A Sort of NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial

Greene and Mexico
by Norman Sherry

The Quiz

Centenary Plan

Miscellany

Correspondence

In the Press
Reports and cuttings

The Trust
Publications

Crossword
The Answers

Dates for your Diary

6th Festival
Thursday 2 October - Sunday 5 October 2003

Spring Festival
Weekend of 24 - 25 April 2004

7th Festival - Centenary
Thursday 30 September - Sunday 3 October 2004

Web site
Do not forget to visit the web site of the Trust which is on

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

Editorial

Time for the spring issue, which celebrates the best early spring I can remember. We have had much sunshine and little rain, although predictably it came to dampen the traditional singing from the top of St Peter's Church tower on the first day of May. The bluebells are now out to make this part of the country even more beautiful.



The Trust plans for future celebrations are also thriving. At a recent meeting of the trustees a number of projects were discussed, some of which are mentioned inside and some of which are still too tenuous to publicise. But you should know that the trustees are constantly thinking of ways of bringing the Trust and our favourite author to the attention of a wider public. If you have ideas that you think might be useful to the Trust or interesting for all of us, why not write them down and send them in. Feedback is very important, not only to a publication such as this, but also to those who give freely of their time and talents to ensure the smooth running of the Trust.

Yan Christensen

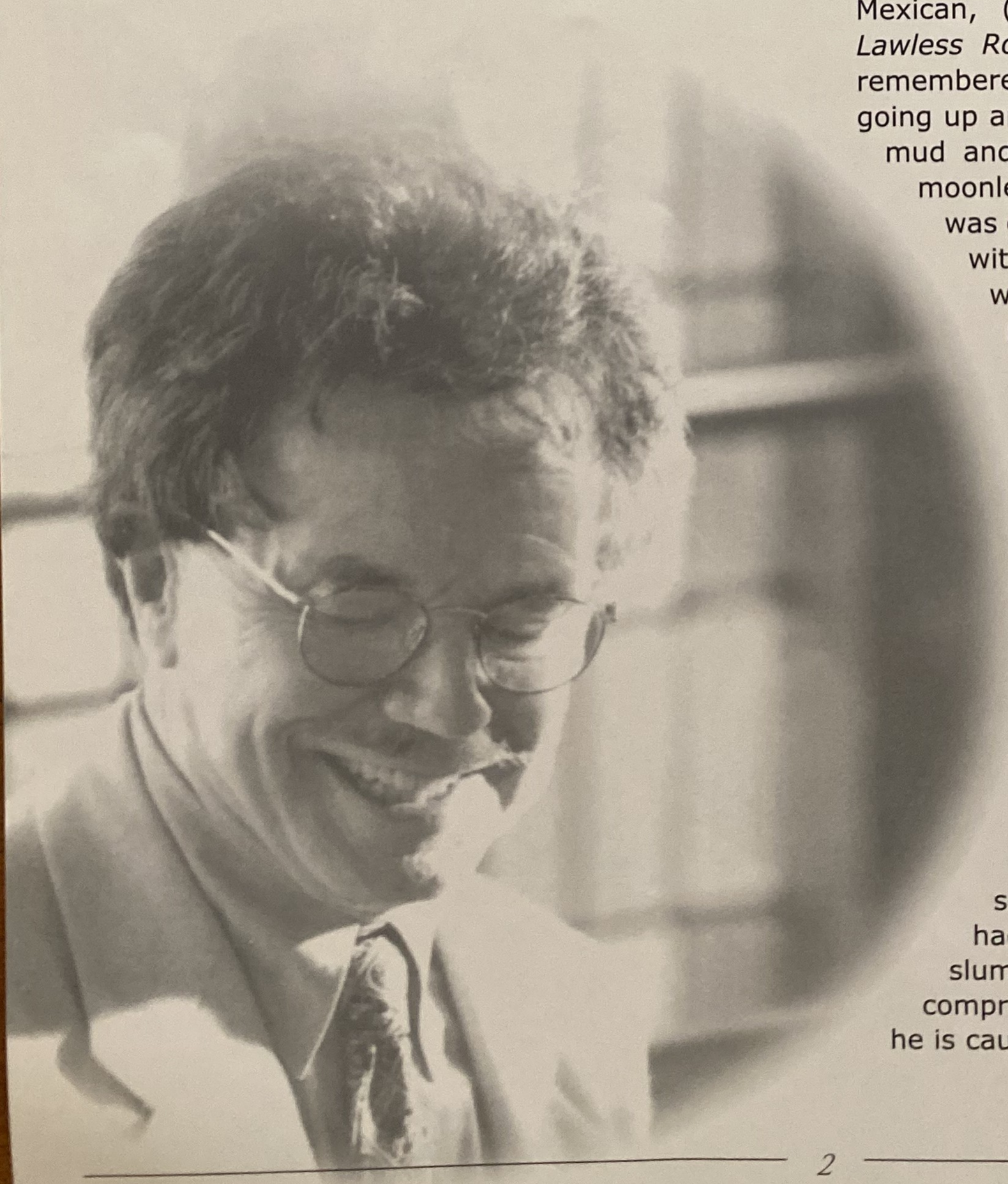
No responsibility will be accepted for any errors or omissions, or comments made by writers or interviewees. Views expressed are not necessarily the views of The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

GREENE AND MEXICO

We have previously brought sections of a piece Greene's biographer, Norman Sherry, kindly made available to the Newsletter. We now bring you another instalment discussing Greene's visit to Mexico .

Greene's life of adventure started early. Before the War he visited in particular Liberia, a journey which resulted in one of the best travel books of the century - *Journey Without Maps*. But he went there because the League of Nations heard of gross Liberian atrocities; of children being skewered on bayonets, of their mothers locked in huts, the door secured and the huts set on fire. Greene set off to investigate. We hear today much of investigative reporters - Greene early on became an investigative novelist - and this he continued to be, not only a trip from London to Brighton, (an hour's train ride), but much wider afield.

Mexico, but especially in the states of Tabasco and Chiapas, was notorious for having promulgated the most savage attacks on God in the twentieth century. The terrible persecution of the Catholic Church involved the desecration and destruction of churches and cathedrals. It was the fiercest and the most successful persecution of the Roman Catholic religion since the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Decrees were passed insisting that priests should marry and if they did not, or if they practised their faith, they were hunted down and shot. In my first volume of the life of Greene, there is a photograph of a martyred priest, first shot and then hanged, his feet just off the ground, facing his church - a sheet of paper nailed to his leg, stating his crime - that of being a priest.



Livestock was exhibited in the cathedral - a bull would be named God, a donkey Christ, a pig the Pope, and the Virgin of Guadalupe represented by a cow. Crosses were torn down from graveyards and *The New York Times* reported on 3 June 1934: 'Mexican Governor Bans Gravestones...' In future, graves were to be plain earth mounds without crosses to mark them and no names were to appear over the graves. They were to be marked by numbers. This persecution drew the convert Greene to Mexico.

Greene became a convert because of his obsessive love for his future wife. But it was twelve years later, and in Mexico, before his conversion really took. He was very intense during his trip to Mexico and he developed a hatred for Mexico and things Mexican, (and this shows in his travel book *Lawless Roads*) but when he began writing he remembered, after a day in the saddle on a mule going up and up a mountainside, stopping at four mud and wattle huts, black and silent in the moonless dark. The old man tending them was on the edge of starvation, living in a hut with rats, yet he welcomed the strangers without a word about payment. 'I felt myself back,' writes Greene in his diary, 'with the population of heaven.' And Greene remembered the simple peasants coming to church after labouring in the fields, a peon in church kneeling with his arms outstretched in the attitude of the cross for hours on end; a peasant woman dragging herself up the aisle on her knees - it was like the Agony itself. In the dust and the dirt of Mexico, Greene became an ardent Catholic.

And it was there that Greene found his whisky priest and the mountainous setting for his priest, the only one who had refused to marry, who, living in the slums, and the countryside, refused to compromise with the atheist authorities, and he is caught being betrayed by the Judas figure.

Again the powerful sense of betrayal which obsessed Greene. The priest in the novel is weak, he's a near alcoholic, has had an illegitimate child, and yet alone has shown the courage to remain a priest.

When I followed in Greene's footsteps I was fascinated to discover the origins of the Catholic priest Greene relied on to create the greatest figure in modern literature. The renegade priest showed immense courage. Greene heard of his origin in stories about him, stories which survived his death.

That wonderful scene where Greene speaks of the priest climbing the mountain followed by an Indian woman with a dead child on her back. They travel up the mountain side and suddenly at the sunset of the second day come out on a wide plateau covered with short grass and a grove of odd crosses, some as high as twenty feet, like trees left to seed. They were the first Christian symbols the priest had seen for five years. It was the work of Indians. Greene's whisky priest felt as if he had taken a short cut to 'the dark and magical heart of faith'. Greene adds the powerful dramatic phrase 'to the night when the graves opened and the dead walked.'

In 1978 I tracked over the Greene ground and found what Greene describes in *The Power and the Glory*. It did literally seem to be the top of the world nine thousand feet up, and there in front of one were the tall black crosses that Greene described, and as night began to fall they stood tall against the black night. Its effect on Greene was to make him consider that Christians were too apt to minimise the magic element in Christianity, the man raised from the dead, the devils cast out, the water turned into wine, the spittle mixed with clay to heal the blind man. It was the unexpected vision of the place that strikes you. It was the sacred burial ground of the Chamula Indians. During my visit three Indians had been shot by the police and the area seemed thick with danger. I was warned not to visit the area or take photographs of the mighty crosses, but research overcomes fear.

Fifty years after his death, the disappearance of the whisky priest (renowned for his essential goodness) troubled people in the area. The whisky priest in *The Power and the Glory* is shot: 'A small man came out of a side door...held up by two policemen...his legs were not fully under his control...They paddled him across to the opposite wall; an officer tied a handkerchief round his eyes...the rifles went up, and the little man suddenly made jerky movement with his arms. He was trying to say something...nothing came out except a word that sounded like 'Excuse.' ...Then there was a single shot ...and the little man was a routine heap beside the wall.'

In real life, the whisky priest was a Father Macario. The Catholic authorities in Georgetown, Washington D.C., tried to keep abreast with knowledge of this hunted priest, who continued working among the people, refusing the route of safety by marrying. In life as opposed to fiction, the priest was known to have performed a great number of heroic acts during his ministry but the catholic authorities did not know whether (during the time Greene was visiting Mexico) he was still alive or, if dead, how his life ended.

However, during my journey to Tabasco and Chiapas, forty years after Greene's own stupendous trek mostly on mule, I made a discovery of a diary written by an uneducated but devout Indian, Gabriel. Gabriel was killed because he wouldn't give up his faith. In his diary is the only known account of the whisky priest. It tells us that the priest's life was sometimes saved by sheer good fortune, not by superior cunning. Father Macario was an alcoholic ('He was a real drunk. He drank the best and the cheapest'). Also that he lived on the run doing God's work near the border of Tabasco so that he could slip over into the state of Chiapas. In Gabriel's diary the short reference is 'Father Macario Fernandez Aguado remained one jump ahead for fear of punishment, always in the swamps or in the jungle helping within its desolate loneliness those Catholics who still had the courage to confess their faith'. We are then told that he was caught in Chiapas and killed. We don't know exactly how but it was the habit to string up the priests so that the local people would be made desperately afraid. But the way most likely in Macario's case (since an exhibition had to be made of the only priest who had for ten years outwitted the police) was that he would be dispatched by machete and then fed to pigs so that no trace of the martyred priest would remain, and, more importantly, no grave could exist to be made into a shrine, and therefore a centre for future protest.

The Judas figure prowls sinister in *The Power and the Glory*. Greene met the mestizo in Yajalon in 1938. He worked at that time in the Presidencia as a clerk-typist but that lasted only six months. He fell in love and failing to win his lady he began mentally to deteriorate, took to getting up at five in the morning, knocking on the doors to collect garbage and he stopped washing. Greene took an

instantaneous dislike to him and he became the betrayer figure in the novel, with his characteristic neighing laugh, his two yellow fangs, and his eternal scratching under his arm-pits. In 1978, through the assistance of Father Loren, I met the mestizo, the model for the Judas figure, called Don Pelito. I entered the little white mountain church where I was to interview Pelito. A rough sign asserted that 'the pay for a Christian was poor, but the rewards endless' and sitting alone was a small dirty figure. He was only 4ft 6in.tall. His hair was dirty; everything about him was dirty; there was soft grit on his hand which I felt as I shook it. (I realised afterwards that it was excrement.)

His trouser legs were rolled up, his pockets capacious, his black coat stretched down to his knees. He had a thin black moustache. As I approached he stood up, took off his hat and



bowed - no doubt recognising a gringo with pesos to spare. He was seventy-six, his face deeply lined yet he looked surprisingly young - perhaps his layer of grime protected him. His ears stood out and he was toothless - the yellow fangs completely gone. I asked him if he was well and he replied that he was troubled because his feet at night were being bitten by rats. Everyone at the mission in Yajalon had read *The Power and the Glory* in translation without recognising the original of the Judas figure walking in their streets, but then how could they have connected this innocuous, put-down and isolated little man with the mestizo Graham Greene had disliked yet elevated into a prime mover in his novel?

As I interviewed him, I made a sketch with a red pen and showed it to Greene on my return. We met at the Ritz in London: Greene was amazed and excited: 'Forty years ago I saw him and I didn't like him. That's how I remember him. You just must put it into your biography.' I did.

Though Greene hated Mexico, on returning home he began to compare the Catholic religious observances in England with those in Mexico: 'Mass in Chelsea seemed curiously fictitious; no peon knelt with his arms out in the attitude of the cross, no woman dragged herself up the aisle on her knees. It would have seemed shocking, like the Agony itself. We do not mortify ourselves.'

Norman Sherry

PREVIEW

We are happy to announce the publication this autumn of Neil Sinyard's book *Graham Greene: A Literary Life.* The publishers are PalgraveMacMillan. Unfortunately copies will not be available until after the Festival, but we hope to have more detailed information by then.

Jonathan Cape, the publishers, have recently announced that the third and final volume of Norman Sherry's biography *The Life of Graham Greene* will be published on the 99th anniversary of his birth, 2 October 2003, which this year is the first day of the annual Festival. Those of you who heard Norman Sherry at the 2000 Festival may recall that he related Greene's prediction that he would not finish the biography. Fortunately Graham Greene was a better author than fortune-teller, and we hope to have Norman Sherry with us at the Festival, signing copies of the final volume for those who wish to purchase one.

QUIZ 2003

Here is the annual quiz, once again kindly provided by Mike Hill. Do make the attempt even if you are less than absolutely expert. As usual there will be a first prize drawn from the correct answers; this time there is also a consolation prize - not necessarily for the worst answer, but certainly for one less than perfect. First prize is a season ticket to the next Festival; consolation prize is a small book token. Please send answers by 15 July 2003 to :

Mike Hill, The Fairways, Keighley Road,
Denholme, Bradford, BD13 4JT

THE QUESTIONS

1 Which late Greene novel was set in Berkhamsted and Panama?

2 Who published *Travels Without My Aunt in 2000*, and appeared at the Graham Greene Festival in Berkhamsted in 2001?

3 At which Oxford college was Greene an undergraduate?

4 Which provincial newspaper did Greene join in 1925?

5 Of which weekly magazine was Greene the literary editor in 1937?

6 Which prize was Greene awarded in Hamburg in 1969?

7 In which country is Vevey, where Greene died in 1991?

8 In which novel does Doctor Eduardo Plarr appear?

9 For which newspaper does Hale work in *Brighton Rock*?

10 In which novel do Querry, Dr Colin and the Ryckers appear?

11 In *The End of the Affair*, what is the first name of the son of Parkis, the private detective?

12 Which five places in Europe give their names to the five parts of *Stamboul Train*?

13 In which novel is the central character trying to secure a supply of coal?

14 Which novel, first published in 1940, is set in Mexico?

15 What is the name of Monsignor Quixote's car?

16 In which novel does the rich lawyer Louis Chavel appear?

17 Which novel is dedicated 'To V.G., L.C.G. and F.C.G.'?

18 Which novel begins: 'Francis Chase let the reins fall and allowed his horse to feel its way towards the camp.'?

19 Which novel ends: 'Poor all of us, when you come to think of it.'?

20 Which novel ends: 'It was for these moments of unsought revelation that the Assistant Commissioner lived.'?

21 Which novel, in Italian translation, has this as its epigraph: 'E luomo triste è il bersaglio di tutte le sue burle.'?

22 Which novel, published in 1966, led to Greene being denounced as 'a liar, a crétin, a stool-pigeon ... a spy ... a drug-addict ... a torturer.'?

23 The 1940 Hollywood film of *A Gun for Sale* had the same title as the American edition of the novel. What was the title?

24 Who plays Fowler in the 2002 film version of *The Quiet American*?

25 Who directed the films *The Fallen Idol, The Third Man and Our Man in Havana?*

26 Which character did Maggie Smith play in the 1972 film of a Greene novel?

27 Who played Dr Fischer in the 1984 made-for-television version of *Dr Fischer of Geneva*?

28 What was the original title for the story *The Fallen Idol* when it was first published in 1936?

29 Which short story is set on the Rio Grande border crossing between Texas and Mexico?

30 In which short story does Jerome hear that his father had died after a pig fell on him?

31 What is the title of Greene's second fragment of autobiography, published in 1980?

32 Which Greene playlet, first performed in Leicester in 1980, has two characters, 'Director' and 'Actor'?

33 What is the title of the two African journals Greene published in one volume in 1961?

34 Which two writers are the subjects of Greene's 1948 essay, *Two Friends?*

35 Who selected and wrote an introduction to *Yours etc.*, a collection of Greene's letters to the press?

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

I should like to say how much I enjoy the magazine. It is always very interesting. What a shame Michael Caine didn't win an Oscar for *The Quiet American*. Let's hope its not too long before another of Graham's stories is turned into film. There is still a lot of potential.

Do you know if many of his manuscripts are left in this country? I seem to have heard that much has gone to the USA. You can't help wondering how he would have felt about that.

Chris Adye

As far as we are aware there are no book manuscripts in this country, although there is quite a lot of written material, e.g. letters exchanged with the artist Paul Hogarth in the Hogarth Archive in Manchester. ed.

Graham Greene Centenary 2004

Next year is the centenary of Graham Greene's birth, and there will be a lot of events in that connection. Our Secretary, Ken Sherwood, has been extremely busy encouraging and co-ordinating with considerable success so far. Our own Festival will of course be very special, and arrangements are being made for an exhibition from Vienna to come to Berkhamsted. It will feature stills and other material connected with the film *The Third Man.*

Arrangements are also going ahead for events and exhibitions in other places including Nottingham, where Greene spent some time when he was first working as a journalist.

In recent months the Berkhamsted Choral Society has been investigating whether there is any choral music linked with Greene but found almost nothing of relevance. They did find a tape and libretto of Andrew Gant's operetta for five unaccompanied voices entitled *May We Borrow Your Husband?*, which is now in the Trust archive. The work was, however, found unsuitable for the intended performance.

CENTENARY SPRING FESTIVAL 24-25 APRIL 2004

The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS) has been invited to hold its AGM in Berkhamsted next year. During the weekend there will be talks and films introducing Graham Greene and his work to members of other literary societies.

The Berkhamsted Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, BAODS Theatre Company, is marking the centenary by producing *The Potting Shed* in April 2004 and those attending the Spring Festival will be able to attend a performance.

Please note that anyone can attend this event ALS membership is not necessary.

The Centenary Festival in 2004 will start on Thursday 30 September with a reception and lunch at Rules in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, London, where Graham Greene traditionally went for lunch on his birthday. The reception, limited to 50 people for reasons of space, will be held in the Graham Greene Room and will be hosted by American Friends Donna and John Osthaus. Those attending will have to pay for lunch about £30 per person. We expect far more people will want to go than can be accommodated so the Trust will have to find ways of allocating tickets, possibly even by drawing lots. **Please don't apply yet!!**

MISCELLANY

GREENE AND SPIES

There is an interesting footnote to Nigel West's talk at last year's Festival in his book *A Matter of Trust.* Benjamin Greene, a first cousin of Graham Greene, was arrested and imprisoned in 1940 as a suspected Nazi sympathizer. This was on information provided by a MI5 stool pigeon, a German refugee called Harald Kurtz. As an informer, Kurtz had had considerable success (measured in terms of the number of people he informed against) but was clearly with hindsight a mercenary and sponger. Benjamin Greene was a pacifist and a Quaker, certainly not a fascist and certainly not disloyal.

Thanks to the efforts of Benjamins brother, Edward, and of their solicitor, Benjamin was eventually released and Kurtz discredited. The episode considerably embarrassed the head of MI5, Max Knight, and may well have increased Graham Greene's cynicism about the world of espionage. It is also interesting that 'Kurtz' was the name Graham Greene gave to a villainous character in *The Third Man.*

Locally Benjamin Greene had met with some hostility; he was a supporter of a group called the British Council for Christian Settlement in Europe, an office of which was situated in Berkhamsted High Street. In an article that appeared in the Berkhamsted Gazette in October 1939, the writer deplored the presence of such a pacifist organisation 'in our midst'. The journalist interviewed Benjamin Greene who confirmed that the bronze eagle on his property was a reproduction of the American eagle, and not a Nazi symbol; he further confirmed that he was not in sympathy with Hitler.
It is probably difficult now to imagine the attitude during World War II to pacifists - the contrast with recent events is considerable!

EVELYN WAUGH CENTENARY
We remind you of the Evelyn Waugh Centenary on 24 - 27 September 2003 in Oxford. Contact Prof. John H Wilson on (USA) 570-893-2166 for more details.

THE THIRD MAN
We understand that there is now a CD available of Anton Karas' complete score for *The Third Man.*

Report of ALS Meeting

The Alliance of Literary Societies is an organisation to which the Graham Greene Birthplace Trust belongs. A representative usually attends the annual general meeting of the ALS which member societies take it in turn to host; the host also takes the opportunity to organise events connected with their particular author. You will have noted above that next year we shall be the host society, but this year it was the turn of The Dylan Thomas Society in Swansea. It was a successful weekend for all concerned. We enjoyed a very interesting talk about Dylan Thomas and later there was entertainment consisting of a quartet of Welsh voices and readings from the work of Dylan Thomas. Coach outings to Rhosilli and other places associated with Thomas had been organised and were much enjoyed by those who took part.

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 case of the more exotic languages would be appreciated. Please always indicate publication and date.

The Oldie carried a review in its January 2003 issue of an audio book. It was *The Third Man* read by the well-known actor Martin Jarvis. The review is by Jocelyn Rickards, friend and lover of Graham Greene; she outlines the story and says of the audio book merely that it is read with great skill. It is on two cassettes, published by CSA Telltapes and costs £9.99.

Noted elsewhere was a review of *A Pound of Paper* (Doubleday) by John Baxter, biographer of Woody Allen and, more to the point, a very serious book collector. Baxter comments that he was first seduced by the idea of collecting by a rare copy of *The Little Red Bus* by Graham Greene, and his collection now includes a large number of Greene first editions, many of them signed by the author. Baxter moved on to several more authors, but Greene remains an important part of the collection.

Radio 4 has a programme early Sunday morning called *Something Understood*; it combines music and readings on a particular theme. Recently *Ministry of Fear* was quoted to illustrate the horror of bombs falling and the reactions of the survivors. Graham Greene's work is truly timeless and remains relevant.

THE TRUST

The Trust has decided that by way of experiment its next Occasional Paper - *Greene and Hitchcock*, by Mike Hill should be published on our website as well as in printed format. If you would like a printed copy please send £2.50 + postage (28p UK; £1 elsewhere) to Ken Sherwood at the Trust Office.

Publications

The following publications are available from the Trust Secretary:

Occasional Papers @ £2.50 plus postage (UK 28p; Overseas £1).

- Inaugural Lecture - Bill West
- Graham Greene and the Berkhamsted Connection
  John Davison
- The Comic Sense of Graham Greene
  Neil Sinyard
- Darkest Greeneland: Brighton Rock
  Cedric Watts
- The Craft of Graham Greene
  Neil Sinyard
- Graham Greene and Pathos
  Martin Corner
- The Long Wait for Aunt Augusta
  Judith Adamson
- A Burnt-out Case - an Autobiographical Suicide
  Rudolf van Dalm

Videos: 1998 Festival - £8

1999 Festival - £10

CDs: The Voice of Graham Greene £10.

Paul Hogarth at the 1998 Festival £5

Subscriptions: From May 2003 subscription fees will be very slightly increased as follows:

UK £8 for one year, £20 for three
Rest of Europe: £11 p.a. or £27 for three years
Elsewhere: £15 p.a. or £40 for three years.

CROSS WORD

The response was disappointing - where were all you puzzle experts? But it was possible to get it right, and the winner is Mike Hill, who is clearly a real expert as it is Mike who sets the annual quiz. It does seem only fair that he should have won as he obviously has been unable to compete in his own quiz. So congratulations to Mike Hill.

The answers are:

ACROSS

5. Display
6. Miss Hei
8. Rue Catinat
9. Pyle
11. Phuong
12. Continental
15. Fowler
16+10. The Quiet American
18. York
19. Caodaister
21. Vietnam
22. General

DOWN

1. Epic
2. Lactic
3. Lift open
4. New line
7. In one nation
13. Turncoat
14. Go for it
17. Enamel
20. Step



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