Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1064839

FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER
Summer 1999
Supplement

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1999 FESTIVAL

With this Newsletter you will receive your copy of the brochure for the 1999 Festival which promises to be even more ambitious than last year's. The highlights include:

-a visit to Brighton for a guided tour of the key locations described in *Brighton Rock* both the novel and the film;

-a conversation with Father Leopoldo Duran, one of Greene's closest friends in the last 20 years of his life and the inspiration for *Monsignor Quixote;*

-John Barry, the legendary film composer comes to Berkhamsted to describe his collaboration with Greene on *Brighton Rock the Musical.*

AMPLIFICATION SYSTEMS

Some of those who have attended events at Berkhamsted Collegiate School have experienced difficulties with the audibility. The School's amplification systems are of course designed primarily for a young audience. We are concerned lest this may deter some Friends from attending events held in the School. We have now analysed the problem with the help of one our Friends, Colin Davies. As a result we have determined that in Deans' Hall the problem can be minimised by using radio microphones and roving microphones for members of the audience wishing to ask questions. We are also inquiring whether we can hire a temporary loop system for Friends with hearing aids. Further information may be obtained by writing or telephoning the Trust Office.

CHANGE IN TRUSTEES

Jeff Edwards, one of the founder trustees, who played a valuable role in establishing the Trust's administration, retired from the Trust at the end of December 1998. His place as a co-opted trustee has been taken by Giles Clark, previously a trustee appointed by Berkhamsted Citizens Association. Berkhamsted Citizens have nominated, in place of Giles, Susan Johnson, its vice-chairman, who works as the Clerk to Tring Town Council.

BIRTHPLACE ON TOWN MAP

A new Town Map, produced by Berkhamsted Town Council, has recently been placed on local information boards. The map gives prominence, possibly for the first time, to Graham's birthplace at St John's House in Chesham Road. This is the indirect result of talks between the Council, Berkhamsted Collegiate School and the Trust in connection with planned publication both of a Heritage Walk (to be published by the Town Council) and the Graham Greene Trail (to be published by this Trust).

GRAHAM GREENE TRAIL

Publication of the Trail has been held up because of the difficulty in finding a sponsor for the £500 production cost.

TRUST ANNUAL REPORT

This was published at the end of May and is available on request from the Trust Office.

AWARDS

In March 1999 the Trust established a separate Awards Committee to make awards to anybody planning a project which in the opinion of the Awards Committee would have met with Graham's approval. It is planned to invite applications during the Summer and make the first two awards in February 2000. If you would like to receive full details of the Awards Scheme or make a donation, please write or telephone to the Trust Office.

ACCESSIONS

The Trust has been pleased to receive from our patron, Caroline Bourget, a gift of audio and videotapes. Graham gave her the videotapes as soon as he was sent them as they were no use to him since he did not have a video. These tapes will be lodged for safe keeping with the Dacorum Heritage Trust, a registered museum based in Berkhamsted which has agreed to look after the Trust's archives and make them available to scholars for study and research . The videos includes film of Graham being interviewed on Russian Television (there is an English translation). A selection will be screened/played on the last day of the 1999 Festival. A full list of the tapes may be obtained on application to the Trust Office.

SPRING LECTURE 1999

Neil Sinyard' s lecture on 21 April on the Comic Sense of Graham Greene was excellent. Neil has agreed that his paper should be published as an Occasional Paper.

GRAHAM GREENE AND THE BARREL ORGAN

Some readers may not be aware that Graham's first expedition to learn by experience how others live started in Berkhamsted in December 1923 when he and fellow Old Berkhamstedian, Claud Coburn, dressed as tramps and pushed a Barrel Organ round the streets of Berkhamsted and other local towns, sleeping overnight in barns. We commemorated this event by a publicity stunt for the 1998 Festival. Peter Risley and his street piano played 1920 tunes in the Saturday street market, and a flyer telling the story and promoting the Festival was handed out.

INTERNET

Those Friends who 'Surf the Net' may like to know that we have a new web site which has been designed for us by Peter Such, a Friend of the Trust and a former Mayor of Berkhamsted who attended some of our early meetings when the formation of the Trust was under discussion. We aim not only to keep the site up to date with the Newsletter but also to carry up-to-the-minute news about the Festival which it would be uneconomic to circulate by snail mail! The site address is: http://www.zyworld.com/GGBT/ Home.htm.

OBITUARY - BILL WEST

Bill West, author of *The Quest for Graham Greene*, who gave the Trust's inaugural lecture in October 1997, died recently. Bill, who was born in 1942, was unmarried and lived in Exeter. Before becoming a full time author he engaged in a variety of activities including a spell on the footplate as a steam fireman. He first became aware of the complexities of Graham Greene's life whilst writing *Truth Betrayed: Radio Politics between the Wars.*

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FESTIVAL REFLECTIONS - A TRAVELOGUE

Ramon Rami Porta from Barcelona has prepared a 15-page diary of the 1998 Festival which will be of particular interest to visitors to future Festivals who do not know Berkhamsted. Apart from a very full description of the Festival he gives a lot of tourist information including local walks which he enjoyed; and provides an extensive bibliography relating to both Greene and Berkhamsted. If you would like a copy please write to the Trust enclosing a cheque for £1.00 to cover photocopying and postage.

1998 FESTIVAL VIDEO

A 15-minute video showing highlights of the Festival has been produced for the trust by St Albans Movie Makers and is available from the Trust Office at a price of £8 (including postage).

MONEY MATTERS

The Trustees are NOT proposing to introduce an annual subscription for the Friends. Instead Friends are invited to confirm they wish to remain on the mailing list by making further donations from time to time towards the costs of running the Trust. Some may be happy to donate annually. Please send your donation with the enclosed form Donations of £5.00 or more will be acknowledged by a receipt in the form of a coloured bookmark of the Paul Hogarth cartoon of Graham Greene.
If you would like to receive a copy of the Trust accounts, please write to the Trust Office.

BIOGRAPHY DELAYED

The third and final volume of Norman Sherry's biography of Graham Greene is not now likely to be published before 2000. In consequence Norman's planned visit to the 1999 Festival has been postponed. We hope to welcome him next year.

GRAHAM GREENE AND THE BERKHAMSTED CONNECTION

John Davison's lecture last May has now been published by the Trust as an Occasional Paper. Copies are available post free from the Trust Office in return for a cheque for £2.20 per copy payable to the Trust.

DEATH OF ELISABETH DENNYS



Elisabeth Dennys, Graham's younger sister and mother of three of our patrons, Nicholas Dennys, Louise Dennys and Amanda Saunders, died on 16 January 1999 at the age of 84. For many years, she had acted as Graham's secretary and indeed accompanied him to Berkhamsted in 1985 when he visited the Town Hall. Graham relied greatly on Elisabeth: 'It was providential that Elisabeth took charge of all my affairs'. Elisabeth suffered a stroke in February 1989, an event which Fr. Leopoldo Duran says was one of the most difficult moments of Graham's entire life. (*Friend and Brother* Leopoldo Duran pp 270-3)

I WAS AT SCHOOL WITH GRAHAM GREENE'

by Lewis South (died 1982)

This monograph written in 1976 was submitted by Lewis' son, Peter South, who read about the Trust in the Independent in September 1998.
The starting points were a granddaughter's interest in classical mythology, and a Catechism Prize dated 1917. He goes on:
She asked me if I remembered a book from my schooldays called Gods and Heroes, which I had passed to her Daddy. This then was her source. I remembered it. My first school prize. As a scholarship boy. It was my introduction to the great classical stories. I was twelve.

The school was Berkhamsted so when I read Graham Greene's autobiography, *A Sort of Life*, it was with a special interest. The earlier chapters tell of his life at Berkhamsted School; not only was I there at the time, I was periodically in class with him. Thus my degree of interest could be shared by not more than a handful of others. The Sixth Forms were relatively small, specialising in chosen subjects. Mine was Mathematics; GG's was History and French, but we all came together in a single ecumenical class for English under his redoubtable father, the Headmaster.

We sat around the library table, and Headmaster Greene 'lying comfortably on his back like an inverted turtle' - a description by Peter Quennell quoted in the book - requires no effort of the imagination - just memory. In front of him was a huge *Webster's Dictionary.* Whenever there was a need to refer to it, he would say, 'Pass me Webster!' and balance the book on the undershelf. Whether he did this on the occasion I asked him what a eunuch was, I cannot remember. All breathing audibly stopped and I sensed rapt attention for his definition. It was a paraphrase of Webster, made to suit my obvious ignorance of technical terms: 'One

who has had his manhood removed by means of an operation. Do you understand?'.
'Manhood' and 'understand' were said with that peculiar Oxford dipthongic 'a' which he affected and which was the source of widespread mimicry. Not surprisingly Graham Greene spoke like that too.

We thought him and Peter Quennell a bit odd, especially as Quennell in the Classical Sixth had already had some poetry published which was quite beyond the understanding of the mathematicians and scientists among us - particularly the more 'loony lines' mentioned by GG in his book.

At the time of which I write, he must have gone through his period of psycho-analysis, and the events leading up to it would have been well-known and gossiped over. Yet such was the gulf between boarders, day boys and the despised train-bugs, of which I was one, that I knew simply nothing of these happenings until I read the Book. His difference in outlook colours his memories of individuals to make them so unlike mine. His was a world in which governesses and sea-side holidays figured; mine was that of the son of a small tradesman to whom holidays were unknown.

As a junior, he remembers a master, Moir, as 'monstrously fat'. I remember him with awe as my first form-master. Portly, yes: but monstrously fat? I could not presume to such a thought. I have special reason for remembering the master, Simpson, whom he mentions. Simpson made me stand on a chair to translate an oration by Tullus Hostillius, saying that I looked just like him. As I was under-sized, cross-eyed and bespectacled, his sally gave me the nickname 'Tullus' which lasted way beyond school. I have friends who use it still. Perhaps Simpson showed his sadism by mocking me so: I was not conscious of it although it was apparent to GG.

'Dicker' Dale was a senior master whom he mentions, recollecting his drawl which I remember; and his stutter which I do not. Nor do I recall his 'It's all experience!' that impressed GG. I saw Dicker's difficulty of communication in the frequent interpolations of 'see?' or 'foller?'. We used to keep a tally, which, in the single period of an hour, often approached the century. One single example embedded itself in my memory. Translation again: the story of Cortez crossing the Andes. My flat narrative style of: 'There, in front of him, he saw the sea' was condemned by Dicker in these terms: 'You can't 'see' the sea - foller? You must 'behold' it - see?'.

As my memories of individuals are different from Graham Greene's, so are my recollections of schoolboy sufferings. His were for belonging to the establishment: mine for being an outsider. My pinched Hertfordshire accent was mercilessly scoffed at, and in self-defence, I quickly adopted the full rounded vowels that I heard all round me. I can identify with GG in preferring long-distance running to games - but for entirely different reasons. It gave me, not solitude, but recognition. I was good at it. My small weight was an advantage, but my poor eyesight no handicap: whereas in all the dreary cricket games I played in over many years, I cannot recollect scoring more than one run!

The mention in the book of the OTC which he successfully opted out of, stirs a porridge pot of memories. Incredibly I flourished in the OTC, and even became a first-class shot using of necessity, the left eye and the left shoulder with an essentially right-handed rifle. I even passed Certificate A. One of the many tests for this was to act as platoon commander in company drill. The tests were held at annual camp; we had regular soldiers to command - guardsmen, in fact, who towered above me. As I gave my commands 'my' men said encouragingly, 'Well done, Littl'un!'. The training was not entirely wasted: it proved useful in the Home Guard.

It was the early 1950's when I was last in contact with the School. Then my sons were there, and even became boarders for a time when I first moved to the North of England. The Berkhamsted countryside, so appreciated by GG was still very beautiful but car-infested, and the High Street crawled with traffic. The long-run course would no longer give him his much prized solitude: he would be running through housing estates. The last time I saw 'the green baize door' was when I called on the then headmaster as a parent and we were joined at tea by an Air Vice Marshal - an old Berkhamstedian who would have been a junior when I left the School. I can never forget my wife's stunned reaction to the spartan dormitories with their pitch-pine partitions, when we inspected them as a preliminary of the boarding arrangements.

My younger boy thought his year as a boarder was fun; my elder one hated it. I imagine his feelings were much the same as those of Graham Greene. But that will be his story; or perhaps his daughter will write about it.

THE READING CIRCLE

The Circle was started by Yan Christensen in June 1998 and now meets regularly in members' homes on the first Monday of most months to discuss a book by Graham or one of his contemporaries. If you would like further information please contact Yan at 12 Ellesmere Road, Berkhamsted. (Tel. 01442 873604).

THE FOLIO SOCIETY

The Folio Society has agreed to help promote the Trust to those of its members who it believes may be interested in the Trust. It has also agreed that members of the Trust may purchase the Folio Society boxed sets of Greene's *Entertainments* and the *Great Novels* at a 20% discount without becoming members of the Society.

Each boxed set contains six books, fully illustrated by Geoff Grandfield. Each set is introduced by an expert on Greene: *the Entertainments* by Bryan Forbes; and the *Great Novels* by Norman Sherry.

The discounted cost is £81.60 for the *Entertainments* Ref GGEP; and £86.40 for the *Great Novels* Ref GGNP plus £2.95 per order for postage and packing unless collected in person from the Folio Society's London address. If you wish to avail yourself of this offer, please write to the Folio Society at 44, Eagle Street, London WC1R 4FS or telephone 0171 400 4200 stating that you are a Friend of the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust and they will send you full details of how to order.

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