THE *NEW* GLADSTONE REVIEW

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Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry for bookish people of philanthropic inclination

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Editorial

Many, if not most, of us probably thought that by now life would have returned to normality. But we are all beginning to realise that the Covid19 virus is not going to be easy to control, let alone eliminate. At different times in our planet's history, the challenges humanity has faced have taken quite different forms – cataclysmic apocalypse, poisoning by plagues, starvation due to overpopulation, nuclear annihilation, catastrophic global warming– all have been, or still are, credible existential threats. Until very recent times the common response has been to switch-off and carry on as usual, because individual efforts seem futile. For example, despite official advice in the 1960s it would be utterly delusional to imagine we could save our skins by building personal nuclear bunkers. (But see article 8 for a remarkable demonstration of human resilience in the face of adversity.)

Even so, we are entering a new era, in which it seems possible that viral pandemics may not be invulnerable. Constant vigilance will undoubtedly be required – and, as will be the case for surviving another major threat – that of ecological breakdown (as discussed in article 2), international cooperation will be vital. In article 3, I repeat my claim that many of the critical issues humanity now faces have a distinctly biological nature – and demand much more *bioethical deliberation* than is currently evident. Statisticians, risk analysts and psychologists dominate the specialist committees. But how many MPs, have much understanding of the nature of scientific research or of ethical theory?

I am most grateful to Stephen Wade for his fascinating account of poet Wilfred Owen's last months before he was killed just before the armistice in 1918. Such biographical notes can provide valuable insights into influences on a poets' writing, e.g. of *Strange Meeting* - a particular favourite of mine.

With continuing uncertainty about future Government proposals for a full release from lock-down, I have decided to embark on a small-scale trial by issuing a mini-catalogue of books of local interest, which may be purchased by a process that satisfies social distancing etc (see article 7 for details).

I wish all readers as congenial a time as possible. Books offer many consolations in adversity.

BM

2. DEMOGRAPHIC DILEMMAS[1]

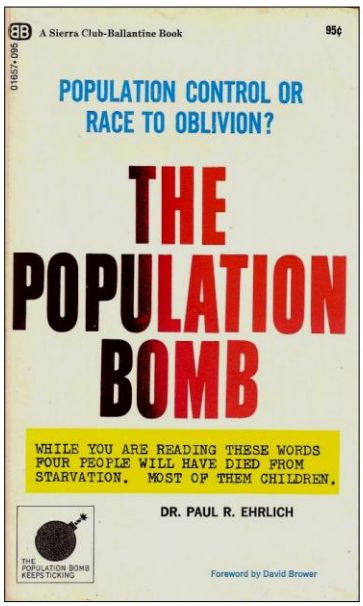
This opinion-piece presents a brief analysis of the problems faced by humanity, and the issues that need to be addressed at a global level, if the future of human life is to be ensured.

At least since the 18th century, concerns have been expressed about the Earth's ability to sustain an ever-increasing number of people. The alarm was most famously raised by the Rev Thomas Malthus in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798. His argument, on which he elaborated in subsequent editions over the next 25 years, is concisely summarized in the following quotations:

Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical [i.e. exponential] *ratio. Subsistence* [i.e. food] *increases only in an arithmetical ratio* [i.e. linearly]. *By that law of Nature that makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal*.

Malthus, who considered that '*the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state,*' deduced that a stable population could only be achieved by an increase in the death rate, '*because gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow levels the population with the food in the world.*' His main claim was that food supplies place a limit on population growth because '*the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man.*' He considered that celibacy was beyond most people's capability.

But it has for long been clear that, although there have been several limited famines, Malthus' pessimistic forecast has not materialized. The ability of the land to produce food was soon to be greatly increased by the methods that contributed to the Agricultural Revolution, while the dissociation of Malthus' *passion between the sexes* and resulting pregnancies was accomplished by the widespread use of contraceptives, both physical and chemical. And yet, although he was assuredly mistaken in his prediction of the immanence of *gigantic famine*, the fear that sooner or later Malthus' grim prediction would be realised was not forgotten.

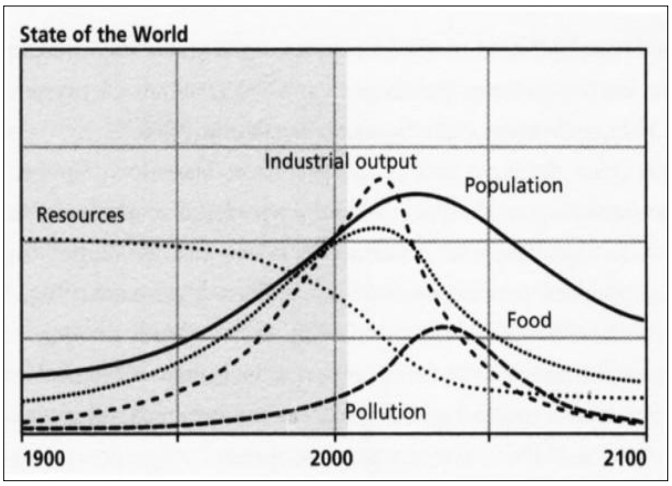


In 1968, a young ecologist at Stanford University, USA, Dr Paul Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb*, which advanced an argument similar to that of Malthus – but backed up with extensive citation of scientific data. Other books were to follow, such as *The Population Explosion*, co-authored with his wife Anne, to which reactions from other academics, both ecologists and economists were often critical – in view of the authors' alleged naiveté and alarmism.

But in 1972 a report published by a team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) USA, basing their analyses on powerful computer programmes, deduced *that even under the most optimistic predictions about technological advances, the world cannot support present rates of economic and population growth for more than a few decades from now.*

[1] Demography: the statistical study of human populations, especially with reference to size, density& distribution

These predictions were not limited to food supply and population, but also assessed factors such as the availability of resources, industrial output and pollution. In the report, and its successor in 1992, the authors Dennis and Donella Meadows and colleagues, suggested that *only by a concerted attack on all the major problems simultaneously could mankind achieve a state of equilibrium necessary for human survival*.



One of the computer scenarios, shown here, was based on the assumption that the-then existing trends would continue unabated – leading to a sharp decline in the global population as food supplies, industrial output and other resources (such as oil) declined, while pollution increased. They stressed that this was not a prediction, but what would be likely to happen *if no major changes in life style were made*. It is interesting, however, that in their reports, no mention was made of global warming due to greenhouse gas emissions, which have since attracted such prominent concern and attention.

Although the emphasis so far has been on population growth, the real problem is the resulting *economic* growth, almost universally pursued in so-called developed countries (DC), because such growth has profound *ecological* effects. This is evident from the simple equation:

$$I = P \times A$$

where *I*, the *environmental impact*, is the product of *population* (*P*) and *affluence* (*A*), which represents the average sum of each person's material possessions and the effects of making, using and disposing of them. One strategy for reducing *I* is to develop novel technologies that are designed to diminish the energy needed to produce each unit of economic output. But clearly, on a global scale, *I* will only decrease if there are reductions in P, A or both.[2]

Although major changes in life style have been made over the 30 years since the 1992 MIT report was published, some have promoted environmental sustainability, while others have been highly detrimental. Equally important has been the recognition that many concerns that were simply not appreciated then – because 'below the radar' – are now known to have critical effects on environmental sustainability. For example, consider the concept of *Natural Capital*, which is a useful term because it is more likely to catch the attention of those whose dominant mindset has hitherto focused chiefly on global economics than on appeals to 'protect the environment' - which many, even now, consider merely a 'sentimental' idea.

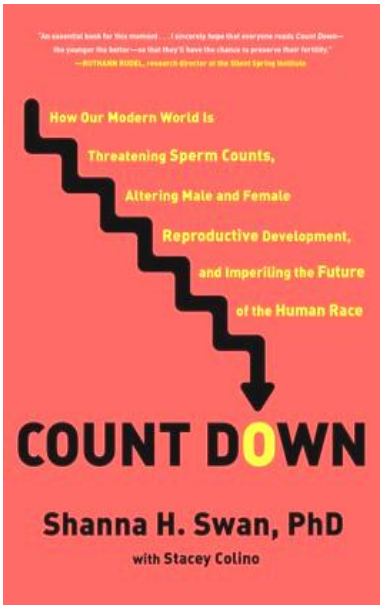
Natural Capital (NC) is the Earth's environmental stock of resources that provide goods and ecological services required to support life. Examples include: water, wind, sunlight, tides, minerals; assimilation of waste; absorption of carbon dioxide; arable land; habitat; fossil fuels; biodiversity; temperature regulation; and facilities for recreation and visual amenity.[2] Apart from its often aesthetic qualities, NC has financial value when used appropriately. On the other hand, many business practices; development schemes and government policies have negative effects by depleting NC, e.g. by damaging ecosystems. For example, more specifically, as greenhouse gas emissions increase and areas responsible for carbon capture decrease (e.g. by deforestation), global temperatures rise, weather

[2] T Jackson (2017) *Prosperity without Growth*, 2nd edition. Routledge

patterns change, sea levels increase, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems undergo readjustment and land-use patterns change. Many in the UK have recently suffered the effects of such events.

On the positive side, monetary income can be derived from NC, e.g. by afforestation and measures to encourage biodiversity. But protection of environmental resources has been largely neglected by standard economic theories and practices. If economic and social development is allowed to grow unchecked, stocks of NC will continue to decline, eroding natural life support systems, and threatening the very persistence of human life.[3]

Clearly, the most effective way of achieving a sustainable global future, in which opportunities for physical and mental wellbeing are equitably distributed, is for the world's nations to cooperate in formulating plans for coordinated action and provision of financial support in ways commensurate with the urgency of specific problems. The UK furlough scheme, devised to mitigate the effects of Covid, demonstrates that conventional capitalist economics is summarily abandoned in the face of a challenging emergency. Few people, at either end of the political spectrum, disagree with the policy. Moreover, the warning periodically broadcast to shoppers at my local Co-op, with reference to the pandemic, '*we're all in this together*,' is an assertion of even more relevance when addressing the future of humanity on Earth!



Although affluence and the potential roles of technology are important considerations in addressing environmental impacts, population remains a crucial factor. In an attempt to curb population growth to improve the standard of living, in 1979 the People's Republic of China introduced the *one child policy*. In accordance with this, couples agreeing to only have one child were allowed access to better schools, housing and health services; but these benefits were withdrawn if the contract was broken: (and the policy was abandoned in 2015). Such a crude 'carrot and stick' strategy fell short both of several basic ethical principles and in achieving its objective. For example, the preference for males led to many cases of infanticide of baby girls. And with poor pension provision, most elderly people were financially dependent on their children—giving rise to the so-called ***4:2:1*** phenomenon – referring to working couples who were solely economically- responsible for one child and four grandparents.

The objective of achieving a sustainable state for all the world's people must surely adopt a much more ethically-based approach. The starting point has, however, changed in the last 30 years, not least because of a dramatic shift in global fertility. From 1950 to 2017, the *total fertility rate* (TFR) – defined as the average number of children born to a woman in her lifetime – decreased by 50%, from 4.7 births to 2.4. Clearly, when the TFR is below the replacement value (taken to be 2.1) the population as a whole is shrinking. The future implications of such changes are difficult to discern.

Of course, as well as birth rates, *longevity* also affects population size. The average global life expectancy at birth has risen from 40 to 65 years over the past century, but in Japan and Sweden, life expectancy is much higher, namely 82- 84 for women and about 77 for men – and similar, albeit less-marked, trends apply for many other countries. Consequently, many countries are experiencing a situation equivalent to China's 4:2:1 pattern, with an ever-increasing number of elderly (and progressively infirm) people, dependent on a shrinking workforce.

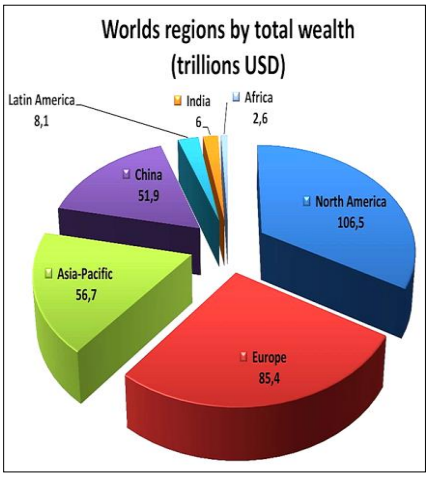
Reduced fertility is the result of two main trends, one biological and the other cultural. According to a

[3] Sustainability Concepts: Natural Capital (gdrc.org)

rigorous and comprehensive global study of men in 195 countries and territories the average sperm count declined by over 50% between 1973 and 2011 – (see Count Down book above) [4] [5]. Prominent causes are endocrine disruption from certain chemicals (notably waste plastics, the alarming scale of which is a recent discovery), maternal smoking during pregnancy and exposure to pesticides – so reduced sperm count might be *the canary in the coal mine'* for male health across a lifespan.[4]

The 'cultural' factor, long operative in DCs, is now again assuming significance. Especially in Western developed countries many young couples have decided not to have children, on grounds which range from the extent to which, when young, they limit parents' freedom of action and/or entail great expense, to not wishing to expose their offspring to a world in which they believe they would suffer much unhappiness. Some couples might not have children on the unselfish grounds that more people add to the global environmental problem through their inevitable impacts on consumption and pollution. And it is also distressingly true that suicide among younger people is increasing. In one recent report, between 2007 and 2017, the suicide rate for those aged 10 - 24 increased by 56%; while tripling for children aged 10-14, after years of decline.

In all our reasoning about sustainability, a concern with *fairness* is a paramount consideration. No one has any responsibility for where, when or to whom they were born – so that fairness must surely be a major ethical priority in all policies that might be proposed. But, inevitably, the future for which humanity must plan will be populated by many people as yet *unborn* - and *without* many currently alive. We have, then, to focus on *intergenerational justice.* As expressed by philosopher John Rawls, for whom fairness equated with justice:



Justice is the first virtue of social institutions as truth is of systems of thought. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions, however efficiently arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust.[6]

The Covid pandemic has made many people realise, perhaps for the first time, that we share a planet which, metaphorically, has contracted to the extent that the wellbeing of each of us demands consideration of all. Egocentricity is not a viable option. Unlike Malthus, we now have the intellectual and technical skills to create a world richly congenial and convivial for all its inhabitants, but it will not be achieved through aggressive nationalism and racism; or unless the vast disparities between the circumstances of the affluent and the impoverished (see UN pie chart) are 'levelled out.' To express the injustices another way, consider the fact that*:* ***Fewer than 1 % of the world's adults (with annual incomes over a million US dollars) own almost half of the world's wealth, whereas about one hundred times as many adults (earning less than ten thousand dollars) own only about one fortieth of the world's wealth.***

This brief analysis, omitting much, suggests that the initial need is for *attitudinal change*. In deciding on the correct direction to pursue in resolving these unprecedented dilemmas, the ethical principle of justice must surely be assigned the highest priority. BM

[4] H Levine et al (2017) Temporal trends in sperm count. *Human Reproduction Update* 23, 646-659

[5] *'If the sperm count curve is projected forwards (always risky) it reaches zero in 2045'* says Dr S Swan. This would imply that an average male would have *no viable sperm in 25 years' time'!* (cf. *Count Down* book)

[6] J Rawls (1983) A Theory of Justice (1983) Oxford |University Press. p.3

3. A vision of the future of Bioethics (in 2000)

In 1999 I was invited by the editor of the Nottingham University Newsletter (along with 12 other senior staff members) to write an article to 'reflect on how far my discipline had come in the last century, and maybe stargaze a little to anticipate what might happen in the next.' I have chosen to reproduce it here because the interaction of ethics and biology has assumed even greater significance in recent decades – and what I wrote then is no less true now. BM

Bioethics: reflections on a revolution

From: The **University of Nottingham Newsletter** (***Millennium edition***: January 2000)

It is a truism that we are living through a biotechnological revolution. Hardly a day passes but we learn of some new breakthrough with profound implications for 'the human condition': cloning, GM foods, xenotransplantation, the artificial creation of life..The universal biological currency of DNA has shattered traditional barriers. Fish genes in carrots, human genes in pigs (and pig hearts in humans) have become the icons of a post-modern biorealism.

If the prospects are awesome, knowing how to manage these new-found powers is deeply problematical. Two philosophical questions subsume all others: **What is all this?** and **What should we do about it?** Science seeks to answer the first, ethics the second. Unfortunately, the habitual conflation of science with technology blurs the distinction. But biotechnology surely needs sound ethics just as much as it needs sound biology.

Hence, the crucial importance of bioethics - the search for rational normative principles to help us decide how the power of biological knowledge and technique might be used with humanity, justice and prudence. It is a challenging academic field, calling on insights from a wide range of disciplines, such as biology, philosophy, politics, sociology, theology and law. Unlike many philosophers of the old school, speculating at leisure on theories of 'the right and the good,' bioethicists work with an urgency on contemporary dilemmas. They scan the news at breakfast, sip government reports with their internet coffee, and scour scientific research papers over lunch.

Bioethical analysis consists of the even-handed examination of the implications of different ethical perspectives on, for example, prospective biotechnologies, with the object of aiding decision-makers in government and industry. But bioethics also addresses countless other challenges with biological dimensions: global hunger, disease, threats to the biosphere and meeting the needs of a population likely to exceed 10 billion by 2050.

The future of bioethics will depend on a much greater academic investment. This, most eclectic of subjects, can only attain the recognition it merits when it becomes an acknowledged academic discipline in its own right, and not just a forum for debate.

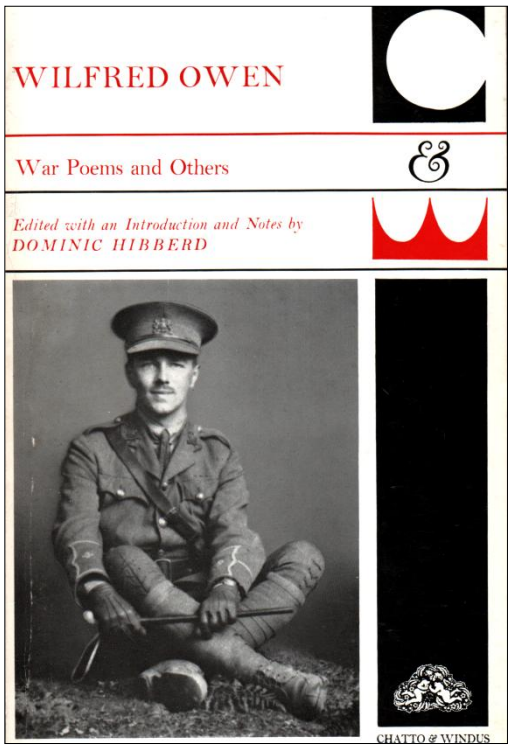
The next century will surely see university schools of bioethics, perhaps in faculties of applied ethics. Only then will we begin to apply the same rigour to using science wisely as we do to discovering it.

4. Wilfred Owen at Ripon Camp

Stephen Wade

A little over a hundred years ago, the poet was one of thousands of men being trained for war. What did he do at that momentous time, before his death in November that year?

Towards the end of March, 1918, the Germans began their massive advance which is known as Operation Michael. The generals had reinforced their lines on the Western Front with half a million men from the eastern front and now they went forward, using everything they had in the armoury, including gas and airpower, along with the usual big guns. Against them, initially, was a rag-bag of men from all kinds of units, and they were known as Carey's Force, as General Carey led them. This major engagement of the last year of the war was to include such celebrated locations as Beaumont Hamel, Lys and the Fourth Battle of Ypres. The German advance was backed by a bombardment of 4,600 artillery pieces, and then seven divisions went forward across a front extended for ten miles. By June, the Germans had lost 125,000 men. They were facing strong opposition from French and American troops.



One officer who would have been there but for his ill-health was the poet, Wilfred Owen, of the Manchester Regiment. At this time, he was based in Ripon, North Yorkshire, and as well as writing some of his most successful poems there (such as *Futility* and *Strange Meeting*), at a terrace cottage in Borage Lane, he was trying to get himself physically fit again so that he could return to the fight. He was destined to do just that, and he would be killed just a few weeks before the Armistice. But in March and April in Ripon, he had entertainment as well. The south camp at Ripon, on Hellwath Common, was virtually a self-sufficient town, having most of the amenities and utilities of a large urban centre.

Kitchener had approved the plans for a camp at Ripon, with the aim of having one working by April. There was to be accommodation for over 30,000 men. The problem was that such a massive establishment would create local difficulties of all kinds. As reported in *The Times*: '*A great number of troops would be drafted into places where formerly there were not enough men to go round, and the girls would see the prospect of nice engagements resulting, or else, as in Ripon, where 14,000 troops had been drafted into a town of 8,000 people, the soldiers would crowd the population uncomfortably and have no place for the young girls to go of an evening*.'

The reasoning behind the planning of the training camps of such massive size was that it made sense for a division, which was a block of fighting men within a battle order and a campaign, to train together as well as fight together. Three infantry brigades constituted a division, and each brigade had four battalions, so the new army fitted in with the overall structure- men coming from various locations to meet and work with the other constituents of their division. In practical terms, as the camps were made across the country, the huts had to be made to take around 800,000 troops. In

Northern Command, there were 200,000 men, and each hut would hold thirty men. On top of this, there were other designated buildings such as sites for cooking, resources and supplies, guardroom and so on. Fir was used, and also corrugated iron. Fortunately for those inside, asbestos was sampled and tested but then rejected.

The extent of the camps was indeed impressive. In some places reservoirs had to be made, and power sources installed. There is no doubt that the logistics of planning and making the camps provide evidence of skilful and intelligent construction work. The army got some things right. The railway back-up continued through the war, with, for instance, a line from Littlethorpe to one of the camps, and later, from October, 1917, an ambulance train for wounded men was shown to the public in Bower Road yard, and as James Rogers has noted, '*Despite the very bad weather the train attracted 2,551 visitors who paid, to the Red Cross, £145 0s 6d in admission charges*.'

It also had a Garrison Theatre, and playing there when Owen arrived were the Benson Company, whom he loved. They were presenting *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which had drawn a record crowd in Manchester and which showed off Frank Benson's talents to great effect. Benson was there at that time, because we know that he asked Owen to come and meet the company. Owen noted in a letter, '*I am going round to be introduced to B and Lucy Benson*.' Benson served in the French ambulance unit in the war, but clearly he was touring with his theatre company for part of the year. Owen would have had a treat. Hesketh Pearson, who knew Benson and who saw his productions, wrote, '*Everyone felt that Shakespeare was safe in the hands of one who could play cricket, tennis, football and hockey so well... and who would break the ice and enjoy a swim between a matinee of Hamlet and an evening performance of Richard III.*'

Futility

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke once the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

One of the poems Owen wrote at Ripon

Theatres played a valuable part in the morale of wartime of course. But there was more to it than simply using the music halls to present patriotic songs. L J Collins explains the nature of theatres at the time: '*Theatre was much more than a diversionary and escapist tactic employed to provide temporary relief; indeed, the theatrical profession, in order to justify its existence, had to produce a theatre that was seen to be purposeful and relevan*t.; Owen certainly enjoyed the theatre at Ripon, and he had seen Benson's productions before. He was very much involved in the theatrical entertainments, and he even knew one of the actors, as he wrote in a letter in March: '*So strolled into the town and was just going into the cathedral when I met Isaacson the actor. He is now very much the Actor, having been discharged from Craiglockhart* [a military hospital]. *Benson is giving The Merry Wives of Windsor in the Garrison Theatre tonight*.'

In early May, Owen reported on more theatre visits when writing to his mother, but he had been disappointed: '*Have been to two of Hall Cain's plays this week. How badly written they were! I can recommend to you Tides by John Drinkwater*.' Owen's first impressions of the camp also were not favourable. He sent a post card home with the message: '*An awful camp- huts –dirty blankets –in fact*

WAR once more.' He shared his hut-space with thirteen other officers and he wrote, '*13 too many. Most of them are privates and sergeants in masquerade... I'd prefer to be amongst honest privates than these snobs*.' Owen's recent biographer summarises his poor health after he arrived: '*Sweating under muddy, bloodstained blankets in an isolation hut, he was afraid that his 1913 illness had returned, until the doctor assured him he had caught an infection that often struck down newcomers to the camp*.'

At that time, there was a widespread epidemic of influenza, and Owen thought he might have caught that bug, but the doctor put him right, and soon Owen was walking in the country around the camp, in between demanding physical exercise. He also visited Ripon Cathedral and paid some visits around Ripon and Harrogate. He found the latter 'dull' and also provided some thoughts on a local social call for his diary entry which was critical: '*Mrs Aslin can click the piano quite quickly... I wonder these people buy pianos at all, when a typewriter is so much cheaper, and makes almost the same noise*.'

He comes across down the years as a supercilious, finicky commentator on his social world. He was unhappy for all kinds of reasons. But his poetry came first, and he found the cottage – number 7, Borage Lane, which was to be his hideaway and the place where his creativity could flower. It was here, at the little house in Ripon, that he wrote many of his most successful poems dealing with the war experience he had known. By that point, he had met Siegfried Sassoon and been at Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh, where his writing received the boost of Sassoon's conversations on the art. By April this year he had written such masterpieces as '*Greater Love*,' *Exposure,*' and '*Futility.*'

Before Borage Lane, he had visited How Hill Tower, also known as the Chapel of Saint Michael De Monte, which was part of the Studley Royal estate. This was a chantry chapel, built around 1200, and was a ruin until John Aislabie developed his Studley garden plans. When Owen visited, it had been in use as a cluster of farm outbuildings since its use as a gaming house stopped in the mid eighteenth century.

He toyed with the idea of living there, writing this entry in his diary: '*It arrested attention as all such towers do, and I climbed up, and finding its inhabitants in it, desired tea of them. Only half of the old chapel is occupied by peasants; the other is vacant. The rent would be about 2s a week! I wish it weren't so far from here. The windows have a marvellous view (for this part of the world) and I could spend my spring evenings very pleasantly up there*.'

There are strong hints there about his negative attitudes to the wild side of Yorkshire and to the country people. It could almost be a diary of a snooty aristocrat who finds the 'peasants' there as servants ('*I desired tea of them'*). In his letters home, he gave some valuable insights into life at Ripon, although his comments were sometimes reserved: '*I send you a rather well-composed photograph of the village-city. You'll see that it's quite pleasant, though not beautiful*.'

He did get to know the environs reasonably well, though, as he walked a good deal: '*Ripon is only a mile from my hut, and through Borage Lane... it is an interesting walk – especially this morning when the buds all make a special spurt between dawn and noon , and all the lesser celandines opened out together.*' In late April he even went to Aldborough to see the Roman remains, and he managed to be

more complimentary than usual to his Yorkshire surroundings: ' *I am much too footsore to walk back so I am now waiting for a train to take me back to Harrogate. The weather is superb and I have spent an afternoon of great elation in these fine old villages.*' After the first months, Owen came to quite enjoy Ripon Camp life. He notes that there were musical performances, and the facilities clearly improved. He was even given some local contacts, including people who would supply him with tea and food, and generally look after him. In May, he was considered to be fit by the Medical Board and was ordered back to his post in Scarborough, to join the Manchester Regiment Reserve at their base. His final destination was France, and there he was to win the Military Cross, but he was killed on the Sambre Canal, at 25 years of age, with the end of hostilities just a week away.

Ironically, a former pupil at Ripon Grammar School, Samuel Cartwright, died the day after Owen – on the 5 November. A letter he wrote to an old school friend survives, and as Samuel was in the Royal Army Medical Corps, he gives us an insight into the medical work done in those horrendous conditions when he was working with an ambulance, bringing back casualties from the dressing stations. He wrote: '*Well, the majority of the bearers are either working in the trenches, clearing to the two dressing stations, or else in the dressing stations themselves. These are really the first places of shelter for the wounded, and are usually small farms or buildings, where the injured are taken, and there they are looked after by our men until the ambulance arrives ready to convey them further back, perhaps three or four miles to a field hospital, although a field hospital consists of two long sheds, and this is where I am at present*.'

One intriguing footnote to Owen's time in Ripon is provided by Dr Roger Kendall, who has investigated the setting and references of Owen's poem, '*The Schoolmistress*.' Dr Kendall has located the building which would have been a private girls' school in 1918, with windows facing the pavement. Owen would have passed this place many times; as it is close to his Borage Lane cottage. In fact, the teacher in question was Sarah Jane Aslin, and Owen referred to a Mrs Aslin playing music, in one of his letters home. The poem has the lines,

There, while she heard the classic lines repeat,
Once more the teacher's face clenched stern;
For through the window, looking on the street,
Three soldiers hailed her. She made no return.
One was called 'Orace whom she would not greet.'

There are today, at a time when centenaries loom large, accounts of losses from particular institutions, firms or families, and one such example is in Ruth Savage's account of young men from Ripon Grammar School who lost their lives in the war. She gives accounts of several scholars and their fate, including that of Samuel Cartwright.

Stephen Wade is a former lecturer in English. He now writes full-time, mostly in crime history. Recent books are *The Count of Scotland Yard* and *The Justice Women*. But he also writes poetry and his next collection, *Stretch*, will be published by *Smokestack Books* later this year.

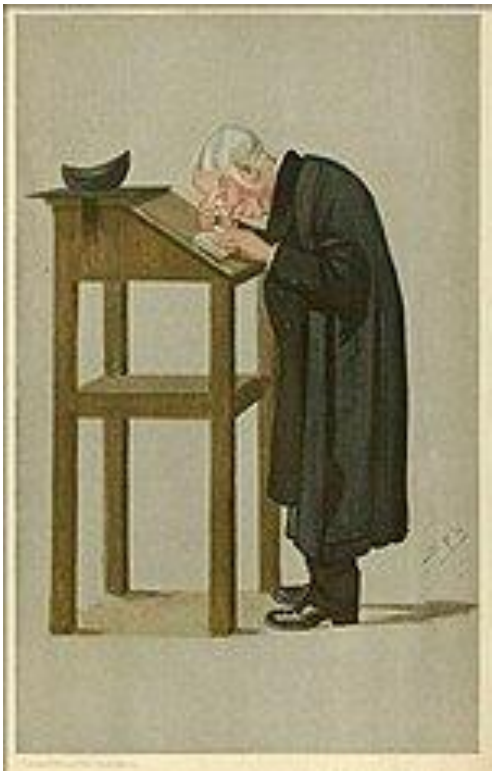
5 Spoonerisms

One annoying feature of old age, I find, is a tendency to mix up one's words when speaking. Fortunately, it doesn't usually affect the written word, because there's time to edit the draft text, while computer programmes often alert you to perceived errors. (But in such cases I generally ignore the 'corrections' of my uninvited tutor, which often betray a north American linguistic bias.)

The sometimes amusing consequences of such unintended slips fall into the category that is often labelled *'spoonerisms,'* a name derived from that of the Reverend William Archibald Spooner(1844–1930), one-time Warden of New College, Oxford, who was prone to this form of mispronunciation. [7]

The, often-quoted, classic, example of this genre, when he was, reputedly, addressing an undergraduate student, was:

You have hissed all my mystery lectures. You have tasted a whole worm. Please leave Oxford on the next town drain. (Which can be translated as*: You have missed all my history lectures. You have wasted a whole term. Please leave Oxford on the next down train*.)



According to anthropologist and historian, Margaret Visser:

'*Spooner became the stuff of legend, which grew and multiplied with the help of his colleagues and students*.'

On one occasion, toasting *Queen Victoria* at a College function, he is said to have raised his glass to the

queer old Dean. .

But there is a suspicion that he was often the butt of gleeful exaggeration, as when he was said to have asked a Roman Catholic for:

a prescription of the dope

and when he allegedly offered to

sow a woman to her sheet

A 'spoonerism', being a form of word-exchange, is described by the Greek word *metaphasis*. But, it now tends to be used as a term applicable to all form of verbal exchange - just as the word 'Hoover' now refers to all types of vacuum cleaner.'

More modern examples are common; and among the most widely memorable are those in the 1976 *Two Ronnies* TV sketch, probably best identified by the phrase *fork handles.* In this, hardware shop keeper (Corbett) is constantly irritated by customer (Barker) who confuses by his blunt requests, of which the first is interpreted as *four candles.* The confusion continues with *hose/ letter 'O's* (for a garden gate); *bath plugs/electric plugs* etc. All innocent word play – but, it seems, enduringly funny.

BM

[7] The illustration is a caricature of Spooner that appeared in *Vanity Fair* in 1898.

6. A reminiscence of Southwell in 4BCv*

Walking the Town's less trodden paths

19th January 2016

Today I found again forgotten paths
through this familiar space
glistening in the frost
audible in the crunch of my shoes on frozen sward
as I strode over Froggat's Field

For innocent as infancy
it guards its secrets from untoward intrusions
but with the angle of the sun just right
revealed what had escaped my recollection
the crisp contours of ancient ridge and furrow

In the apple orchard
an unfamiliar path leads to the River Greet
which here is as smooth as a mill pond,
and opposite, a muddied slope where cattle drink
to slake their thirst in summer's heat

But upstream, under the stately Caudwell's Mill
inevitably now converted into flats
the Greet becomes a noisy brook
babbling and foaming over a pebbled ridge
where once an adolescent Byron bathed with humbler folk

And so via King Street to my antiquarian shop
almost hidden like others of the Town's secrets
where I gather a few musty volumes
for someone whose unusual tastes
might just concur with my eclectic sense of worthy books

This is something of an indulgence, recalling a personal perspective of Southwell in 4BCv (i.e. four years before Covid)* when Gladstone Books occupied a small shop in Bull Yard – and when I regularly walked in and around the Town. It's a habit I have now resumed.

But perhaps it may also remind others of happier times.

BM

7 Mini - sale of books of local interest

Rather like a shop window, these three pages display a small selection of books in my Local History stock (partly chosen because of their colourful front covers) which are most likely to be of interest to people living in, or visiting, the Southwell area. Details of condition, prices etc are listed below.

Should readers of the Review be interested in purchasing one or more of the books, a telephone call will enable us to discuss a mutually convenient time for viewing the items (respecting social distancing rules, face masks etc) and making a purchases – but being under no obligation to do so. Government regulations are due to change on April 12, allowing indoor viewing, but initially it seems prudent, weather permitting, to limit this, as-allowed from March 29th, to a sheltered garden site.

This is a modest first step in reviving my bookselling activities after a difficult period during which Gladstone Books has been, for both personal and political reasons, in a state of hibernation. In due course, I intend to allow browsing access to the full stock in a book-room (of course, fully observing the Government rules in place at the time) and to establish an on-line sales service.

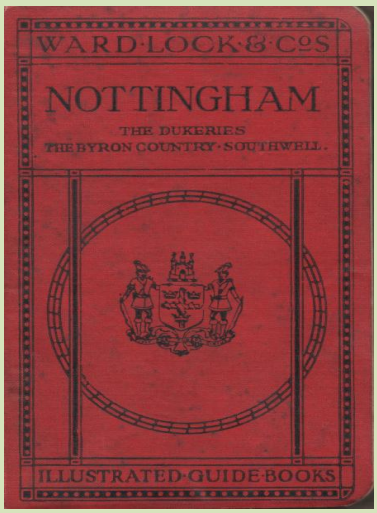
1. Ward Lock *Red Guide to Nottingham and area*, (1928). maps (2 pull-out) 128pp+ vg. Rare £15
2. J Bramley (1948) *Short History of Religious Houses in Notts*. 50pp illustrated pb. vg Rare £7
3. J Hamilton (2003) *Glad for God* ('Glad' = Gladstone, MP): history of Newark 260pp. pb vg £8
4. H H Swinnerton (1910) *Nottinghamshire* Cambridge UP County series. 153pp illustrated. g (with a few neat – informative - penned comments). hb £10
5. C A Austin (1955) *Harmonic Century* (of Notts Harmonic Soc: 1856-1955) 120pp. g hb £10
6. M Boyes (1991) *My Amiable Mamma* (biography of Byron's mother): re. Byron's youth at Burgage Manor, Southwell (drawing by neighbour and friend Elizabeth Pigott) 180pp. vg pb £7
7. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1964) *Newark on Trent: the Civil War Siegeworks* HMSO v detailed and illustrated (with pull-out colour map) 108pp. pb g. Rare £15
8. Tom Shipside (~ 1955) *I Lived in a Village: stories of life and folk in Nottinghamshire in general, and Oxton in particular)* Woolston Book Co, Notts. hb (slight tear in jacket) 110pp. g. Rare £12
9. Nottinghamshire Federation of Women's Institutes (1955) *Within Living Memory*. Countryside Books pb. 256pp vg. £7
10. W H Wylie & J Potter Briscoe (1893) *Popular History of Nottingham* F Murray, Nottingham 186pp + many pp fascinating adverts; 10 bw illustrations. [online prices 100$ +] Rare vg £20
11. Alan Rogers (1974) *Southwell Minster after the Civil Wars* University of Nottingham Dept Adult Education 56pp + 6pp bw plates [online prices 50$+] vg Rare £10
12. Duncan Gray (1949) *Nottinghamshire Through 500 years: a short history of town government.* Corporation of Nottingham Quincentenary Year. 95 pp of text and 35pp of illustrations. Size 25 x 19 cm. hb with jacket g. £12

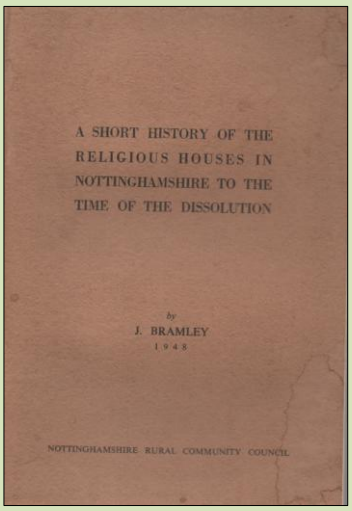
The above prices are much lower than those for equivalent items advertised on the internet

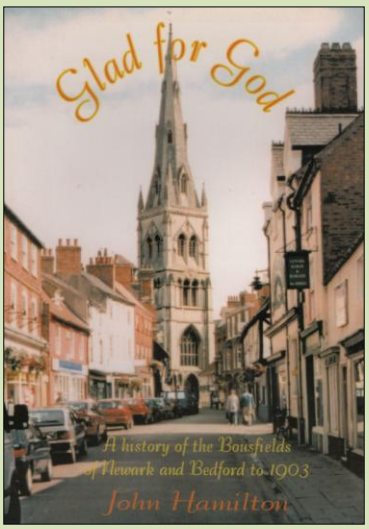
Telephone: 01636 813601
Email: info@gladstonebooks.co.uk

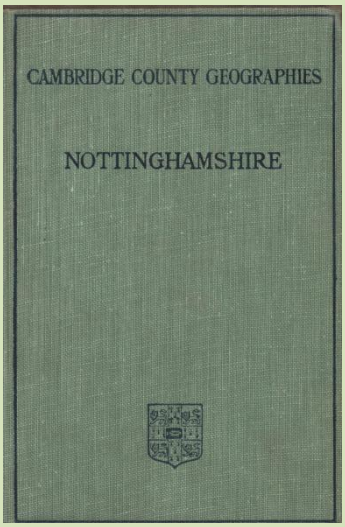
Ben Mepham

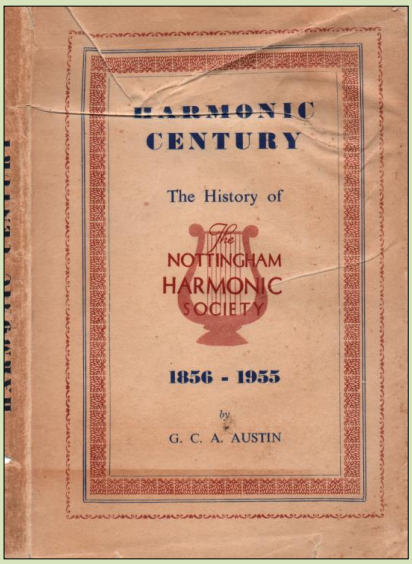
New Gladstone Review 12, article 7

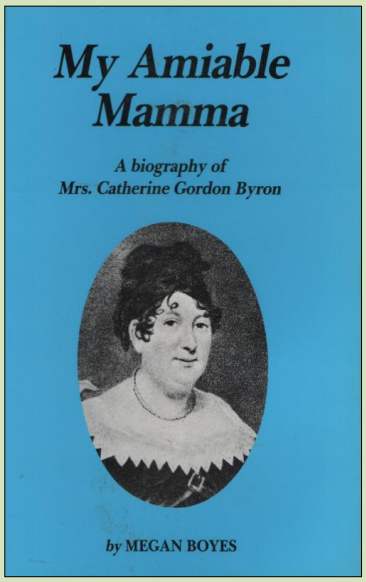




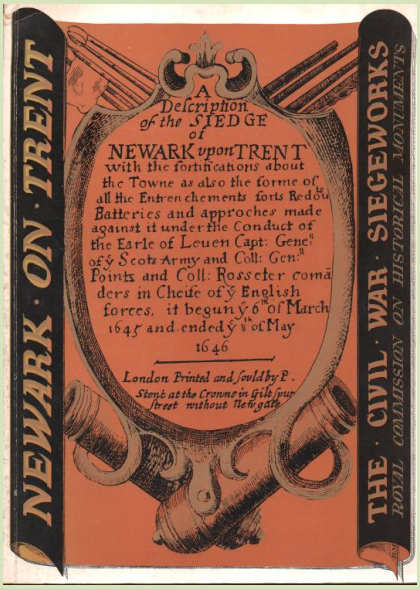


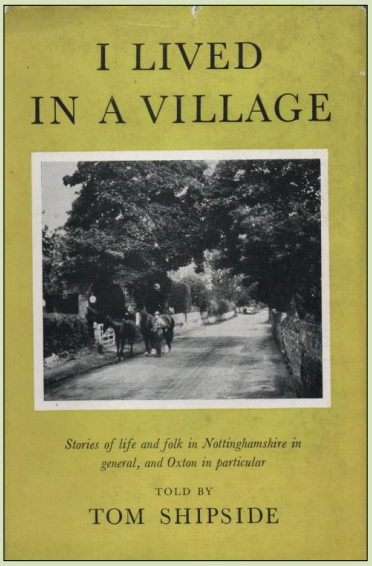


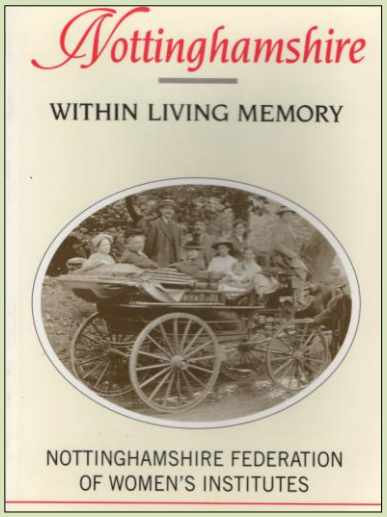


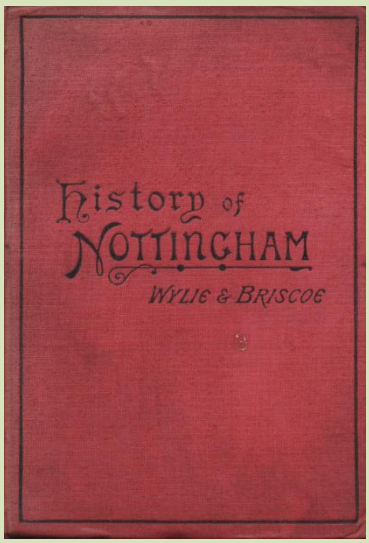


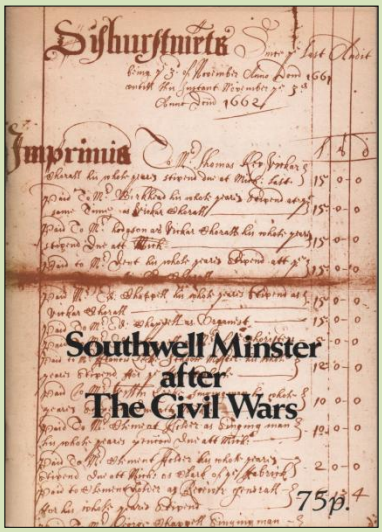
New Gladstone Review 12, article 7

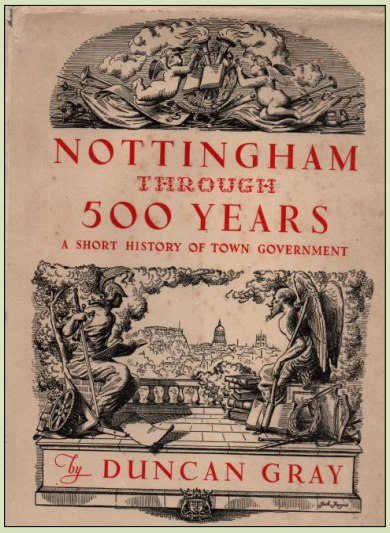












Advertisement

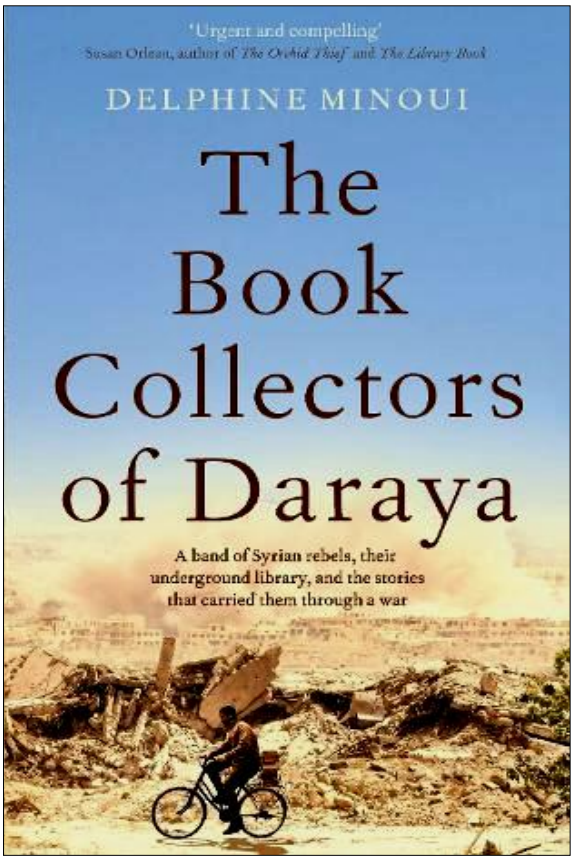
I have ordered my copy of this book, but even though I have, to date, only read reviews of it, I am sure it is well-worth publicising for its clear demonstration of the '***freedom, tolerance and power of literature'*** – especially in the face of the desperate conditions in which people live in war-torn Damascus. One can only feel humbled by the bravery of those determined to defend their culture.

New book announcement

'This is an urgent and compelling account of great bravery and passion. Delphine Minoui has crafted a book that champions books and the individuals who risk everything to preserve them.' Susan Orlean, author of *The Library Book*

In 2012 the rebel suburb of Daraya in Damascus was brutally besieged by Syrian government forces. Four years of suffering ensued, punctuated by shelling, barrel bombs and chemical gas attacks. People's homes were destroyed and their food supplies cut off; disease was rife.

Yet in this man-made hell, forty young Syrian revolutionaries embarked on an extraordinary project, rescuing all the books they could find in the bombed-out ruins of their home town. They used them to create a secret library, in a safe place, deep underground. It became their school, their university, their refuge. It was a place to learn, to exchange ideas, to dream and to hope.



Based on lengthy interviews with these young men, conducted over Skype by the award-winning French journalist Delphine Minoui, *The Book Collectors of Daraya* is a powerful testament to freedom, tolerance and the power of literature.
£16.99 Hardback*208Pages /*

Published:18/03/2021

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ISBN:9781529012316
Number of pages:208

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