

The

Friars'

Chronicles

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The fat Owl rolled into the box.

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And finally, as the decade draws to a close, may I wish all members a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year. And, long may our Club flourish!

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Study Tea

It was a magnificent seven who joined Penny Tweedie round her warm fire on a chilly November afternoon. Ill health prevented two intended attendees from being there and an invasion of grandchildren (a much happier cause) kept our President in Berkshire. Despite engineering works, which in your editor's case meant four train journeys instead of one (the District Line functioned only from Earls Court and the Overground from Camden Road), we were all happily gathered soon after three o'clock, enjoying warm cups of tea and a sighting of Hamilton memorabilia. Two plucky souls had made it all the way from Merseyside, so the North of England was worthily represented.



Among the items selected for our perusal were Charles Hamilton's Baedeker for North Italy, with Hamilton's signature inside, some of his letters, a ticket stub for a concert by Nellie Melba at the Royal Albert Hall in 1926 (not a Prom though – they didn't move to Royal Albert Hall till during the war), and Coronation programmes for 1937 and 1953. There was also a letter from the Broadstairs Museum confirming that it had several items of Hamilton memorabilia on permanent loan, though, as Naveed Haque's article reveals, permanence here was not enduring.

Nigel Colman entertained us with his new one man play of Noel Coward, This traced Coward's progress from his early days when, at the age of 11 he was cast by the famous manager Sir Charles Hawtrey, who had no connection with his later 'Carry On' namesake. Coward

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performed during the war but was conscripted in 1918. The Front ceased to beckon, however, when he was deemed unfit for service and thus ineligible to be shot at or shelled.



Between the wars Coward prospered, going to Broadway in America in 1921 and having particular success in both Britain and America with 'The Vortex' in 1924. An ill-fated attempt to have his hero Ivor Novello in a play was just a temporary setback. Such was his standing that after the Munich Agreement of 1938, Coward, who was against appeasement, was asked by Winston Churchill to tour Europe to see what the mood was. He returned with the gloomy news that the continent was preparing for war. During the war, Churchill (now Prime Minister) made use of him again, sending him to America to sound out Roosevelt's sentiments. The American President did not think much of Britain's chances in the war.

After the war, after poor management of his finances by his advisers, Coward was forced to live in the West Indies when the Inland Revenue presented him with an excessive tax demand. They, fortunately, were not consulted a few years later when Coward was knighted.

Nigel admitted to a little embroidery at the end of Coward's life, with apparent sightings of his early actress friend, Gertrude Lawrence, and his mother. He never married but had a number of male friends with whom he was 'close'.

Nigel's play over, it was time for Tea and a sumptuous repast awaited us.

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Despite all of us doing our best, large helpings of cake and other goodies still remained uneaten. Where is Bunter when you need him? A sad toast was drunk to Shirley Jacobs, who passed away during the summer and who had attended all the previous study teas. Shirley did sterling work for every society she joined and her loss is being felt keenly over a wide range of areas.



After some brief thoughts about the Friars Luncheon and AGM (**The Original Maids of Honour in Key at 2.30 on Saturday 15 February**), the autumn evening took us away. . Heartfelt thanks were given to Penny for once again so generously opening up her home for us and providing such a splendid spread. Without Penny there would be no Study Tea and we are all very grateful to her.

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Letter Rack

Dear Editor,

Portercliffe - Series I'll have to read again some time. I think Bunter was entitled to a finders' fee of 10% of the sovereigns. I remember the "bees' knees" being used by Billy Cotton in his autobiography as a term for being too big-headed.

I believe the Penny Popular stories were subs.

Have You eaten Grandma - was today's a deliberate mistake or a typo?

Incident in the annals of my school in the 1950s – Headmaster: "All my staff are dead [pause] behind me."

Lure of the Green Felt – I remember Bunter knocking the balls about and cutting the cloth at Wharton Lodge.

Ponsonby sipped champagne during the 1933 Hikers series.

Price and Loder had a ten pound bet on Greyfriars – Highcliffe during the Stacey series – and I still say that various prigs should have minded their own business. Betting is straightforward - you win or you lose.

What Happened to Snooks?-Similar story featuring Bunter and Quelch in pre-war Holiday Annual. [*And in the Carcroft story 'Rag on Roger' in the Spring 2017 (No. 145) Friars Chronicles. ed.*]

Mark Taha