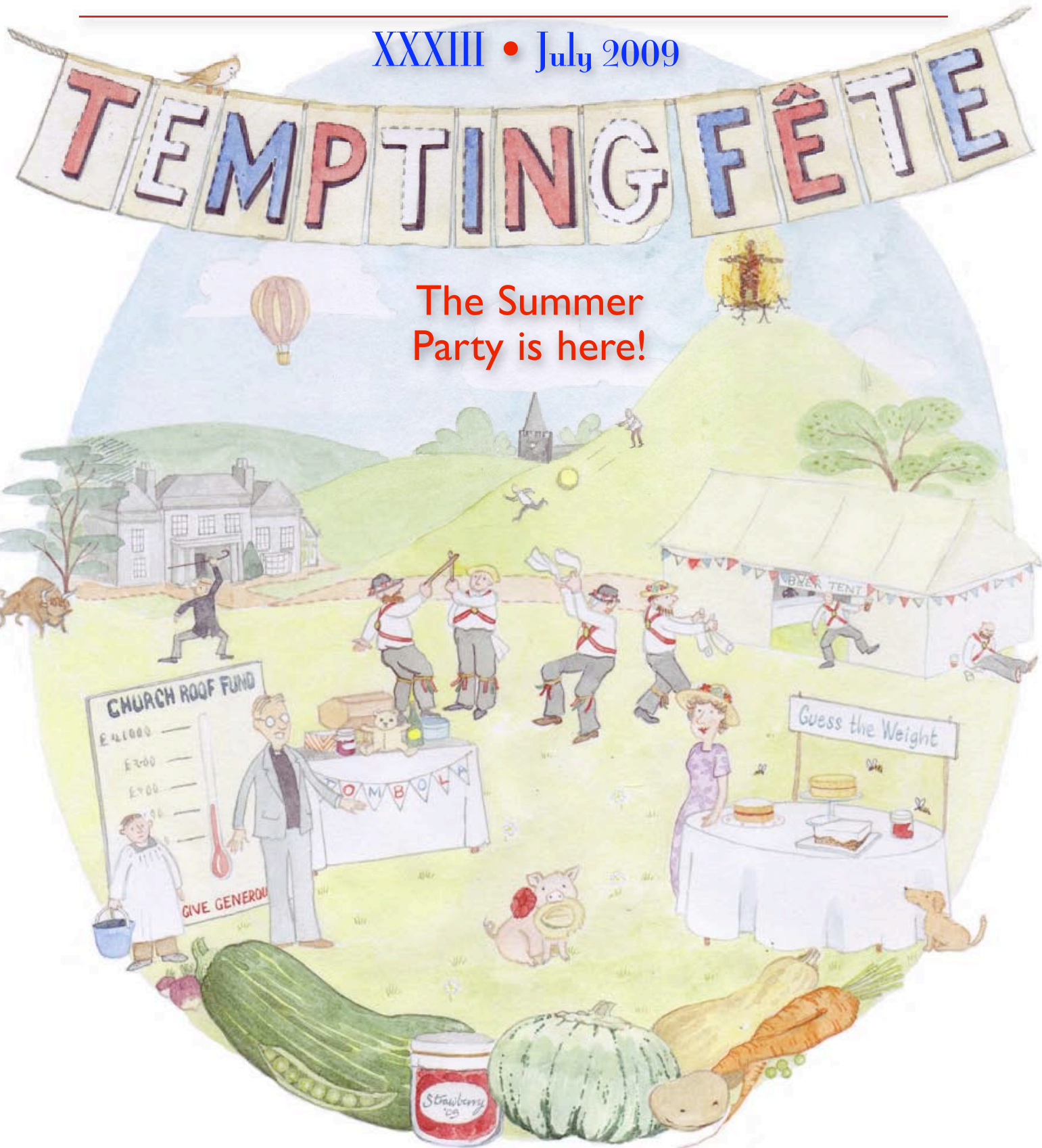


The New Sheridan Club

Newsletter

XXXIII • July 2009



The Summer Party is here!



The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of the Wheatsheaf pub just off Oxford Street. The Wheatsheaf is one of Fitzrovia's historic pubs, a one-time haunt of Dylan Thomas, George Orwell, Augustus John and Julian Maclaren-Ross. In fact Thomas met his wife Caitlin in here and, legend has it, he was known to flash at women here as well. Fitzrovia's associations with literature go back to the eighteenth century. In the twentieth century both Woolf and Shaw lived in Fitzroy Square; Pound and Lewis launched *Blast!* at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel in Percy Street. John Buchan lived in Portland Place and in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Richard Hannay has a flat there. Both Lawrences (D.H. and T.E.) took rooms here, as did Aleister Crowley, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Katherine Mansfield.

The Editor Writes

By the time you read this the Club's summer party will nearly be upon us. The twice-yearly parties are the NSC's biggest events. To date these have always been in central London and usually have a theme: summer 2007 was *The Last Gasper*, a homage to tobacco, the smoking of which in public buildings was to be outlawed the next day. Last summer was *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, all about the English abroad and the colonial experience. This time round it is *Tempting Fête*, a celebration of the traditional village fête. See page 13.

The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 1st July in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 8pm until 11pm. Instead of a lecture this time we will be treated to the first scene of *Broken Holmes*, a humorous play concocted by Mr Robin Johnson and performed by a troupe of thespians known as the Semper Theatre. The play is a parodic poke at Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, imagining them as a bickering couple. "The real mystery", Johnson explains, "is why an intelligent, sensitive soul like Watson stays in a relationship with an abusive, egotistical drug-addict?"

The official description of the play runs thus:

A murdered duke. A deadly cobra. An illegitimate heiress returned from exotic shores. Decades of unlikely back story effortlessly deduced from a single marmalade-stain. Sherlock Holmes should have this case nailed shut in time for elevenses, as long as he doesn't forget his morning opium.

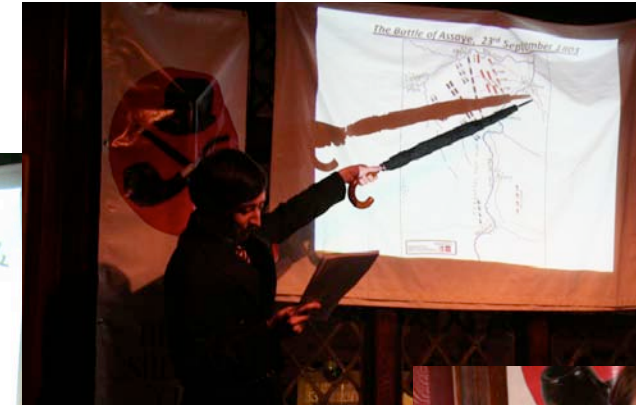
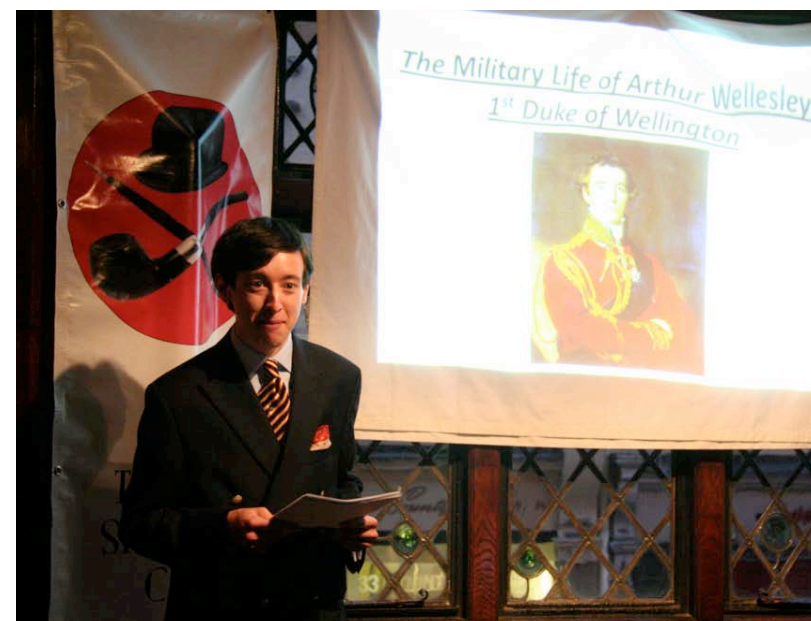
But this is the day that his long-suffering sidekick Watson's patience finally comes to an end. This is the day he solves a case of his own.

Find out what's really going on under the deerstalker in this darkly comic examination of one of fiction's most outwardly respectable characters. Featuring a puppet snake.

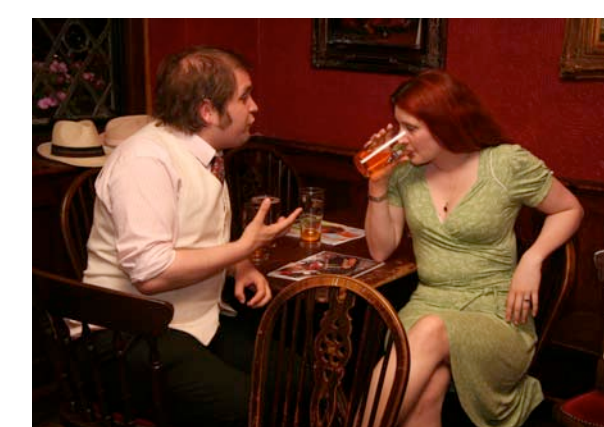
The Last Meeting

At the June meeting we were treated to a rousing delivery by Lord Finsbury Windermere Compton-Bassett of his address, *The Military Life of the Duke of Wellington*. Scarily, in those days anyone (well, any gentleman) seems to have been able to become an army officer simply by buying the position, often at a ridiculously young age. Fortunately for us all, Arthur Wellesley turned out to have a bit of a knack for soldiering. Despite unpromising beginnings—his mother considered him feckless and dubbed him "my awkward son", while his early attempts to marry his eventual wife were rejected because of his poor prospects—he went on to thrash Napoleon twice, serve as Prime Minister and invent a boot.

An essay version of this address is on page 4.



(Right) Before the talk, Jessie lays down the law about this year's Christmas house; (left) Compton-Bassett warms to his subject (under that subject's glacial gaze); (above) a handy umbrella helps him explain the Battle of Assaye



(Above) Parson Woodforde cuts a dash as usual; (above right) Tim Kennington lays on the charm; (right) a rush for seats as the talk begins; (below) a student of journalism picks Torquill's brains



Mr Graves toasts your good health

(Above) Tabitha and Natasha, aka Dolly Tartan; (below) Tash gamely plugs the next Furbelows gig; (below left) the Curé takes Will's confession





The Military Life of the Duke of Wellington

By Lord Finsbury Compton-Bassett

ARTHUR WELLESLEY was born around 29th April, 1769 in Dublin. (I say around, as some sources say 1st May, so there is a little uncertainty. Incidentally, Napoleon was born this same year.) Arthur was the fourth son—and third of five surviving—of the Earl of Mornington, at this time Professor of Music at Trinity College Dublin.

Wellesley was born The Honourable Arthur Wesley and remained a Wesley until at least his campaigns in India. It is unclear why he decided to change his surname but both sides of his family had been Wesleys and Wellesleys, and he was often known as either. Perhaps he felt Wellesley was a little more distinguished. He spent a great deal of his childhood in the family homes in Ireland and this is where he began his military appointments.

He was schooled at Eton from 1781 to 1784. However, 1781 was also the year his father died. A somewhat unsuccessful gambler, the Earl left many debts. In 1785 the family moved to Brussels, where Arthur enrolled at the French Academy of Equitation at Angers, spending a year there before moving back to Britain. At Angers he learnt French and became an excellent horseman—two skills that became very important in later life.

At this time he was not seen as outstanding at anything. Indeed, his mother remarked that “he is fit for powder and nothing else”. Upon his becoming a soldier she said, “Arthur has put on his red coat for the first time today. Anyone can see he has not the cut of a soldier.”

Military Life

On 7th March 1787 he was commissioned an Ensign in the 73rd Foot, a Highland Regiment. An Ensign is the equivalent of a Second Lieutenant in the infantry today and the main

function of an Ensign was, as the rank suggests, carrying the regimental colours. Thanks to family connections Richard, one of his elder brothers, managed to get him a position as Aide-de-Camp to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—a job that took him away from soldiering, doubled his pay and allowed him to attend as many balls, parties and soirées in Dublin as he could manage.

On Christmas Day 1787 he transferred to the 76th Foot (another Highland Regiment) and was promoted to Lieutenant. He continued his duties in Ireland for a few years, rising militarily by transferring to the 12th Light Dragoons in 1789, then in 1791 to the 18th Light Dragoons, this time with the promotion to Captain.

Around this time he fell in love with Kitty Pakenham, daughter of the Earl of Longford, and in 1793 asked her brother—the recent new Earl of Longford—for permission to marry her. He was refused, on the grounds that he was too young, too much in debt, and did not have a promising career in front of him. Arthur was apparently heartbroken, and—a keen violin player—he burnt his violins in a fit of frustration, never playing again in his life.

He resolved to pursue his military career with vigour, and later in 1793 became a Major in the 33rd Foot—an English County regiment this time rather than a Scottish Highland one. A few months after this appointment, his brother lent him the money to purchase a Lieutenant-Colonelcy; at the age of 24 he became commanding officer of the King’s 33rd Regiment of Foot.

(From the formation of the British Army until 1871, young men could simply purchase ranks from Ensign up to Lieutenant-Colonel. Prices varied considerably between regiments, but young men with enough cash could command a battalion on the field of battle without any military experience. Arthur may seem young at 24 to command a regiment, but Edward Paget, a cavalry general in the Peninsular War, was a Lieutenant-Colonel at 19, as were two others. Sir Henry Walton Ellis, CO of the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Waterloo, was bought an Ensign’s commission by his father when he was only three weeks old, and a Captaincy at 13.)

In 1793 Arthur got his first experience of battle. The Duke of York led an expedition to

Flanders and the 33rd Foot was part of the army. The two-year campaign was, overall, a failure but, Arthur observed, “At least I learned what not to do, and that is always a valuable lesson.” Arthur also learned how to manage his battalion under fire and the merits of the “line versus column”—more of which later. (This campaign also brought us the nursery rhyme “The Grand Old Duke of York”, so that’s two good things to come out of it.)

India

Less than a year after returning, the 33rd was despatched to India in 1796. Arthur wrote: “I am nimmukwallah... that is, I have eaten of the King’s salt, and, therefore, I conceive it my duty to serve with unhesitating zeal and cheerfulness, when and wherever the King or his Government may think proper to employ me.” His brother Richard, Lord Mornington, was now Governor-General of India—which led to friction between Arthur and more senior officers, over whose heads he was often given important tasks.

Recently promoted to full Colonel, he now had the chance to command more than a single regiment. The shortage of senior officers in India meant everyone had to “step up” a rank and assume more responsibilities. Colonels often found themselves commanding Brigades three or four regiments strong—usually a role for a Major-General.

The army had been sent to subdue Tippoo Sultan, one of the most powerful native rulers in India. The British had defeated him some ten years before, but now he was encouraging the French to send a force to help him drive the British out of India. The British, under General Harris and Major-General David Baird, were marching on Tippoo’s fortress capital of

Seringapatam; on the way, on 27th March 1799, the Battle of Malavelly took place, Arthur’s first action in India.

At Malavelly Arthur had command of 11 battalions—his own 33rd and ten native. His tactics are important to note: he was on the defensive with all his battalions formed up in line two ranks deep, one next to the other, on a low ridge. Tippoo’s army were lined up opposite. Suddenly a column of 2,000–3,000 infantry formed and began to advance towards Arthur’s command. Arthur waited until the enemy were only 60 yards away, then had his men fire a volley and advance. Under the

combined impact of a volley at close range followed by a bayonet charge, the enemy ran. Disheartened even before a battle proper had begun, the rest of Tippoo’s army retreated. The 33rd lost just two men.

The storming of Seringapatam was to be altogether different. Around this time Arthur suffered his only ever defeat. It was more a skirmish than a battle, but he was in command and it annoyed him greatly. He was ordered to carry out a night attack to clear a wood of the enemy but his attack

was defeated through confusion: the 33rd got lost in the dark and stumbled around getting shot at by people who knew the terrain. There was hand-to-hand combat too—an officer was killed by bayonet and it is likely Arthur used his sword on this occasion (one of the few times he did). Casualties were only 25 men but Arthur never again ordered a night attack unless it was impossible to do otherwise.

Seringapatam

After this setback the siege progressed well and on 4th May 1799, the assault took place. As sieges go, it was relatively easy—the British took the fortress with the loss of just 389 men, a tiny



Arthur as a 26-year-old Lieutenant-Colonel



amount given they were assaulting a fortified position. Tippoo Sultan was killed and his forces lost 8,000 men. Arthur had command of a reserve Brigade during the assault and was not needed to take part in the actual fighting.

Arthur was made governor of Seringapatam, and thus of the State of Mysore—a very important and prestigious job for a new officer just out from home. This angered Baird in particular, who believed he deserved the honour, both as senior to Arthur and for leading the assault on the fortress. But Arthur was not just brother of the Governor-General: he had great skill in administration and diplomacy, which Baird lacked. Arthur wrote years later: “Baird was a gallant, hard-headed, lionhearted officer, but he had no talent, no tact; he had strong prejudices against the natives; and he was peculiarly disqualified from his manners, habits, etc., and it was supposed his temper, for

the management of them.”

Arthur spent the next couple of years mainly as an administrator, but occasionally leading military expeditions to defeat local warlords and rebels, which he did with every success. In September 1802 he learned he had been promoted to Major-General and it was soon after this that he commanded an army against the Maratha Confederacy of west central India, winning a battle that I believe, as he did, was the greatest achievement of his career—including Waterloo.

Assaye

Arthur’s army was 24,000 men strong but he decided to split his force into two, giving Colonel Stevenson of the East India Company one half, and commanding the other himself. The majority of Arthur’s force was of native soldiers—his only British troops were the Foot

regiments of the 74th, 78th and 80th, and the cavalry of the 19th Light Dragoons. The 80th he gave to Stevenson and so began a two-pronged advance against the Marathas.

It was Arthur’s force that first came upon the enemy position, drawn up in line on the other side of the River Kaitna and completely blocking his advance. Stevenson was a day’s march away, but despite Arthur’s army being at half-strength, he felt there was no time to waste and decided to attack. But how to get across the river? Local guides informed him there was nowhere to cross, but Arthur personally carried out a reconnaissance, during which he found a ford between two halves of a village, at Waroor. He therefore ordered the army to cross: it marched along the front of the Maratha army, crossed the river, then formed up for battle on the other side. During this manoeuvre the Marathas changed position in order to face the new British threat, and it was also at this time, as Arthur was crossing the river with his staff at the head of the army that his Orderly, with his three spare horses and canteens of water, had his head taken off by a roundshot.

The Maratha army was almost 100,000 strong, with over 80 artillery pieces lined up against him. Arthur was outnumbered almost ten to one. But he realised that over 60 per cent of the enemy force was cavalry, so defeat the infantry and artillery and the day should be won. He placed great faith in his ferocious but disciplined Highland infantry and his one regiment of British cavalry had larger and more powerful horses than any Indian ones.

Arthur’s infantry advanced in line, with the cavalry and artillery in support. The 74th accidentally inclined right towards the heavily defended village of Assaye itself rather than going straight ahead, and ran into trouble because it became the sole target for a great proportion of the enemy line, and it was also out of range of support from the rest of the British army. It formed a square against a mass of enemy horsemen, but was being shot to pieces. However, things were going far better elsewhere. The British force advanced head-on against the enemy, into the smoke and cannon fire of the enemy gun line. At 60 yards the British line halted and gave a volley at the enemy—a second volley followed, and the enemy gun line

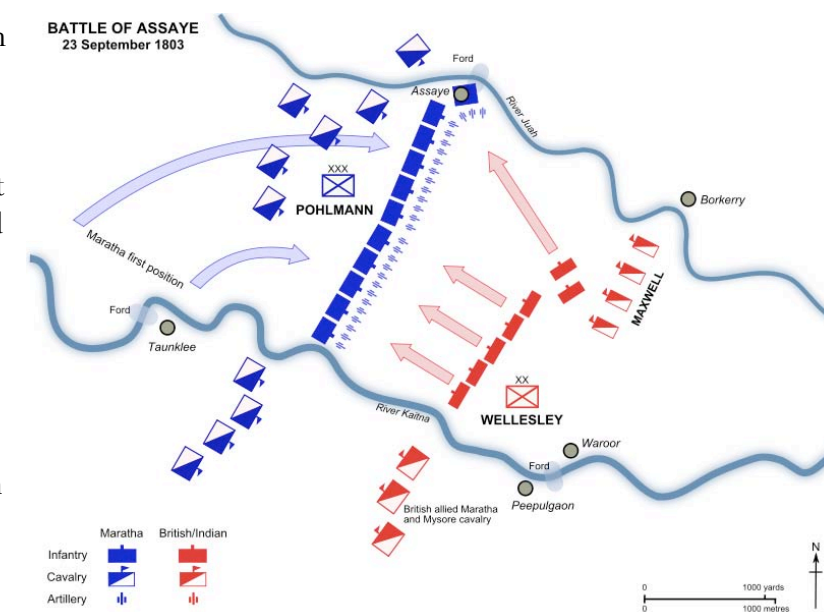
disintegrated. Following up with the bayonet, the British took control of the gun line, reformed and repulsed an attack by enemy forces coming up in support—who were finally driven off the field in a cavalry charge by the 19th Light Dragoons. This charge also saved the 74th, who suffered horrendous casualties.

It was in this battle that Arthur had two horses killed from under him—one shot during the first advance, and the other speared in the neck during a melee at the gun line—when he again had to use his sword to defend himself. For all his mastery of strategy, Arthur was not afraid to get right in the middle of the fighting with his men. A Scots officer, Colin Campbell, later commented, “The General was in the thick of the action the whole time. I never saw a man so cool and collected as he was.”

But the battle was costly: Arthur had inflicted casualties of at least 6,000 on the enemy and completely broken them, but out of the 5,800 British troops actually engaged, 1,594 were killed or wounded.

After Assaye he took part in only one other major engagement, that of the siege of the fortress of Gawilghur. It was extremely heavily defended, particularly with artillery, but Arthur and Stevenson were combined and their successful assault lost only 126 British against over 4,000 Indians. This victory, together with the victory at Delhi of another British force, caused the Marathas to ask for peace and a treaty was signed the following year.

By now Arthur was growing tired of India, remarking, “I have served as long in India as



any man ought who can serve anywhere else.” In 1805 he travelled home with his brother, whose tenure as Governor-General had ended.

It was also in 1805 that he met, for the only time, Admiral Nelson, by chance at the Colonial Office. Arthur later wrote: “He entered at once into conversation with me, if I can call it conversation, for it was almost all on his side, and all about himself and, really, in a style so vain and silly as to surprise and almost disgust me.” At this point Nelson apparently left the room for a moment, obviously to find out who Arthur was, after which, “All that I had thought a charlatan style had vanished...I don’t know that I ever had a conversation that interested me more.” Within a few months Nelson was dead. The two men now lie close to each other in the crypt of St Paul’s Cathedral.

Having amassed £42,000 from his Indian exploits, Arthur was now rich and relatively famous and in September 1804 he was made a Knight of the Bath. Now his second proposal to Kitty Pakenham was accepted and they were married in April 1806.

The Peninsular War

In 1807 Napoleon, fresh from defeating the Austrians, Russians and Prussians in central Europe, turned his attentions to the Iberian Peninsula. Arthur, now a Lieutenant-General, was sent to Portugal where he defeated the French at the Battles of Rolicca and Vimeiro in 1808. But he was then superseded in command by Generals Dalrymple and Burrard—who had not actually taken part in the battles Arthur had just won. Not known for their competence, these generals soon signed the controversial Convention of Cintra, which stipulated that the Royal Navy would transport the French army out of Lisbon with all their spoils of war. When the British government found out, Dalrymple, Burrard and Arthur were recalled to Britain for a Court of Enquiry—which found that Arthur had signed the preliminary Armistice but not the Convention, so he was cleared of any wrongdoing (and in fairness he was only acting under orders of a superior officer at the time).

Meanwhile another British army, this time in Spain, had appeared at first successful before retreating back to the port of Corunna. Sir David Baird (of Seringapatam fame) lost his right arm and the army commander, Sir John

Moore, was killed, though the British force was successfully evacuated.

Eager to be back in action, Arthur submitted a memorandum to Secretary of State for War Lord Castlereagh on the defence of Portugal, stressing its mountainous frontiers and advocating Lisbon as the main base because the Royal Navy could help defend it. Castlereagh and the cabinet approved the paper, and appointed him Commander-in-Chief of all British forces in Portugal, simultaneously raising the number of men available from 10,000 to 26,000.

Back on the Peninsula with reinforcements, Arthur took the offensive in April 1809. In the Second Battle of Oporto, he crossed the Douro river in a daylight *coup de main* and routed Marshal Soult’s French troops. He then marched through Portugal and joined with a Spanish army to defeat the French at the Battle of Talavera. For this Arthur was created “Viscount Wellington of Talavera”, but it was, to use one of Arthur’s later phrases, a close-run thing. A French night attack nearly succeeded, with a good proportion of the Spanish forces running away at the sound of their own gunfire. And with Soult’s regrouped army threatening to cut them off at the rear, the British were compelled to retreat.

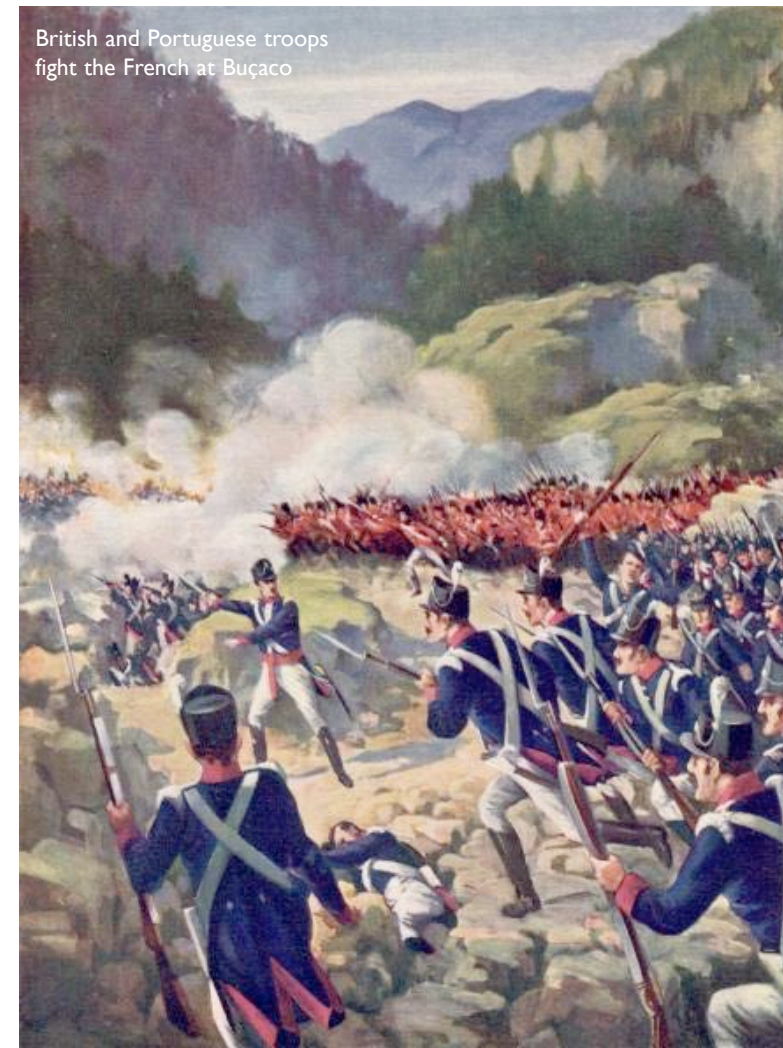


In 1810, a newly enlarged French army under Marshal André Masséna invaded Portugal. Despite the great victory at Talavera, British opinion now was that Arthur was doing nothing and making no attempt to bring the French to battle. But first he slowed the French at the Battle of Buçaco (where again he used a ridge and the “line versus column” tactic), then blocked them from taking the Lisbon peninsula with a series of massive, interlinked earthworks known as the Lines of Torres Vedras. These lines were what Arthur had been planning during the lull after Talavera and he managed to keep them so secret that not even the majority of his army knew about the defences until they were ordered to garrison them. The French invasion of Portugal broke down and retreated after six months—without even trying an assault anywhere along the lines, deemed impregnable even by the enemy.

The next year saw see-saw campaigns in which the British nearly drove the French from Portugal but also suffered some horrendous casualties—at Albuera the 3rd Foot (Buffs) lost 85 per cent of their men. The French retained the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, guarding the mountain passes into Portugal—it was to these crucial fortresses that Arthur now turned.

In 1812, Arthur, now a full General, finally captured Ciudad Rodrigo as the French went into winter quarters, storming it before they could react. He moved south quickly, besieged Badajoz for a month and captured it in one bloody night. After consolidating Portugal, he took his army into Spain again and won a decisive victory at Salamanca, liberating Madrid. As a reward he was created Earl and then Marquess of Wellington, and given command of all Allied armies in Spain, becoming Generalissimo of all Spanish forces.

After more see-sawing Arthur led a new offensive in late 1813 through the hills north of Burgos and switched his supply line from Portugal to Santander on Spain’s north coast. Continuing to outflank the French lines, he caught up with and defeated the army of Napoleon’s brother Joseph at the Battle of Vitoria, for which he was promoted to Field Marshal—a rank reserved only for Britain’s best and most successful Generals. There was now no higher military rank he could obtain. At

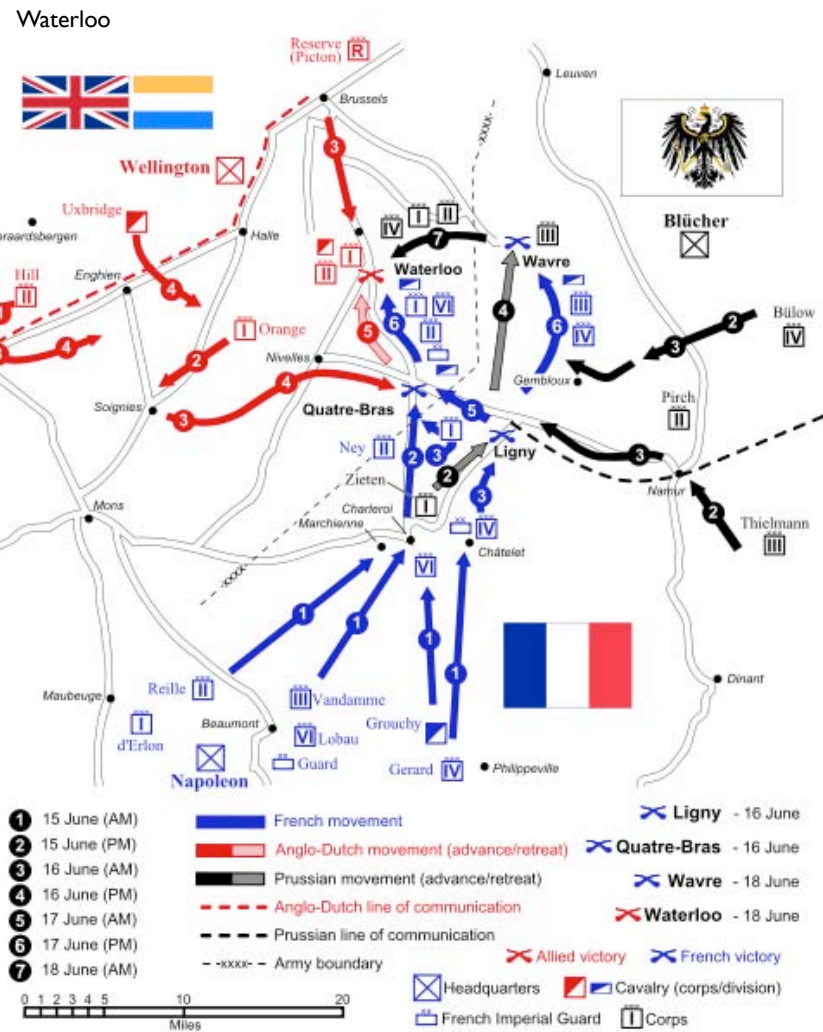


Vitoria, however, the British troops broke ranks to loot the abandoned French wagons instead of pursuing the beaten foe, and this caused an enraged Arthur to write to Earl Bathurst the famous line, “We have in the service the scum of the earth as common soldiers.”

After taking the fortresses of Pamplona and San Sebastián, and winning battles over Soult’s reorganised French army, Arthur invaded southern France, beating Soult yet again at Nive, Orthez and Toulouse. Immediately after Soult evacuated the latter city, news arrived of Napoleon’s defeat and abdication.

Hailed as conquering hero and now famous throughout Europe, Arthur was created Duke of Wellington. (Many of his titles and ranks were bestowed upon him while the war was still in progress—when he got home he was awarded all his patents of nobility in a unique ceremony lasting a full day.)

After the war, he was appointed ambassador to France and, on 2 January 1815, his Knighthood was converted to Knight Grand



Cross—again the highest honour that could be bestowed upon him.

Waterloo

On 26 February 1815 Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France, regaining control of the country by May. Arthur arrived in Belgium to take command of the Anglo-Allied army of British, Germans, Dutch and Belgians, stationed alongside the Prussian forces of General Blücher—a 72-year-old cavalryman, veteran of countless wars and a passionate hater of all things French. Napoleon defeated the Prussians at Ligny on 16th June, whilst his second-in-command Marshal Ney fought an indecisive battle with Arthur at Quatre Bras that same afternoon—Arthur apparently rode to the battle in full dress uniform, having been at a ball given by the Duchess of Richmond in Brussels when told of Napoleon’s invasion. His horsemanship came into play again: in a reconnaissance he was surprised and pursued by French cavalry, and rode straight at the 42nd

Highlanders. Shouting at them to lie down, he leapt over their ranks.

These battles compelled the Anglo-Allied army to withdraw to a more defensible position—a ridge on the Brussels road, just south of the small town of Waterloo. Two days later, on 18th June, the Battle of Waterloo was fought.

This was the first time Arthur had encountered Napoleon, but he did not command the army he wished for, his army of the Peninsular days. “I have got an infamous army,” he stated, “very weak and ill-equipped, and an inexperienced Staff.” He commanded an army of only 25,000 men trained to British standards: the rest were poorly trained soldiers from Dutch and Nassau forces—some of whom had fought for Napoleon during the Peninsular War.

Napoleon wished to keep the British and Prussians apart as much as possible, and he sent 33,000 troops under Marshal Grouchy to intercept Blücher. Arthur’s comparable gamble was to leave 17,000 men around the town of Hal, north-west of the Mont

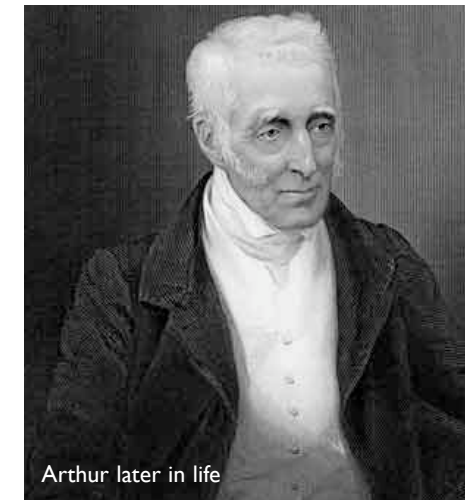
Saint Jean, to protect against any attempt by Napoleon to drive him away from the sea and safety, but also to provide Arthur with a fresh reserve with which to fight the following day, should the action on 18th June prove inconclusive, as at Quatre Bras.

Napoleon’s tactics have been criticised as lacking in the brilliance he exhibited earlier in his career. His plan on the day was to pin Arthur’s right with overwhelming cannon fire and an attack on the fortified chateau of Hougoumont, to draw reinforcements away from Wellington’s centre-left position, then shatter this position with an all-out infantry assault in the column formation, the usual French tactic in battle.

Hougoumont held out, only modestly reinforced from time to time by Arthur, who realised exactly what Napoleon had planned. The subsequent infantry attack by the French was destroyed by Allied heavy cavalry, who in turn however suffered over 50 per cent casualties from French cavalry counterattacks.

As the British were still holding on to the ridge, Napoleon’s only option left was an all-out assault on the Allied centre, leaving no effective force to hold off the Prussians. At this point Arthur chose to reorganise the defensive line, and the watching French took this as the prelude to retreat, resulting in waves of French cavalry attacking the completely unbroken Allies, to which there was only one solution—the forming of squares. At this point, a combined attack by French infantry and artillery, firing point-blank into the squares, would probably have caused devastation and a French victory. But co-ordination in the French army was haphazard. The squares held out, and the French cavalry assault, having to charge uphill through muddy terrain over sunken roads and ploughed farmland, petered out.

Now the Prussians arrived, driving in Napoleon’s forces on the east of the battlefield. Napoleon made a last attempt to destroy Arthur’s centre before his two enemies could link. At six in the evening, the fortified farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, lynch-pin of the Allied front just as Hougoumont was for the Allied right, was finally taken—but only after the



defenders, elite light infantry from the King’s German Legion, ran out of ammunition. Arthur redrew the remnants of his front and prepared for the final assault, at which point he is said to have prayed: “God, give me night or give me Blücher.” Though he might have seen thousands of men advancing on to the battlefield from the east, he did not know that the dark uniforms in the distance were the forces of Blücher rather than those of Grouchy.

At this point Napoleon sent forward the Imperial Guard: never defeated in battle, an elite of an elite and a regiment for veterans only, held in reserve to provide the decisive blow at moments like this, it branched out in a two-pronged attack to finish off what Napoleon believed to be an Allied army on the point of annihilation. But Arthur had prepared an ambush for the Guard: they ran into a surprise

counter-attack from British infantry (by coincidence mainly the British equivalent of the Imperial Guard, the Foot Guards, whom Arthur personally ordered, shouting, “Up Guards, and at them!”) concealed still behind the all-important reverse slope. Suddenly faced with red-coated two-deep ranks firing the classic controlled battalion volleys, the Imperial Guard faltered, retreated—and triggered a mass panic. The entire French army disintegrated, leading Arthur to comment afterwards, “I have fought the French as often as anybody...and I never saw them behave ill except at the end of the battle of Waterloo. Whole battalions ran away and left their arms piled.”

Arthur ordered an advance of the Allied line as the Prussians overran the French positions to the east, and the French army was routed completely. Arthur and Blücher met at the inn of La Belle Alliance on the road bisecting the battlefield. It was agreed that the Prussians would pursue the French to France, the British following after a night of rest.

On 22 June Napoleon abdicated again and was transported to Saint Helena. Waterloo had marked the end of the Napoleonic Wars once and for all—and the end of Arthur’s military career.

Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, died peacefully at Walmer Castle in Deal on 14th September 1852, aged 83. On his arm was found a bracelet placed there by his wife when they were young.

Undoubtedly Arthur Wellesley was a great soldier. He could plan campaigns in a country as large as India while managing the rations of a single battalion, could survey a battlefield as army commander or take part in the hand-to-hand fighting. He had a dry sense of humour, commenting to a friend: “If writers would adhere to the golden Rule for an Historian, viz. to write nothing which they did not know to be true, the Duke apprehends that they would have but little to tell.” But I think one of his finest quotes ever has to be: “We always have been, we are, and I hope that we always shall be, detested in France!”



Pictures of Isolation and Individuality

THE THIRD IN OUR new run of Film Nights was well attended and imaginatively scheduled, thanks to Miss Suzanne Livingstone and Mr Dickon Edwards. Suzi's main feature was *Grey Gardens*, a 1975 documentary about two women, mother and daughter, faded socialites both named Edith Beale, living alone in a dilapidated 28-room mansion in East Hampton. They were actually the aunt and first cousin of Jackie Onassis, but after Phelan Beale, "Big" Edie's husband, left her the two lived on in the house for some 50 years in increasing isolation and squalor, surrounded by cats and raccoons. When they needed money for food they would occasionally sell an antique from the attic. At one point local authorities threatened to evict them and raze the house, for violation of building and sanitation codes.

"Little" Edie had spent time in her twenties in New York as an aspiring actress and notable beauty and had had several proposals of marriage. But I believe she fell in love with a married man, hung on hoping he'd leave his wife and then, when it became clear he would not, retreated back to the family home, Grey Gardens. There were brothers too, somewhere, and a fortune that was somehow purloined, but it seems the classic scenario where the youngest

daughter ends up looking after the mother, dreaming of getting away and living her own life, yet held back by duty and love.

Preceding that we had a splendid television interview with Quentin Crisp. It was made for World In Action in 1970, actually two years after publication of *The Naked Civil Servant*, but did much to raise his profile. By this stage his appearance was relatively restrained—he no longer dyed his hair with henna or painted his toenails—but he still presented a striking portrait of effeminacy, indolence and wit. He had earned a living as a life model but by this stage is depicted as someone who seldom left the house, subsisted on Complan diet drinks and liked to give the impression he was just waiting to die. (He offers the film crew glasses of stout on the grounds that he finds it makes the day pass more quickly; he never cleaned his flat, arguing famously that after the first four years it didn't get any worse.) In fact as his fame grew he went on to have successful one-man shows and an acting career, later emigrating to America which he had always found more accepting of his eccentricities.



There was a third film too, a short with Joanna Lumley in it which I think may have been supplied by Chuckles, but we had some early technical issues with the projector and we weren't able to hear the sound. (Hats off to the manageress who teetered on a step ladder attempting to fix the problem with a teaspoon.)

Thanks to Suzi and Dickon. If you would like to curate a Film Night please get in touch.



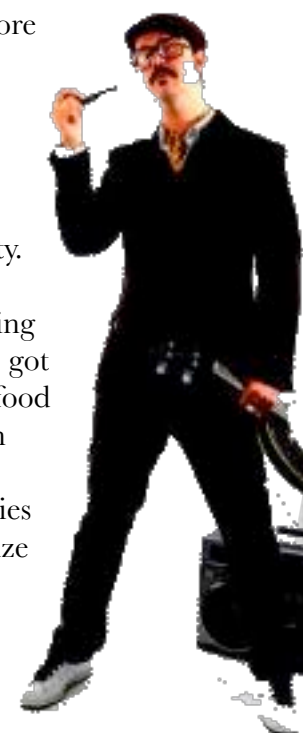
Tempting Fête

THE CLUB'S SUMMER PARTY is almost upon us! It's on Saturday 4th July, at the City Tavern, 29–30 Lawrence Lane, near Bank tube station, and the theme is the traditional village fête.

I'm pleased to announce that the party will be officially opened at 7pm with a ribbon-cutting by the parish vicar, the Rector of St Mary Le Bow, which is about a street away from the venue. We have a packed programme of entertainment beginning with a live broadcast by the Fitzrovia Radio Hour, a 1930s-style live radio play complete with cut-glass accents, vintage style microphones and inventively produced sound effects. Come early as the broadcast will begin promptly at 8pm.

Later we have a live demonstration of the genuine Victorian walking-stick martial art of Bartitsu, followed by your favourite and mine, Mr B. the Gentleman Rhymer, the lost link between Noel Coward and Chuck D., offering "raps" about cricket and pipe-smoking and asking the eternal question, why can't there be more kissing in porn?

The highlight of the evening, however, must surely be the Grand Raffle, with hundreds of pounds of prizes to give away—entry to which is free to Members, as is entry to the party. We'll be plotting the progress of the Church Roof Fund (actually representing our minimum spend at the bar—we've got till 1am to put away £4,000 worth of food and drink, but we know you've got it in you!). There will be stalls offering homemade sweets and burlesque oddities and don't forget there will also be a prize for the most impressive vegetable...





A Double Birthday Bash

SATURDAY 6TH JUNE saw a joyous party celebrating the birthday not only of the delightful Fleur McGerr but of our Glorious Chairman for Life, Torquil Arbuthnot.

The venue was The Deveraux public house off the Strand, an establishment whose landlord is an expert on Babycham, should you ever need one. No Babycham got quaffed that I saw, but a lot of other things did and no small amount of cake was in evidence, as you can see from the pictures—Torquil even had one styled like a popping Champagne bottle. Needless to say there were some splendid outfits too. Thanks to Suzanne Coles for the snaps.



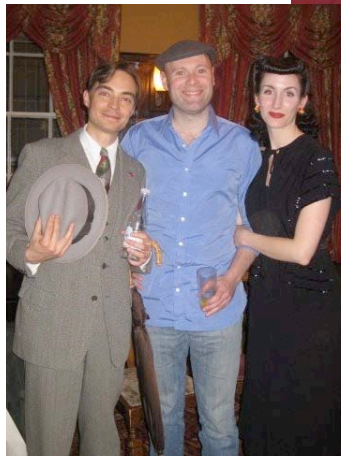
One of Torquil's presents. The hat, that is, not Catherine



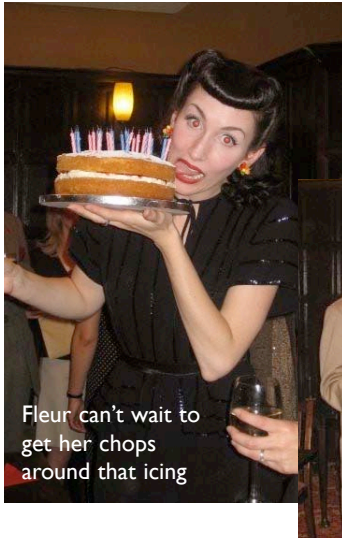
Torquil's Champagne cake



Miss Nicola and Todd. She's an Actionette, you know



(Above) Torquil skins and guts a cake with the ancestral kukri; (left) your correspondent (I) with Fleur and her squeeze Mark; (below) a spectacular table of period dressers, friends of Miss McGerr, I'll warrant



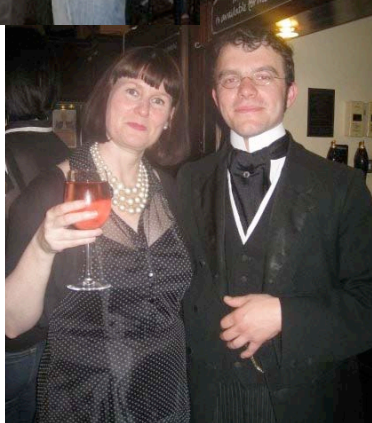
Fleur can't wait to get her chops around that icing



(Above) Fruity finally arrives, seemingly just as Robert and Seonaid are leaving...



(Above) Mark chats to Laurence Bennion and Robert Beckwith; (right) Miss Minna sups with the Devil in the form of Lord Rupert



Personal Head Space

Clayton Hartley investigates the appeal of traditional barber Geo. F. Trumper

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD of Trumper's. They have a branch in Jermyn Street and a branch in Curzon Street, just ten minutes' walk away. Previously they had a concession in Simpson's on Piccadilly (until it became a Waterstone's bookshop). Clearly they have never felt the need to stray from their Clubland heartland.

"People do see it as quintessentially English, as part of the Establishment," agrees my barber today, Kevin Champness. So is the Trumper's haircut something different, a style you can't get elsewhere? Kevin doesn't think it's that.

"I've been with Trumper's for 26 years. Essentially it's a barber's shop but there seems to be an emphasis on attention to detail. I feel that whatever you do in life there are little things you can cultivate and develop to deliver a better service. That's what attracts me to what Trumper's symbolises."

Service at this establishment is clearly intended to be a rich and personal experience. Each chair is in its own panelled booth, with a velvet curtain on a brass rail that can be drawn across for complete privacy. The shelves are lined with jewel-like bottles and jars of unguents and dressings. Each barber has a booth that is his or her own, laid out to his or her requirements.

Do clientele come here looking for a particular experience? "Psychologically, the individual booths suggest more focus on that one person—as opposed to sitting in a shop



with a group of people and perhaps hairdressers talking over you. Some people may like that 'buzz', but others are perhaps intimidated by it and like the idea of a place where they can relax and get back in touch with themselves."

I wonder whether this environment perhaps appeals to people who want the best but don't quite know what they want—and seek some gentle guidance on what might suit. But Kevin sees it a different way: "I think the one-to-one approach lets people focus on what they really want. When you're in a comfortable frame of mind you can make more rational choices."

The ebb and flow of fashion is felt less here than elsewhere. Instead Kevin observes some timeless truths. "If someone has a long, thin face, for example, I wouldn't encourage long sideburns, as they will only emphasise the length of the face. Similarly, for someone with a thick neck I wouldn't advise a hard line at the bottom of the hair as it will emphasise breadth."

But one service Kevin offers that perhaps goes beyond the traditional is Shiatsu head massage. If this sounds New Age and faddish, he is quick to dismiss this notion. "Barbers have always offered head massage. But for me it goes back to the importance of allowing the customer to step out of the froth of everyday life and get to know themselves again. I find





the barber's chair a good place to do that."

If you think of a massage as a purely passive experience, with you simply the object of the masseur's violent manipulations, think again. "It's a form of communication," Kevin says, pausing to hold my head in a particular position for a few seconds. "I might be doing something then stop, and you might like that fact that I've stopped. Then after a while when I start again you might think, 'That was precisely the right moment to begin again.'" While I am digesting this he says, "Try opening your mouth slightly. It helps unclench the jaws and release tension."

Kevin has trained on and off in yoga as well as Shiatsu. "It's something I got an awful lot out of personally." He talks of the value of finding who you are rather than who you think you ought to be, of dwelling in the moment. Perhaps sensing my apprehension as he envelops my head in his arms, he says, "This may be new to you and you're worried about what is going to happen. But nothing is going to

happen—it's about what's going on now. It's about the texture of that experience."

Blimey. There's no denying that the massage is pleasant and relaxing and certainly works better in a wood-panelled booth than in a bright, clattery high street salon. But even more enlightening and refreshing has been my conversation with Kevin, surely the most thoughtful barber I have ever encountered.

"Someone once said that a hairdresser attends to your hair, while a barber attends to the whole person," Kevin muses. "I suppose it's a bit like psychotherapy."

9 Curzon St, London W1J 5QU (020 7499 1850), 9am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat
20 Jermyn Street, London SW1Y 6HP (020 7734 1370), 9am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat
Dry cuts are £28, wash and cut £32, wet shave £30

Trumper's are kindly stocking the bathrooms at Tempting Fête, 4th July



Crowning Glory (1956)



BOOK REVIEW

Dora Gordine: Sculptor, Artist, Designer

Jonathan Black & Brenda Martin
 (Phillip Wilson Publishers, £28)

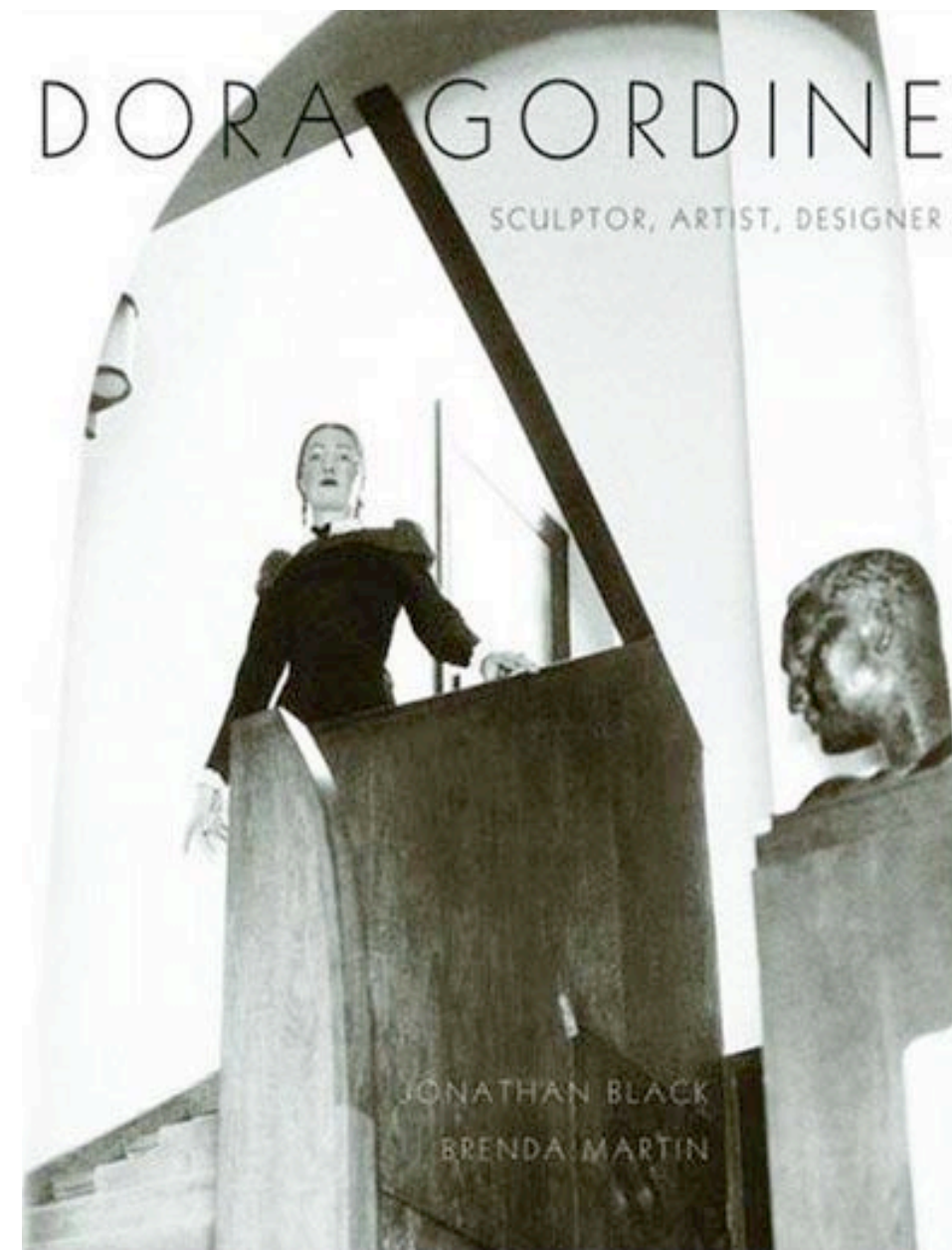
By Torquil Arbuthnot

LA GORDINE WAS BORN in Latvia, although whether born in 1895, 1898 or 1906 is a matter of conjecture since she moved her birth date around a bit. She was brought up in Latvia, Estonia and St Petersburg. Her family were

caught up in the Russian Revolution, in which her father died. She fled to Paris in the 1920s and was greatly influenced and encouraged by the renowned French sculptor Aristide Maillol.

She travelled in south-east Asia in the early 1930s, marrying her first husband, a Dr Garlick, in Singapore. She divorced him and married, in 1936, the Hon. Richard Hare. He built for her the remarkable modernist Dorich House in Kingston, now a Gordine museum. The couple became part of the Bloomsbury set and other bohemian milieux and La Gordine was described as "possibly the finest woman sculptor in the world".

La Gordine deliberately developed an aura of mystique about herself, which this impressive book does much to elucidate. The volume is excellently illustrated, with many plates reproduced for the first time. NSC Member Dr Black deserves a hearty clap on the shoulder for this splendid tome.



Call for Thoughts on 'Englishness Abroad'

By Dickon Edwards

Dear Esteemed Members,

I am researching a new non-fiction book titled *Forever England: Corners Of Belonging In Foreign Fields*. It will touch upon modern instances of displaced Englishness (and indeed, Britishness) as found today in countries and former colonies around the world. It can be leftovers from Empire, or

wistful new replications from scratch. It can be monuments, buildings, bars and cafes, restaurants and shops, signposts, people, streets or entire towns and islands. I'm particularly after aspects which are unlikely, otherworldly, thought-provoking, poignant, strange, nostalgic, sad, heart-lifting, noble or just quietly splendid. All suggestions, anecdotes and thoughts on the subject gratefully received.

Your Servant In Peroxide,

Dickon Edwards
 dickon.edwards@gmail.com
 19 Southwood Avenue, London N6 5SA



NSC Membership: The Overflowing Storehouse of Its Privileges

MEMBERS OF LONG STANDING will probably know all this, but for the benefit of more recent joiners (or indeed bemused strangers who have happened to pick this up at the summer party) I thought I would run through all the glorious benefits of belonging to the Club.

As soon as you join you will receive a **Membership Pack**, consisting of an enamelled lapel badge, your Membership card, some calling cards (featuring the Club logo and web address, handy for giving out to strangers who stop you in the street—usually after closing time on a Friday night—to whom you are wary of giving personal details), a set of the Club Rules and Regulations (largely impenetrable but completely binding and subject to sudden change at the drunken whim of any Committee Member), plus some NSC stickers suitable for defacing public property. Further calling cards will be supplied if necessary at no extra cost within reason.

As a Member you are also eligible to wear **the Club Tie** (see picture). It's

100% silk in the Club colours, with the logo cunningly woven into the black stripe. There is also now a **Club Cufflink**, handmade by a jeweller in Brighton. The ties are £15 and the cufflinks £24 a pair. (It's true that this doesn't offer much for ladies; we're still working on this but any suggestions gratefully received.)

Then there is the **Portrait Service**: for nothing we will incorporate your likeness into a famous painting or print, or indeed a deservedly obscure one or something completely new. This involves photographing you in an appropriate pose then harnessing the mysteries of Photoshop. We tend to decorate the walls with these images at our monthly Club Nights. If you would like to avail yourself of this service just get in touch, ideally with an idea what you would like your portrait to be.

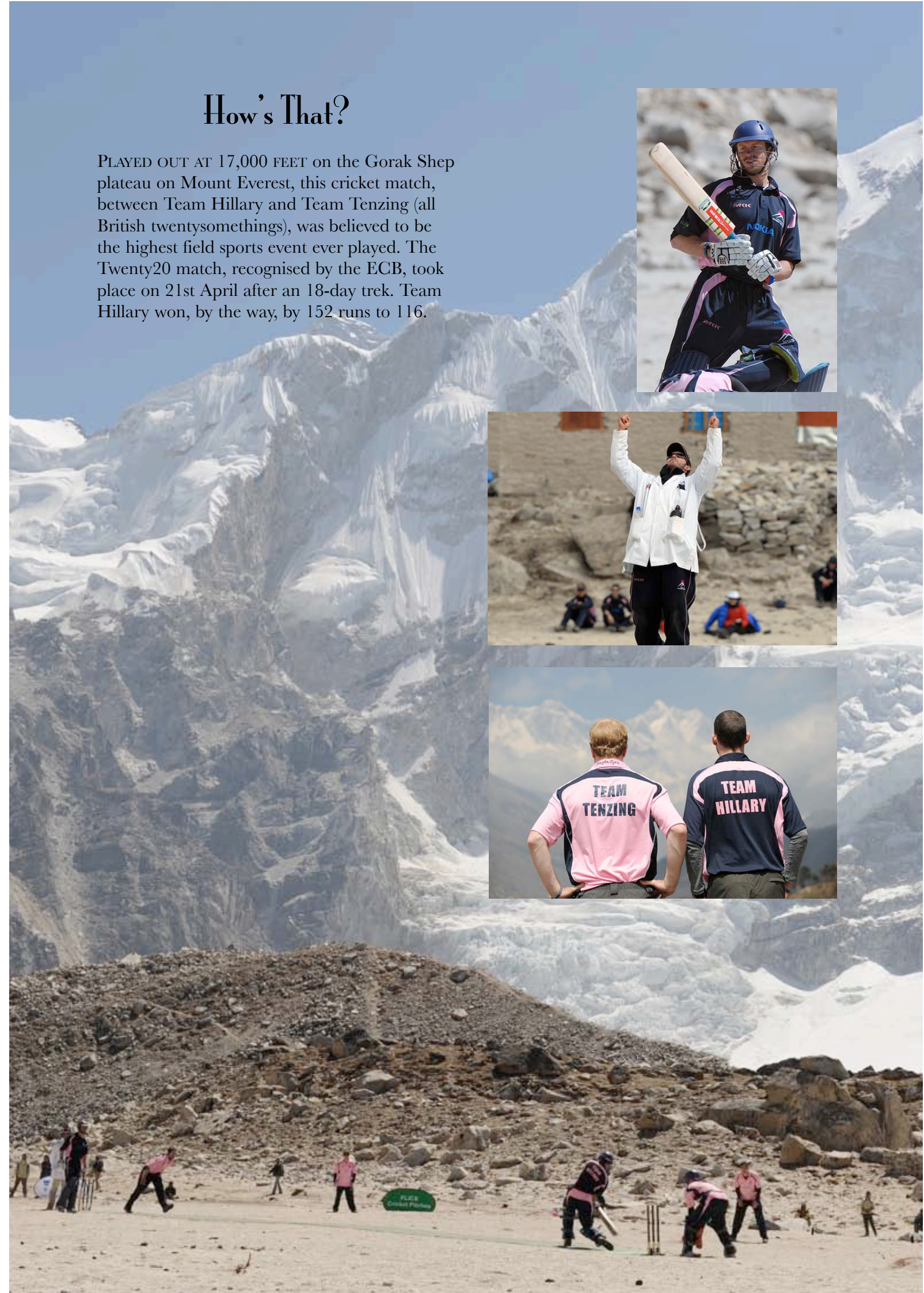
Each month at our meeting we have a **Turn** of some sort, usually a lecture on some delightfully obscure subject but sometimes music, drama or a demonstration of some impressive but useless skill or collection. Members are heartily urged to volunteer. You are also encouraged to contribute articles, images or tip-offs to this monthly Newsletter—not least because then I won't have to write it all myself. The **Newsletter** is another benefit of Membership, distributed primarily as a PDF though I tend to make up a few hard copies for the Club Nights. It is intended to reflect the Club's activities and interests, spreading good cheer, intriguing nuggets and information about forthcoming events, as well as to document what the Club has been up to.

And of course Members get free entry to the summer and Christmas **parties**, plus free entry to the Grand Raffle!



How's That?

PLAYED OUT AT 17,000 FEET on the Gorak Shep plateau on Mount Everest, this cricket match, between Team Hillary and Team Tenzing (all British twentysomethings), was believed to be the highest field sports event ever played. The Twenty20 match, recognised by the ECB, took place on 21st April after an 18-day trek. Team Hillary won, by the way, by 152 runs to 116.



: The Cocktail Cabinet:

Wherein Members relive, or perhaps relieve, the horror of the night before

The Pisco Sour

Torquil Arbuthnot

Pisco is a type of un-aged grape brandy found in Peru, Chile and Bolivia (the name comes from the Quechua for “little bird”, apparently) and, appropriately enough, I first sampled it on a trip to Peru in 2000. Peruvian pisco is between 76 to 96 proof, and tastes rather rough on its own, which is probably for the best since it packs a punch, and is best drunk with some sort of mixer.

John Doxat, in his book *The Complete Drinker's Companion* (1985) recounts of pisco, “I have encountered one brand, the bottle of which contains a preserved snake—no more alarming than the spirit itself.”

The drink became popular in the 17th century among sailors, who began to call it pisco, after the port of Pisco where it was thought to originate. It was popular for its strong taste and ability “to quickly affect the consumer” (i.e. speed sailors into their favourite mood of “fighting drunk”). During the 18th and 19th centuries, pisco was a mainstay on ocean-crossing vessels, drunk mostly by the jolly Jack Tars, as officers usually drank whisky or other “finer” spirits. The main reasons for its heyday were the low price and high availability. This position was maintained by pisco until the onset of rum, which won over drinkers because of its lower prices and softer flavours.

Pisco can be drunk with Coca-Cola, in a variant of the Cuba Libre (called, amazingly enough, the Peru Libre). I've also heard this called a Pisco and “Sol y Sombra” (Sun and Shadow), and there's a variant called the Tiger Tail where the pisco is sieved through a fabric napkin into the cola. In Chile they drink something called the Serena Libre, that mixes Chilean pisco with papaya juice and powdered sugar.

However, the most common way of drinking pisco (certainly among gringos) is the Pisco Sour. This is a variant of the well-known Whisky Sour (bourbon whisky, lemon juice, and sugar) or Sidecar (brandy, triple sec, lemon juice). The basic recipe for a Pisco Sour is 2 parts pisco, 1 part lemon juice, 1 part bar syrup, 1 egg white, and a dash of a regional bitters such as Amargo



(though Angostura can also be used). The cocktail is usually served in an Old Fashioned glass with no garnish, although some bartenders sprinkle a pinch of cinnamon over the egg white. Peruvian lemons actually have a taste more akin to limes.

Some sources claim that the Pisco Sour was invented in the early 1920s by American expatriate Victor V. “Gringo” Morris at The Morris Bar in Lima. However, it is more likely that a variation of the Pisco Sour (i.e. pisco flavoured with the local lemons) was being drunk back in the 1500s by the Incas. It seems to have become popular outside Peru in the 1980s, brought to Europe and the United States by the hordes of backpackers and unwashed students who clog up the Andes every year.

I travelled to Peru with my oldest friend, Gavin Hadland, whom I'd known since school. After bumbling about in Lima for a few days we flew to Cusco, the old Inca capital. Cusco is 10,500 feet above sea level, and the air is rather thin and the simplest exertion can leave one somewhat breathless. To counter this altitude sickness (*soroche*) Peruvians

recommend one sips a hot cup of *mate de coca*, or coca tea, a tisane made using the leaves of the coca plant. After a refreshing cup of this tea, we did what all red-blooded Englishmen do abroad and headed for the nearest bar.

Normally one should avoid “English pubs” abroad as they are generally crammed with yobs in football shirts swilling Heineken and watching the English Premier league on a big-screen noctovision. The Cross Keys in Cusco, however, is different. It overlooks the main square, is agreeably ramshackle, staffed by Peruvians, and serves Peruvian beers such as Cusqueña, Pilsen Callao and Cristal. Gavin and I got the dust out of our throats with a few Cusqueñas, and then asked the barmaid what the local firewater was. She promptly mixed us up a couple of Pisco Sours, and we quaffed several of these before meandering back to the hotel.

Throughout the holiday we never passed up the chance for a Pisco Sour, including knocking back a

couple on a train crossing the high Andean plains at 14,500 feet (the same height as the Matterhorn).



Like all sours, a Pisco Sour has an agreeably tart taste and packs more of a punch than first appears. Pisco is now reasonably available in Britain, and a few of the trendier (or more forward-thinking) bars in London will serve up a passable attempt at a Pisco Sour.

Peru has a National Pisco Sour Day which is celebrated on the first Saturday of February.



CLUB NOTES

New Members

I WOULD LIKE to channel a psychic shoulder-clap in the direction of the following coves and covettes who have signed up for Club Membership in the last couple of months: Mr William Sprunt, Mr David Anderson, Mr Edward William Hutchings, Mr Sean Longden and Mrs Pandora Harrison.

Forthcoming Events

FOR THE LATEST developments, see the Events page at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk.

The Fitzrovia Radio Hour

Friday 26th June
7.30–12.30pm

The Underglobe, The Globe Theatre (exhibition entrance), Bankside, London
Admission: £5 or £19.50 to include a three-course dinner (must be pre-booked; see www.swanattheglobe.co.uk)

Another 1930s-style live radio broadcast from a cast of evening-dress-clad, cut-glass-accented thespians. The stirring tales this time depicted include “Leinigen and the Monkey Men of Vijayanagar”, “Survival of the Fittest”, and “The Madman in the Moon”. Sponsorship comes from Rathbone's Pick-Me-Up Tablets—“remedies for the tired, the anxious and the busy!” Expect much comic business with sound effects.

Also performing will be scurrilous tunesters Top Shelf Jazz.

The Rakehell's Revels Summer Party

Saturday 27th June
10pm–5am

The Bath House, 8 Bishopsgate Churchyard, Liverpool Street, London
Admission: £10 in advance from Ticketweb, £15 on the door



Jarman?, performing at the Greenwich Beer and Jazz festival

Dress: "Strictly the finest attire", which goes without saying for the NSC posse, of course

David Piper's Rakehell's Revels at the Café Royal's Grill Room was a Tuesday night fixture for years, playing swing-era tunes to dressy retro crowd. Now it's back for a one-off spectacular...

Jive Joint Sunday Swing Dance

Sunday 28th June
2-5pm

The Rose Theatre, 24-26 High Street, Kingston, London KT1 1HL

Admission: Free

I know little about this event but it comes recommended by Ardracchan. The discs are being spun by "international DJ" John Vassallo.

NSC Club Night

Wednesday 1st July
8pm-11pm

Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB

Members: Free

Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)

See page 2.

Lindy Hop Dance Course

Thursdays 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd July

8.30-9.30pm

The Salisbury, 1 Grand Parade, Green Lanes, London, N4 1JX

Admission: £35 for the whole course

Miss Gaia Facchini offers another of her Lindy Hop dance courses, this time a beginners class. If you'd like to get involved please telephone Gaia on 07882 753215. She also lurks at www.myspace.com/swingatthegeorge.

The New Sheridan Club Summer Party:

Tempting Fête

Saturday 4th July

7pm-1am

The City Tavern, 29 Lawrence Lane, London, EC2V 8DP

Members: Free

Non-Members: £5, but this may be offset

against Membership if you join on the night
Dress: Vicars, yokels, squires, poachers, village idiots, milkmaids, scarecrows, suits of armour, downed Luftwaffe pilots in disguise, Green Men, morris men, disturbing pagan traditions, boaters, blazers or just black tie.

See page 13.

Tricity Vogue and the Lost Band

Tuesday 7th July

Doors 6.15pm, show 8pm

Volupté, 9 Norwich St, London EC4A 1EJ

Admission: seated £10 (dining optional), standing £5

The cheeky songstress dubbed by *Time Out* "mistress of the ukulele" has a new show in which she attempts to fashion a band for herself from the audience. (Something tells me she may have seeded musos among the crowd, but who knows?) Saucy songs and a splash of burlesque. See www.tricityvogue.com and www.volupte-lounge.com.

The London Beer and Jazz Festival

Wednesday 8th-Sunday 12th July

12.30pm-11pm

Greenwich Old Royal Naval College,

Greenwich, London SE10 9LW

Admission: £7-£20 depending on when you enter. See www.greenwichbeerandjazz.com for details.

As if five days of beer and jazz weren't an appealing enough prospect, the Club's own Mr Ian White will be manning a cider bar at this

event on behalf of CAMRA. There will also be a real ale bar, a Pimms tent, a cocktail bar and various food outlets. Each day features three bands, one at lunchtime, one in the afternoon and one at night, and headliners include the James Taylor Quartet and Courtney Pine.

From Head to Toe in Berlin

Thursday 9th July

7.30pm

The Hob, Devonshire Road, London SE23 3HE

Admission: £9 (£6 concs)

Those who enjoyed Maria Trevis' performance at the Kredit Krunch Kabaret might like to know she is doing her own show as part of the Sydenham Arts Festival. See www.sydenhamartsfestival.com.

The Chap Olympics

Saturday 11th July

Midday-11pm

Bedford Square

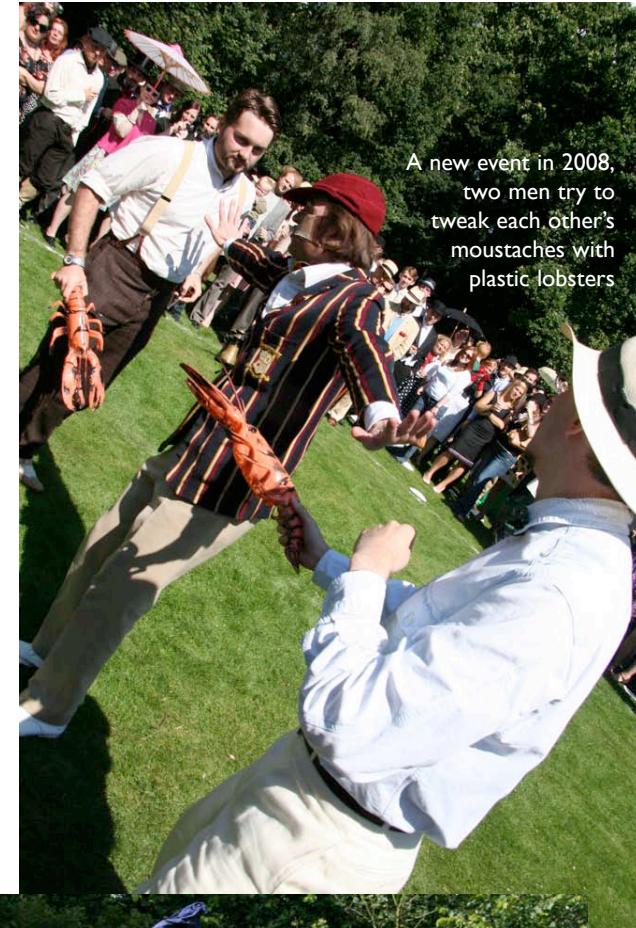
Gardens, Bedford

Square, London W1

Admission: £15 from Ticketweb

The annual trial of Chappist prowess returns. Last year, following the loss of the lucrative sponsorship by Hendricks, the event adopted a low-key tone and moved to a mysterious clearing on Hampstead Heath.

This year, however, thanks to a sponsorship arrangement with the nearby bar, Bourne & Hollingsworth, the Olympics is back at Bedford Square Gardens. And because it is no longer beholden to one beverage brand I believe there will be a wider choice of refreshments and even some victuals..? Quite what you get for your £15 remains a mystery (it has always been free in the past); I believe there are evening entertainments back at Bourne & Hollingsworth. For more details of this pivotal event in the Chappist calendar, see www.thechap.net.



A new event in 2008, two men try to tweak each other's moustaches with plastic lobsters



Highlights of last year's Chap Olympics. Here is the timeless Hop, Skip and G&T



This isn't an event, just Robert, Seonaid and Captain Coppice having a picnic

FOR THE LATEST information on what the Club is up to, who has been arrested, etc., have a squizz at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk. For more photos of Club events go to www.flickr.com/sheridanclub. Those of a technological bent can befriend us electrically at www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub or indeed www.facebook.com.

CONTACTING US

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