A Sort of NEWSLETTER

Late Spring 2002 | THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST | £1.50 Free to Friends

In This Issue

Editorial

Preview
The Fifth
Graham Greene Festival

Review
The Spring Event

Articles
Brighton Rock Analysed

Visit to Antibes

The Greenes & the Town Hall

Miscellany
Quiz Answers

In the Press
Researchers Controversy

Correspondence
New Book

Obituary
Yvonne Cloetta

Dates for Your Diary
Future Festivals
26 Sept - 29 Sept 2002
2 Oct - 5 Oct 2003
30 Sept - 3 October 2004
(*Centenary Year*)

Editorial

This issue bears witness to the interest shown by readers, and I am very pleased to be able to bring you an article and a letter from Rudolf van Dalm and an article from Donna and John Osthaus describing their efforts to have lunch at Café Félix. By lucky chance I had recently twisted the arm of a colleague and he returned from holiday with photos of the restaurant, as you will see inside.

Speaking of photographs, do visit the website to get an impression of some of the attractions of Berkhamsted.

Although not everyone manages to rise with the sun, on 1 May it was worthwhile to do so, as there is a tradition in Berkhamsted of madrigals from the top of the church tower. It is a charming custom, and for those who braved the cold, coffee and croissants were served in the Court House afterwards. A photographer was there and inside you will see the effect of the rising sun illuminating the church.

It is a privilege living in Graham Greene's Birthplace, and one we are happy to share with you at Festival time.

You will see from the Preview that preparations for the Fifth Festival are well advanced; there are even plans afoot for the Centenary celebrations in 2004. If you have any ideas for fitting tributes on that occasion, please let us know.

Yan Christensen

No responsibility will be accepted for any errors or omissions, or comments made by writers or interviewees. Views expressed are not necessarily the views of The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

PREVIEW

FIFTH GRAHAM GREENE FESTIVAL

There will of course be more about this year's Festival in the next issue, but we have news from David Pearce, the Festival Director, that plans are virtually complete for a packed programme of talks, films and contributions from Friends of the Trust.

The guide-line will be Graham Greene's political thinking. For example we shall hear the author of *Graham Greene on the Frontier*, Dr Maria Couto. Other speakers with particular knowledge on the subject will be Rupert Allason and Professor Anthony Arblaster.

There will of course be films to blend with the theme, namely *The Human Factor*, partly featuring Berkhamsted; the 1957 version of *The Quiet American* will also be shown, and possibly the very recent version if it has been released by September. If it has not, then we shall see *The Comedians*. So for those that like to read the book before seeing the film, these are the ones to read in preparation.

We know already that there will be a considerable international contingent and we shall have contributions from the learned and the enthusiastic, in our case often the same people; in response to last year's suggestions there will be sessions dedicated to 'Worldwide Perceptions of Graham Greene'.

There is a lot to look forward to, and Berkhamsted looks forward to seeing you.

REVIEW

We shall bring a formal review of *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene* in the next issue of this Newsletter.

The Spring Event

This year the Spring Event was a joint evening with Berkhamsted Citizens Association and it was a repeat performance of 'May I Suggest...' which some of us saw at the 1998 Festival. The stage was set for a dramatisation of some of Graham Greene's letters to the press. The narrator, Cherrie Gallagher, was the continuity link that enabled the audience to put into context the letters Greene had written and some of the responses to his letters that had also been published. Simon Hill took the part of Graham Greene and the letters were delightfully 'performed' by the present and former Festival Directors, David Pearce and Roger Watkins. Adrian Davis played the piano to complement the readings. It was an interesting and very amusing evening clearly enjoyed by the audience.

Our thanks are due to each of the performers who had put a lot of work into giving us such a treat.

ARTICLES

The Catholic Enigma of *Brighton Rock*

We are very pleased to publish this article by Rudolf van Dalm, whose interest in and knowledge of Graham Greene is known to us all.

Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (BR) (1938) is undoubtedly the novel that shows the most important change in his direction of writing. If his books had so far revealed only a tendency to religion, from that moment on it was the Catholic religion itself, and almost everything connected with it, that was prominent in all his major works. The change came suddenly and rather unexpectedly, for the story was well on its way before the Catholic element made its first appearance, viz. on p 53 of 250 pages. Some occurrence, something that appealed to Graham Greene's imagination, must have happened around that time.

An ardent reader of Greene's work cannot have failed to notice that the author had a habit of holding on to an idea, an image, a certain



Brighton Rock

phrasing that obviously attracted him the moment he put it on paper. There are various examples to be found in his *oeuvres*, e.g. the 'leper' image, which he used for the first time as far back as 1931/32 and many times after that before he worked it out in *A Burnt-out Case* (1960). Also the 'gigantic wings' in BR are originally to be found in *Journey Without Maps* (1936).

Knowing this, one is just one step away from presuming that contemporary works of his might reveal some correlation in the choice of words or subject matter in connection with BR. In order to find out when the 'Catholic' idea might have germinated in the author's mind one should try to trace any similarities in phrasing or in the use of any particular words in work from the time the making of BR was in progress. It so happens that around 1935-1940 Greene was also active as a film reviewer. We read in the introduction to *The Pleasure Dome* (1972) that he was 'struggling with BR and *The Power and the Glory...'* at the time. The word 'struggling' is worthwhile noticing here, for Greene had indeed difficulty finding the right shape for BR and he wrote to his publisher on 17 January 1938 that he had 'never had such a bother with a book'. Although Greene had started writing BR as early as July 1936, it was not until 9 April 1937 that he handed in the first 30.000 words of the novel.

In *The Spectator* of 4 December 1936 he reviewed the American film *The Green Pastures*. On reading it and bearing in mind the early stages of BR, one comes across a number of words that have a certain correlation and are sometimes even identical, e.g. 'heaven', 'belief' and 'medieval'. And there is more: In the review there is the phrase '...on a long-ago visit to a cheap cabaret'. One is at once reminded of Ida in BR, who is a performer in a cheap sort of cabaret. Further on in the text: 'Hezdrel begins to teach God the quality of mercy...'. Pinkie's quotation: 'Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found' comes inevitably to mind when reading this. Most of all, however, one is struck by what appears in the last paragraph of the review. Greene writes:

'The Noah sequence is admirably dramatic when it is not too easily comic; the dingy sexual drama played out beside the Ark under the rain-clouds, *the jealous gangster with his razor-blade and his cheap girl, the sudden heartless, passionless knifing*, occupies only a very few feet of film, but it conveys *the rather snake-like air of incurable corruption*. One may feel uneasy at Mr Connelly's humour and wonder whether the negro mind is quite so material, but he is extraordinarily successful with *the two extremes of good and evil*.' (italics added)

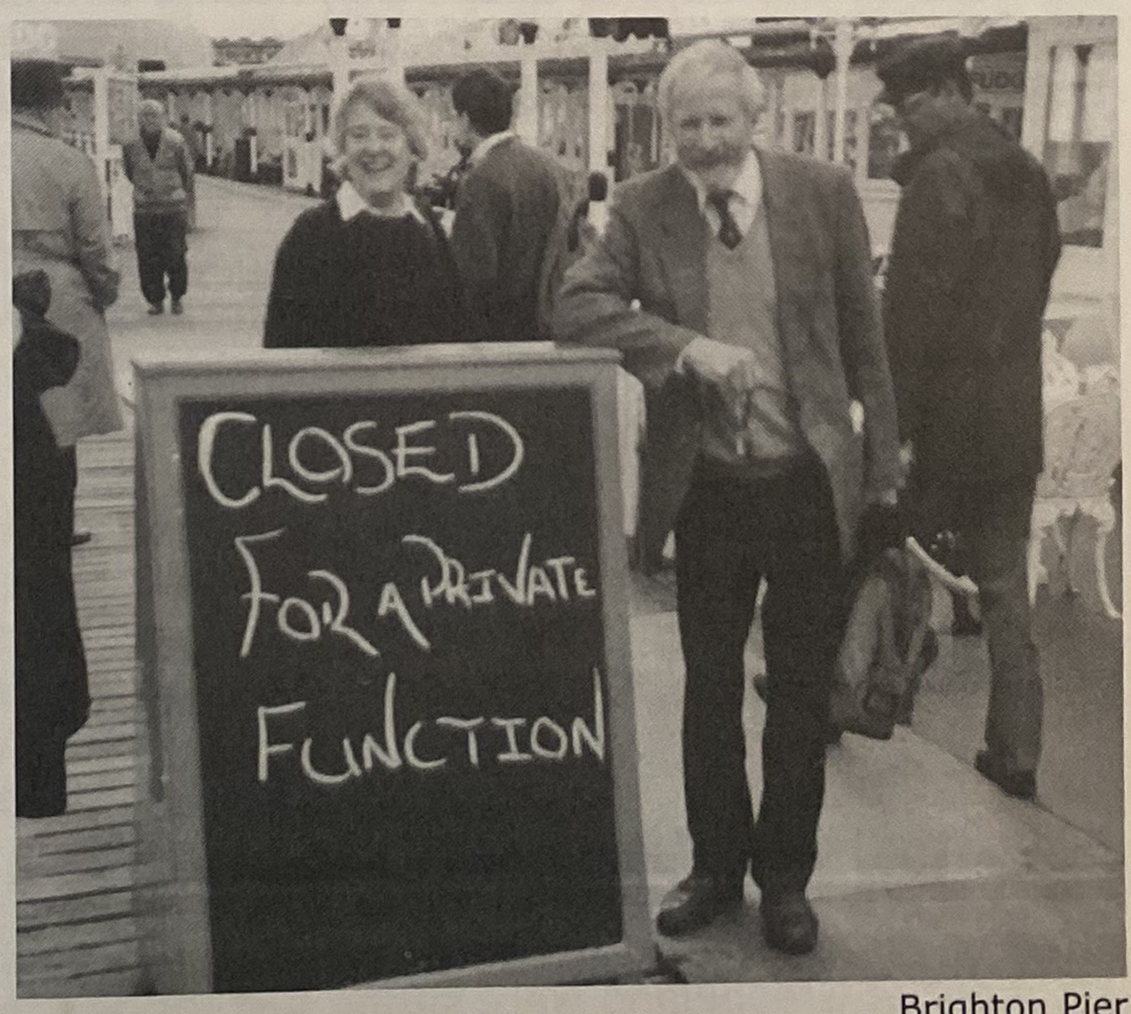
This is BR all over. All in all, there was too much interfacing for the whole thing to be coincidental. By courtesy of the British Film Institute in London I was able to watch the picture concerned in a private viewing. It is a movie in which the Old Testament is explained to the black pupils of a Sunday school by a black minister. These explanations are alternated with simplified performances by black actors of biblical episodes as seen through the eyes of a black narrator. In the film the conception of a belief is projected on a whole community, in which the presence of God is continuously felt or experienced, and in which Good and Evil practically go hand in hand. The introductory text to the picture reads as follows:

'God appears in many forms to those who believe in Him. The thousands of negroes in the deep South visualise God in Heaven in terms of people and things they know in their own everyday lives. *Green Pastures* is an attempt to portray that humble heaven's conception'

This may have influenced Graham Greene who was preoccupied with BR and at a crossroads with regard to its further development. The acceptance of religion as a part of daily life in the film may have helped remove his writer's block. Another indication of his preoccupation is the fact that he renders the title of the film as *The Green Pastures*, erroneously adding the article. And, who knows, maybe he was also unconsciously attracted by the pun in the title, for according to Cedric Watts in his lecture at the 1999 Graham Greene Festival in Berkhamsted, the author enjoyed any play on his name.

Rudolf E. van Dalm

The 1947 film of *Brighton Rock* has recently been re-issued in Brighton and was give national coverage. It was reviewed in *The Guardian* (17.5.2002) by the eminent film historian, David Thomson, who was particularly puzzled by Greene's softening of the novel's ending. He linked that decision to Greene's attempt (overruled by Carol Reed) to contrive a happy ending for *The Third Man*.



Brighton Pier

©CANAL+Image UK Ltd



Chez Félix in Antibes. Photo by Courtesy of Sean Blakemore

Antibes

John and Donna Osthaus, whom some of you will remember from last year's Festival, went to Antibes and have let us have the following report.

This spring we went to the south of France, planning to see the location of Greene's flat in Antibes, *La Résidence des Fleurs*, and to eat in the restaurant *Chez Félix* where he was known to dine practically every day. We had Greene-like weather throughout the trip: "*Gusts of rain blew along the ramparts*" (the second sentence in Greene's Antibes story "Chagrin in Three Parts") even though the month was April rather than February.

At *La Résidence des Fleurs* (on his side of the building the entrance is called *Cyclamens* on another side the entrance is *Azaléas*) we found a green marble plaque which says boldly, "GRAHAM GREENE VECUT ICI DE 1966 A 1990".

The restaurant *Chez Félix* is a seven-minute walk from the flat toward Antibes' Château Grimaldi (now the Musée Picasso) and the old market area.

We went on two days to *Chez Félix*, hoping to find it open. A hand-written sign on the door said "Réouverture Pâques 2002", but it was already 10 days after Easter. On the first visit, there were three people sitting inside the glass entry-way, although we could see that the green caned restaurant chairs were overturned on the tables. A woman sitting in a wheel chair waved us away when we tried to open the locked door.

Chez Félix is apparently not in the telephone book anymore. On our first visit we had a driver-guide who had failed to find it in the Yellow Pages and resorted to calling Heidi's English Language Bookstore in Antibes to get the location. A colleague of his who did know the restaurant told him, "You don't want to eat there."

On the second visit the same three characters right out of Greeneland were sitting just inside the door. This time the door was not locked so we went in. We asked them if the restaurant were open. The woman in the wheelchair shouted for the *chef*. A man came out of a door at the back of the room smoking a cigarette. When we asked if the restaurant were open, he shook his head.

Chez Félix occupies a premier position just inside the ramparts of the old city. From any of the window tables, or from a sidewalk table, one could enjoy a view of the harbour with the masts of small yachts framed by the rounded arch of the entrance through the ancient wall. All along this inside wall, other restaurants without the view were doing a brisk business (the annual Antiques Fair was in progress).

We did, in fact, get our lunch that day on the terrace of the restaurant next door (where we had an unobstructed view of *Chez Félix*).

Donna and John Osthaus

The Greenes and Berkhamsted Town Hall

The Secretary, Ken Sherwood, has considerable knowledge of the history of Berkhamsted Town Hall, having served on the Town Hall Trust for a number of years, including a spell as its Chairman. He has contributed the following article.

Like most Berkhamsted residents, the Greenes were familiar with the Town Hall, but possibly only with its façade. Graham mentions it briefly in *A Sort of Life* and again in his short story *The Innocent*, but he may never have gone inside the building until the 1980s.

When Graham and his brother Hugh came to speak to Berkhamsted Citizens Association in 1974 the possible demolition of the Town Hall may have cropped up in conversation. Soon afterwards the Town Hall Rescue and Action Group was

formed. Amongst other things the group apparently decided to make contact with influential Berkhamstedians like Graham and Hugh. As a result, on 16 October 1975 a letter appeared in *The Times*, written from Earl's Hall, Hugh's home in Suffolk.

'Sir, As present and former citizens of the Chiltern town of Berkhamsted, we wish to draw attention to yet one more threat to its amenities and appearance, which is sadly typical of what is happening throughout the country.
Berkhamsted has lost many good buildings in the last few years. The stretch of the High Street designated as a conservation area has, ironically enough, suffered most. The Market House and Town Hall, a listed building, was erected in 1859 by public subscription as a centre for community activities and it is one of the last remaining buildings of character in the High Street.

Now it too is threatened. The Parish Council, who are its trustees, are seeking permission to demolish it. Against that a group of subscribers of the Town Hall Trust have put forward a considered plan for its rehabilitation and use by the community.

We believe that today both economic logic and concern for architectural heritage point in the direction of retaining existing buildings and adapting them to modern use. We hope that this letter may help to save one such building.'

The letter goes on to refer to other buildings designed by the same architect, Edward Buckton Lamb. The letter was signed by Hugh and Graham Greene and also by Antony Hopkins, Richard Mabey and Peter Quennell. All, apart from Peter Quennell, subsequently accepted invitations to become patrons of the Town Hall Trust. A facsimile of the letter is now displayed in the Town Hall.

On 6 July 1976 Hugh wrote a further letter, this time on behalf of Graham and himself. The letter was addressed to the Council:

'Now that there is a new Council in Berkhamsted, I should like, as one who spent his childhood and schooldays there and is still quite a frequent visitor, to appeal to the Council, particularly to its new members, to think again about the future of the Town Hall.

In these days too much of our past heritage is destroyed unnecessarily. It would do the Council much credit if they took the lead in a new direction. No doubt some annoyance has been caused to those with closed minds by the persistence with which many people have fought for the preservation of the Town Hall. There has been nothing perverse about this. It is only necessary to look at old photographs and prints to see how much damage has been done to the character of Berkhamsted High Street in quite recent years.

Surely it is time to call a halt to this before Berkhamsted becomes another sprawling piece of suburbia with a faceless High Street. There can be enlightened self-interest in this. Many people must come, or come back, to Berkhamsted and spend money there because of its still existing attractions.'

After a brief paragraph about the architect, the letter concludes:
'One asks in some bewilderment why an important listed building, still potentially usable with thousands of pounds worth of basically sound structure should be sacrificed in the way that has been contemplated. One hopes that some Councillors will seek an answer to this question.'

It is a matter of conjecture how far Graham influenced the style and content of these two letters.

There is no mention in the Council papers of the letter to *The Times*. The Council's reaction to the second letter is expressed in the Council Minutes: 'Whilst the Trustees felt in sympathy with Sir Hugh's feelings in the matter of preserving the Town Hall, it had nevertheless to be appreciated that the problem was a fundamental one of finance.'

In 1979 responsibility passed from the Town Council to a small group of interim trustees. In 1981 a new Trust was formed which commenced the renovation of the building. In November 1983, shortly after the opening of a shopping arcade and the Sessions Hall, Hugh and Graham Greene visited the re-opened premises, accompanied by their sister Elisabeth who was Graham's secretary. In October 1986 Graham and Elisabeth made a further visit. On that occasion Graham, learning of the Trust's financial difficulties, donated a copy of a private printing of one of his works; this was later sold at auction for the benefit of the Trust.

It is perhaps fitting that the Town Hall, now fully restored, is one of the venues used for the annual Graham Greene Festival.



Ken Sherwood

Berkhamsted Town Hall

MISCELLANY

Quiz Answers

The winner is Rudolf van Dalm. The number of answers submitted was disappointing. Please tell us why you did or did not enter; and let us have suggestions for what you would like.

The Answers

1. 'She might have been waiting for her lover.'
2. Anthony and Kate Farrant
3. Swedish
4. Journalism
5. Harrow
6. Lucia/Loo Davidge
7. Michael Hordern
8. Five
9. René and Phuong
10. Fowler
11. Pyle
12. Phuong
13. Opium
14. Place Garnier
15. Audie Murphy
16. March 1952 June 1955
17. 1978
18. 'My sister Elisabeth Dennys'
19. The germ of corruption
20. 7.12
21. Sarah
22. Davis
23. Uncle Remus
24. Moscow
25. Otto Preminger

Extras

A. Another Mexico

B. Charlie Chaplin (published 27 September 1952)

C. Tom Laughton

D. The Power and the Glory (Part One, Chapter One)

E. The Confidential Agent

CORRESPONDENCE

Please use these columns to express views, discuss themes, comment on the news and views of others, or simply to tell us you are there.

We are pleased to bring extracts of a letter from a well-known Friend of the Trust

I have just read *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene*, a collection of analytical essays. Although the language is sometimes difficult to follow, the essays shed light on various facets of Greene's work, and make it clear that his work shows great profundity. Anyone who can inspire a work on this formidable level is simply unique. It will hardly be possible to publish a more sincere tribute to Berkhamsted's most celebrated son.

Rudolf E. van Dalm

IN THE PRESS

The Editor cannot keep up with the entire International Press, so please help by sending any press cuttings you would like to see reported. An English précis in the case of the more exotic languages would be appreciated

An item that has occupied column inches is the vexed question of access to Graham Greene's papers held at Georgetown. Norman Sherry had been appointed official biographer, and was granted sole right of access; what no-one could have foreseen was that Sherry would take so very long to complete the biography. Biographers of other notables, correspondents of Graham Greene, want to research the papers for information about e.g. Edith Sitwell and Evelyn Waugh, but are prevented by the terms of Greene's express wishes. The latest news from Norman Sherry is that he has written 1500 pages of volume III and hopes to finish within a year or so. Information from *Washington Post* and *New York Times*.

The Independent carried an article on the same subject. It reported that the bitter literary argument may come down to a single comma.

Graham Greene's final statement on the subject was in writing and read 'I Graham Greene grant permission to Norman Sherry, my authorised biographer, excluding any other to quote from my copyright material published or unpublished'. Before signing this statement Greene inserted a comma between the words 'other' and 'to'. It could be argued, and no doubt has been, that this insertion changed the meaning to suggest that while Norman Sherry was the sole authorised biographer, the matter of whether other writers could quote from the papers was left open.

It is said that the family want the 'stranglehold lifted' and even the usually reticent Francis Greene has expressed as his opinion that his father's papers should be made available to scholars.

OBITUARY

The death of Yvonne Cloetta was kept quiet for some months, but was eventually mentioned in the major British papers.

The following obituary by Marie-Françoise Allain, Graham Greene's French agent, appeared in *The Independent*, and is reprinted by permission.

YVONNE GUÉVET, born Pontrieux, France 17 January 1923; married Jaques CLOETTA (two daughters); dies Cannes, France 3 November 2001.

'If she didn't exist, I'd put a bullet through my head.' Life and death were as simple as that for Graham Greene, when I last saw him in October 1990, six months before he died. Tired but alert, he was gathering his forces around that 'She', in that intense, pathetic, and surprisingly youthful remark.

'She', of course, was Yvonne Cloetta, 'la petite bretonne', born Yvonne Guévet, Greene's companion for 32 years; actually his profound, essential human tie, I believe. Time and again he told her, 'I love you forever and the longest day'; on the back of a photograph Yvonne showed me in their Swiss flat where Greene shared his last two years with her, he wrote, 'I could not live without you', or much earlier, on another picture, 'For Yvonne, 1959-1978: If I were to live my life again, there is only one thing I would want unchanged: meeting you, knowing you, and loving you.'

Those words of passion may sound strange today, to British ears, on the death of Yvonne Cloetta, 10 years after that of Graham Greene. Suddenly there re-enters the discreet 'French mistress' for whom a great English writer had 'defected' to Antibes, in the mid-1960s, settling close to where she lived with her two young daughters, while her husband, Jacques, worked in Africa. Yet 'she', the 'Happy Healthy Kitten' sometimes debased by critics, might be the key, not only to an exceptional love story, but also to a fuller understanding of Greene's personality.

For Greene had been leaving tangible traces of a not so secret affair, after all. He left many proofs of their mutual attachment: comments in the margins of a sober diary Yvonne kept, personal hand-written *dédicaces* to her in all his books, plus some 280 letters some acquired in 1999 by Georgetown University. Except that all those traces were for Yvonne's eyes only (apart from the much-quoted printed dedication to *Travels with My Aunt*, 1969, where the mischievous 'H.H.K.' appears). And Yvonne's eyes were, in spite of their frankness, most secretive, save when she was looking at Graham, always in sheer adoration. 'My whole life has been a secret,' she once admitted.

Yvonne Cloetta was a major witness to Greene's activities - next to him when he negotiated from Antibes the fate of hostages in South America for instance. She was his sweet 'confidential agent', even, at times not so rare, his travel companion - present when he met Kim Philby again in Moscow, sharing his friends, Max and Joan Reinhardt, the Chaplins, A.S. Frere and his wife Pat, to name a few. She was the helper in the shadows for the supervision of translations of his books into French - having worked on one, I can testify to her accuracy.

But Yvonne, actually shy and totally immersed in the mutual love that filled the world for her, stuck to 'secrets', private or more political ones, almost to her very end. Almost... No doubt she carried some away, just as Greene must have done. Because her first concern was not to betray the faith he had put in her, not to betray the secretive man with whom she had been sharing the shadows and the bliss. She was not interested in her own life, or what posterity made of it; indeed her death was not made public for four months.

She remained silent for years; expressing herself on rare occasions - a BBC tribute to Greene, a brief but well-written introduction to Greene's dream diary (*World of My Own, 1992*), a biting public letter to a woman writer who, according to her, had produced a biased portrait of Greene.

Because she had great sex appeal, some critics tried to suggest that this was the reason for Greene's involvement, or to posthumously 'punish' Greene. Hadn't both lovers infringed social mores? Yvonne was born in Pontrieux on the Côtes d'Armor, into a devoutly Catholic family, and educated at the lycée in Quimper. She was married (to a businessman, she had been his secretary), and 19 years younger than Greene, also married, when they met in Douala, in the Cameroons, in early March 1959. Afterwards, neither of them ever divorced: weren't they a little too happy in their discreet intimacy?

Well, those who try to discredit her will have to eat their words. Her intelligence and perceptiveness were obvious, as when she narrated (even though sparingly) her life with Greene to the friends she trusted. Not only did Yvonne Cloetta love Greene, but she understood him. And became a vital element for him.

Yvonne had been tempted to keep to herself the images of a loving Greene, now grown stable, and content with knowing that he would be 'the best and the last'. But grief was so tenacious, passion so vivid, the need to speak about him so pressing, that she had to let go. Which she finally did. With all her scruples. For she kept in mind Greene's warning: 'Poor you, I'm afraid the day will come when you have to face some biographers. In that case either you refuse to talk altogether... But if you do, do tell the truth, not in the middle'.

Although what is meant by 'middle' is difficult to appreciate, Yvonne Cloetta didn't dodge her responsibilities. We had been working on a modest book together. We were completing the last chapter. She was already fairly ill when, somehow, she unconsciously must have decided that time was up. That Graham, over there, had been waiting for too long.

Marie-Françoise Allain

THE TRUST

There are still occasional papers available; contact the Secretary if there are gaps in your collection.

Please note however that as the demand was rather modest and the cost not necessarily so, we shall no longer have videos of the Festival made and edited for sale.

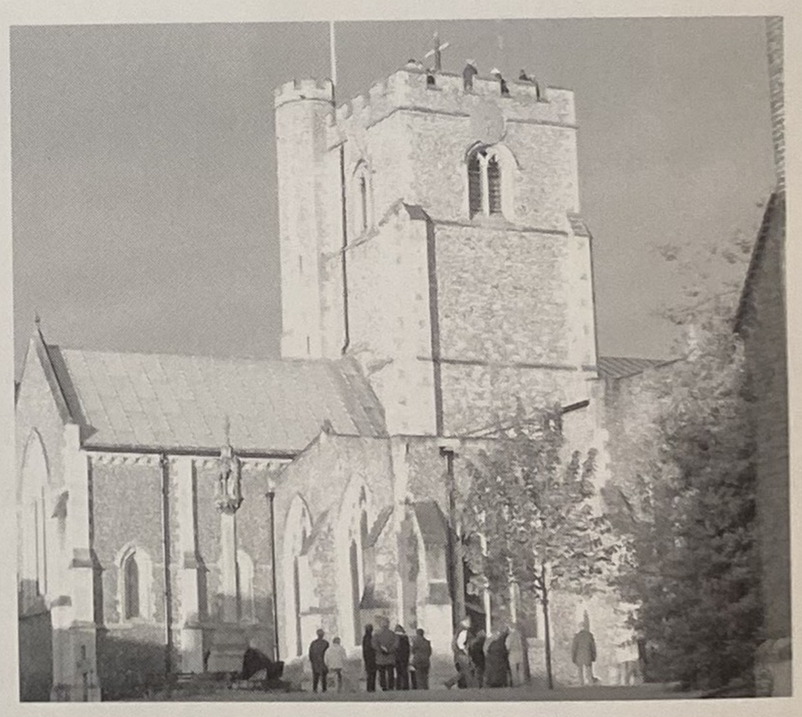
WEB SITE

Do not forget to visit the Trust web site on

www.grahamgreenebt.org

<http://www.grahamgreenebt.org/>

At present there is a set of photographs on the site. They have been taken by Peter Such, a Friend of the Trust to whom thanks are due from us all for his kind help with the website. The photographs show primarily the canal and illustrate just what a lovely town Berkhamsted is. Do look at them.



May Day Madrigals



The Singers

Photo courtesy of David Guest *Berkhamsted Living*

The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust is a member of the Berkhamsted Arts Trust which is financially supported by Dacorum Borough Council
We are very grateful to Jenny Thomas for permission to use her original drawings
Literary Editor: Neil Sinyard
Correspondence to Yan Christensen, 9 Briar Way, Berkhamsted HP4 2JJ, England
Trust Office: Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, Rhenigidale, Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted, HP4 2PP
Produced by Daryl Latham at D&A Design 01442 878006 and printed by Strongs Printing Services 01442 878592