



The Grasshopper

The Organ of The Gresham Society

**Some books are undeservedly forgotten; none are undeservedly
remembered (W H Auden)**

Issue No. 22

3rd January 2025

College Notes

The College has been pleased to appoint Professor Robert Allison CBE DL as Chairman of Council. Formerly Vice-Chancellor of Loughborough University, we hope to have an interview with him in the next Grasshopper. The College's Five-Year Plan has now been drawn up. Key headings are Grow and Diversify the Audience; Uphold the Academic Traditions of the College; and (inevitably!) Grow Income. More information to follow. The pilot programme with the Mulberry Academy has now gone live. Ten lectures will be given there during the year for aspiring sixth formers. Congratulations go to Robin May as his lecture "Why Is There More Than One Species Of Human?" has passed one million views. A far cry from the Good Ol' Days just after Barnard's Inn Hall was taken over when we thought an audience of 60 was good going...

The closing date is nearly upon us for the following professorial vacancies: the IT Livery Company Professor of Information Technology; the Frank Jackson Foundation Professor of the Environment; Mercers' School Memorial Professor of Business. Applications close on **January 6th 2025**.

Ave Atque Vale

We welcome Michael Burke and Deborah Safron to the Society. They are of course eligible to join our American Chapter but they are now settled in London. And Deborah is carrying out an interesting project on the change in reading habits and requirements amongst undergraduates. More anon. We greatly regret to announce the death of Howard Worth, a longstanding member of the Society, who was a regular attender at events along with his wife Cristina. He did a Ph.D. at Durham and was an Old Mercer, with whom he was active over many years. His former friend and fellow Old Mercer Howard Stephens says that Howard "was a charming, erudite and generous companion and will be sadly missed".

Members' Corner

May I report with all due modesty that I have been elected to the Court Emeritus of the Stationers' Company in recognition of many years' service. Alison Gowman CBE is now a Canon of the Chapter of St Paul's and a Lay Canon. This is a picture of her wearing her manteletta.



Alex Edmans Prize

The PRI is the Principles for Responsible Investment, established by the United Nations to promote responsible investing. Every year they give one Outstanding Research Award for a new paper on responsible investing, and this year it went to Alex's paper "Sustainable Investing: Evidence From the Field" (with Tom Gosling and Dirk Jenter). [Editor's Note: Two years ago he won the same award for "Socially Responsible Divestment" with Doron Levit and Jan Schneemeier. We await the hat trick with some anticipation...]

The 2024 Reith Lectures in December were given by Gwen Adshead, Gresham Visiting Professor of Psychiatry 2014-2017 on the various aspects of violence. The third lecture was actually broadcast from HMP Grendon. (There were no untoward incidents during the lecture.)

Members' Corner (Print Section)

I suppose it is inevitable, but the list of recent publications by Society members is nothing less than abundant. Here (in alphabetical order), we have Sir Vernon Bogdanor who has produced the book with the longest title this year, with *Making The Weather: Six Politicians Who Changed Modern Britain* (Haus Publishing £22). Richard Holloway quondam Bishop of Edinburgh and Gresham Professor of Divinity, has produced *On Reflection* (Canongate Books £18.99). Then Ronald Hutton follows up on his magisterial *The Making of Oliver Cromwell* (Yale University Press 2021 £25) with Part II *Oliver Cromwell: Commander in Chief* (also Yale and also £25).

[Editor's Note: this might seem out of Ronald's usual fixation on witches, sprites, and things that go bump in the night, but there is a legend that Cromwell sold his soul to the Devil on the eve of the Battle of Worcester in return for victory and seven years' good fortune. Of course he popped his riding boots exactly seven years after the battle. Coincidence or what?]

The quinquennium mirabilis at Winchester

Sir Bryan Thwaites reflects (in his Centenary year) on the mass of mathematical talent that he discovered when he went to Winchester College just before the War. Part I focuses on his fellow number crunchers:

The boys were: Christopher Longuet-Higgins, Freeman Dyson, James Lighthill, Oliver Atkin, Sir Bryan Thwaites and Michael Longuet-Higgins, four of whom went on to become Fellows of the Royal Society at a very early age. Sir Bryan found himself among a very special crowd of budding mathematicians. He discovered that from about the age of fifteen they had been corresponding with the top mathematicians at Trinity, Cambridge such as A.S. Besicovich, J.E. Littlewood and G.H. Hardy. So they went up to Cambridge already well up to the standard of Part III of the Maths Tripos which they took with stars in 1941. Immediate Research Fellowships would normally have followed - but times were not normal.

With warfare now being increasingly controlled by scientific analysis, there

were major establishments around the country such as the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment at Fort Halstead in Kent, the Radar Research Establishment at Malvern, and Bletchley Park; and they had to be fed by a constant stream of young scientists. Schools and universities were required to send to the Ministry of Supply the names of likely recruits and it was only decades later that it became generally known that it was the Cambridge don and author C.P. Snow who almost single-handedly chose and allocated such young men and women according to their abilities.

For example: he was called for interview in May 1942 and the conversation ran as follows: "Good afternoon, Thwaites - in September you will go up to do the Maths Tripos in 2 years and then go to the NPL." "Oh Sir, I'm terribly sorry, I can't do that - I have been accepted for the Guards Armoured Division." "Well, Thwaites, that's bad luck. Goodbye." At that very moment my future career was determined!

Similarly, Freeman was sent to Bomber Command to work on the optimisation of the effect of mass bombing; James went to the NPL charged with establishing the theory of supersonic flow; Christopher was sent to Balliol, Oxford, to work in the field of Chemistry; Michael went to the Admiralty Research Laboratory at the NPL to work on water waves and their effect on landing craft; and Oliver went to Bletchley Park.

Soon, however, their National Service had been completed and they were free to resume their own careers. Thus Christopher made major contributions to theoretical chemistry which some felt deserved a Nobel Prize. After chairs at King's London and Cambridge, in 1967 he switched his interests to Machine Intelligence and co-founded a Unit of that name at Edinburgh University funded by the Science Research Council. Later, the SRC commissioned James to write a Report on the future of AI, the publication of which in 1973 created a furore whose reverberations are still being felt to the disadvantage of the UK's standing in the field. As a result, Christopher and James were estranged.

Freeman became universally recognised as a polymath of the highest order. His achievements ranged over the whole gamut of mathematics, physics and the state of Mankind, and are far too numerous even to summarise. In 1952 he took up a life-time appointment at Princeton's Institute of Advanced Studies and US citizenship in 1957. His visits to the UK often included a brief stay at his sister Alice's house in St James's Terrace, Winchester where Bryan would then dine with the great man. He held no particular affection for Win. Coll. - his father, Sir George, had been our Master of Music 1924-37 before going on to be the Director of the Royal College of Music - but he did accept the honour of being received Ad Portas in 2011.

Michael was an oceanographer who spent his life successfully theorising on

waves. Moving effortlessly between universities and institutions in the UK and the USA, often using the National Institute of Oceanography as a base, he was revered by the select band of like-minded scientists.

Oliver forged an international reputation in Number Theory and is widely known for his “Sieve of Atkin” which was a computer programme designed to generate prime numbers in the wake of the age-old Sieve of Eratosthenes. He emigrated to the USA in 1970 and became a Professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He was the quirkiest of the six of us and, like Christopher (and myself), an organist.

[More to follow in G23 – it’s quite a story!]

More on doppelgängers

Charles Vermont writes: Your mention of doppelgängers in the latest edition of The Grasshopper put me in mind of the following:

Who fits this description? “He was educated at one of his country’s military academies, became an officer, but resigned his commission to go into journalism; he became a best selling author, then stood for political office, and took up painting in his later years.” Your answer would probably be Winston Churchill, to which I would ask ‘which one? The one born in Blenheim Palace, or St Louis, Missouri?’

Winston Churchill (1871-1947) was one of the best-selling novelists of the early 20th century. In the 1890’s, our future prime minister wrote to him about readers becoming confused by their name. The American was much better known at the time, so the Englishman agreed to use his full surname, and styled himself Winston Spencer Churchill. This was later shortened to Winston S. Churchill.

Best wishes

Charles Vermont

Reflections

More on Banks (on from G21)

Readers remind me that there was actually a film called The Day They Robbed The Bank of England, made in 1960. To quote a military source, “It involved the thief getting cosy with a bunch of Ruperts so that he could learn the procedure of the guard mount.” (My informant had once served in the ranks, evidently...)

And regarding security, one of my more curious vacation jobs in Oxford days was working for Securicor. We once had to transport crates of gold bars to a secret location in the Home Counties (you couldn’t miss it – it was signposted from the motorway). And they weighed a ton, though it was quite something for me in the Easter vacation to be sitting in the back of a van with my feet

propped up on several million pounds of bullion. (And we didn't have the comfort of a squad of Gurkhas marching behind us...)

And talking of the Bank Piquet, Wing Commander Mike Dudgeon reports: Re 'Change for a Fiver' in G21 – Bank Piquet it certainly was, and my cousin Captain William Dudgeon, Black Watch, commanded it on at least one occasion. I believe one had a very nice dinner in the Bank, and could invite a friend. Someone (long forgotten who) told me he had been William's guest once. Sadly William, who was 10 yrs older than me, died a while ago.

Dudgeon up in the air with Catalina (aka "Miss Pickup")

No folks – not a whiff of scandal, though Catalina was once the love of Mike's life - the Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat (USAAF) ça va sans dire. In this case the magnificent man found his flying machine at the Imperial War Museum's airfield at Duxford and went up for a jolly around East Anglia in September.





[Editor's Note: Anyone interested in replicating Mike's aerial exploits might care to contact the Catalina Society.]

Creepy Crawlies again

Following on from sightings of the yellow-tailed scorpion (G21 refers), do not be confused as the body is actually black, as is the tail – it is the legs which are yellow. They are mildly venomous and very small, so it is not a good idea to perch on the dock wall of a summer evening in Sheerness. And although the species was first classified in 1778 there is some confusion as to whether *Euscorpium Flavicaudis* is the same as *Tetratrachobothrius Flavicaudis*. So now you know.

[(Yet another) Editor's Note: The Blue Water Centre in Sheerness is actually advertising for someone to look after them – so there's your chance! {And note punctuation...}]

Envoi

People sometimes ask how I come up with quite such an eclectic range of topics in *The Grasshopper*. The answer is, of course, the Grasshopper Himself. He has spent many years hopping around library shelves and has the irritating habit of reading over my shoulder. Quite simply the two of us look out for odd stories and sometimes odd connections. I usually have half-a-dozen library books on the go – and I have the full run of Surrey Libraries by ordering whatever I need on-line. And whenever I spot an oddity I put in a bookmark and take note for future reference. That sometimes means either looking at a book on my own shelves, which I have built up over the years (the books that is, not the shelves) and simply think that if something has caught my eye then I might be able to do something with it one day. Views and suggestions are always welcome of course, as are contributions from members.

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

Veteran Society members Glenn Wilson (quondam Professor of Physic) and Maria Arakie, aka Connaught Opera, are presenting their smash hit medley of songs entitled Music From The Fabulous Fifties at Mercers' Hall on Monday January 27th at 2.15pm in favour of the City Bridge Foundation. Be there or be square – and let Maria know on - maria@maria-arakie.com

The Mayor's Progress

Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli has completed his mayoral year – and what a year it has been – everything from abseiling 47 floors down the Leadenhall Building for charity to spending over 100 days travelling abroad to 24 countries in support of the City plus giving over 400 speeches to over 70,000 people and mixing with the media on 298 occasions. The Knowledge Miles Lectures have been a resounding success, with 103 lectures drawing on a whole range of eminent speakers, as have the Coffee Colloquies held at the Mansion House, which have covered the 17 Sustainable Development UN Goals, with 250 speakers and 2500 people in attendance. The Ethical AI Initiative has been well supported and it is to be hoped that the Space Protection scheme will bear fruit with a reduction in space debris. There is so much to report that it might be easier just to go to Mainelli.org or to search on <https://www.mainelli.org/?p=5118> to see more. And we hope to speak to Michael again once he has had a well-deserved break. If you have any news items for *The Grasshopper* do let Tim (t.j.connell@city.ac.uk) know. Anything on awards, recent publications or odd curiosities will doubtless suit.

Editorial Team	
Professor Tim Connell	
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Barbara Anderson	Jack Wigglesworth
Senior-Revisions-Editor	Editor-at-Lunch

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