



OBELUS

Gruffydd Hornan

an abbreviated history

alias: *Griff*

b. ca 1881 — Scottish/Welsh/American?

d. 1959

Gruffydd (Griff) Hornan was born to middle class parents of Welsh descent in Glasgow, Scotland in 1881. His early education at Shawlands Academy, a partially prestigious public school in the Crossmyloof area of South Glasgow was uneventful. In his class photo when he was about age 9 (1890) he seemed shy and peripheral to the more self-assured group of Glaswegian schoolmates. He is seated in the second row at the far left edge of the tattered cabinet photograph, below. *(See also, a detail on following page, left side)*



In 1894, while only 13, Hornan's family emigrated to America to settle in the community of Scotland, South Dakota, a small town in Bon Homme County incorporated only 9 years before. He then resumed his schooling. His somewhat well-to-do family encouraged him to further apply himself to his studies. Young Griff (as he was called due to the difficulty most had with his unpronounceable Welsh name: Gruffydd—pronounced *gree-fee-the*) was soon enrolled in the Lutheran Normal School, a small liberal arts school in nearby Sioux Falls. This greatly suited his broadly curious mind and desire to be living at school, well away from his immediate family.



Above, left (ca 1890): a detail from previous page. Middle and right: studio portraits of Griff Hornan as a 16 yr old youth (1897), then as a high school graduate in 1899 at age 18. On facing page: In 1902 when Hornan was a 21 yr old college student in Minneapolis.

As a young man, Hornan moved to Kingston, Ontario, Canada, before the Great War and worked for most of his life as a librarian with a sense of entitlement and grandeur. He ran the Municipal library for many decades, but he was eventually spending most of his time researching personal projects and writing biographies of his forebears while compiling their genealogy. Sightings of Hornan at the library became increasingly rare and soon the city's bursar was unsure if he was actually still an employee. Nevertheless, Hornan kept a dusty little office in the library's basement for years. His fairly substantial family inheritance provided him with the funds to be able to work at home in obscurity with little actual concern for earning a living.



Hornan's life's task in his golden years was to gather together and sort the archives of his friend and possibly relative, the naturalist and collector, Homer Caleb Brunion, who died intestate in 1940. *THE BRUNION COLLECTION OF EXTREMELY INTERESTING THINGS* consisted mainly of naturalia, oddities and assemblages accumulated during his lifetime. Hornan salvaged and organized this collection with his assistant, Asaph Saif al-Haq, who came to live and work with him in 1946. *The Hornan Post Mortem Portrait Archive* is a collection of 19th and early 20th century photographic post mortem portraits acquired by Hornan from Brunion's estate. This portrait archive is now part of the permanent collection of the LYRIC CRANIUM and in 2014 was published by Obelus as *Alpha and Omega* by the current "keeper-of-the-collection", Professor David M. Morrish.



When Saif al-Haq died in 1955 in the middle of Hornan's final major project, Hornan seemed lost and confused. Saif al-Haq's decline had left the collection disorganized for the first time. Things began to go badly awry with Hornan's research and logic and the disintegrating collection proceeded to take on a life of its own, all the while driven by Hornan's own demons, paranoias and fantasies.

(Left, Griff Hornan in 1941)

The following pages are excerpts of the front matter from a tattered copy of Hornan's magnum opus, *The Web of Artistry*, wherein he was trying to ascertain the inter-connections between a diverse group of distant relatives starting with one John Morrish of Devon, England. Hornan was for some reason fascinated by the links he found (or created) between fairly disparate yet possibly related people whom he thought of as talented artists or archivists. One focus of his research was Homer C. Brunion, for whom the collections under Hornan's eventual control were named. Sadly, his book was printed only as a prepress review copy, one that he obsessively re-examined and re-read, hence its poor condition. No published copies have yet been found.

The Web of Artistry

or

How Can So Many Mildly Creative People
Of Minor Consequence and Repute
Be Vaguely Connected
To Only One Common Ancestor

by

Dr. G. Hornan

B.A., M.A., Ph.D. M.M.O.O.F., U. of N.

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Table of Contents:

Prolegomenon

A) Book One – The Early Years

- Chapter 1 – Who was John Morrish?
- Chapter 2 – Devon: Bideford and Environs
- Chapter 3 – The Generations Disperse (or die)

B) Book Two – The Split between Devon, North Eastern USA, Upper Canada, Maritime New Brunswick, and the Canadian High Prairie.

- Chapter 4 – Deceptively, The New World Seems Receptive
- Chapter 5 – The Out-Migration of Thomas Jr. et al
- Chapter 6 – The Strangely Ubiquitous Twins and Their Families
- Chapter 7 – A Rash of Childhood Mortality – Who Will be Left?
- Chapter 8 – An Academic is Finally Born
- Chapter 9 – Homer C. Brunion, an Enigma

C) Book Three – The Twentieth Century Creative Renaissance

- Chapter 10 – Post-Victorian Flourish
- Chapter 11 – Innocence and Lack of Training and Talent
- Chapter 12 – The Modernist Impulse: Avoided
- Chapter 13 – Angry Posturing—Morose Affectations
- Chapter 14 – Reginald Peregrine Bellevue: The Odd Duck
- Chapter 15 – Dolores Blodewedd, Portraitist
- Chapter 16 – The "Garden of the Nether/When"
- Chapter 17 – A Fateful Discovery
- Chapter 18 – The Next Generation, or the Last?

Appendices:

1. List of Illustrations
2. The Family Trees
3. Documents and Certificates (Births, Marriages and Deaths; Admissions, Arrests/Releases, and Certifications)
4. Catalogues of Artifacts
5. Exhibition List
6. Interviews
7. Medical Histories
8. Biographical Sources

Prolegomenon

Whilst searching through my extensive private library of copious but scattered archival data which catalogues my illustrious family's genealogical past, I was struck by the abundant and amazing coincidences of creative impulse seen trickling through an encouraging number of the bloodline tributaries which originate from a nineteenth century progenitor, one John Morrish, Esq. of the Bideford area, North Devon, England. After much internalized dialogue and soul-searching, I thought it necessary to fully explore this profoundly self-invigorating phenomenon and fill in the many historical gaps in the record with visual and anecdotal minutiae gleaned from the many obscure sources I have laboriously collected and placed at my own disposal; to whit, my personal library of genealogical research, local art history, family medical records and transcribed interviews with relations dispersed widely throughout this country and the so-named, Old Country. This humble, albeit intense treatise, is the culmination of many solitary years of dogged searches, meticulous cataloguing and painstaking distillation of the bulk of the data I have so far unearthed and transcribed, and, finally with the help of my taciturn assistant Shermer*, (who was sadly taken from me last year), here, in this so-far incomplete tome, I have put forward for your generous perusal and, hopefully, serious contemplation, the facts as I have come to understand them. Dame Fortune has proffered her abundant blessings upon me by also allowing me to acquire many actual artifacts: extant examples of artwork, original photographic portraits and views, as well as other physical records of these amazing artists', artisans' and creative spirits' lives; and thereby without the physical and irrefutable evidence proven by these copious records, my premise would surely and utterly fail.

My only regret is that we do not have any method by way of extending our sincere gratitude to these creative forebears for their unwitting and—until now—unrecognized contribution to the expansive cultural richness of our humble family line other than through some as-of-yet unknowable paranormical contact. (This is a notion I am vigorously exploring at the moment. I am supremely confident that there is a real potential for first-hand corroboration of much of what I have put forward here through direct contact with the protagonists of each aspect of this profound family record. I will certainly endeavor to publish my findings at some point in the future.)

In bringing the bright light of a new spring day to the physical apparition of this record, its many pages and its humble bindings, I wish to gratefully thank my prestigious publisher, Obelus Press and the immensely helpful staff at Ranfurley House Press, for the wonderfully understandable way in which I have been treated of late, especially in light of my recent troubles with copyright and silverfish. I must also give posthumous thanks to my able assistant, Shermer*, who had helped me keep everything in order, and had on more than one occasion saved me from profound embarrassment by correcting some misguided assumptions I may have over-enthusiastically clung to. I will miss him dearly. —GH

* Shermer: what I called my archivist and compiler, Asaph Saif al-Haq

This booklet is part of an ongoing series of mini-biographies compiled by the research staff of OBELUS Publishing and printed by DeadCat Press at the Residue Press Printshop. Much of the material herein is from THE LYRIC CRANIUM archives, and was originally collected and catalogued by the late Griff Hornan and his archivist, Asaph Saif al-Haq, in the late 1940s and early 1950s. All text, except where noted, is by David Morrish.

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