GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

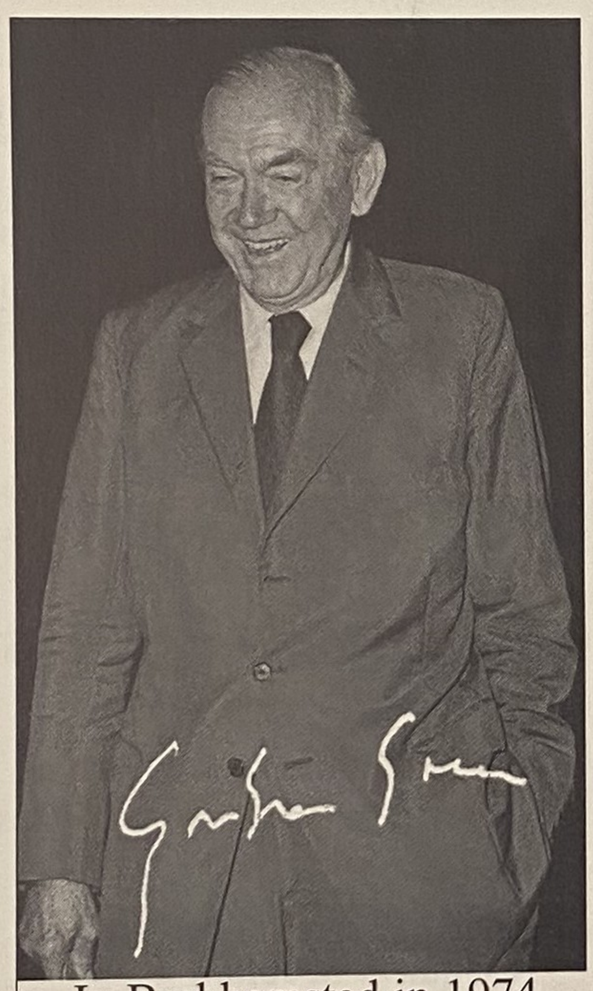
FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1998

Registered Charity No. 1064839

Chairman's letter

It is the extraordinary mark of Graham Greene that although he is so essentially English, and although his directions of thought and sensibility were shaped early on, his measure is much greater than these considerations might suggest. As I write I have beside me a bronze medallion struck in his honour by the French Government. He travelled widely abroad; his novels are read in many translations; his readership is world-wide. He is everyone's author; and he, perhaps more than any other, has caught the spirit of our age in its internationalism, in its uncertainties, and in its tracing of the complexities of the human spirit. 'The dangerous edge of things' that he spoke of precludes the cosy and the conventional and second hand. He saw for himself and with utter honesty.


In Berkhamsted in 1974

To form a Society to honour him, both as a man and as a writer, and to further an understanding of his importance seems so very natural now seven years after his death. This is the right time for such a Society. Graham Greene's family have been generous in their support of the idea; those who knew him well have clear recollections; and we become increasingly aware of the extraordinary ramifications of his public, political and personal life. Scholars are publishing biographies and critical assessments, and universities acknowledge his importance.

Increasingly available to us are his writings, his films, his scripts, and his letters - the growing memorabilia of the Greene world. Those who admire the writing and who have come to appreciate the man will all understand that some focal point, some meeting ground of interest, should be established. This is the purpose of the 'Graham Greene Birthplace Trust', and it is this that I earnestly commend to you.

For those of us who live in Berkhamsted there is added motive. Wherever we walk here we can track his steps and feel his presence. Graham Greene is one of the great sons of this town and of its oldest school. The Berkhamsted of his youth was a town of notable character, and it is obvious that his life here meant more than he was sometimes prepared to admit. This is where for him everything began, and so this is where we should take up the work for the very next chapter. Graham's book seems to lie open before us, and, as with all greatness, it needs to be given the flesh and energy of our own commitment.

Many of you reading this have expressed the interest. The purpose of this Newsletter is to make known our future plans, and to invite you all, whatever your interest, to take a lively and determined part. Inevitably we have begun locally, but with your help the word will spread from the local to the national scene, and thereon to the international. Those who visit the town find at present only desultory traces. The life of Graham Greene seems almost too recent to be regarded as heritage, but it is none the less so, and it deserves our careful concern. Whatever we do now will be held to be of value in the future.

Those who are presently involved sense that this beginning will have enormous implications, and that, once established, 'The Trust' will serve a purpose far and away beyond anything we can contemplate. I am privileged to be associated with those who are moved by such enthusiasm, and I ask you now to join the Trust as a Friend if you have not already done so, to support our forthcoming programmes, and to be a vigorous participant in this new venture.

David R.A.Pearce

Lecture - Friday 8th May

7.30.p.m. for 8.00.p.m.

in the Old Hall, Berkhamsted School

'Graham Greene and the Berkhamsted Connection'.

A lecture by John Davison, formerly Housemaster of School House, Berkhamsted School where Graham lived from 1910.

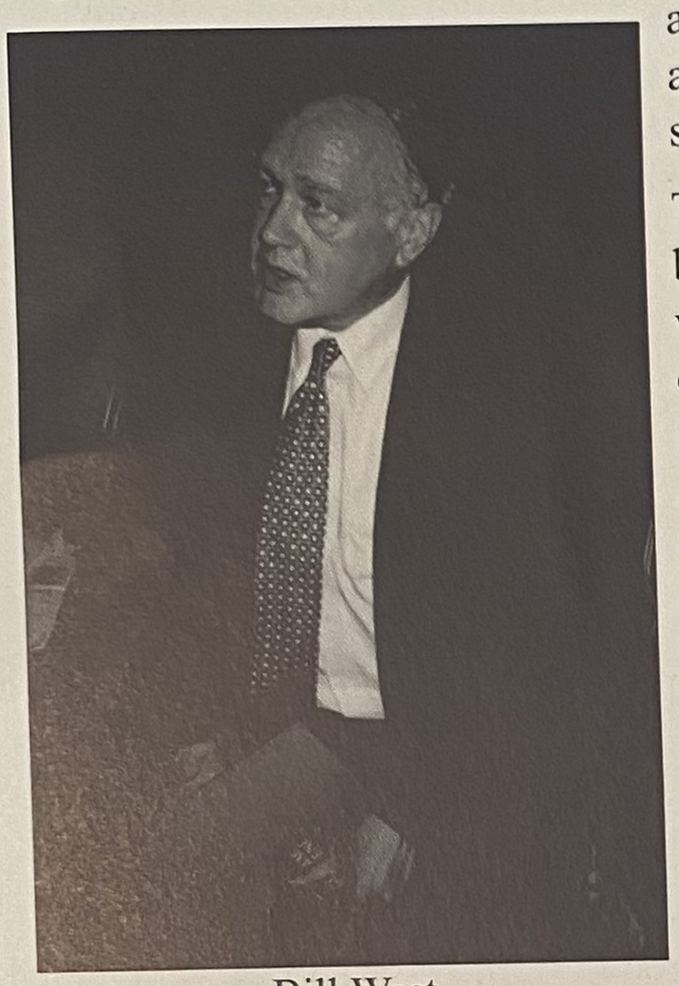
Tickets: £2 at the door.

This is the first event since the launch of the Trust and we hope to welcome a large audience.

The Public Launch

The inaugural public meeting was held on 2nd October, 1997, in Deans' Hall, Berkhamsted School where Graham Greene's father was Headmaster and he a reluctant pupil. This was the 93rd anniversary of Graham's birth. A brief and witty address by the Mayor of Berkhamsted, Peter Such, an Old Boy of the School, was followed by an introduction by Ken Sherwood, the Secretary of the Trust and the inspiration behind its establishment and this first public meeting.

The occasion was marked by fascinating and hitherto unpublished anecdotes from the Graham Greene annals; the results of much determined investigation on the part of Bill West, the broadcaster and author of a newly published book, ***The Quest for Graham Greene.*** Our speaker's wide-ranging researches offered us glimpses into some hidden depths, including Greene's links with Catholicism in Austria and clandestine spying activities for the secret services there.



Bill West

The evening was chaired by David Pearce, who was later the narrator of one of Greene's early short stories ***The Innocent*** which was performed in the manner of a dramatised reading by members of the School's teaching staff. If 'there is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in' (q.v. ***The Power and the Glory***), this was it. This little story was not only strongly evocative of Greene's later work but provided an appetising foretaste of treats in store for the Friends of the Trust in the form of cultural events based on his works.

The meeting also featured an open discussion on the Trust's future activities. This was led by Roger Watkins and Michael Webster. An analysis of the discussion and the results of the questionnaire filled in by those attending the meeting indicated very strong support for an annual festival based in Berkhamsted.

There was also considerable support for the establishment of a Berkhamsted town trail featuring locations described in his books. Other ideas favoured were to establish a study of Greene's life and works, possibly recorded by audio-visual means, the establishment of a plaque commemorating his birth at St John's House in Chesham Road, Berkhamsted, and the setting up of a museum of Greene memorabilia. The contents of the museum could perhaps be built up by duplicating key original records of Greene's life and works held around the world. The School's library, it was noted, held some original manuscripts which perhaps could be the subject of facsimile copies.

The meeting, which was attended by patrons Caroline Bourget and Nicholas Dennys, generated considerable enthusiasm and set many exciting challenges for the Trustees to implement.

Michael Webster

Our Patrons

Our patrons are all relations of Graham Greene. Caroline Bourget, Graham's daughter, lives in Switzerland. She often visits her Mother in Oxford and her Autumn visit fortunately coincided with the Launch. Louise Dennys, daughter of Graham's sister, Elizabeth, lives in Canada where she is Chief Executive of Knopf publishers. Her brother, Nicholas, lives in London where he runs The Gloucester Road Bookshop. Their sister, Amanda, lives in Northants.



Caroline Bourget & Nicholas Dennys

Inaugural lecture published

Bill West's inaugural lecture at the Launch has been published as a pamphlet. Copies may be obtained post free by sending £4.50 to The Amate Press PO Box 972 OXFORD, OX4 1GJ.

Launch - Analysis of 71 Questionnaires

Proposed activities:	No. of votes
Annual lecture/conference/festival	56
Town Trail	46
Study of life and work	23
Plaque at St John's	22
Museum	20
Audio-visual presentation	15
Scholarships	13
Statue	9

Six people were in favour of an oral history project, a new proposal made during the meeting.

First editions auctioned

The Trust has been given extracts from Sotheby's catalogue last December, giving details of rare first editions and manuscripts of Greene's work which were up for auction together with many other important books and letters by the best known English authors.

First Graham Greene Festival -- 30 September - 3 October 1998

The idea of a an annual Festival in Berkhamsted to celebrate the multi-faceted achievements of arguably the greatest English writer of the twentieth century has been greeted enthusiastically by all who have so far been approached for advice and help. Indeed there has been a feeling that such an event is overdue.

Although there are still some six months to go, already the outline of an exciting and varied programme is emerging. Fortunately Greene exercised his talent in so many directions that we have many aspects from which to select. Moreover his early experiences in Berkhamsted, both good and bad, stayed with him all his life and can be found reflected throughout his writing.

The main event of this year's Festival will be a lecture by Philip French, ***The Observer*** film critic. He has just completed, for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, work on a publication on ***Greene and the Cinema***. We shall be among the first in England to have the benefit of his views.

Philip French considers ***The Third Man*** to be Greene's masterpiece. We very much hope that Kodak will enable us to view this film in their 35 mm. cinema. Quentin Falk, author of ***Travels in Greeneland*** has agreed to introduce this event.

The Berkhamsted Film Society will participate in the Festival with a screening of ***Our Man in Havana***.

Live theatre will, we hope be represented by an amusing and provocative anthology of letters that Greene wrote to the Press over the years on a variety of topics. The anthology will be based on the book ***Yours etc.*** by Christopher Hawtree. The Berkhamsted Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society has expressed an interest in helping us with this.

Paul Hogarth, the artist and Royal Academician, will also be participating. In 1962 he was commissioned by Penguin Books to illustrate the covers of the new edition of Greene's novels. As he says himself: "Thus began a working relationship with Graham Greene that flourished for almost 30 years and involved me not only in creating jacket designs for the Penguin editions of his books but also in a year-long odyssey to depict their actual settings and locations."

In what promises to be a fascinating presentation, Paul Hogarth will reveal the excitements and challenges of working with Greene. We hope to arrange a small exhibition of his works as part of the Festival.

In addition to these events, we are threading through the Festival Week papers of literary criticism and analysis.

These are our plans so far. They may change. Whatever happens, we shall do our best to arrange a programme which celebrates the richness and variety of Graham Greene's achievements.

The final details and information on how to obtain tickets will be available in mid-summer and will be sent to everyone on our mailing list.

Roger Watkins

1999 Festival

Norman Sherry, Graham Greene's official biographer, has agreed to speak at the 1999 Birthday Festival. By that time he believes the third and last volume of the biography will have been published. Some Friends may have been fortunate enough to hear Norman speak in Berkhamsted when Volume One was published in 1989.

The Graham Greene Trail - progress report

Mrs Sylvia Hall, a Friend of the Trust, has volunteered to draw up the trail which will cover all the identifiable locations in Berkhamsted, which are linked with Graham, either through references in his works or identified in biographical material. The Trail will be marked on a specially prepared map, and the accompanying text will identify the reasons why each location is included



The formal signing of the Scheme of Trust 20th September 1997
Left to right: David Pearce, Ken Sherwood, Giles Clark, Michael Webster

Commemorative Stamps - 2004

The Trust has approached the Royal Mail with a view to the issuing of commemorative stamps to mark the centenary of Graham's birth on October 2nd, 2004. Royal Mail has agreed to bear our request in mind. It appears they receive some 2000 requests a year for special commemorative issues from which 32 are shortlisted for final selection. If any reader has successfully negotiated a special issue with the Royal Mail, the Trust would be delighted to have the benefit of their experience and advice.

The Oral History Project

One of the more interesting suggestions put forward at the public launch was the idea for an oral history project. The Trustees have decided that the objective of this project will be to interview, preferably using video, everybody who can recall specific meetings with, and anecdotes about, Graham. Of course if somebody's memories have already been recorded, we don't need to repeat the exercise but we would like to know when and where and how to get hold of a copy of the video.

An invitation to Old Berkhamstedians who may remember Graham during his schooldays has already been made; the names of about three contemporaries were mentioned at the launch and we hope to have interviewed them before you read this Newsletter.

One old lady, recently interviewed, had some memories of Graham's uncle, Edward Greene, and his children but was a bit taken back when shown a photograph of Graham's father, the Headmaster of Berkhamsted School.

" Ah, but you see I didn't know ***him,*** *in those days 'never the twain shall meet'! We never spoke to them, they never spoke to us, we were poles apart. The only thing I knew was, they weren't allowed to go into a fish shop, and there was a fish shop on the bridge, by the Canal, just below the Post Office. We used to go in there and they used to ask us, 'Can you get us a pennyworth of chips?' and they used to stand round Chapel Street corner while we got these chips, and they used to give us two chips for getting them. If they had been found in that chip shop, it would have been instant dismissal."*

Was this the reason why Graham played cricket with the Town boys?

Museum Store

The Trust has agreed in principle with Dacorum Heritage Trust to deposit for safe keeping any memorabilia it receives until such time as it has its own facilities. Dacorum Heritage Trust is a registered museum, based in Berkhamsted, which has amongst its objectives the collection of Graham Greene memorabilia.

Bibliography

The Trust has been asked by the Alliance of Literary Societies, which it has recently joined, whether it has produced a comprehensive bibliography of Graham's works; and of books and articles written about him. This is not a simple task given the world wide range of his literary output and the many languages into which his best known novels, plays and film scripts have been translated. The fullest bibliography we have traced to date is the Contemporary Authors New Revision Series Volume 35 published in 1990 but it only covers the English Language and only identifies the titles of publications in which shorter articles have appeared. Over the years Graham wrote many letters and articles for newspapers and weekly magazines both at home and abroad as well as introductions to other authors' works. The Trust is making contact with those such as Judith Adamson and Christopher Hawtree who, at Graham's request, made selections of articles and letters for publication and, we hope, have comprehensive lists available to them.

The Friends' application form

The Trustees have designed a Friends' application form. This is being widely distributed to potential Friends. The form contains a photograph of a smiling Graham taken in Berkhamsted in 1974 when he and his brother Hugh addressed the Berkhamsted Citizens Association about their Berkhamsted childhood. Those who attended may recall a stormy meeting during which a female contemporary of Graham's, whose father had been Headmaster of the Junior School, accused Graham of implying her father was a sadist!

Internet address

http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/5095/greene.html

Finances - a snapshot

The Trust was launched in 1997 with the backing of a £500 grant from Berkhamsted Town Council. Donations to date less expenses have increased the bank balance to £600 which will cover the cost of publishing this Newsletter and the Friends' application form. The Trust has applied to become a member of Berkhamsted Arts Trust which means that it will be eligible for deficit funding for future events in the event of losses being incurred,

50th Anniversary of the film of Brighton Rock 'Lord Dickie's tickled Pinkie'

The Trust has been presented by Francis Corey Wright, a Friend of the Trust, with a copy of the 50th Anniversary Souvenir Supplement published by the ***Brighton Evening Argus*** in January 1998. Lord Attenborough, who is Chancellor elect of Sussex University, described the supplement as 'an amazing spread'.

The supplement gives an extract from Graham's letter to the Mayor who had congratulated him on the award of the Order of Merit: 'I am afraid that my book ***Brighton Rock*** was not very much appreciated at the beginning in your city and it's a great pleasure to know I have been forgiven.'

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