A Sort of Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAHAM GREENE BIRTHPLACE TRUST

Spring 2008

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Do not forget to visit the website of the Trust which is on www.grahamgreenebt.org

Editorial

With this issue some of you will find a renewal reminder; please do not ignore it. In fact not only do we hope that you will renew in order to continue to receive this Newsletter, but we also hope that you will 'sell' the idea of a subscription to friends who might enjoy reading it and attending the Festival. If you find selling difficult, why not make a present of the modestly priced subscription? With a gift subscription the recipient will be reminded of your generosity several times a year.

The Festival is of course the main attraction of our literary year. Inside you will find an early preview; more information will follow in the next issue which will be out before October, when the Festival takes place. Meanwhile, as you will see from the varied contents, Graham Greene continues to feature – there is a constant awareness of his work among writers and critics and the Trust, with your help, does its best to ensure the flow of information does not stop.

Speaking of help! Please let me have examples of your favourite GG quotations as well as your version of a Talepiece.

Yan Christensen

Language is the apparel in which your thoughts parade in public.
Never clothe them in vulgar and shoddy attire

George W. Crane

Newslettereditor@grahamgreenebt.org
Your comments and letters are always welcome.

REVIEWS

Graham Greene: The Spoken Word,
British Library CD (67 mins) NS ACD 35 £8.99

Brigitte Timmermann The Third Man's Vienna: celebrating a Film Classic, Shippen Rock Publishing Ltd., 2005, 410pp. 49 euros. ISBN 3-950-2050-1-2

Richard Greene (ed): Graham Greene: A Life in Letters,
Little Brown, 2007, 446 pp.£20 ISBN 978-0-3167-2793-8.

Here are three items which any Greene enthusiast would wish to own. The CD is part of a valuable series on writers talking about their own work: other authors featured include George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Becket and a stimulatingly ill-tempered Evelyn Waugh. The Greene selection is a valuable mixture of readings and interviews that range in topic from his novels to his film criticism, from Kim Philby to Lauren Bacall, and from recollections of his schooldays to his opinion on old age. For those interested in his creative processes, there is a particularly fascinating talk on the genesis and development of *A Burnt-Out Case* and his dilemma of what to do with his hero at the end - whether he should die or be allowed 'to walk off,' as Greene says, 'like an early Chaplin' (a reference I had forgotten in Greene's original published text, *'In Search of a Character'*, and one which reinforces my view of the important connection between these two artists). He talks entertainingly of his days as a film critic, his libellous review of Shirley Temple's performance in *Wee Willie Winkie*, and how he enjoyed the bad films as much as the good ones, particularly those of Cecil B. DeMille, which, he says, 'have wonderful moments, especially in the dialogue'. Of the films of his own novels, he particularly commends *The Confidential Agent* as the most successful Hollywood adaptation: it is certainly an underrated film that would merit a showing at a future Festival. He is very droll about the changes John Ford, an Irish Catholic, made to the more controversial aspects of *The Power and the Glory* when Ford adapted it for the screen as *The Fugitive* (1947) - a film Greene admits he never saw, though I doubt whether it would have changed his opinion, as few people have liked it apart from John Ford himself. In an extract from a speech he made at an international conference of PEN in 1969, Greene wittily contrasts the soundness of some political systems with the idiocy of those who administer them, whom he characterises as 'a hideous establishment of stupid men'. There is a lot to savour, amuse and ponder in this entertaining and well-balanced anthology and the booklet by Nigel Lewis is also informative and useful.

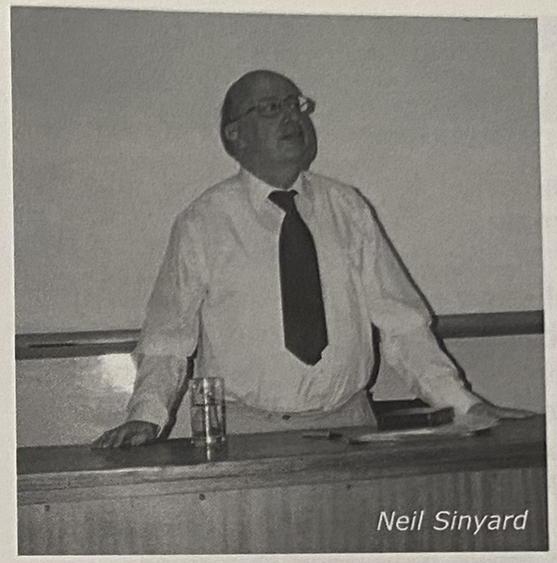


Brigitte Timmermann and Dermot Gilvary

For those who have had the pleasure of meeting Brigitte Timmermann at previous Greene Festivals and, even more, been on her famous *Third Man* tour in Vienna, her celebratory book about the film will be self-recommending. Nevertheless, it should be said that this is one of the most beautifully produced of all film books - a labour of love if ever there was one. The author describes it as 'part literary study, part film study, part history book' whose starting-point, apparently, was simply a query about what happened to the boy who had played little Hansl, the chubby-cheeked imp who keeps incriminating Holly Martins and who

seems a deliberate echo of the mischievous way Harry Lime tormented Holly in his youth. It goes into meticulous detail about the origins of the film, the casting of all the rôles, as well as providing an evocative picture of the actuality of life in post-war Vienna that so inspired Greene. Some little known but key background figures (e.g. Karl Hartl, Elizabeth Montagu, Peter Smolka, Jerome Chodorov) are given their due. There are some valuable reminders: for example, the fact that the inspiration for Holly Martins' hapless British Council lecture was an actual - much more informed - lecture that Elizabeth Bowen gave in Vienna around this time on 'The English Novel in the Twentieth century'; and that the American release of the film, as well as having its opening narration performed by Joseph Cotten's Holly rather than the director Carol Reed (as in the British version), was a good 11 minutes shorter than the version the British audience is accustomed to and was not shown in the States in its full form until 1999. There are one or two minor errors that inevitably slip into a work of this magnitude (for example, Rebecca was Alfred Hitchcock's directorial debut in Hollywood but not his directorial debut as such). Mainly this is a monumental achievement, fabulously illustrated, both a matchless souvenir of a great film and a treasure-trove of valuable and unusual detail. The film lives again before your eyes: you can almost hear the newly arrived Orson Welles button-holing his director and wailing, 'Carol, I can't work in a sewer, I come from California'.

Another regular and welcome visitor to the Festivals, Richard Greene has edited a splendid collection of Graham Greene's letters, a Herculean task since the author was apparently accustomed to writing around two thousand letters a year. As the editor points out, a different picture of Greene emerges here from the warts-and-all biographical portraits of Norman Sherry and Michael Shelden (well, in Shelden's case, it was just warts). What emerges from the letters is a man of often great personal kindness, particularly towards writers whom he championed, such as Walter Greenwood, R. K. Naryan and Muriel Spark, and to people in personal distress. Edith Sitwell's observation on him - 'What a great priest you would have made' - comes to mind here, though she tempers that wisely with the comment, 'but you are better as you are'. Needless to say, his opinions on matters both literary and political are frank and fearless. He is not afraid to declare that he prefers reading Conan Doyle to reading Forster and Virginia Woolf and thinks Joyce's *Dubliners* a much finer achievement than *Ulysses*: I couldn't agree more. He is often very funny, even in moments of gravity, as on Evelyn Waugh's death when he says the quality he loved most in him was 'that he would say only the kind things behind one's back'. He can also be



Neil Sinyard

acerbic to the point of near-rudeness: I was quite shocked by his description of Alfred Hitchcock as 'a silly, harmless clown' in a letter to his brother Hugh (his views on Hitchcock are the one area of his film criticism that has not stood the test of time). He is similarly severe with Ralph Richardson - a supreme interpreter of Greene in films such as The Fallen Idol and *Our Man in Havana* and the play *The Complaisant Lover* - whose performance in *Carving a Statue*, in Greene's view, wrecked the play. 'Alas, you fancy yourself as a literary man,' Greene wrote, 'and I have as little faith in your literary ability as in your capacity to judge a play'. Richardson apparently pasted the letter on an illustrated book he had on Henry Moore's sculptures. He recommends medical help to Anthony Burgess when the latter's envy and paranoia are getting out of control. The collection is discreetly but very helpfully annotated throughout, occasionally making some astute suggestions of its own (for example, that the Shirley Temple episode may have influenced Greene's portrayal of the whisky priest's sexually precocious daughter in *The Power and the Glory*, a connection I had not thought of but which seems very plausible). The only error I noticed - and I only mention this because it can easily be corrected in future editions - is the misattribution of the direction of *Roots of Heaven* to John Ford: it was actually John Huston. Overall this is a volume that reads as compellingly as a Greene novel and gives a sympathetic, fair and well-rounded picture of the man. And there is no question about my favourite moment in the collection, which not only indicates Greene's star quality as a writer but also his inimitably dry, sometimes unconscious, wit. It comes at the end of a letter to Catherine Walston in 1951. 'I have provisionally accepted, ' he wrote, ' a free luxury holiday in Biaritz from July 29 to August 5 in the company of Jean Cocteau, Charlie Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich and Orson Welles.' The word 'provisionally' made me laugh out loud: what on earth proviso could there be to experiencing an all-expenses-paid luxury holiday in a gorgeous location with four of the greatest artists of the twentieth century? Some manic-depressives have all the luck.

Neil Sinyard

PREVIEW

Time is marching on and arrangements for the Festival are far advanced. Dermot Gilvary has assembled a marvellous programme to appeal to all tastes. There will be a Young Persons' Event, illustrated talks and of course films, including that all-time favourite *Brighton Rock*, introduced as always by an expert. We can look forward to hearing from professorial favourites such as Cedric Watts and Neil Sinyard and to welcoming new speakers such as Libby Purves OBE who is well known to fans of BBC's Radio 4. There will be the pleasure of listening to talks by Fr. Ian Ker, Chris Mullin MP and others, and at social events and coffee breaks there will be the opportunity to meet old friends from previous Festivals and to make new ones this year.

Any word one uses from habit means nothing at all

THE QUIZ 2008: Answers
Graham Greene and Books

What a clever lot of readers we have! We had six answers of which five were completely correct and the sixth had only one wrong answer. That is a remarkable result, and the only sad thing is that not everyone can win. This time the winner is Ian Fisher, of San Francisco. The prize as usual is a season ticket to the Festival.

Check below to see how you fared if you did not send in your own answers:

ANSWERS

1. *Don Quixote* (Cervantes)
2. *Our Man in Havana* (by Wormold and Hawthorne)
3. *The Ministry of Fear*
4. Novelist/writer
5. Rollo Martins
6. Maurice Bendrix (*The End of the Affair*)
7. *Hamlet*
8. J.B. Priestley
9. Alden Pyle (*The Quiet American*)
10. *The Confidential Agent*
11. Keats
12. 'Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.' (*The Social Contract*)
13. Tennyson (*The Brook*)
14. Wilson
15. Colley Cibber
16. *Pericles*
17. Jim Baxter
18. Dr Magiot's
19. *Travels with My Aunt*
20. *The Human Factor*

In human relationships, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths

MISCELLANY

Father Duran
It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Father Duran. He was a close friend and admirer of Graham Greene; Festival goers will remember his impassioned talk in Berkhamsted some years ago. We hope to bring an obituary in a future issue.

Six Greene Bottles
I rescued several empty bottles from the wine generously provided by Caroline Bourget to help us celebrate her father's centenary. I understand that the labels specially printed for these bottles will be much sought after by wine label collectors because of their rarity. If anybody reading this item is prepared to help the Trust realise some money from these labels please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

The six bottles for disposal are in fact four green bottles and two red bottles. Two further empty bottles are stored in our archive in Berkhamsted. The wine was bottled by the Association Vinicole Corseaux. The green bottles were opened and the contents drunk at the

formal opening of the Centenary Exhibition in Berkhamsted on Tuesday 28 September 2004 (See report in ASON for Autumn 2004). The red bottles came from the centenary celebrations held in Corseaux in April 2005 (See report in ASON for Spring 2005).



Both labels are marked with Graham Greene's name and the dates 1904 –2004. The labels on each red bottle describe its contents as 'Vin du Centenaire'

Ken Sherwood

Drinking in Oxford

Next time you are in Oxford you can treat yourself to a drink in one of two pubs on St. Giles' with a history. Both *Eagle and Child* and the *Lamb and Flag* are owned by the wealthy St. John's college; the former was the meeting place of the Inklings, a group of writers that included Tolkien. Since the popularity of the *Lord of the Rings* films it has become very well visited. But you may be more interested in the *Lamb and Flag*, the haunt of Thomas Hardy and Inspector Morse, and where Graham Greene used to drink. So go and raise a glass to the continued popularity of your favourite author.

It is impossible to go through life without trust: that is to be imprisoned in the worst cell of all, oneself

Lost and not yet found – another update

A further update follows with editorial apologies for some confusion regarding the piece in the last issue. Two matters still outstanding should have been reported:-

1) The first loss is a copy of a video of a Russian Arts programme featuring an interview with Graham Greene (in Russian) in December 1987 and also an interview with Kim Philby and extracts from Russian versions of films such as *Stamboul Train*. The loss occurred some years ago. We still have the original of the video, which was Graham Greene's personal copy.

2) The second loss is of two books from the Trust Library. *The Viper of Milan* (Marjorie Bowen); and *Graham Greene – Man of Paradox* (AF Cassis).

If you have any clues as to the whereabouts of the missing items or can help with replacing them, please let me know.

Ken Sherwood
01442 865158

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.

Alberto Huerta passed away in February. He had corresponded with Graham Greene and took part in a Graham Greene festival that was organized by Culture Minister Jean-Claude Bajeux in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. After a long visit with Yvonne in Switzerland he wrote a book about her that she did not like and asked him not to publish. He did not publish the book.

Bernard Diederich

http://www.usfca.edu/usfnews/news_stories/Alberto_Huerta.html

I have received some photos regarding the film production of *Our Man in Havana*. They are from a Cuban film historian's private archive and certainly they are historical documents.

In July 2008 I am going to Havana to look everywhere for more material, newsreels, photos concerning Graham Greene's visits and the film production of *Our Man in Havana*. I feel it is my duty to recover all these materials, which are part of our culture. This is one of the reasons for the creation of the British-Cuban Heritage Foundation, a project that I am working on with my wife Melanie Jones.

I am sending this to you just in case you do not have these images. I should like to present a project for 2009, celebrating the anniversary of the film that will cover everything that I have found in Cuban film archives, from private collections to the film archive of the Institute of Cinema in Havana ICAIC, regarding Graham Greene in Cuba and the film production of *Our Man in Havana*,

Vladimir Smith, Curator
The British-Cuban Heritage Foundation.
http://www.thebritishcubanheritagefoundation.co.uk/

We hope to be able to show some of these photos at a future date. ed

I am writing on behalf of Mirare Press - and our author, Gail Vida Hamburg, whose novel about American foreign policy, *The Edge of the World*, has struck a chord among progressives in the United States who believe in a sane U.S. foreign policy.

Ms. Hamburg was born in Malaysia and lived in England until 1985, when she emigrated to the US. She has been a journalist and journalism professor in New York and Chicago, where she now lives.

In the preface to her book, she writes in her author's note: '*The Quiet American*, Graham Greene's prophetic novel about American foreign policy in Vietnam, was a source of inspiration to me during the writing of this book. I have been moved to reference it, as a historical marker and literary device, in this fiction. A familiarity with Greene's novel will greatly enhance an understanding of mine.'

Ms. Hamburg has given many readings and attended many book groups to discuss her novel, and has been delighted that her readers have taken her author's note to heart by reading *The Quiet American* before beginning hers.

I am providing some links to information about her book at the foot of this and her reference to *The Quiet American* and Mr. Greene's writings in her work since the start of the Iraq War.

Kyra Hendricks, Publicist, MirarePress
www.mirarepress.com
http://gailvidahamburg.com/articles/menage.html

Success is the point of self-deception. Failure is the point of self-knowledge

THE TRUST

Ken Sherwood

As many of you will know, Ken's health and strength are not what they were and he has decided to resign as a Trustee. He has until now been untiring in his efforts for the Trust and fortunately his links with it will not be entirely severed as he has agreed to be a Patron of the Trust, an honorary position that will ensure that he stays in touch.

Secretary

We are fortunate indeed that John Partridge has agreed to take on the function of Secretary of the Trust; he will in future organise the meetings of the trustees and prepare the minutes.

A Tribute to the Founder of the Birthplace Trust

The retirement of Ken Sherwood from the Trustees is announced above. His standing-down must not pass without salutation.

No one who has experienced the Festivals over the last ten years can have been unaware of Ken's contribution to every aspect of events. Contacts with Friends, the answering of a steady stream of literary and biographical queries, the sale of tickets, the financial stability of the Trust, the knowledge of 'Who was who' in the Greene world, and 'Where was what' in our archives – all of these were undertaken by Ken with a doggedness and an energy that sometimes made the trustees wonder if there could be life or impetus without him. He was the treasurer, the secretary; he was the snapper up of every snippet, the recorder of

every reference, and the custodian of all documents. A terrier on the scent, he tracked down his quarries relentlessly, and scampered happily in ways that left the rest of us breathless.

For all this he was suited by his many civic associations in Berkhamsted. The Town Hall Trust, the Citizens Association, the Local History Society – members of these had come to appreciate Ken's commitment and his accountant's scrupulousness over detail. In all these concerns, he has had, and has still, the unassuming assistance of his wife, Jenny, who is herself the presiding genius of the local museum store.



Such would be the observations of anyone moderately familiar with the affairs of the Birthplace Trust. Our debt to Ken, though, goes much further.

About the time Graham Greene died in 1991, Ken was mulling over the idea of how best to celebrate this son of Berkhamsted. From his realisation that there were exciting possibilities, Ken moved forward to become the instigator and the spirit of the whole venture. He floated his ideas to two or three friends. There were, already established, key links with the Town and with Berkhamsted School. Both were central to any hope of success. And so the Trust was born. It was to be called 'The Birthplace Trust'; it was not to be just a society of literary appreciation, but a celebration of a whole ranging life that had its beginnings in Berkhamsted.

These were the aims that Ken set out. To his driving initiative came the experience and scholarly skills of Roger Watkins who became the director of the earliest Festivals. It was Roger who felt that there was sufficient breadth of interest to warrant an annual four-day festival. At a stroke, the concept became international and significant. There were new implications of accommodation and social participation. We should now have the ability to invite speakers of real distinction, even from far afield.

That decision gave head to all Ken's organisational abilities which were now to be employed in so many ways: in the setting up of a Charity with its financial responsibilities and legal requirements; in advertising and public relationships with a *Newsletter* (written and edited by Yan Christensen); in literary affiliations, in enabling successive Festival directors to achieve their aims, and - of greatest importance - in establishing the happy involvement of the Greene family.

It all seems so easy now, but in the early days our very existence was reliant on individual enthusiasms. We were pioneers; it was all new ground, and by trial and error our efforts. Local bodies had to be interested; the procedures to be established! How vivid still is the memory of knocking up in a back garden makeshift boards for posters, and getting bemused shopkeepers to fly our banner, or to risk an advertisement in our first brochure. There was a lot of walking the streets and announcing this newcomer. Yes, looking back, one can smile, but in those days it was an act of faith, and it was Ken who had the faith and who was indomitable. He would tour the Chiltern countryside with literature, waylay librarians, comb through compendia of literati and glitterati simply to establish the audience numbers to make our efforts worthwhile. We could only ask speakers if we could guarantee an audience. It was a tight-rope act. It still is, but we have found that people liked the family-informality and they have, marvellously, remained faithful.

There were times when Ken's exuberance seemed to run before his horse to market, and we were left wondering if we might not do better to travel more sedately and with a little less baggage. We would wonder quietly amongst ourselves whether the whole show could be sustained if Ken were to make off for any reason. And, now, for health reasons he has had to stand down.

Two facts mark the measure of the man. The first is that he has never been less than absolutely positive, and has soldiered on despite heart attacks and failing eyesight and family pressures. Inconveniences were shrugged off, just as were the incidental hiccoughs of the Trust's early existence.

The second is that Ken charted out the main principles of the Trust, and, now that he leaves us, we find that we are in good heart, and capable of carrying on. That is because the course has been so carefully and surely set. It is easy enough now to adjust the course, to reef, or let out more sail, to venture here or there as some new helmsman wishes to chance his arm; but to set the vessel initially on its way, sea-proof and shipshape - that was the enterprise of a master mariner; and for that we - both trustees, and Greene devotees from all over the world - have reason to be grateful to Ken Sherwood.

Our real begetter is Graham Greene himself, and the Trust will continue while that name has a following which will support it, but all – and they are many - who have understanding of the Trust, know that Ken Sherwood has, with imagination, tenacity, equanimity, and immense goodwill, kept the faith. No one can have any doubt about his role or impact. He joins the members of the Greene family as a Patron, and we are glad that he will go on playing his part amongst us – a part that we know well and admire: busy, bubbling, sometimes baffling, but always buoyant, and courteous and engaging.

David R.A.Pearce

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.

First of all many thanks to those that send in snippets from such a wide selection of publications – your help is very much appreciated.

One nice story appeared in *Country Life* (and elsewhere): a second-hand book was given to Oxfam who clearly recognised a good thing when they saw it. It was Greene's *Rumour at Nightfall* and it fetched £15 000 despite a torn dustjacket.

The Telegraph reported that Combe Florey, Evelyn Waugh's last home, was for sale, and his daughter pointed out that very many famous writers had stayed there, including Greene.

In *Washington Post* Stephen L. Carter, novelist and professor at Yale Law School, writes about the US election:

It's not just an election: it's a thriller
'Usually, the novelist tells us early on who the hero is. This is important. Once we know the hero, we know whom to root for. We also know who's likely to win in the end, unless of course the writer is someone like John LeCarre or Graham Greene -- authors from the noir school, whose heroes often fail.'

In Kansas City they are still listening to the opera based on GG's *The End of the Affair*. In India they are still reading *Journey without Maps*. An Irish-American confides on the internet: My ambition is to write songs like Graham Greene writes novels. To judge by blogs and other mentions on the net, *The Quiet American* and *The End of the Affair* are probably the Greene novels that are read most, but others are also mentioned, and GG is still a benchmark author against whom many new writers are measured.

Several films are regularly mentioned and *The Power and the Glory* has been constantly in the news in connection with the tributes to Paul Schofield who died recently.

'That review' was also mentioned in connection with Shirley Temple's 80th birthday.

As so often happens whenever Greene King, the brewers, are mentioned the connection with GG and the founder, his great grandfather, Benjamin Greene, is also part of the story.

TALEPIECE

In November 2007 the Graham Greene reading group in Berkhamsted tackled *A Passage to India* by E M Forster. I mentioned this to a friend who suggested that, as an antidote, I should read *A Fine Balance* by

Rohinton Mistry (1996). I admitted that I had never heard of this author. Thanks to Abebooks.com I soon located a second-hand paperback copy. And what a paperback ! It is in large format (6" x 9") and 2" thick. I am more used to paperbacks that I can stuff in my pocket and read on the train. I put it aside realising that it would not be a quick read. When I got to it some weeks later I found that it was a page-turner. Not quite in the way that a fast-moving detective story might keep me up all night but I certainly wanted to know what happened next to the unusual and rather endearing main characters. Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952 and, having earned a degree in mathematics, emigrated to Canada at the age of 23. After further studies he took to writing.

A Fine Balance, perhaps Mistry's most successful work to date, tells the story of four characters (Maneck, Dina, Ishvar and Omprakash) and the impact of Indira Ghandhi's state of emergency on them. One of the most successful aspects of this book is its carefully crafted prose: 'The morning express bloated with passengers slowed to a crawl, then lurched forward suddenly, as though to resume full speed. The train's brief deception jolted its riders. The bulge of humans hanging out of the doorway distended perilously, like a soap bubble at its limit.' This intricate opening paragraph, which is typical of the precise prose of *A Fine Balance* throughout, helps propel the novel forward through a memorable portrait of post-Independence India.

The book deals with many important questions that we in England rarely face in such extreme form: the position of women in society, the effects of caste and class, the huge shift of population from country to city and the attendant housing problems, sterilization quotas and forced vasectomies. One wonders how such an anachronistic system survived into the twentieth century. This is an India of which Forster seems to have known nothing but it still exists and is much more real than life under the Raj.

Colin Garrett

The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust

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