

Some thoughts on 'Spectre' West and other elusive characters

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The real-life prototype of the character Captain Harold West in the war novels of *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight*, known as 'Spectre' West or occasionally 'Westy', has intrigued many readers and is one of the main riddles of these books. Dr. J. Wheatley Blench has stated: 'In Williamson's *Chronicle* some of the characters most notably revealed 'in ancient sunlight' are those in the Gaultshire Regiment The noblest of these is 'Spectre' West who plays a vital part in Phillip's development. 'Spectre' represents the best of the volunteer officers; he is a brilliant tactician, whose bravery surmounts a bitter hatred and fear of the war.'¹ Paul Reed made a brave stab at identification in his essay 'Henry Williamson and the Kaiserschlacht March 1918'² where he investigates the identity of several characters to be found in *A Test to Destruction*, including that of 'Westy':

Physically the description of Westy is very similar to Adrian Carton de Wiart VC [an eye-patch, injured arm and so on] The two remaining contenders are both officers of HW's Regiment – the Bedfordshires. The first is Lieut-Colonel H.S. Poyntz DSO MC of the 2nd Battalion [i.e. HW's Battalion]. His career is very similar to Westy's – he was a regular soldier, seeing service at Ypres in 1914 – but his service with the 2nd Battalion was limited, prior to 1918. By 1918, he was the commanding officer of this Battalion – as was Westy – and had indeed seen some limited service as a staff officer. However, some weeks prior to March 21, he leaves the Battalion, is promoted Brigadier-General and commands the Brigade in which the Battalion was serving; Westy does this during the offensive in the Chronicle.

The officer that took over from Poyntz when he was promoted to Brigade was one Major Richard Owen Wynne. Wynne is I firmly believe, the real Westy. Born in June 1892 at Moss Vale, New South Wales, Australia, he was educated at Marlboro College and Clare College, Cambridge. He was granted a commission as a regular Army Officer in August 1914, and joined the 2nd Bedfordshires in June 1915. He was a company commander at Loos and fought throughout all the early part of the Somme Battle, winning the DSO for gallantry in July 1916. He was sent on a Senior Officer's Course in January 1917, but it is not clear if he actually served as a Staff Officer, as he rejoined the Battalion in April 1917. For a short period he was an acting Lt-Col commanding the 18th King's Liverpools and in July 1917 he was posted to the staff of 30th Division, as a liaison officer. He then 'disappeared' (possibly to GHQ) but turned up again in the 2nd Bedfordshires in early 1918. He took over from Poyntz as an acting Lt-Col commanding the Battalion and received a bar to his DSO for his part in the March Retreat. Cf. his citation to that of Phillip Maddison in A Test to Destruction.

(NB. Major Wynne did not die during the war and afterwards returned to Australia.)

Reed's conclusions are reasoned and plausible as an overall picture. That they do not answer the total picture of 'Spectre' West as he is portrayed by Williamson, lies only in the fact that Reed has looked for a too literal explanation and has not allowed for the more surreal side of Williamson's nature and writing.

It was with great excitement that when recently sorting a box of ephemeral material of the 1960s in Henry's archive for filing and storage, I found an envelope containing the following important item. It was a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March, 1966, an obituary of an ex-army officer who had died the previous day in a fire at his home Trentishoe Manor at Trentishoe, near Lynton, North Devon. The obituary with the heading 'Too Scruffy J.P. dies in fire at home' stated that the officer, Brigadier Arthur Cecil Willison, had fought in the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars and held the DSO and bar, and MC. The obituary further stated that 'among the debris firemen found hundreds of scorched copies of Brig. Willison's book *The Relief of Tobruk*.' Thus this is the famous Brigadier Willison who led his brigade of tanks and infantry in the breakthrough there in the Second World War and later became a prisoner of war in Italy. The heading at the top of the obituary referred to the fact that Brig. Willison had been removed the previous month from the active list of the Bench of Lynton magistrates because his fellow

magistrates complained that he was too scruffy. Willison had apparently replied that his wounded fingers prevented him from shaving. Reports in Devon newspapers were almost identical.³

On this sheet torn from the *Daily Telegraph* by Henry Williamson he had written at the top: 'Keep my secret. This is the original of 'Spectre'. Why wasn't I with him?' and again under the heading: "'Spectre' West". The photograph accompanying the obituary shows a man elderly (and indeed looking scruffy and unshaven) with a haunting and haunted look, high forehead and tortured eyes. Under this Henry had written "Arthur Williamson – 1/2 brother (illegitimate)" showing even further his psychological affinity with this man.

This then would seem to be the answer to the riddle, the author himself proclaiming it so. But on investigation the situation proved (once again) to be not quite so straightforward. Brian Dolan soon established from records that Brig. Willison (1896-1966) had served in the First World War with 1 Sherwood Foresters, was on the staff, wounded twice and decorated three times (DSO, MC, & Bar) plus two 'mentions' in Despatches. His highest temporary rank was Captain and he finished the war as a substantive Lieutenant. He later joined the Royal Tank Corps and had a most distinguished army career and was in GSO Intelligence with service in India and the Far East.⁴ His entry in *The History of the Sherwood Foresters*, p.203-4 gives slightly more detailed information: '2nd Lieut. The Sherwood Foresters 3.7.1915; Temporary Capt. 19.8.1916; Lieut. 5.9.1916; Capt. 1.1.1923 Royal Tanks Corps. Served with the 1st Battalion and on Staff in the Great War 1914-19, wounded twice, British and Victory Medals, 1914-15 Star, DSO, MC & Bar.'

So far, so good: Willison meets all the parameters that would make him the prototype for 'Spectre' West: his obvious daring and brave personality, his facial characteristics as shown as an old man in the *Daily Telegraph* photograph – high-domed forehead and staring eyes – and the superficial outline of his First World War service (if we allow for use of artistic licence in moving his regiment etc) certainly fit the impression of the spirit of 'Spectre' that is gained from the novels. But there is still lacking real proof.

I have been unable to find any correspondence between Williamson and Willison, although as they lived so near to each other then they may well have communicated by telephone and visits. Willison's son, Lt-General Sir David Willison, who very kindly replied to my enquiry, has no knowledge of any friendship between the two men, stating that his father was totally reticent about his service in the First World War. His only knowledge being that his father was at Sandhurst when war broke out, was commissioned into the Sherwood Foresters and reached France in early 1915. He served mostly with the Hampshire Regiment and was thus known as 'the Ant' for the rest of his life.

However, one of the volumes in Williamson's archive is *The Eighth Division in War, 1914-18*⁵. This has markings against several entries concerning the Sherwood Foresters in the appendix that had previously puzzled me but which now had at least a purpose. These consist of a list of Honours and Awards made (but without any detail unfortunately) and under 'Distinguished Service Order' one finds: 'Lieut. (Int.Off.) A.C. Willison, MC 1/Sherwood Frstrs' and a pencilled note added in the margin 'ANT(RTC)' – the meaning of which was of course revealed by his son's information as above. A further entry records the bar to his MC. The very short pencilled notes against several names are not in Henry's handwriting and may well be Willison's as they are personal and denote detailed knowledge of the people concerned (mainly succinct thoughts on whether they did or did not deserve their decorations!).

The only entry concerning Willison in the actual text is on page 270 describing the final offensive at Mons in October 1918 – some time after the fictional 'Spectre' is drowned in the novel – and is not marked in any way: 'At noon patrols from the 2/East Lancashire and 1/Sherwood Foresters entered St. Amand and after some street fighting occupied the town. 'A' Company 1/Sherwood Foresters were the first to enter the town, Lieut. A.C. Willison, MC, 24th Infantry Brigade Intelligence Officer, being the first man in.' (p.270)

References in the *Official History*, 1915, Vol. II, provide some further details of movements and location of the overall involvement of 8 Division. In September 1915 this consisted of 23, 24, and 25 Brigades. The Divisional Commander was Maj.-Gen. H. Hudson, CB, CIE (1 Aug. 1915-9 Dec. 1916). 24 Brigade was commanded by Br.-Gen. R.S. Oxley and was made up by 1/Worcestershire, 1/Sherwood Foresters (Major I. St. H. Morley), 1/5th Black Watch, 2/E. Lancs and 2/Northamptonshire. On p.262 there is an account of the attack by III Corps/8 Division at Bois Grenier south of Armentieres in September 1915. This is described in *The Eighth Division at War*, chapter IV, 'Bois Grenier' (p.45ff.) as the contribution of 8 Division to the Battle of Loos when 1/Sherwood Foresters were detailed to hold the trenches on the right of the attack. The *Official History* states that 8 Division casualties were 56 officers, 1342 other ranks. (6) In October the *Official History* notes 1/8th Sherwood Foresters as being

with 139 Brigade and on 13 and 14 October were part of attack to reach the Hohenzollern driving the enemy back at all points. The 1/8 Sherwood Foresters took over the redoubt. They lost 25 officers and 405 other ranks.⁷ They do not appear to have been with 8 Division for the Somme Battle but in late October 1916 were placed at the disposal of Gen. Pollard for support of Zenith Trench.

So one can pick and choose. Some parts match and others do not. However, it is important to remember that it is most noticeable that 'Spectre' West tends to appear with Phillip in the novels (as can now be seen from Williamson's real involvement in the war) in those scenes that are not based on Williamson's own war service. Thus although Williamson is following an authentic thread through the novels, he himself was not present in these scenes, and despite the case that can be made out for Major Wynne and Lieut. Willison as 'Spectre', Phillip's role at these points is fictional, which leads one to assume that 'Spectre's' role (whomsoever he was based on) is equally fictional.

Apart from any other consideration, like Alice's pack of cards, the whole scenario as laid out above collapses with the entry in Henry's diary on 30 April 1918: 'Heard Westy died.' This cannot be any of the contenders already mentioned for the role of 'Spectre' West, not even (as Paul Reed notes in his 'Kaiserschlacht' article already cited) Captain J. West, MC, of 4 Bedfordshires – for he was killed on 21 August 1918 in an attack north of the Ancre. This diary entry is the only reference in Williamson's contemporaneous papers of 'Westy' (or any variation of the name) although Henry refers to him in letters to Lady Monica Salmond written in the late 1950s (when writing *The Golden Virgin* and subsequent war volumes of the *Chronicle*) particularly 'I love my poor Westy, who was killed in 1918.' (but Henry may be referring to the fictional character here – not a real person). The identity of this diary 'Westy' is to date a mystery. Brian Dolan has searched records thoroughly and can find no counterpart to fit this entry. It should be stated also that Dolan has found no evidence of any drowning at sea which can be fitted into Williamson's story of 'Spectre' West.

It is necessary to step back from the particular and look at Williamson's overall objectives for his war novels to find some solution of the 'Spectre' riddle. In my Preface to *A Patriot's Progress* I have established that Williamson encompasses an overview of the total war scene within the five books. Although based in large part on his own experience and based on authentic records for those episodes outside his own experience, Phillip's role in the novels fulfills that of the 'everyman' soldier; but Williamson obviously needed also an older and wiser character within the 'heroic' mode to portray other aspects of the war. This is the role of 'Spectre' West and, despite these specific references to his death in 1918, he is no doubt based on more than one real life person, possibly a mixture of all those mentioned above plus other elements not yet discovered (like a painter mixing several colours to achieve the shade he wants) to provide Williamson with the mix necessary to achieve the effect of character that he wanted – another instance of masterly use of structure.

Henry's use of the nickname 'Spectre' may well derive from the central image of Henry Barbusse's *Le Feu* (see *A Patriot's Progress* where the influence of Barbusse on Henry Williamson is discussed in detail). In particular the opening chapter of *Le Feu* dances all around the idea of spectre – 'bloodless faces', 'pale-faced clairvoyants', 'watchers on the threshold of another world' – and in fact the whole book is one long synonym for the word. Williamson himself used the word 'wraith' repeatedly in *The Wet Flanders Plain*. Henry was haunted by his experience of war.

A potent clue about Henry's purpose can be found in his use of the Tennyson quote on the title page of *A Test To Destruction*: 'He faced the spectres of the mind And laid them: thus he came at length to find a stronger faith his own; ...' These lines are taken from Tennyson's poem *In Memoriam to A.H.H.*, written after the death of his great friend Arthur Hallam in 1833. But Tennyson's purpose was wider and deeper than just to record the life of a single man, friend and mentor though he may have been. Not completed until 1850 *In Memoriam* grew into a long reflection on thought in the nineteenth century: as Williamson's *Chronicle* is a reflection on the life and thought of the twentieth century. This is an important aspect in establishing Williamson's real purpose in writing the 'war' novels – the 'above and beyond reality' aspect, the encompassing of the total scene, the larger view, which is the central aim of Williamson's work.

Another scenario that proved difficult to match to real life is found in the opening chapters of *The Golden Virgin* concerning Phillip's immediate Company Commander, Captain Jasper D'Arcy Kingsman, of the 25th Middlesex Regiment, stationed at Hornchurch. Kingsman, 'a quiet elderly captain',⁸ commandeers Phillip's car, a Swift, for an official visit to Southend to check on and pay the three blind 'nightwatchers' (used for their superior hearing in detecting approaching enemy aircraft) and then invites Phillip to accompany him to 'my place, about a dozen miles away from the salubrious mud-flats'

for the night. Williamson did not have a car of any sort at this time – the Swift will have belonged to 'Kingsman' or another officer, with the truth rearranged to make a livelier story-line. The clue given that Kingsman was an amateur racing driver has not proved productive to date.

Kingsman's home turns out to be, as we discover when Phillip looks at the embossed writing paper, 'Tollemere Park'. Kingsman himself is a fairly minor character within the novels. His importance is that this is the place where Phillip meets Father Aloysius and is introduced to the poem *Into Battle* by Julian Grenfell. We learn that the Kingsmans have just lost their son, an RFC pilot shot down during the battle of Loos, and there is a portrait of him on the wall and another of his father, both by famous artists. The other fact we are given is that the family is Roman Catholic.

In attempting to track down Kingsman's real life counterpart and his residence many hares were started, their trails closely tracked by Brian Dolan and myself over many hours of work. Most of the hares died an untimely death as false trails, although almost all had some part to play in the total picture, and cannot be entirely dismissed. This is one of the most complicated and cleverly disguised parts of the whole sequence. Research into the situation at Hornchurch shows that Kingsman did not exist within the real-life Battalion set-up. I had a theory about all of this but needed to find a way of proving it, and with no information that seemed impossible. Then a vital piece of information came into my hands about the source of the actual name, Jasper Kingsman (very kindly and strangely on almost the same day, forwarded by both Peter Cole and John Gillis, both HWS members, to whom I am most grateful) and from there the puzzle gradually unravelled. As Williamson actually tells us in the novel, the Kingsman memorial does indeed come from a slab on the floor in nearby Horndon Church:

'Here lyeth the body of Jasper Kingsman of this parish and
also of the Middle Temple, London, who departed this life the
15th Day of September 1704 in the 86th year of his Age.'

The *Victoria County History of Essex* (Vol. VII) has references for Jasper Kingsman.⁹ The gist of these is that Jasper Kingsman bought South Ockenden Hall in 1692. When he died he disinherited his own son and left his estates to his cousin Josiah. These were handed down through a succession of 'Josiahs' and 'Jaspers' until the line died out in 1789 and the estate was sold. *The Golden Virgin* refers to the memorial slab, and tells us that Capt. Kingsman was the last of his line, had been born in India, and no Kingsman had lived there for over a hundred years. So far, so good: the source for the actual name and the general background is revealed (even Kingsman's calling to the Bar) – but not the modern counterpart. Brian Dolan's research has found no Kingsman records in the Army lists.

One line of attack followed was via the trails of 'Tollemere' and 'D'Arcy' (remember the D'Arcy added into Kingsman's full name), as there are just to the west of Chelmsford a group of villages whose overall name includes 'Tolle', easily seen on a map when making a geographical bid for the source of Kingsman's home, one of which is actually called Tolleshunt D'Arcy. Essex Record Office kindly provided a list of names and addresses that fitted the parameters I sent them. Of these, one struck me as a distinct possibility: 'John Henry Salter, JP, of D'Arcy House, Tolleshunt D'Arcy'.

Brian Dolan set to work to research this line of enquiry, which proved most interesting. The easiest route to check was via the clue in the novel of the dead RFC son with the MC. Dolan's search immediately revealed: 2/Lt. (Temp) John Henry Raymond Salter of 54 Squadron RFC, killed in action 13 October 1917. Although two years later than the Battle of Loos death in the novel, one can allow for some poetic licence and disguising factor on Williamson's part, so this was very promising. However, on cross checking Dolan found no connection between this young pilot, who actually came from the north, and the John Henry Salter of D'Arcy House, and as by then I was already following another trail, we decided to rule this out of the equation. Even so, the coincidence is so odd that one wonders if Williamson indeed knew something of these circumstances. The name D'Arcy cropped up in several ancillary lines of enquiry including the name of the wife of Brigadier Willison (Contender for 'Spectre' West) who married a lady called Hyacinth D'Arcy – muddying the waters quite considerably – but those followed through all proved abortive.

Another clue lies in the description of 'Tollemere Park', ancestral home of Kingsman's wife. The house was cream-coloured; two huge pillars rising beside the entrance seen across a lake fringed with reeds; Palladian front to house etc. A second package from John Gillis contained the result of research he had made in 1971, when he made enquiry of Chelmsford Library about the origin of this house. The librarian at that time suggested Hylands House and Park at Widford which fitted Williamson's

description exactly. Because the house and grounds had passed into the ownership of the County Council there were details filed about it. This house had been bought by the Hanbury family in 1854. In 1937 a Mrs. Hanbury lived there with her son, who was a pilot in the Second World War and killed in a flying accident early in that war – a sad event, but interestingly suggestive from the viewpoint of this investigation. Mrs. Hanbury died in 1964 and the house and effects were sold at that time including a large number of paintings, of which three were family portraits (Williamson's description mentions a gallery of paintings and portraits) including Major John Hanbury (1664-1734) and Sir John Hanbury Williams (no date). Dolan found no RFC casualties named Hanbury in the First World War, but interestingly Brigadier Richard Nigel Hanbury (1911-71) was Hon. Colonel of 'The Honeymooners' (nickname for the Beds. & Herts. Regt.) in 1967, so Williamson would certainly have known about him and his background, if only through his membership of the Regimental Association. He had certainly seen or visited this house at some point and decided to use it for his purpose in the novel, but the Hanbury family themselves do not appear to overlap with his elaborate scenario.

Another main clue given as to the identity of 'Kingsman' lies in the two portraits actually mentioned by Williamson in his novel; one of the RFC son by Orpen, the other a family group by Sargent. Fred Shepherd (HWS member and Treasurer, whose main interest in life is 'Fine Art') provided me with a detailed answer to this query. The artists are Sir William Orpen, RA (1878-1931) and John Singer Sargent, RA (1856-1925), both of whom were part of the 'official war artists' programme. Looking for a 'father and son' portrait connection Fred found the following: Sargent had exhibited a portrait of the Earl of Wemyss at the Royal Academy in 1909 entitled 'Presentation Portrait' (Henry would have had no problem with adding an imaginary wife and child to this or any picture!) and Orpen had exhibited a portrait of Michael Wemyss at the Royal Academy in 1917. The Sargent portrait was of the 10th Earl, Sir Hugo Francis Wemyss-Charteris, GCV, also with the title Lord Elcho, who had been Hon. Colonel of the 7th Middlesex Regt. (London Scottish) from 1878-1900 – indeed it was Lord Elcho who gave the Regiment its unique Hodden Grey uniform, designed to avoid clan competition via the rival tartans (see the photograph of Roland Barnes) – and was Aide-de-Camp successively to Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and King George V – a 'King's man' indeed! But the Wemyss family are Scottish and have extensive property in Perthshire, where the Wemyss pottery is made and have no connection with Essex. The 11th Earl, Sir Hugo Richard Wemyss-Charteris succeeded his father in 1914. He was in the 1880s a Conservative MP first for Haddingtonshire, Scotland, (1883-85) and then for Ipswich (1886-95) (too tenuous a connection for the purpose here) and was Hon. Colonel 7/Royal Scots in the First World War. Michael Wemyss proved somewhat elusive; he was not actually the Earl's son and no mention of him has been found in peerage details, and he was not a pilot but was in the Royal Horse Guards. So this whole, seemingly promising, evidence turns out to be somewhat tenuous; there would seem to be a connection but there is not enough to be definite proof. However, that there is some further connection will be seen as the tale unfolds.

First, we must note that Williamson particularly mentions in his novel that Kingsman's son was an RFC pilot and Phillip had seen this portrait in the Royal Academy the previous year. Brian Dolan found a book on Orpen¹⁰ which held vital information. This relates that General Trenchard wanted portraits of men of the Royal Flying Corps for propaganda purposes. His ADC, Maurice Baring, was a friend of Sir William Orpen and introduced him to the pilots Trenchard had particularly chosen. One of these was the air-ace Lt. A.P.F. Rhys-Davids of 56 Squadron stationed at Estrees-Blanche. Orpen painted him in September 1917 simply calling it 'Portrait of an Airman'. Rhys-Davids was shot down almost immediately after, in October 1917. (We are told that he always carried a volume of Blake's poems in his pocket in case he was taken prisoner.) Other RFC portraits by Orpen were Lt. R.T.C. Hoidge and Fl.Sgt. W.G. Bennett, also of 56 Squadron and who were also later killed.

We know that Henry Williamson visited the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition on 12 June 1918 in the company of Mrs. Nicholson (see reference in *A Patriot's Progress*) and I think it can safely be said that he 'lifted' the Rhys-Davids portrait (as the most appropriate) for his own use, and added it into his elaborate plot. And to further point the way, this portrait is reproduced in John Rothenstein's book on the war artists which is in Williamson's archive¹¹ which would have reminded him of its existence. By the time Williamson came to write *The Golden Virgin*, he probably could not remember the name of the sitter, especially as it is not named in sources, thus the actual sitter was probably of no relevance to his story, he was just using the fact of an RFC pilot as background colour.

The other, and to my mind the main, clue lies in the introduction at this point in the novel of Julian Grenfell's poem *Into Battle*. Although there is no proof, I am sure in my own mind that Henry was aware

of this poem from its initial printing in *The Times* on 28 May 1915, on the day that Grenfell's death was reported, and that at that time it made a great impression on him and that the slight doubts he expresses about it in the novel come from a more mature point of view – as is now the general view.¹² As stated in *A Patriot's Progress* he certainly had a copy of this poem in his book *Soldier Poets*.

*The thundering line of battle stands
And in the air Death moans and sings
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.*
(the last stanza from Julian Grenfell *Into Battle*, 1915
The whole poem is quoted in *The Golden Virgin*, p.72)

Another book in Henry's archive is Monica Salmond's *Bright Armour*.¹³ Henry used this book as a source for details of nursing and hospitals during the war, but it has a far greater significance than that. Monica Salmond, at the time of the First World War the Honourable Monica Grenfell, was Julian Grenfell's sister (older by five years), both offspring of Lord and Lady Desborough (family name Grenfell). Julian, born in 1888, was the eldest son and heir. Educated at Eton and Balliol, Grenfell was one of a group of young men of particular brilliance, a now legendary pre-war generation. He was an accomplished classicist, and a dedicated sportsman, his forte being athletics. He also had considerable talent for drawing and verse. Bernard Bergonzi states that Julian Grenfell represents the purest embodiment of the Romantic Hotspurian ideal that the Great War produced.¹⁴

Most of this group of brilliant young men were destined to die in the First World War. These contemporaries included John Manners, Grenadier Guards, killed September 1914; Charles Lister, eldest son of Lord and Lady Lister (Lord Lister having been killed in the Boer War in 1904) who died at Gallipoli in August 1915; Ego Elcho (NB the connection with Earl Wemyss/Elcho¹⁵); Arthur Asquith, son of the Asquiths (the 'Kingsman' family knew the Asquiths); Aubrey Herbert; Rupert Brooke, who was at Antwerp on 4 October 1914 and who died of virulent blood poisoning six months later after a three day leave at Port Said granted after an aborted landing by the Hood Battalion on Gallipoli, and was buried on the island of Skyros, as Monica Salmond wrote in *Gallipoli 1915* (see later paragraph): 'in the island where Theseus was buried, and whence the young Achilles and the young Pyrrhus were called to Troy, Rupert was buried on April 23, 1915, the day of Shakespeare and St. George.'; and also Bernard Freyberg from New Zealand, who became a Colonel in the Hood Battalion of the Naval Division (several of these young men were in the Hood Battalion) and won the DSO with three bars for his 'Gallipoli swim' and a VC on the Somme – wounded nine times in WW1 and twice in WW2. As Monica Salmond shows in *Bright Armour* the titled families of these doomed young men were involved in running hospitals and convalescent homes, and are shown as just getting on with the job in hand, despite the devastation in their lives, playing their part as best they could. Monica was herself a nurse throughout the war, although frequently totally run down and exhausted.

The Hon. Julian Grenfell, DSO, a Captain in the 1st Royal Dragoons, called 'Roughers' by friends and family, was wounded on 15 May 1915 and was taken to No.7 Stationary Hospital at Boulogne with a scalp wound. A few days previously he had visited his sister very briefly at the hospital where she worked at Wimereux. On hearing the news she hurried to see him and reported to their parents that he was doing well and it did not seem too serious. However a relapse proved that it was and Monica herself went to nurse him. Their parents travelled out to France to be with him and also his younger brother Billy (the second son, Gerald William) managed a brief visit. A further relapse on 26 May portended the end. Two months later Billy was also killed leading a charge at Hooge on 30 July 1915.

Apart from Monica Salmond's book, there are several letters from her in Henry Williamson's archive and copies of two small volumes of typed personally produced Memoirs: *This Day: August 4 1914* (thoughts on life as war was declared) and *Gallipoli 1915 – An anthology*, which contains details from letters and diaries of Julian and his closest friends as previously mentioned (and the source of my own information about this group). *Into Battle* is included here, and in *Bright Armour*, in the original version that Henry Williamson used in *The Golden Virgin* 'the rough copy scribbled and hardly altered in Julian's small pocket diary' (see acknowledgement at front of *The Golden Virgin*). There is also a fragment entitled *Sweet Chestnut Avenue*, which describes the family home. One letter states that 'those years form the axis of our lives ... I have been so impressed by your interest in Julian ... I wish Julian could have known your wonderful writing.' Monica Salmond was married to Sir John Maitland Salmond, GCB,

CMB, CVO, DSO, Marshall of the RAF, and their daughter Rosemary married Nicholas Mosley, MC,¹⁶ the son of Lord Ravensdale (Sir Oswald Mosley) by his first marriage, and Henry was godfather to their son Ivor Mosley. (Monica Salmond mentions 'your godson' (her grandson) frequently in the letters.) Nicholas Mosley succeeded to the Baronetcy on the death of his father in 1980.

Henry Williamson's side of the correspondence is of great interest.¹⁷ Although unfortunately it does not reveal any fresh evidence for the problems being addressed here, it does reinforce my thesis that Julian Grenfell and his poem are central to the plot. On Christmas Eve 1956 Henry wrote to ask, rather belatedly, permission to quote *Into Battle*: '... the theme of that poem has been woven into the narrative [of *The Golden Virgin*] ... the search for the wholeness (love) in varying degrees, connected directly with courage, fortitude, and inner harmony in varying degrees ... And drawn also of a young colonel (Lieut. S.R., temp-captain, acting Lt.-Col.) of 26, broken at Querrieux in June 1916 for objecting to the plan of battle. ... 'Spectre' West. ... New characters – the admirable, elderly Capt. Kingsman. His friend the R.C. priest, later padre, who knew Julian Grenfell – whose poem, as I said, is one of the themes. ...'

These letters throw considerable light on Williamson's overall purpose in the *Chronicle* and need fuller examination than is possible here (see Note 17 above). But a statement of particular importance is found in a typescript letter dated 17 October 1957: 'But the completion of the series anyway will take all one's strength, if it remains, ... [and added in ms] I feel, & have felt since 1919, that this work is my destiny: that if it is not done, it may be lost forever. One is but a medium ... the personal being is small & ordinary, a mere vehicle for the spirit of place & time. ...'

There is one other person who cannot be left out of this particular equation although he was not part of it – Henry Williamson's great friend (Sir) John Heygate. Heygate was educated at Eton and Balliol although, born in 1903, of a much later generation. But more importantly his father was assistant master at Eton until 1918, and would have known the pre-war 'Grenfell set', and discussion about them must certainly have occurred. As the Heygate family had property in Southend they may well be part of this sub-plot, and although their role is of no actual importance here, Williamson may have garnered information from them.

But, as can be seen, none of the possible contenders found to date for the role of 'Jasper Kingsman' really fit the picture. It is therefore quite possible (and to my mind almost certain) that the whole 'Kingsman' scenario was set up solely for the purpose of paying tribute to Julian Grenfell and his family – a play within the play. I felt very strongly from the beginning that the Grenfell poem was the central pivot at this point but could not see how this fitted into what is found in the novel. With the help of all the extra information, including Williamson's own words, I think it can be seen that most of the clues point towards the explanation given. As can now be seen Henry Williamson would have known that the 'Wemyss' portraits, although still only tenuously, would have had a connection. The intricacy of this item, a tiny part of the overall scheme, is amazing; no doubt there can be a further refining of the denouement in due course.

Father Aloysius who also features in this scenario – 'such a good man, the priest-in-charge of St. Saviour's in the High Street [Lewisham]' (*The Golden Virgin*, p.69) is an equally hard character to unravel. The actual Parish Priest of St. Saviour's at the time of the First World War was Canon Joseph Bernard Ward (1873-1950) who served there from 1909 to 1950 and was indeed a chaplain in the army.¹⁸ The Williamson family would certainly have known this priest. (We are told that 'Hetty' went to the church secretly to say prayers.) However I have found no clues whatsoever within Henry's considerable archive and again I am sure in my own mind that 'Father Aloysius' as such was not involved in Henry's own personal life. Like 'Spectre' West he appears mainly in those scenes where Williamson himself was not actually present. He is therefore almost certainly a symbolic figure representing that particular aspect of life – standing for the large number of priests who gave succour to the wounded and dying at the Front. There are certainly recognisable aspects of the well-known Father Benedict, whose book *Happy Days in France & Flanders with the 47th and 49th Divisions* is in Williamson's archive, but a reading of that book soon shows that Benedict was not actually Aloysius, although some passages are marked. Particularly the sermon that appears at the end of Benedict's book as Henry's ms note in the front of it shows: '? End of Golden Virgin. Phillip sees the padre & hears a sermon in his church, on the lines of the last page of this book'; and on turning to that last page after the printed words 'no sacrifice can be in vain, and we trust where we cannot trace that "All is well, all shall be well, and He shall make all to be well." EXSPECTO RESURRECTIONEM MORTUORUM ET VITAM VENTURI SAECULI.' Williamson continues in holograph: 'The priest then gave the blessing of the papal cross, and Phillip bowed his head. Phillip can be floating above the watery crater-zones in silence – the silence that now seemed [more deadly –

crossed out] more heart-breaking than the flame and shock of the barrage over Passchendaele.'

A major clue to the identity of Father Aloysius should lie in the quotation ascribed to him on the title page of *The Golden Virgin*: 'Objects of hate are but our own chimaerae. They arise from wounds within us.' If he had a real-life counterpart that quote should be traceable. I have been unable to do so. However, I was very startled to note in a showing of the film *Ghandi* on television in January 1998 that the great Mahatma's last recorded words before his death on 30 January 1948 were very similar in intent – and I rushed to write them down: 'The devils are in our own hearts and that is where we must fight them.' It would be typical of Henry Williamson to take these words of a great saint and translate them to fit his own purpose in portraying the saintliness of Father Aloysius.

To move from the sublime to the ridiculous, there is one minor character who needs to be clarified as he is mentioned several times in Williamson's letters home and who appears in a somewhat unfavourable light in several volumes of the *Chronicle* as Tom Ching. On the inside cover of a book entitled *War is War* by Ex-Private X (Gollancz, 1930) Williamson has written a note explaining that the author is A.M. Burrage (and that he was a fellow member of the Savage Club who was thrown out in the 1930s for alcoholism, dying soon after and further noting that the descriptions found on pages 30 and 35 do indeed describe Burrage) adding: 'Make a character of AMB as the pal of Collins in the LRB – the jokers of Crowborough' and continuing 'The character on p.97 was Thomas Lecount Efford, original of both Effish and Ching.'

Burrage's passage on p.97 reads: 'There was another suburban hero quite as unpleasant as the last mentioned. He was very young which asks for consideration. Thank God I hadn't to face the job at his age. He had been 'combed out' of a Government office, and he must have been the most disgusting bit of work that ever darkened the doorstep. God had provided this human scarecrow [and HW has underlined the following words] with huge staring eyes – which later stood him in good stead – and he used to whimper to me and ask me if I thought it was any use for him to sham madness. I think he had tried every other complaint on the M.O. except leprosy and womb trouble.' Against this HW notes again: 'This fellow is or was, 'Effish' in *Dandelion Days*, doubling as Tom Ching in the Phillip series.'

Thomas Lecount Efford attended Colfe's Grammar School 1907-12. His entry in Leland Duncan's *Colfe's Grammar School and the Great War* states that he joined 28 Battalion, London Regt. (Artists) as a private in December 1916 and 'Served in France at Arras and Passchendaele where he was badly shaken by an exploding shell.' Poor Efford, there must have been so many like him. But at least he has been immortalised!

NOTES

1. Dr. J. Wheatley Blench, 'Bedfordshire in the Writings of Henry Williamson', HWSJ, No.17 (March 1988), pp.29-43.
2. Paul Reed, 'Henry Williamson and the Kaiserschlacht March 1918', HWSJ, No.18 (Sept. 1988), pp.12-14.
3. Copies of reports from Devon newspapers were kindly provided by Jamie Campbell, Reference Librarian at Barnstaple Library, North Devon, who added the information that Willison had been thought 'eccentric' by local people.
4. Information on Brig. Willison taken from *Who was Who 1961-70* and Army Lists 1315a, 1920. Research Brian Dolan.
5. Lt.-Col. J.J. Boraston, CB, OBE, and Capt. Cyril Bax, *The Eighth Division in War, 1914-1918*, The Medici Society, 1926.
6. *Official History*, 1915, Vol. II, p.426.
7. *Ibid.* pp.386/87/88.
8. *The Golden Virgin*, chapter 3, 'New World', p.54ff.
9. *Victoria County History of Essex*, Vol VII, pp.112, 119. Copies kindly provided by Essex Record Office.
10. Bruce Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, Jonathan Cape, 1981.
11. John Rothenstein, *British Artists and the War*, Peter Davies, 1931. This book includes six paintings by Orpen including 'Portrait of an Airman' and three by Sargent but not the one referred to by Williamson in his novel.
12. See Bernard Bergonzi, *Hero's Twilight*, new rev. p/b ed. Carcanet, 1996, where the poem is criticised as naïve.
13. Monica Salmond, *Bright Armour*, Faber & Faber, 1935.
14. Bergonzi, op cit. Bergonzi's book is reviewed in HWSJ, No.33 (Sept. 1997), p.76, where his main argument based on the dichotomy of hero (Hotspur) and anti-hero (Falstaff) within war literature is set out.
15. 'Ego Elcho' was Capt. Hugo Francis Charteris (Lord Elcho), born 28 December 1884 and killed in action in April 1916 – who would have inherited the title 12th Earl Wemyss/Lord Elcho. Instead his son Francis David Charteris, KT (1966), born January 1912, succeeded to this title in 1937.
16. In the Second World War, Nicholas Mosley was a Lt. in 2/London Irish Rifles, and fought with the Irish Brigade in Italy, where he was awarded the Military Cross. Information contained in *The London Irish at War, A History of the Battalions of the London Irish Rifles in World War II* (Pub. by London Irish Rifles Old Comrades Association, 1948) and later a Captain in the Rifle Brigade. Research Brian Dolan.

17. I discovered at a very late stage of writing (i.e. the book, *A Patriot's Progress*) that Henry Williamson's letters to Lady Monica Salmond are deposited at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Document D/ERV C2749 (14 letters from 24.12.'56 - 16.7.'64). I am grateful to the archive staff for making copies available for me and for permission to use these. Copyright of the actual letters is the province of the Henry Williamson Literary Estate. I was relieved and gratified to find that these letters bore out my own thesis about Julian Grenfell – it showed (if nothing else) that I am on Henry's 'wavelength'! As they throw most interesting light on Williamson's purpose within the *Chronicle* fuller examination of these letters will be published in a future volume of the Henry Williamson Society *Journal*.
18. Information from St. Saviour's Parish Centenary 1894-1994, by courtesy of Roger Chandler-Honnor, Deacon at Holy Cross, Catford, and honorary Chaplain to the LIR, who has lived in Catford all his life – who is a friend of Brian Dolan (who by the most extraordinary coincidence was himself married in St. Saviour's Church in November 1950 and was present with his father at a dinner to celebrate Canon Ward's Golden Jubilee in 1947. A photograph in the Parish History shows them all at the dinner). Canon Ward's nickname in the parish was 'Bunny' and he was described as 'an arresting, magnetic personality in the pulpit' and was known as a bit of a showman. Apparently during the Blitz (WW2) he used to climb to the top of the church tower instead of going to the shelter, to shake his fist at the Luftwaffe. His character and circumstances do not really fit 'Father Aloysius' and I do not think that they actually were one and the same person, merely that Williamson used some of the facts of Canon Ward's situation and transferred them into his complex tale.

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