A Sort of NEWSLETTER

Summer 2003 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST £1.50 Free to Friends

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

6th Festival
Thursday 2 October – Sunday 5 October 2003

Spring Festival
Weekend of 24-25 April 2004

7th Festival - Centenary
Wednesday 29 September – Sunday 3 October 2004

WEBSITE

Do not forget to visit the website of the Trust which is on

www.grahamgreenebt.org

Editorial

Festival time is drawing near; you will have had the brochure with the very full programme and I hope you are now reading the books recommended. Inside you will find a Preview by David Pearce, the Festival Director, telling you even more about it.

The Festival is of course the highlight of the Trust year. Although the trustees are busy all year, and David Pearce starts preparing at least a year in advance, it is during that one long weekend that we meet the faithful Friends of the Trust, who make the whole thing worthwhile. Each year we look forward to seeing 'old' friends and meeting new ones. And each year we are rewarded by the throngs who come to enjoy the talks and sociability that mean another successful Festival. I do hope you will be there in early October.

For ease of communication a direct e-address has been set up in order that you can send readers' letters or anything else to me. The mailing address is at the bottom of the last page and for e-mail you can now use:

Newslettereditor@grahamgreenebt.org

Your comments and letters are always welcome.

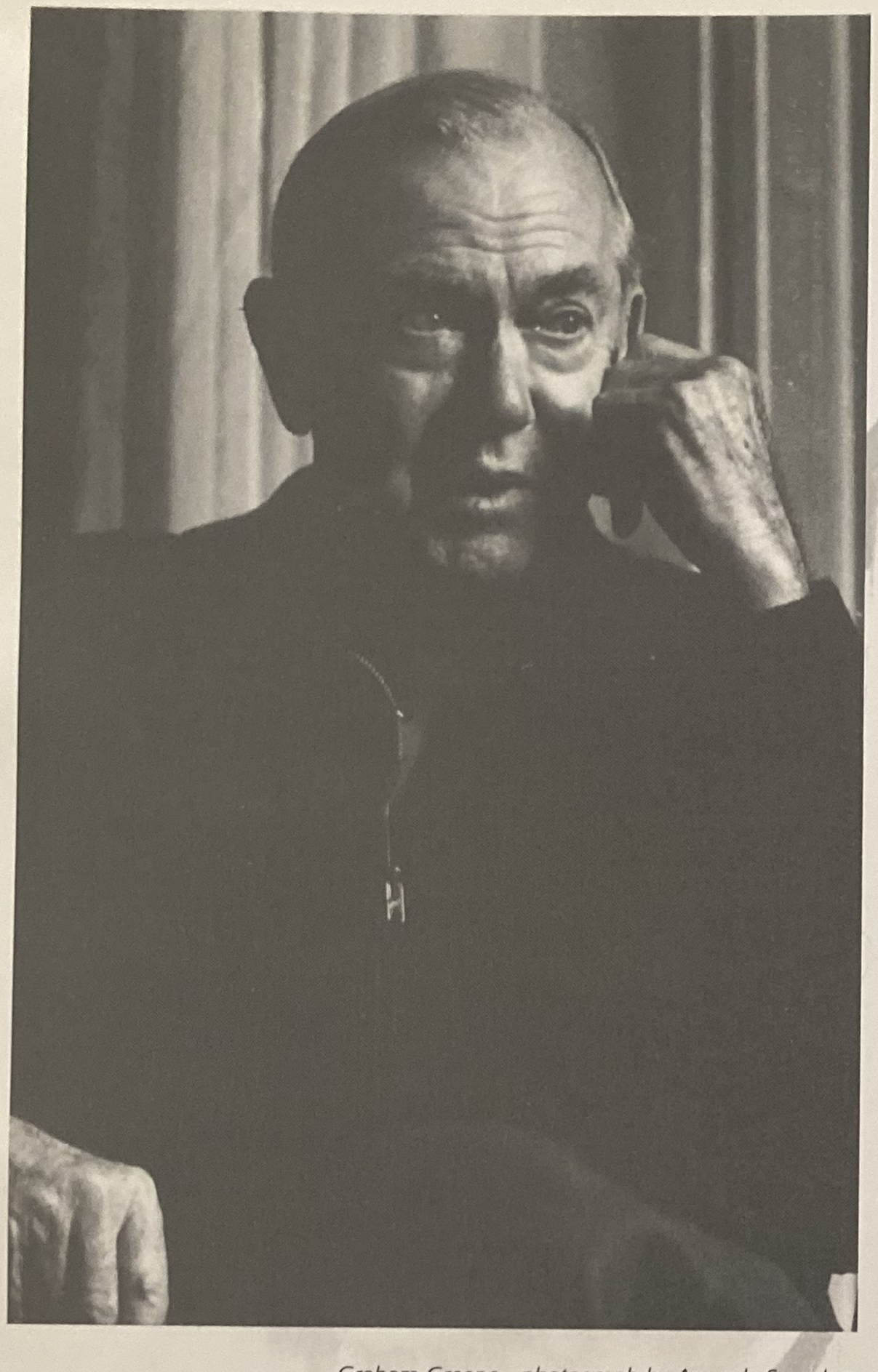
Yan Christensen

It is with great sadness that we record the death aged 99 on the 19 August of Vivien Greene in Oxford.

Our condolences to the family; our thoughts are with them.

The Funeral took place at The Oratory, Oxford on 29 August 2003

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



Graham Greene - photograph by Amanda Saunders

FESTIVAL 2003

You will now have received the Festival brochure for 2003, and I breathe my gratitude to all those who so willingly have accepted invitations to speak. The speakers come for a variety of reasons: perhaps because they are engaged in research on Graham Greene and his circle; perhaps because they knew Graham and are moved to pass on to others something of that enigmatic personality; or perhaps it is because literary enthusiasms are contagious. Experience leads to a book; a book to a film; a film, then, to a wider readership for the book. That is how it is: that is how it should be.

I am sometimes told that Graham would have hated being subjected to a Festival held in his name. That may well be true of one who clearly enjoyed being an anonymous spectator of the world's oddities, but it is also true that an author puts himself in his books. Not so that you can prod with your finger, and say, 'Aha, there he is!' but so that the reader will realise that the actors and the actions matter to the writer's own peace of mind. If that were not the case for Graham then his books would be no more than slight, trivial paperbacks that can be bought on the station platform at Euston and left behind when one gets off the train at Berkhamsted.

So, my answer - if you want one - is that Graham comes at Graham through his own writing; and that we likewise approach him through his books. He would be happy to allow us those insights even if he would wish (*pace* Norman Sherry) to hide from us the whole definitive and ultimate biography.

If anyone should ever wonder upon what basis I try to compose these Festivals, he or she may see that it is the books that are at the centre. I am delighted that speakers should entertain us with stories about Graham, and I have a collection of breakfast-time Festival anecdotes when speakers are less cautious about their reminiscences, but I do not want our meetings to be an airy discussion of what might be called 'The Graham Greene Experience'. I want us to start with the books, for it is the books that are the shared window-seat view on the Greene world. Our speakers and you, the audience, share that window-seat, and all have some comment on the scene. Those who address us may have considered more closely, but we all should have had the books on our knees.

Perhaps the Saturday of the Festival is too heavily weighted by the books that I have felt important. *The Power and the Glory* was my first brush with Greene in 1955. My mind cannot decide the priority between that and *A Burnt-Out Case* - not, of course, that one needs to have a preference. Both are works of serious intensity, and to them is added the film, *The Heart of the Matter*, for the second evening of the Festival.

Monsignor Quixote is an entertainment and we should relax and enjoy that, in company with the film's Director and Producer, and then with an old Trust friend who is one of Quixote's countrymen. They will all make us wish to see the Greene Spanish countryside at first hand. My one disappointment is that I could not persuade the producers of Graham's favourite Rioja to participate in the Festival and to whet our appetites in a different way. My disappointment is so acute that I will not here even divulge the name of the vineyard estate.

I would say to you all: 'Read the books beforehand - or again.' We shall then all have the greater

fun, which is the underlying objective of all my planning.

My second retort to the comment that Graham would not enjoy a Festival is to say that no one secretly minds having his health drunk on a birthday. It is Graham's ninety-ninth birthday, and I hope that you will be there.

David R.A. Pearce
Festival Director



David Pearce speaking at the 2002 Festival

One of the problems at the Festivals is often the matter of sound quality, especially in Deans' Hall. We do realise this, and each year we take steps to improve the audibility and amplification. This year we shall hope to solve the acoustics. Those, however, who experience difficulties with hearing should never be slow to voice them there and then. It is no good simply telling the Director afterwards.

David R.A. Pearce

GREENE AT BALLIOL

You will recall that Patrick Hennessey received an award from the Trust for researching Graham Greene's time at Balliol College, Oxford. He has carried out the assignment in an exemplary fashion, and it is with considerable editorial regret that the result had to be abridged, owing to space restrictions. It is hoped that the whole piece can be made available in some form at a later date.

It struck me, going through my mother's book shelf one evening, that if Balliol had been good enough for the likes of Belloc, Bradley, Huxley, Powell, and countless others then it would be good enough for me and secondly, and most excitingly of all, that when I published my first novel, apart from not having been born in 1904 and my father not being a headmaster, it would begin like all of Greene's, which I thought no bad thing.

That work is still in what I believe optimists call the conceptual stage but I did go up with the charge of researching Greene's time at Balliol and it occurred to me that there were two strands to such an investigation; firstly, to look at what he actually did there, how he spent his three years and what he left behind him - in many ways how Greene affected Oxford – and secondly, how Oxford affected him and his writing. A wonderful starting point for such an investigation was thrust upon me when I was roused to a measure of indignation by Anthony Mockler's statement in *Graham Greene Three Lives*. When Mockler says of Greene, that: 'In his writings Oxford stimulated nothing – not a character, not a story, not even a setting', he is not only factually incorrect but seems to be grossly exaggerating. If one of the very things that sets Greene apart is the unique atmosphere of his novels, Greeneland itself, then the shaping of that landscape must be a stimulus to the work. In Oxford there is far less physical evidence of Greeneland; I am sure, however, that Greeneland lies as much beneath the dreaming spires as it does behind the green baize door, albeit somewhat more subtly. At Balliol, Greene wasn't an outsider at all. His claim in *A Sort of Life* was that Balliol had been chosen because it was not athletic. What more probably had an impact on Greene's choice was the presence of Kenneth Bell, a Berkhamstedian and Governor of the school, as a history tutor. The college, regrettably, does not have a wealth of information on Greene; many of his papers never came into the hands of the library, but what I did find was some correspondence on Greene's entry to college. It was his father who first wrote to Bell about the possibility of Greene trying for a history scholarship and the letter is still there, as is the letter from Greene on St John's writing paper agreeing the dates he will be up for exams. Most amusing of all are the responses to Greene's application. In a letter to a C. Baily dated 16 June 1922 Kenneth Bell writes of Greene's work for the scholarship paper

> "It was highly imaginative stuff, sometimes thin and fantastic but written with real power over words."

Most tellingly of all,

> "His efforts to disguise his ignorance, though not very convincing, were extremely ingenious."

Illustrations by Paul Hogarth

This was the boy of whom two days previously Bell had written, again to Baily:

> "A very clever boy, not very robust in health and rather above himself at present, but with considerable possibilities."

In 1922 Greene was entering a college with two differing, equally deserved reputations: the intellectual powerhouse to which Greene would later allude in his radio play *The Great Jowett*, and also the brash and beery college which so offended the sensibilities of Cyril Connolly who found it had a 'Cambridge' atmosphere. Neither of these reputations presented a problem to Greene. There is no reason why he should have felt alienated either from the hearty social atmosphere of the college or from its academic rigours. Indeed the very things which so depressed Connolly, who came up in the same year, were things which would logically have made Greene feel more at home.

In Trinity term of 1923 Greene finally moved into college and naturally began to make friends. It is interesting to note that throughout the first term Greene stuck closely to Claude Cockburn, his closest friend from Berkhamsted, and that term culminated in the much quoted barrel-organ incident in which they returned to Berkhamsted as tramps, but went unrecognized. As the two gained in confidence they naturally gained in independence. Cockburn would go on to make his mark in the Union while Greene was beginning to make waves in the one aspect of Oxford life in which he would become a key player, new writing. In February 1923 Greene's short story *The Trial of Pan* was published in *The Oxford Outlook*. A glance at the cover of *The Oxford Outlook, No. 22 Vol. V* reveals just what a glittering world Greene was immersed in while he was at Balliol. The undergraduate contributors to this one edition include Christopher Isherwood, Harold Acton, Claude Cockburn, Arthur Rowse and J.T. Macleod as well as H. Graham Greene. *The Trial of Pan* is an interesting short story perhaps because it has a youthful vitality and playful subversiveness which distances itself from Greene's sombre moods. Pan is being judged by God at the end of a hard day's judgement, 'they had had a tiring day, having declared forty-five people innocent and three guilty.' The levity with which the subject is treated is strongly reminiscent of Saki.

Greene's new friend in Trinity term was a Robert Scott, a Highgate man, a sympathetic public schoolboy who shared Greene's penchant for practical jokes. At the end of term in an elaborate conceit Scott allegedly came to Berkhamsted to lecture, disguised as Kipling, while Greene addressed a room full of Highgate boys on his experiences as a Mongolian traveller.

If in any Oxford sphere he can have been said to have made an impression then it was, fittingly, the literary one and it was this world that brought him into contact with the gliterrati of the university, a contact which I suggest would shape his future writing just as much as contact with bullies like Carter at school already had done.

In Hilary term 1925 he was among a select group of poets from Oxford who went up to record for the BBC. Rowse, who also went up, describes the occasion with the only physical description of Greene at Oxford that we have:

> "Extraordinarily youthful appearance with curly flax-gold hair and the odd strangulated voice, speaking from his Adam's-apple as if he had difficulty in producing the voice. Most of all one was struck by those China blue eyes, wide open to the world."

Greene moved out for his final term and worked quite hard for his finals. The second he gained perhaps ought to be judged in the context of his peers who also went on to great things. Quennell and Betjeman never graduated, Waugh, Connolly and Powell took thirds and Harold Acton a fourth. Humphrey Carpenter suggests of 'The Brideshead Generation' that they 'rightly ignored the poor intellectual fare that was on Oxford's official menu, and instead used the place as a testing ground for a new lifestyle in which writers and artists might flourish.' Greene was never quite of this set. He knew them and vice versa, but the worlds rarely collided. The publication of *Babbling April* – his first collection of verse - was not only significant in terms of the work he had written at university but also in terms of the response it solicited, particularly from Howard Acton in *The Cherwell* who dubbed it 'the slender banjo tunes of an adolescent hysteria'.

In his last term Greene is an undergraduate who has travelled widely, enjoyed escapades, if fairly harmless ones, with secret services, has had a considerable impact on the literary scene and had met his future wife. His was by no means a low key, undistinguished university career. He ran the Contemporary Poetry and Drama Society and in Balliol was a member of numerous dining clubs which seem at times to merge into one another.

Ironically the antics of these societies were as much frowned upon for their adolescent nature. Greene was once admonished for schoolboy

behaviour by the Dean, as were the more glamorous and exclusive clubs to which he did not belong. Greene spent a term drunk on beer; Duggan the best part of three years drunk on champagne. Compared to the Railway Club dinners and Hypocrites and Bullingdon parties as later recalled by Waugh, Greene's pranks seem tame indeed.

At school he is neither fully one of the boys nor fully one of the family. At Oxford he is intellectually, artistically and probably in spirit far more one of the aesthetes than the hearty blues-winning college men but we cannot escape Connolly's observation, 'with us, but not of us.'

In a postcard to the Dean a BBC journalist asked in 1994 why Greene is never described as a Balliol man and the answer has to be because, in essence, he wasn't. He enjoyed his time at Oxford and certainly left more of a mark than many will ever do, but he never justified Herbert Asquith's epithet to Balliol men that they exude 'a tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority'. His correspondence with college later in his life reflect his pragmatic approach to the place. He insists he enjoyed his time there; writing to decline an invitation to speak at Catz dinner in 1971 he says: "Alas I am no speaker and so you will never persuade me to give the address on St Catherine's Day, but I very much enjoyed, a few years back, being in the audience."

Patrick Hennessey

GREENE AND WAUGH

1.
Graham Greene as recorded by Evelyn Waugh

A friend in Berkhamsted – not a Greene fan - recently lent me *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*. Waugh and Greene were friends so there are many mentions that may be of interest, among them the following:

The first reference to GG is in November 1937. Waugh records that he had just written his article for *Night and Day* when GG rang to tell him that *Night and Day* was on its last legs.

In May 1944 Waugh attended a dinner for the new Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Griffin, 'to meet the flower of Catholic literature'. He mentions that he had Graham Greene on his deaf ear during dinner.

An amusing incident is mentioned on Sunday 11 January 1948 when the diarist attended mass at Farm Street. Greene also attended and was on that occasion literally penniless as he had emptied his pockets into the box for African missions. Waugh took him to the Ritz for a cocktail and had to give him sixpence in order that he could check in his hat.

Waugh spent the last weekend of September 1948 with Greene and Catherine Walston: first at Graham's flat in St James's Street and the next day, after attending a press showing of Carol Reed's *The Fallen Idol* (described by Waugh as 'clever and funny and original'), at Walston's one storey farm building at Thriplow. They talked much of religion as the lovers had been reading a treatise on prayer together that afternoon. Catherine Walston eventually went to bed, but telephoned for the authors to join her at her bedside which was full of books of devotion.

In April 1953 Waugh attended the first night of GG's play *The Living Room*. 'Went to play in high spirits which the performance failed to dispel'. Too much champagne during the interval meant that Waugh felt he may have missed the point of the whole story. He criticised various things in the play, but also admits that he did not listen to the last ten minutes, so realised that it was not fair to judge.

In July 1955 Waugh writes he saw again the film of *The End of the Affair* '...most of it, that is to say. I could not face the detective a second time'. He then re-read the book and found fault with the film for not being close enough to the book. The film, says Waugh, elevated the status of the characters and lost the drabness of Clapham. He also thought that the events which follow Sarah's death are the real end of the affair, and the film missed that point.

Later the same month he 'turned into the Albany on impulse and called on Graham Greene'. Greene was alone, planning a trip to Canada with his daughter 'in search of cattle and a husband'. He told Waugh that because of incipient cirrhosis of the liver he was on a strict regime. He also mentioned his disagreement with Korda over the film of *Loser Takes All*.(In a footnote the editor Michael Davie quotes from a letter he had received from GG in November 1975: 'I suppose I was having a bit of liver trouble and dramatised it to Evelyn. Just as he dramatised my visit to Canada,

which was in search of a small ranch and not of a husband. I had a temporary quarrel with Korda who refused to allow Alec Guinness to play a part in a film *Loser Takes All* – part based on himself.')

In an entry dated 31 December 1960 – 1 January 1961 Waugh records that he had to refuse to review Graham Greene's *A Burnt-out Case*. 'There is nothing I could write about it without shame one way or the other.' In a long, interesting entry in the diary Waugh criticises the book, not only for its theme, the despair and loss of faith of the hero, but he also considers that Greene's skill is fading. Waugh goes on to say:

'His early books are full of self-pity at poverty and obscurity; now self-pity at his success. I am not guiltless as one of those who put him in the odious position of 'Catholic artist'. He complained of the heat of his sexual passions, now at their coldness. A book I can't review'.

Three days later he wrote to Greene that it was clear he was exasperated by his reputation as a 'Catholic' writer, told him he was sorry for his share in this annoyance. Twelve years earlier a lot of Catholics had been suspicious of his good faith and Waugh went round England and America reassuring them. He now prayed that the desperate conclusions of 'Marie' and 'Querry' were entirely fictitious

Ken Sherwood

2.

By coincidence we also received the following from Friend of the Trust, Tony Price, who quotes from John Mortimer's Murderers and Other Friends 1994 (Penguin 1995 pp 235+6)

'Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh used to visit Stonor and the 1930s chapel has its romantic echo in *Brideshead*. They came, I'm sure, out of affection for Sherman Stonor, the late Lord Camoys' …

'Our friend was Jeanne Camoys, Sherman's widow… who had been a great beauty in the thirties…. She hinted at a distant, passionate relationship with Graham Greene, but I noticed he was nervous of visiting England when he heard she was in the country'.

3.

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.

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

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

1.

Your "Miscellany" (Spring 2003) says of Graham Greene's cousin, Benjamin, that he was "a pacifist, a Quaker, certainly not a fascist and certainly not disloyal". It then goes on to state (correctly) that his wartime internment was on the basis of false evidence.

The best one can say about Ben Greene is that he was a naïve man who fell into despicable company and, unwittingly or otherwise, worked to promote the aims of this country's enemies. The British Council for Christian Settlement in Europe was not the pacifist organisation in the midst of Berkhamsted to which a resident objected in October 1939, as you report. It supported a negotiated settlement of the war and while it brought together Christians and pacifists and those of no particular persuasion, it also included Fascist sympathisers like the Duke of Bedford and Henry Williamson. Its headquarters were in Greene's home and its secretary was John Beckett, who since his days as a Left wing Labour MP had moved to and past the Mosleyites. The word "Christian" in the title at a time when such a phrase was often used by pro-Nazis to denote Aryan should have been warning enough. Greene was also associated with the British Council Against European Commitments, of which, says Francis Becket, the socialist writer and son of John, in his biography of his father, *The Rebel Who Lost His Cause*: "The BCAEC, in fact, was a front organisation for every fascist, neo-fascist and anti-semite in London". Greene was also a leading member of another pro-Fascist group, the British People's Party.

Richard Griffiths, in his book, *Patriotism Perverted*, says: "From now on we shall find the terms 'usury' and 'money power' used continually by people such as Beckett and Greene, as a coded reference to Jews, to be understood by their [fellow BPP] members".

Pacifism has an honourable place in the history of the 20th century but it is not one which encompasses Ben Greene. He may have believed that he acted honourably but even that is open to doubt. Objectively, he most certainly did not.

Terry Philpot

Limpsfield, Surrey

2.
I feel with some reluctance that I must put the record straight with regard to the history behind the film of *The Honorary Consul* and what Christopher Hampton had to say at last year's Festival. It was not Mr Hampton's 'first Hollywood assignment' as the report in last year's Autumn Newsletter suggests. The film was an English production and the producer was one Norma Heyman, an ex-actress married to the English film producer John Heyman. The assertion that Graham was 'sacked' as a writer of the screenplay is outrageous. If anybody was 'sacked' – if that is the word for what happened – it was me. As Graham was fairly happy with my film of *England Made Me*, he kindly gave me an option on what was then his latest novel. I spent over a year working on a screenplay – in close consultation with him so my script had his *imprimatur*. After a series of raised hopes, and broken promises typical of the film industry, my script got into the hands of the Heymans who showed it to Richard Burton and he apparently liked it very much. As



Graham Greene and Peter Duffell

a result, I put them in touch with GG and they bought an option on the book. Some time later, I had a call from Graham saying that he suspected that – I quote – 'they are doing the dirty on you', which of course turned out to be the case. For whatever reason, they junked my script and brought in Christopher Hampton to write another. This is why he did not get to talk to Graham about it, not because Graham was sacked, which is rubbish, but because Graham was very unhappy both with Hampton's script and the behaviour of the Heymans who were avoiding any contact with me and not answering my 'phone calls. The full story is to be found in Quentin Falk's excellent book *Travels in Greeneland*.

Peter Duffell
Somerset

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. Please always indicate publication and date. Further information about the cuttings can usually be obtained from the editor.

A number of cuttings have been received but with one exception, space does not permit their inclusion in this issue. Please keep them coming all the same.

WEAPONS OF MASS ... SUCTION

In May *Washington Post* carried a story of an Army Team searching for weapons in Baghdad. For once they had found a building not only intact but locked and bolted. With all the equipment at their command the team broke in and searched slowly by flashlight from room to room, until they reached a stone passage: cement covered windows, steel doors – something important here, clearly. Finally the last bolt snapped, and there in the innermost chamber – a cache of vacuum cleaners!

Friend of the Trust, Donna Osthaus, wrote to the Washington Post drawing attention to the point you have all spotted – *Our Man in Havana* almost brought to life.

MISCELLANY

We have received the following, which we make available as it has come in.

Some years ago when, under the name of Firsts & Company, I was involved in buying and selling rare books and first editions, I published a limited signed edition of Graham Greene's introduction to the Collected Edition of *Travels With My Aunt*. There are about 40 remaining copies of the Introduction which I would be happy to make available at a cost of £40 each, postage included.

Arnold A Rogow
1100 Madison Ave
New York
NY 10028

TRUST PUBLICATIONS

With an extended publishing programme, it is no longer approiate to include a list of publications as part of the newsletter. A separate publications order form is enclosed and will be re-issued from time to time.

The list includes CDs of many of the lectures at the 2002 festival. As we go to press permission to sell CDs of their presentations is still awaited from a number of those who spoke.

However perhaps the most interesting CD is that of the late Michael Meyer's talk at the 1999 Festival when he recounted at length how he first met Graham. Michael also recalled playing Scrabble with Graham on Tahiti and how he arranged for Graham to play the part of an insurance agent in a French film.

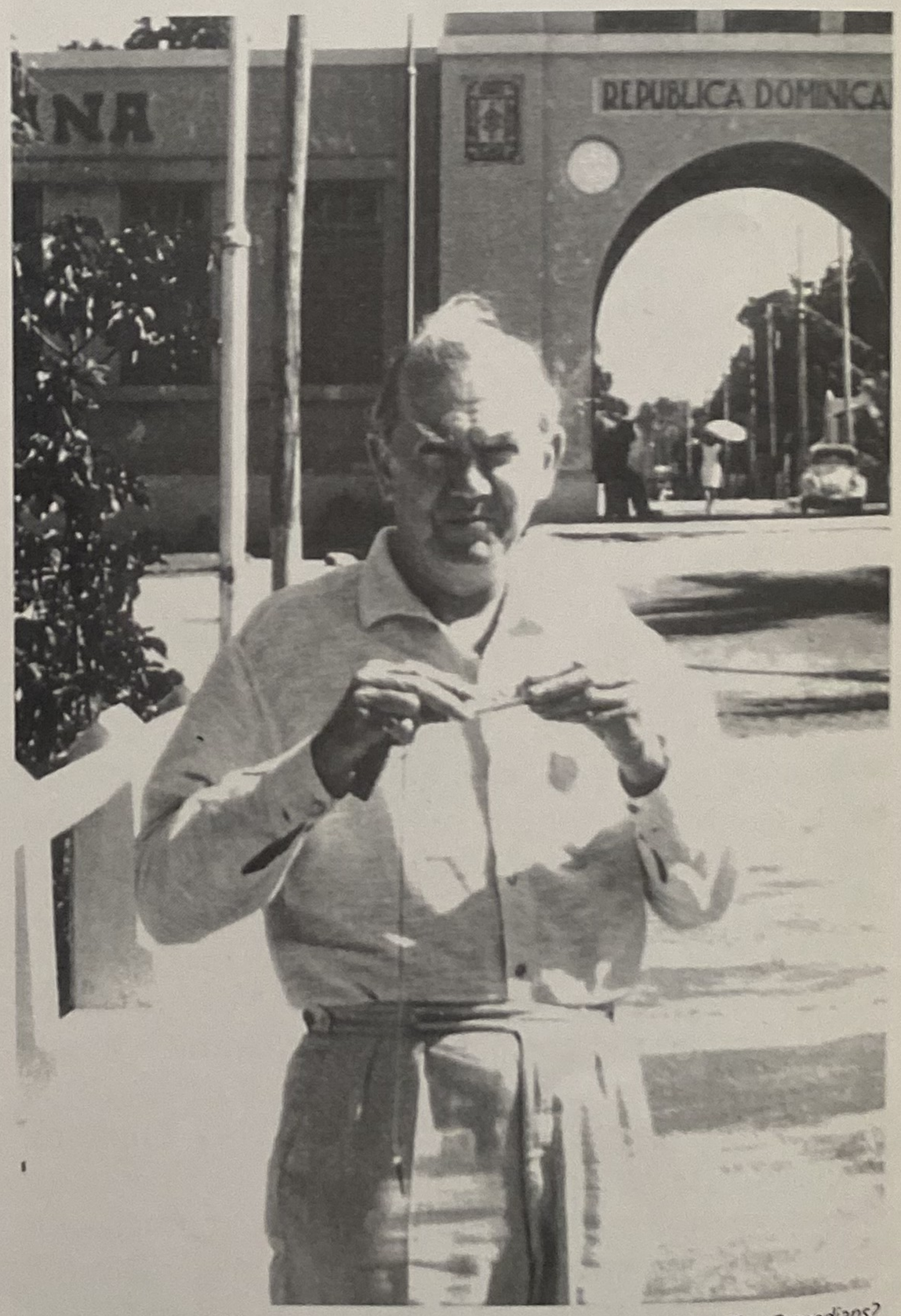
THE QUIZ

What knowledgeable people you are! There were several completely correct answers, and some that were nearly so.

The winner was Colin Garrett of Berkhamsted. He receives his Festival ticket from the Secretary. The consolation prize goes to Martin Jenkins of Morden, who will receive his modest book token in the post.

The correct answers are:

1. *The Captain and the Enemy*
2. Julia Llewellyn Smith
3. Balliol
4. Nottingham Journal
5. *Night and Day*
6. The Shakespeare Prize
7. Switzerland
8. *The Honorary Consul*
9. *Daily Messenger*
10. *A Burnt-Out Case*
11. Lance
12. Ostend, Cologne, Vienna, Subotica, Constantinople
13. *The Confidential Agent*
14. *The Power and the Glory*
15. Rocinante
16. *The Tenth Man*
17. *The Heart of the Matter*
18. *Rumour at Nightfall*
19. *The Third Man*
20. *It's a Battlefield*
21. *Our Man in Havana – Il Nostro Agente All'Avana*
22. *The Comedians* – denounced in the Haitian pamphlet Graham Greene Demasque
23. *This Gun for Hire*
24. Michael Caine
25. Carol Reed
26. Aunt Augusta, in *Travels with my Aunt*
27. James Mason
28. *The Basement Room*
29. *Across the Bridge*
30. *A Shocking Accident*
31. *Ways of Escape*
32. *Yes and No*
33. *In Search of a Character*
34. Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson
35. Christopher Hawtree



Researching The Comedians?

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