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Dear Tony - Anthony Trollope's Post Office Career

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FEATURES

REGULARS

Killing Mrs Proudie

by Steven Amarnick

Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York.

The old saying goes: be careful what you wish for, it may come true. We might add this corollary: be careful what you say about yourself, people may believe you. Charles Dickens, whose 200th birthday has been celebrated this year, did not have trouble making his greatness known, thereby making it easier for others to concur, whereas Anthony Trollope, whose own bicentennial approaches, presented himself as an ordinary man who simply worked harder, more persistently, than most. "I have never fancied myself to be a man of genius", Trollope declared in *An Autobiography*, a book that begins with apologies for its existence, its subject being "so insignificant a person as myself". If Trollope so resolutely insisted that he was no genius, perhaps it is unsurprising that few others, even devoted readers, would contradict him.

Yet as N. John Hall wrote in his 1991 biography, Trollope "knew he was one of the giants of English fiction" despite "the satiric self-depreciation he practiced". If we look closely at one crucial passage, Trollope's account of his decision to kill Mrs Proudie in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, we see him at his satiric, and deceptive, best, casting himself as a godlike writer with the ability to make mere mortals quake.

"As an artist he never took himself seriously; many people will say this was why he was so delightful", wrote Henry James. Great as Trollope's achievement was, and let there be no doubt about the depth of James' appreciation, as expressed in the long essay he wrote after Trollope's death, he would have been greater still if only he had not been so flippant about his art. At first glance, the passage about Mrs Proudie's death would seem to offer obvious proof of James' argument. After all, what serious artist, in the middle of composing "the best novel I have written", would decide to eliminate a major

"A convicted thief," repeated Mrs Proudie
Illustration by G. E. Thomas from *The Last Chronicle of Barset* serialisation by Smith, Elder & Co.

character, seemingly on a whim, because of the complaints of a couple of readers? Let us pay attention, though, to what Trollope actually said:

> "… it was with many misgivings that I killed my old friend Mrs. Proudie. I could not, I think, have done it, but for a resolution taken and declared under circumstances of great momentary pressure.
>
> It was thus that it came about. I was sitting one morning at work upon the novel at the end of the long drawing-room of the Athenaeum Club -as was then my wont when I had slept the previous night in London. As I was there, two clergymen, each with a magazine in his hand, seated themselves, one on one side of the fire and one on the other, close to me. They soon began to abuse what they were reading, and each was reading some part of some novel of mine. The gravamen of their complaint lay in the fact that I reintroduced the same characters so often! 'Here', said one, 'is that archdeacon whom we have had in every novel he has ever written'. 'And here', said the other, 'is the old duke whom he has talked about till everybody is tired of him. If I could not invent new characters, I would not write novels at all'. Then one of them fell foul of Mrs. Proudie. It was impossible for me not to hear their words, and almost impossible to hear them and be quiet. I got up, and standing between them, I acknowledged myself to be the culprit. 'As to Mrs. Proudie', I said, 'I will go home and kill her before the week is over'. And so I did. The two gentlemen were utterly confounded, and one of them begged me to forget his frivolous observations.
>
> I have sometimes regretted the deed, so great was my delight in writing about Mrs. Proudie, so thorough was my knowledge of all the little shades of her character… Since her time others have grown up equally dear to me,- Lady Glencora and her husband, for instance; but I have never dissevered myself from Mrs. Proudie, and still live much in company with her ghost".

It is important to notice that nowhere does Trollope say the clergymen *gave* him the idea for Mrs. Proudie's death. His only claim is that he might not have been able to go through with it unless he had made the spoken resolution. He probably had similar difficulties killing off the wildly popular Barsetshire series. Only by making a very public resolution in the form of the title, 'last chronicle', could he resist the temptation to keep going. It is likely that with Mrs. Proudie he was also looking for a way to make a public promise to bind or nudge him. Elsewhere in *An Autobiography* Trollope described the charts he kept in which he registered his writing output, and how:

> "… if at any time I have slipped into idleness for a day or two, the record of that idleness has been there, staring me in the face, and demanding of me increased labour, so that the deficiency might be supplied".

Even when he was the only witness, Trollope was able to shame himself when necessary to work harder. And, similarly, declaring out loud that he would do away with Mrs. Proudie, even to only two witnesses in a private club, may have given him the courage needed to make what was surely the correct artistic decision. Does anyone doubt that Mrs. Proudie's death, and the reaction, add immensely to the power and majesty of this book?

"I may say that I know the tone of the voice, and the colour of the hair, every flame of the eye, and the very clothes they wear""

What we also might overlook at first is how these clergymen represent a certain kind of crude reader. Their complaint about recurring characters is foolish in the context of a passage mentioning Lady Glencora and Plantagenet Palliser, and an autobiography recounting his multitude of characters and how intimately he knew them. As Trollope wrote, "of all in that gallery I may say that I know the tone of the voice, and the colour of the hair, every flame of the eye, and the very clothes they wear". The clergymen may see mindless repetition, a failure of imagination; but as Trollope made clear in *An Autobiography*, the use of such characters allowed him to practice the subtle craft of delineating the changes "which time always produces", not so much in our basic natures as in "our manner of showing or of hiding these characteristics" as well as "our power of adding to or diminishing their intensity". Not only could readers fail to notice such subtleties, they may have a simple-minded view of how literary realism operates, a view skewered here by the way the clergymen feared their own hands were genuinely bloodied by Mrs. Proudie's death.

So silent and unassuming was Trollope at first that the clergymen did not seem to register his presence; yet soon he loomed over them,

in front of a fire, while on each side they sat in supplication. The fires of hell may have been about to consume them for their murderous deed, but Trollope showed no forgiveness.

"... work should be going on not only when he is at his desk, but in all his walks abroad"

Trollope was intent on reaching what he called "the hasty normal reader", readers like these clergymen, which often meant making himself out to be far more hasty, and normal, than he really was. Everyone remembers how Trollope taught himself to write nearly nonstop (250 words every 15 minutes once he got going) and how he went back to his desk morning after morning, producing his books the way a shoemaker produces shoes, not waiting for inspiration but simply doing his job. What is often forgotten is how Trollope was consumed by his creations for much of the time when he was not writing. He tells us in An Autobiography that the writer's "... work should be going on not only when he is at his desk, but in all his walks abroad, in all his movements through the world, in all his intercourse with his fellow-creatures."

Because Trollope wrote so quickly, and in a way that allows us to read quickly, we may overlook his attention to subtle effects. The description of how he became determined to kill Mrs. Proudie, far from revealing an impulsive, random approach to novel construction, is a *tour de force* of serious playfulness. If Trollope is inexhaustible, it is not only because of the number of books, but that so many passages, in thousands of pages, are marked by crafty detail.

This article is taken from a talk entitled *Anthony Trollope: The Art of Modesty,* given to New York University, originally adapted from Steven Amarnick's Dissertation.

Trollope Collection at Lowewood Museum

On Saturday 8 September 2012, Chairman Michael Williamson DL and the Deputy Mayor of Broxbourne, Councillor Bren Perryman, launched a collection of Anthony Trollope novels at Lowewood Museum, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. This is an apt venue as in 1859 Trollope moved nearby to Waltham House in Waltham Cross, a house remarkably similar to the house which has now been converted into Lowewood Museum. Coincidentally, a magnificent pillar box stands immediately outside the building. During the twelve years spent in the area Trollope wrote some of his best known works including *The Last Chronicle of Barset.*

Councillor Perryman said "Anthony Trollope was one of the most successful and respected English novelists of the Victorian era. We thank the Trollope Society for this impressive loan of works, which helps to showcase the borough's connection to such a prestigious literary figure". Michael Williamson presented Councellor Perryman with a Trollope novel as a gift to Broxbourne Council.

Several members then encapsulated Trollope and his writings by performing readings of their choice. Martin Chown's reading reflected Trollope's earlier life, depicted by the character Tudor taking some copying work, as requested, to an interview at The Internal Navigation Office, and getting the job without it being inspected. (see page 20 below) Mark Green's reading described Lady Glencora coping with a visit by Lady Hartletop to the dying Duke of Omnium; Dominic Edwardes' passage recounted the death of Lopez at Tenway Junction in *The Prime Minister,* Lucia Constanzo chose Miss Mackenzie admiring herself in the looking glass, whilst David Glass read the last two pages of *The Last Chronicle of Barset,* where Trollope justified his unqualified approach to relating aspects of the clergy in a social rather than professional way: "My object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen".

The Collection includes a first edition of *Orley Farm* and a painting of *Headford House,* the ruins of which, near Drumsna in County Leitrim, inspired Trollope to write his first book, *The*

Macdermots of Ballycloran. The house featured in the novel as Ballycloran Castle. The picture, carefully researched and painted by Drumsna resident Sinead Guckian, was presented to the Society in June 2009. Many Trollopians will be aware that this ruin, now reduced to a few ivy covered walls, forms a focal point of 'The Trollope Trail'. Less well known, perhaps, is its origin. The original name seems to have been Lisnagan Castle from the Irish Lios-na-gceann, meaning 'fort of the heads' from the custom of displaying heads of enemies on the walls! For many years it belonged to the Jones family; Sir Theophilus Jones was MP for Sligo and Leitrim at various times between 1692 and his death in 1736. Samuel Pepys recalled in his diary meeting him on 6th September 1696: after visiting the theatre with two other Knights they "went to the Ship Taverne and there staid and were merry till late at night".

"Many Trollopians will be aware that this ruin, now reduced to a few ivy covered walls, forms a focal point of 'The Trollope Trail'"

The Collection is on loan to Lowewood Museum until 2015, the bicentenary of Trollope's birth. Appointments to view can be made at www.broxbourne.gov.uk/lowewoodmuseum.

The Second International Summer School

Held in Drumsna, Co. Leitrim

by Helen Rutter

Local delegate

After a lecture by Julian Stray of the British Postal Museum & Archive (see page 23 below) Michael Gleeson, from Trinity College Dublin chronicled Trollope's time in Ireland in *Trollope: In & On Ireland*. He summarized how Trollope lived in Banagher from 1841 until 1859; became a Freemason and Master Mason, met and married Rose, had two children, and employed a servant, called Barney, who was key in organising his life. He wrote his first two novels in Ireland about Ireland. Living a middle class lifestyle, Trollope observed the horrors of the famine, but was never personally touched by that level of hardship.

Trollope's writing coincided with Thackeray's publication of *Vanity Fair* and the Bronte sisters seeking publication. Bianconi was a friend of Trollope as he made his journeys to different postings around the country. Trollope was always interested in the Irish and returned to writing about the country throughout his career. He stood for election for the Liberals (in Beverley, Yorkshire) at a time when Home Rule for Ireland was high on the political agenda. He did not avoid the tricky questions of the day, such as criticising O'Connell in early writing, and tackling the Protestant/Catholic divide in 1879 in *An Eye for An Eye*. He addressed the bigotry of the Land Leaguers in his final unfinished book, at the time of the Phoenix Park murders of Burke & Cavendish, which effectively stopped the movement towards Home Rule. It is also worth mentioning that the infamous Kitty O'Shea (Parnell's mistress) was the daughter of a friend of Trollope. Throughout his lengthy career Trollope returned to the Irish theme in his prodigious output, underlining the importance of his relationship to the country.

Teresa Ransom then recalled her biography of Trollope's mother, *Fanny Trollope*, and how she was a famous novelist earlier in the 19th century, contemporary with Jane Austin. She began writing out of necessity in order to support her family, as her husband lost what little money he had, causing them to flee their creditors. They removed to Bruges in Belgium for some time after the Napoleonic wars. In a period when women were regarded as chattels of their husbands, with no rights of their own, this extraordinary woman, as well as raising her children, wrote in order to provide for them. She travelled to the United States and worked with Native Americans: she became a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic, and undoubtedly inspired her son Anthony to try his hand at writing when he came of age.

Our inspiring day was to be concluded with a paper delivered by Chairman Michael Williamson who was sadly taken ill. In his absence, Howard Gregg and Priscilla Hungerford deputised and delivered an interesting synopsis on Trollope's second book, *The Kellys & the O'Kellys*.

The stimulating presentations provided perspective, and set Trollope's works against an historical background which is all too easy to overlook. I eagerly await the next Summer School.

The Third International Summer School, reviewing *An Eye for an Eye*, will take place in Ireland on 6-8th September 2013, contact colleen@drumsna.com for details.

Trollope and The Church of His Day

by The Very Reverend Keith Jones

The Very Reverend Keith Jones has been a minor Canon of St Albans Cathedral, an honorary Canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Dean of Exeter, and then Dean of York until his retirement earlier this year, at which point he was appointed Dean Emeritus of York

I should like to consider how Trollope used the church of his day, and especially Cathedrals, to show how human beings relate to change and exercise power and influence over each other. Trollope was acutely aware of the issues of his age, and through them revealed perennial truths about character and action.

He devoted some of his best novels to describing a Cathedral City because he found such places indicated how change was coming to the world he both wistfully loved and at the same time saw was in need of reform.

Trollope's first Cathedral story, where he introduced his readers to Barchester, is *The Warden*, published in 1855, though started much earlier. It was an exploratory treatment, and shows how he became fascinated by the imaginative and dramatic possibilities latent in the Barchester that grew in his imagination. It is about a clergyman who combines the office of Precentor at the Cathedral with the office of Warden of an ancient establishment of almshouses. This is a subtle portrait. In Barchester, the Precentor is not one of the major dignitaries of the Cathedral but an office holder or minor Canon employed to sing the services and encourage the choir. He does not live from the possession of an income attached to one of the Prebendal estates. Until the early decades of the 19th century these ancient and sometimes lucrative sources of income continued, but became more and more anomalous in a world where the notion that people should be employed by institutions with powers to oversee and measure performance became prevalent. His real remuneration is from another post, as Warden of Hiram's Hospital.

But in terms of the 1850s Trollope was fully aware of the sort of interview criteria being introduced into the civil service of his time (*The Three Clerks*). Mr. Harding is an anachronism. He is a sweet, gentle and conscientious man, in later middle age, of whose company we cannot tire. He is horrified to discover that the modern, dynamic man who is a suitor for his daughter's hand has serious questions to ask about the way he is remunerated and about the comforts of the way he lives. Therefore the subject explored by Trollope in *The Warden* is the clash between a kindly but unjustifiable world that was passing away, and a new culture that was efficient but which reformed away much that was good. Trollope, himself a reformer in his professional life, showed he harboured fears for the future.

But the possibilities Trollope enacted in the Barsetshire world only begin with Mr Harding: The heart of *The Warden* is another character growing like a large tree in the little garden of the book: Archdeacon Grantly. Trollope said, and no doubt honestly, that when he set out to describe an Archdeacon he had never met one. But everyone knew he had wholly understood the personage. Grantly's solidity as a character does not owe much to the information about his work as an Archdeacon. He is, rather, a personification of huge self-confidence and social ambition, which make him a natural leader; and has a personal honesty and sense of honour that stop him from being a monster. Is there, we wonder, a reflection in this of Trollope himself?

Archdeacon Grantly too, belongs partly to the old world and partly to the new. Although Trollope showed him in a critical light, we feel that he liked him. Grantly is undoubtedly a gentleman (an elusive but weighty criterion for Trollope), a companionable man, of the sort that Trollope would himself have met in the clubs he loved in London. In his book of 1866, *Clergymen of the Church of England*, Trollope showed that between himself and Archdeacons there was indeed an affinity:

> "... above all things, an Archdeacon should be a man of the world … The man who won't drink his glass of wine, and talk of his college, and put off for a few happy hours the sacred stiffnesses of the profession and become simply an English gentleman, - he is the clergyman whom in his heart the archdeacon does not love".

Grantly is like that, and a great deal of Trollope's attitude lies in that sentence.

Grantly has also the energy and drive of many a Victorian church leader. But he is also a career clergyman of an age which welcomed the alliance of worldly rank or position with high office in the established church. When we first meet him in *The Warden* he has the valiant calling of a Knight going to rescue a wronged and innocent victim. But you can tell that he is no radical reformer. He is unfortunately given to snobbery. One of his chief motivations is to secure the advancement of his family, which in turn sets off a saga of the Grantly family running through several books, including *Framley Parsonage, Doctor Thorne*, and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, and contains elements of comedy and tragedy.

Through Cathedrals, Trollope refers to wider issues of the church of his day. Religious practice and belief was flourishing in all the main social classes. However, this was also the decade from which we have the first clear indications of how many people attended church, and also how many did not. The census of 1851 revealed that 58% of the population regularly attended a place of worship on Sundays. Today we accept this as a staggering figure, one which we can question repeatedly, but in the 1850's it was for many a source of alarm. One of the things it showed was how the independent churches had grown greatly, supported by the allegiance of half the country's population. It also showed that the Church of England was strongest in the Home Counties and in the east, and was weak in the northern manufacturing towns. Change was clearly needed.

Trollope was fully aware of this. He would also have known the changes to Cathedral life prior to this brought about by the creation of the Ecclesiastical Commission: the reforms undertaken in the 1830s and enacted on August 11th 1840 had taken control of the income of the Prebendal incomes of the Cathedrals, monies which in turn had formed the income of the Canons. We might now call this serious money. At Durham in 1830 (most notorious of the old Cathedrals whose wealth had benefited from the coalfields) the Bishop's average income was £19,066, only slightly less than the £19,182 received by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and over £5,000 more than the Archbishop of York's annual income (multiply by 70 for the modern equivalent). This was literally princely, but notorious, and many leading clergy were eager reformers. Consequently the non-residential Canonries were abolished, and the governance of Cathedrals was granted to four residential Canons. That at least was the intention, and largely it was so.

The old endowments of the Dean and Canons of the Cathedrals were accumulated and invested centrally: a huge sum. About £130,000 p.a. was thought to be made available from the nearly 400 Prebends around the Cathedrals whose incomes were centralized. From it, Bishops got £5,000 a year, and Deans and Canons proportionate figures. The number of minor Canons and Vicars Choral in each Cathedral was also reduced. It was a courageous and thoroughgoing reform and not ungenerous, as remuneration generally was far more in real terms than clergy now receive as stipends. Victorian reformers were quite clear that it was vital for the old and unreformed places (whose survival of the Reformation had been ensured only by royal patronage) which even now are odd in comparison with the institutions of other churches, should be taken in hand. By 1870 the changes were complete. In the short term the changes were largely a success, but in the longer term Cathedrals were impoverished and driven to survive on tourism, resulting in some of them clashing with the ancient statutes that enriched the lawyers. But the great abuses were addressed.

Trollope was aware of another tide of change. More and more clergy and laity thought that the Church should be more definitely pious than it had been, and less identified with the worldly tone conveyed by such people as Archdeacon Grantly or Canon Stanhope. Some (high churchmen and among them the Tractarians) looked to the ancient traditions of the Church to revive worship and piety. Others (Evangelicals) looked to stir inward experience. Evangelicals grated on many, especially Tractarian sympathizers. Evangelicals may regard outward formalities as worldly and irrelevant to the real matter of the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Non Evangelicals often suspect members of that tendency of manipulativeness as having too great a readiness to gush. In the 1850s Evangelicals showed a vigorous determination to reform society in a more godly direction, and campaigned to change the law of the land accordingly.

When Evangelicals appear in the novels of Charles Dickens or Anthony Trollope, they are, alas, unlikeable. In Dickens's books they are generally dissenters: Methodists of one kind or another. But many Church of England clergy counted themselves as Evangelicals, then as now, and were, in those days, ascendant. A nasty example of the type appears in 1837 in *The Vicar of Wrexhill* by Frances Trollope. The villain of this book is a slimy Vicar who is appointed for political reasons, and creeps his way into the heart of a widow for her fortune and her

property. Unfortunately this is a slur on the reputation of admirable representatives of the Evangelical tradition. But in this matter Trollope and his mother shared similar attitudes towards Evangelicals.

This aspect of the church life of the 1850s emerged in *Barchester Towers*, published in 1857. Here two searing portraits of Evangelicals are presented in the form of Mr Slope and Mrs Proudie. Between *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* they sharpened a campaign over Sabbath observance. Lord Shaftesbury and the Archbishop of Canterbury (John Bird Sumner, an Evangelical) backed moves in Parliament to prevent museums and galleries opening on Sundays. A bill to that effect appeared before Parliament in June 1855.

"In Bishop Proudie, Trollope showed the sort of Bishop who would have been approved by Lord Palmerston and the sort that he in fact promoted".

There was uproar. Not everyone even then found Sunday an inspiring day or ideal. On the one side stood the Archbishop and organizations such as the Lord's Day Observance Society, and on the other, those who knew how many of the poor relied on Sunday working as they did for their livelihood. Several thousand people gathered in Hyde Park on Sunday 24th June 1855, and hooted at the rich and their servants who spent their Sunday afternoons parading in their carriages. "Why allow your servants to work on Sundays? Down with the Sabbatarians!" were the sort of shouts that were heard. But there were more than shouts. Lord Robert Grosvenor, who presented the Bill at Westminster, feared that his House would be sacked. At the beginning of July crowds of boys pelted the carriage of Lord Palmerston and broke various windows, including those of the Archbishop of York (Thomas Musgrave) in London. Lambeth Palace was surrounded by crowds of police. The mob pulled up the railings of Hyde Park and 49 policemen were hurt in one day. The Bill was withdrawn. Galleries did open, and a grudging and complex series of laws did allow trading to happen: a mess that was tidied a few years ago by the almost total collapse of popular opposition. It clearly marks

what a different world we now live in.

Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister in February 1855. He was not an Evangelical. He was even ignorant of the clergy, though not as hostile to church politics as Disraeli was to be. He once wrote to Queen Victoria:

> "… the bishops are in the church what generals of districts are in the army: their church duties consist in watching over the clergy of the diocese, seeing that they perform properly their parochial duties, and preserving harmony between the clergy and the laity, and softening the asperities between the established church and the dissenters. For these purposes it is desirable that a bishop should have practical knowledge of parochial functions, and should not be an overbearing and intolerant temperament. His diocesan duties are enough to occupy all his time, and the less he engages in theological disputes the better. Much mischief has been done by theological bishops…"

The paradox is that because Palmerston was not interested in church life he also did not like the clergy to be too interested in promoting the church as an institution. He would have preferred the clergy to keep to religious matters, provided they did not trouble him. Consequently, in some ways he found Evangelicals more congenial than the high churchmen who wanted influence and were likely to interfere. But he miscalculated. The Sabbath riots came as a shock.

In Bishop Proudie, Trollope showed the sort of Bishop who would have been approved by Lord Palmerston and the sort that he in fact promoted. Thomas Proudie:

> "… had been preacher to the royal Beef-eaters, Curator of theological manuscripts in the Ecclesiastical Courts, Chaplain to the Queen's Yeomanry Guard, and almost to his Royal Highness the prince of Rappe-Blankenberg… in person Dr Proudie is a good looking man, spruce and dapper, and very tidy. He is somewhat below middle height being about five foot four, but he makes up for the inches which he wants by the dignity with which he carries those which he has. It is no fault of his own if he has not a commanding eye, for he studies hard to assume it. His features are well formed, though perhaps the sharpness of his nose may give to his face … an air of insignificance. If so, it is greatly redeemed by his mouth and chin, of which he is justly proud".

Trollope, always good at describing nonentities, brilliantly depicted this nonentity as the Evangelical but weak front for his more lethal wife, and also his Chaplain. The historical facts given above explain why Mrs Proudie and Mr Slope, for all their mutual enmity, agree over the importance of keeping Sunday special.

"His features are well formed, though perhaps the sharpness of his nose may give to his face … and air of insignificance."

Trollope's awareness of the impact of modernization, and the rise of Evangelicalism, add to the subtlety of his descriptions of Barchester. But is Trollope's Barchester entirely a past world? Because Cathedral Closes have often been carefully preserved, they can cause us to imagine that the same life goes on in them as did in the 1850s. But changes have been continuous. The senior clergy today are poorer and live in tied houses, which they have to vacate when they retire, between 65 and 70 year of age. Even Archdeacons are not quite what they were when Grantly was in his prime, though they are still the workhorses of the dioceses. Trollope's inevitable question about whether the clergy are gentlemen is now almost meaningless. And nowadays Cathedrals have not only survived but flourished as the festival and worship centres for wide areas. They often have large congregations; their music is better than ever. They have immensely busy timetables of activity. They are even in better physical condition.

And yet. The greatness of Trollope is based on the glorious dialogue between well realized characters. Is any scene in a novel more dramatically successful than that in which Mr Crawley vanquishes Mrs Proudie? While human beings struggle for power, Trollope delights and enlightens. We still meet Grantlys, Slopes, Crawleys and Hardings – but not only among the clergy.

Taken from a talk delivered to the London Seminar Group in September 2012.

Your letters

If you have any questions, comments or observations on anything related to Trollope, 'Trollopiana', or the Trollope Society, please write to us at The Trollope Society, PO Box 505, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 9RW, or email info@trollopesociety.org

Hello Pamela,

I found *Trollopiana* waiting for me on my return from Australia last week … always enjoyable.

While I was in Perth I met with Eleanor Bellett, the fellow Trollopian whom you mentioned in 'Omnium Gatherum' [*Trollopiana* Volume 93] and enjoyed a pleasant lunch with her and two other members. An unusual gathering!

Clare Munn

Dear Michael and Pamela

I thought you'd be interested in the Obituary of Stephen Panton in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph.*

Nigel Starck

Panton was renowned for his love of the works of Anthony Trollope. Fame of a sort came his way in 1996 with the publication of Kitchen Venom by his then-colleague, Philip Hensher (now a novelist). The book opened with a competition between the clerks to name as many Trollope novels as possible, a trial inspired by Hensher's conversations with Panton.

The Daily Telegraph, 14th September 2011

Dear Sirs

I have a copy in mint condition of *Trollope: A Commentary* by Michael Sadleir (Constable 1927). This copy is a signed limited edition (number 91 of 100). Would any of your members be interested in buying it?

Richard Tomkins

Dear Sir

I have a copy of the *Christmas Graphic* dated 1876 in which five chapters of 'Christmas at Thompson Hall' are published. Is this the complete story?

Nick Trevor

There are indeed only five chapters in *Christmas at Thompson Hall.* The first is' Mrs Brown's Success' and the fifth is 'Mrs Brown at Thompson Hall'. The 1876 appearance in the *Graphic* was the first publication but it later appeared in the *Collected Short Stories* within Volume I *Christmas Stories.*

Michael Williamson:

Hello there,

A book has come into my possession titled *Phineas Finn* with no title page and beginning with no page number on chapter one but page two is numbered 104. The next chapter in this quarter leather-backed book is five with no page number but the opposite page number is 233, and so the book moves on in the same vein.

I just wondered if you had ever come across this oddment. There is a personal inscription signed by a Vernon Wetherall [?] … dated … 1905.

Stuart Marshall

It is difficult to make an informed comment without seeing the book but I can give some general information which I hope will be helpful.

Initially, *Phineas Finn* came out in 20 monthly instalments beginning with the first number of *Saint Paul's Magazine* in October 1867 and running uninterruptedly until May 1869. Each instalment contained one full page illustration which was then included in the first two-volume edition in book form.

[Perhaps] … it has been rebound at some time [leaving] missing sections? [although] the odd pagination does not sound as if you only have the text of one volume. If you could provide us with photocopies of the key pages we might be able to provide a more definite identification.

Michael Williamson

25th AGM Lecture

Dear Tony

Anthony Trollope's career in the Post Office

by Julian Stray

Julian Stray is Assistant Curator at The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA), the leading resource for all aspects of British postal.

When Anthony Trollope entered the Post Office in 1834 he joined a large Government-led institution with a central core of 'old school' masters. One of these officials, Francis Freeling, later became Secretary to the Post Office and established a system for recording Minutes and Reports. He is responsible for the foundations on which the Royal Mail Archive is built and The British Postal Museum & Archive's London home was named Freeling House in his honour in 1984. It was from this extensive resource that much of this paper was researched.

Francis Freeling's son Clayton was Secretary at the Stamp Office and Clayton's wife was a friend of Francis Trollope, mother to the young Anthony. The scene was set and Anthony Trollope's life in the Post Office was set in motion.

Clayton took Trollope to see his brother Henry Freeling, then Assistant Secretary at Post Office Headquarters in London. Trollope was asked to copy some lines from *The Times* newspaper and he proceeded to produce a series of blots and mistakes. Given a second chance, he was permitted to do some writing at home and bring it in for inspection the following day. When he arrived at Headquarters, he was seated at a desk and put to work as a Junior Clerk in the Secretary's Office, his writing from the previous evening went unexamined. Trollope was formally appointed on 4th November 1834. His appointment record reads:

> "I beg to submit to your Lordship the name of Anthony Trollope as a Junior Clerk in the Secretary's office… Mr Trollope has been well educated and will be subject to the usual probation as to competency".

His days stretched from ten in the morning until six in the evening. He regarded his work, mostly writing duties, or more properly, copying duties, as not the most satisfying. He had a reputation for turning up late for work and extended his lunch playing cards with fellow clerks. Discontent and rebellious, he struggled to make himself fit within the strictures of a state position.

"… fortunately the Irish Secretary to the Post Office informed him that he would base his opinion of him on his merits rather than the sorry report from London"

Trollope later became one of the personal clerks to Colonel Maberly who had succeeded Freeling as Secretary to the Post Office. Trollope struggled to maintain an amicable relationship with a difficult character. Trollope recorded in his autobiography that he found Maberly both cruel and unjust. Though this was not an opinion shared by all, Trollope was to be plagued by Maberly for some years.

Appointment to the Surveying staff

Trollope found his salary of £90 inadequate to his means and in August 1841 he applied for the newly created position of Surveyor's Clerk in Ireland. Unfortunately Maberly's opinion of him had preceded his arrival in Ireland. He could potentially have been severely hampered by this but fortunately the Irish Secretary to the Post Office informed him that he would base his opinion of him on his merits rather than the sorry report from London.

Post Office Surveyors were responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the postal service in their district. They would visit every letter-receiving house and post office, checking its accounts and efficiency. London-based postal Headquarters relied heavily on their Surveyors' advice and expertise.

Trollope's administrative load was viewed so heavy that he was actually issued a signature hand stamp.
This item is one of the gems of The British Postal Museum & Archive's collection. BPMA 2007-0063

The amount of work for each surveyor steadily increased, particularly in the early 19th century. The sheer weight of administration meant that Surveyors' Clerks were soon added to the Surveying Establishment. It was to this body of men that Trollope belonged and he now changed his lifestyle. An increase in salary to £100 was accompanied by travelling expenses, which in Ireland were half that awarded in England.

His autobiography records his admission of travelling on horseback as much as he could so that the additional travelling allowance would pay for his stabling. Certainly he could now actually afford to gain the life experiences that subsequently found their way in to his novels. He was now 26 years old. When he married in 1844 he was receiving a Post Office salary of £400 per annum. With expensive tastes, he regarded such payment as 'slender' though he also took from four to six weeks holiday every year or two.

Postal Reform

Trollope witnessed Postal Reform. This was Rowland Hill's plan to bring the cost of sending a letter down to one penny. Having the *sender* pay the postage rather than the *recipient* ensured not only an explosion in use of the postal service by the general public but also a requirement for massive restructuring of the infrastructure that supported it. It fell on Surveyors and their Clerks to make the necessary changes.

Surveyors were instructed that any village or hamlet that received 100 letters each day should be awarded a delivery. However the revision did not proceed as fast as Headquarters wished and Trollope, recognized as a 'first class' Surveyors' Clerk, was given the job of speeding things up in several districts. In 1851, Trollope was heavily involved with his review of the postal services of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, and the six southern Welsh counties, also the Channel Islands, particularly those on Jersey.

In November 1851 he was sent to the Channel Islands to make recommendations on how to improve the service. His reports were assessed by his superior George Creswell, Surveyor for the Western District of England, before passing to Headquarters in London. Possibly the most important of Trollope's proposals was his recommendation for the experimental use of pillar boxes at four sites in St. Helier in Jersey. Pillar boxes had been in use on the continent for just a few years previously, however the introduction of anything as substantial as street furniture for this purpose had not yet occurred in Britain:

> "There is at present no receiving office in St. Heliers, and persons living in the distant parts of the town have to send nearly a mile to the principal office. I believe that a plan has obtained in France of fitting up letter boxes in posts fixed at the road side, and it may perhaps be thought advisable to try the operation of their system in St. Heliers - postage stamps are sold in every street, and therefore all that is wanted is a safe receptacle for letters, which shall be cleared on the morning of the despatch of the London Mails, and at such times as may be requisite. Iron posts suited for the purpose may be erected at the corners of streets in such situations as may be desirable, or probably it may be found more serviceable to fix iron letter boxes about 5 feet from the ground, wherever permanently built walls, fit for the purpose, can be found, and I think that the public may safely be invited to use such boxes for depositing their letter".

Trollope's brother-in-law, John Tilley, stated that their use on Jersey would be a "good opportunity to try the system". Tilley had

joined the Post Office in 1829 and was described as a shrewd, caustic, clever man. He married three times, his first wife being Trollope's sister. Trollope later described Tilley in his autobiography as "one of the dearest friends of my life". They remained in frequent contact, both socially and professionally, for decades and in correspondence Tilley's salutation varied from the usual "My Dear Trollope" to, if feeling particularly social, "My Dear Tony".

Creswell also agreed with Trollope's proposal, adding that "no better opportunity of trying the experiment of 'roadside' letter boxes could be selected". Within the month, the Postmaster General had approved the trial. Trollope's roadside letter boxes, referred to as "assistant post offices" by the *Jersey Times*, came into use on 23rd November 1852. They were hexagonal, cast-iron, about four feet high and red in colour. On 8th February 1853, similar boxes on Guernsey opened for business. While none of the original 1852 boxes on Jersey have survived, remarkably, one of the venerable old boxes on Guernsey is still providing good service. Another survives in The British Postal Museum & Archive collection.

Promotion to Surveyor

After completing a review of the rural posts in Hereford, Trollope was promoted to acting Surveyor and returned to Ireland in the Northern District. This was made substantive on 11th October 1854. Following postal reform in 1840 there had been an incredible increase in the volume of mail in Ireland, rising from almost nine and a half million letters in 1839 to nearly 42 million in 1855. Much of Trollope's work was dealing with the new postal services, routes, discipline, salaries etc. While an efficient employee, he could also be a difficult man; he had a reputation for roaring out an instantly formed opinion. At one meeting of the Surveyors, he shouted at one of the speakers: 'I differ from you entirely!... what was it you said?'

Since 1830 the Post Office had been experimenting with the transport of mail by rail and the Surveyors were crucial to the new arrangements. Tilley wrote to Trollope in December 1855:

> "My Dear Tony, ... whatever course you take we are bound to support you. You are to make every possible effort to keep the mails on the line of railway... I shall of course be very glad if you can bring the people round, though I see little hope of it".

In late 1855 and early 1856 he worked closely with Tilley on his recommendations before they were approved by the Postmaster General. Trollope himself was under no illusion as to how important this change had been, particularly in Ireland:

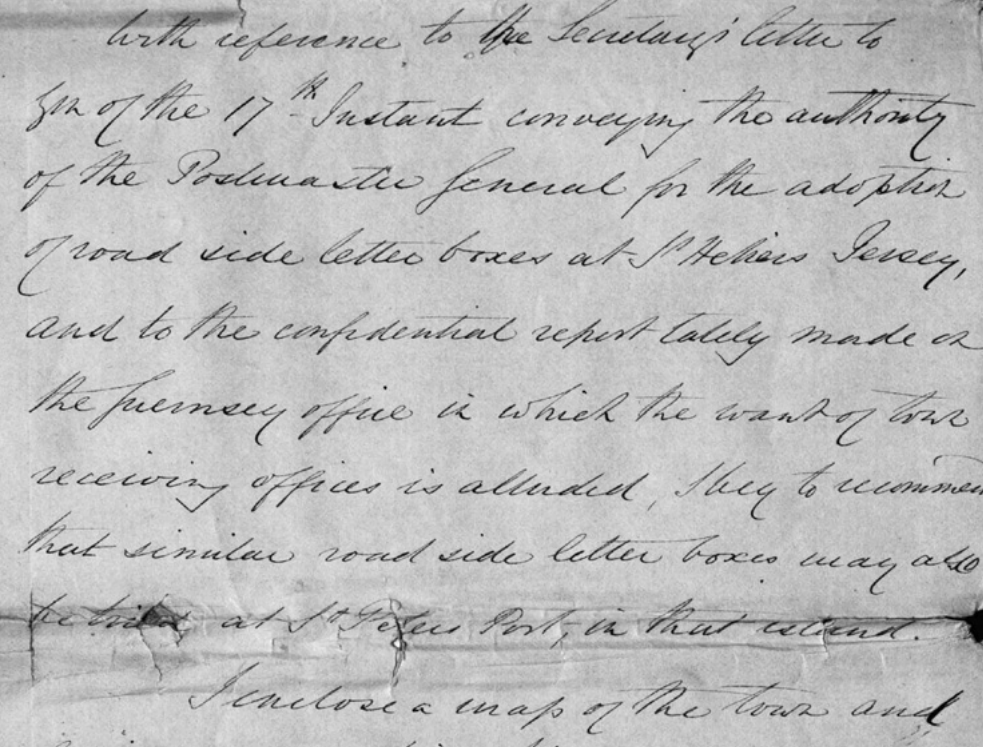
> "In no part of the United Kingdom has more been done for the welfare of the people by the use of railways for carrying mails and by the penny postage system than in Ireland."

"Much of Trollope's work was dealing with the new postal services, routes, discipline, salaries etc. While an efficient employee, he could also be a difficult man"

Foreign travel

Trollope's work for the Post Office now began to take on a different form. In 1858 he was selected to negotiate a treaty for the conveyance of mails with Egypt. This was for the transfer of Australian and Indian mails across the delta. A treaty was already in place whereby mail bags and boxes were transported by camel from Alexandria to Suez. His mission was to negotiate a treaty for transport by rail and he completed the work within two months, making the best of his time abroad. When Edmund Yates, a senior clerk within the Secretary's Office travelled to Alexandria on Post Office business, he was expecting to meet Trollope there. However he was met by a letter saying that Trollope had left: "... were I to stay now I should lose my only opportunity of going to Jerusalem". However, on his return Trollope submitted his claim for £150 in expenses!

Working through the Mediterranean surveying the British Post Offices, Trollope was never far removed from official discussion, regardless of his travels. In 1858, when senior officials were considering replacing boxes with bags for mail transported to the East



Trollope's proposal for the introduction of letter boxes at St Helier, Jersey

Indies and Australia, Trollope wrote a series of letters to Rowland Hill on the subject: having observed how the wooden mail boxes were actually received abroad, he could state with first-hand knowledge that they were often broken, the contents exposed, were too bulky and thoroughly inefficient. A change to bags with leather tops was made following his recommendations.

While on Malta he inspected the post office and its accounts. He wrote

> "as a whole the duties are I think efficiently performed… it is probably the case that a Maltese, or even an Englishman in a climate so hot as that of this island, will not work so quickly or perhaps as efficiently as our clerks at home"

Trollope was forgetting his early years as a clerk spent playing cards when he should have been working: he recommended a reduction in the number of clerks employed and a re-arrangement of their salaries. This began to bring overseas postal establishments in line with the incremental system of payments used at home. When he was appointed to postal missions in the West Indies and Cuba in 1858 Trollope found the outward journey demanding. Working on his novel *Doctor Thorne* on the voyage, he recorded:

> "I write my allotted number of pages every day. On this occasion more than once I left my paper on the cabin table, rushing away to be sick in the privacy of my state room. It was February and the weather was miserable; but I still did my work".

On Trollope's return, he was asked to carry out a review of the posts in Glasgow. He wrote the love scenes in *The Bertrams* while he was revising the Glasgow duties. He later excused his writing, stating that it was carried out while he was engaged in "walking over the city with the letter carriers, climbing up to the top flats of the houses... and in mid-summer!'"

In later years the Postal Surveyor General of Scotland, Cunynghame, retired and spoke of his time with Trollope. He thought him a great worker and blessed with an amazing ability to fall asleep instantly for a brief space of time in any situation. He spoke of how Trollope would frequently do this on their travels together, but this may have more bearing on Cunynghame's abilities as a conversationalist than anything else!

Back in England, Trollope was later appointed Surveyor of the Eastern District of England. This comprised Cambridgeshire, Essex, part of Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. His life in Ireland "had constantly been happy" but his transfer to England would put him "within reach of publishers, clubs and the dinner parties of the metropolis".

Feuds - such delicious feuds

In 1864 the Surveyors petitioned Lord Stanley of Alderley, the Postmaster General, for an increase in their allowance and an additional payment for Godby, the Chairman of Surveyors. Both were refused and the surveyors received a letter to this effect from Tilley on behalf of the Postmaster General. Trollope took exception to a statement that previous additional payments to senior heads of department in the Post Office had been made for "special services". Trollope did not wait to consult his colleagues before putting pen to paper. In a long letter to the Secretary on the 8th July 1864 he wrote:

> "... I believe no gentleman in the Service... has a better right to put forward a claim for special services than I have... I think that as an old, and I believe I may say meritorious, officer of the Crown, I have the right to ask the Postmaster General to reconsider the matter of special payments, and to readjust the salaries of the Surveyors"

His reply did not ignore the slight that he felt he had received from the new Secretary, his brother-in-law John Tilley either:

> "I think that I am justified in asking his Lordship to recommend the newly appointed Secretary to be more considerate of the feelings of those officers among whom he passed his official life till he received his promotion".

Trollope's letter was to no avail and in an attempt to mollify the heated exchange, he wrote directly to the Postmaster General:

> "A Civil Servant no doubt runs a risk when he calls in question the discretion of his superior officers as I have done. But a course which may be imprudent, need not therefore be improper".

Perhaps he was partially successful in calming the situation for in February 1865 he again opened a letter from Tilley that any of us would be pleased to receive:

> "My Dear Trollope, it is thought necessary to send an officer of the Post Office to India, China & Japan to enquire into certain postal matters, and Lord Stanley [the Postmaster General] considers that it will be well to entrust the mission to you. The Officer so sent will be required to visit Gibraltar and Malta, the stations in Egypt, Bombay, Ceylon possibly Calcutta, Shanghai and Japan and it is calculated that about nine months would be so occupied. Will you be good enough to let me know whether your engagements will admit of your undertaking this employment?"

In June 1866 the role of Metropolitan Surveyor was created and the Postmaster General instructed Tilley to ask Trollope if he wanted the job. Trollope quickly began his revisions of the London post.

In 1857 London had been divided into ten separate postal districts to speed up the delivery of mail within the city. The North Eastern and Southern divisions were abolished following a report by Trollope on their efficiency. This position would have thrown Trollope into close and frequent contact with Rowland Hill. Edmund Yates recorded that when they met Trollope would:

> "… bluster and rave and roar, blowing and sputtering like a grampus; while the pale old gentleman opposite him, sitting back in his armchair and regarding his antagonist furtively under his spectacles, would remain perfectly quiet until he saw his chance, and then deliver himself of the most unpleasant speech he could frame in the hardest possible tone".

Trollope himself records the: "feuds - such delicious feuds".

Yates believed Hill hated Trollope "very cordially". Speaking of Trollope's declaration that promotion by merit was a "damnable system", Hill believed that Trollope left the service because, despite the system being administered by his own brother-in-law, Trollope was still unable to obtain the position of Assistant or Under-Secretary. Trollope was now earning quite handsomely from his writing and tendered his resignation from the Post Office on 3rd October 1867. He had completed 33 years of service with the Post Office. A pension was not normally granted until the age of 60 and Trollope, aged 52, was therefore ineligible.

Having received his resignation, Tilley wrote to Trollope on 9th October:

> "...you have for many years ranked among the most conspicuous servants of the Post Office which on several occasions when you have been employed on large and difficult matters has reaped much benefit from the great abilities which you have been able to place at its disposal ... in accepting your resignation, which he does with much regret, the Duke of Montrose [Postmaster General 1866-68] desires me to convey to you his own sense of the value of your services and to state how alive he is to the loss which will be sustained by the Department in which you have long been an ornament and where your place will be with difficulty supplied".

Even following his retirement, Trollope's work for the Post Office was not complete. In 1868 he was requested by the Government to travel to the USA to complete a new postal treaty with Washington. He was by now a very successful and popular author. He could commit his energies to his literary output, his clubs, hunting, whist and travel. He lived for 15 years after his retirement from the Post Office. On 3rd November 1882 he suffered a stroke soon after dining with his old friend and occasional adversary from the Post Office, Sir John Tilley, and died 6th December 1882.

Seminar Groups

A review of Seminar Discussions

The Trollope Society has Seminar Groups up and down the UK, from Salisbury to Edinburgh. All members are most welcome to attend. For information on forthcoming groups visit www.trollopesociety.org

Oxford: 15th February 2011, contact hrogerharvey@aol.com

The Last Chronicle of Barset

Jennifer Sugden gave an apposite talk on the character of Josiah Crawley and changes to the legal system from the defendant presenting a defence in their own words, to today's adversarial approach of lawyers addressing the jury on the accused's behalf. It was noted that in *Last Chronicle* Crawley's own words convince Mr Toogood of his innocence, leading to the eventual truth. The erosion of social values, the inescapability of change and the sense of nostalgia, were also observed.

The reasons for Lily Dale's rejection of Eames and Crosbie, and her commitment to the title of Old Maid, were debated with consideration of her sexuality and idealism. There were queries over the 19th century procedure for cashing cheques. The question of the present value of the £20 cheque and the total £70 given to Crawley brought suggestions of a multiplier between 40 and 100. We discussed the illustrations in a first edition bound up from the original parts, and N. John Hall's *Trollope and His Illustrators*. The significance of the Dobbs Broughtons/Conway Dalrymple/van Sievers/Madalina Demolines plotting provided a contrast between financial and moral values and those of Barsetshire, a precursor of *The Way We Live Now*, or an explanation of Lily's final rejection of Johnny.

Roger Harvey

York: 25th January 2012, contact peter.lee@york.ac.uk

The Bertrams

Howard Gregg introduced this ambitious novel with its analysis of a society consumed by money, dysfunctional families, abuse of authority, and Trollope's great social sweep of writing.

We concentrated on George, Caroline and Harcourt, all of whom manifest self-possession: Caroline sometimes defensive, sometimes offensive. In all three, self-possession is broken by trial and, in the case of the two former, rebuilt in a chastened sense of relationship.

Some members expressed impatience with Trollope's recourse to experiences in the Mediterranean and Near East ("Cairo – *twice*!"), although the second sequence promotes understanding of the (disconcertingly muted) 'happy' ending. Some felt Harcourt's suicide was uncharacteristic. We would have liked more of Arthur, a foil for George and Harcourt, and of Adela, even though the former was dismissed by Trollope as 'unworthy': not only because they echo George and Caroline, but because the long-suffering Adela effectively absolves Caroline from guilt over Harcourt's suicide, thus freeing her to marry George.

Although Tolstoy had reservations about the novel's diffuseness, Newman, a great Trollopian, considered this 'decidedly the most powerful thing' written by him.

Anne Pugh

Cambridge 28th January 2012, contact michael@thecleeve.freeserve.co.uk

The Duke's Children

For several months the group journeyed through the written life of the Duke of Omnium and family, ending with *The Duke's Children* containing familiar themes: Parliament and party politics; the importance of Members of Parliament; class; rank; money; honesty and pride.

Lady Glencora dies prematurely, leaving the Duke to manage two spirited sons and a determined daughter. He is confused between his genuine love and a belief in the importance of rank. But a marriage between Silverbridge and Isabel Boncassen would not have been uncommon in the 1870s as class was becoming less rigid. A rich American heiress of plebeian background could marry into the English peerage, to general benefit. The character of Isobel is possibly based on Trollope's close friend, the American Kate Field, and Mr Boncassen, well spoken and erudite, may have been based on Mr Lothrop Motley, a popular American visitor whom Trollope almost certainly met. We felt that the construction of the story was clever with dramatic tension upheld until the end. We agreed that Anthony's characters are so well drawn that we can, and do, argue vehemently about them as though they are real people.

A shifty character, but one for whom, strangely, we felt some sympathy, is Major Tifto, persuaded by his crooked friends to lame a racehorse, resulting in society rejection.

Mabel Grex, a beautiful woman and one of Trollope's memorable tragic heroines, at the outset has it all, but by playing her hand badly is left with nothing.

We now know that a quarter of the original text was omitted by Trollope at the request of his publishers, and we look forward to the publication of a new complete version in 2015.

Teresa Ransom

London: September 2012

The Warden, a theatrical production by Traffic of the Stage

Several Members attended performances at *Upstairs at the Gatehouse* in Highgate, and reactions were very positive. The play was a faithful adaptation by Society Member David Witherow, who is to be congratulated on an enjoyable evening of entertainment.

The interesting venue lent itself to an intimate presentation in the round, giving the right atmosphere. By moving quickly from one area of the stage to another, a refreshingly fast pace was maintained and the characters cleverly brought to life by the talented, well-directed cast.

I particularly liked the sympathetic interpretation of both Lindsey Readman as Susan Grantly and James Butler as John Bold; there were strong performances from Roger Sansom and Bryan Hands while Andrew Wickes was a splendid Archdeacon. In the sensitive title role, Tim Thomas managed to capture all the facets of this complex well-loved character, well supported by Laura Hanna as a charming Eleanor. The cast was admirably completed by Semane Parsons, Andrew McRobb and Simon Brandon. The whole team, and especially David and Director Harry Meacher, deserve praise for creating a perfect adaptation. Although Anthony was a frustrated playwright, he would take heart that, as his bi-centenary approaches, there are many coming forward keen to dramatize his works.

Michael Williamson

A seminar with the writer and members of the cast will be held in London on 31st January, contact martin.chown@tesco.net.

Omnium Gatherum

A collection of all sorts of things of interest to Trollopians

Sadly we announce the death of Guy Robinson, longstanding member of the Society. Guy delighted in highlighting Trollopian situations where upper class people were unable to act spontaneously due to the convention of hats and bonnets being worn on the slightest outdoor visit. An example is in *Marion Fay* chapter LIX where Lord Hampstead visits Marion Fay on her deathbed, in a highly emotional scene:

> "I cannot bear it", he said, rising suddenly from his chair, and hurrying out of the room. He went out of the room and from the house, on to the little terrace which ran in front of the sea. But his escape was of no use to him; he could not leave her. He had come out without his hat, and he could not stand there in the sun to be stared at. "I am a coward", he said, going back to her and resuming his chair".

Erratum: An error in the article 'Trollope: From Barsetshire To Barnet Via The Bertrams' by Paul Baker in *Trollopiana* Volume 93 stated that a commemorative plaque on the front of *Grandon* was unveiled by Joanna Trollope. It was in fact unveiled by Teresa Ransom who found the house whilst researching her biography *Fanny Trollope* (1995). She was invited to view the rooms, some of which are described in both Anthony's and Fanny's books.

We are always pleased to hear of any news, events, exhibitions, publications or other items of interest to Trollope Society members. For inclusion in Trollopiana, please email the editor, Pamela Marshall Barrell at pamela.barrell@artsviews.co.uk

The Trollope Society,
PO Box 505, Tunbridge Wells,
TN2 9RW, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1747 839 799
Email: info@trollopesociety.org
Web: www.trollopesociety.org
Twitter: Follow @trollopesociety
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