

RESIGN!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CLUB • ISSUE 110 DECEMBER 2015

Our Xmas party
celebrates Alice
in Wonderland

CURIOUSER
&
CURIOUSER

**Writer, boffin,
soldier, shrink**

Derek Collett on
the extraordinary life
of Nigel Balchin

Art Deco Land

Tim Eyre on the New Zealand
town of Napier, a jewel of
preserved Jazz-Age buildings

Time, gentlemen, please

Ian White on the Club's annual noble
quest to visit several pubs in one night



The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of The Wheatsheaf, 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 The Wheatsheaf and, legend has it, he was known to flash at women there 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 there, as did Aleister Crowley, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Katherine Mansfield.

The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 2nd December in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. Matthew "The Chairman"* Howard will deliver the 4th Lady Malvern Memorial Lecture, a seasonal blast entitled *There Won't Be Snow in Africa this*

The Last Meeting

Our guest speaker was Derek Collett, who addressed us on the life of Nigel Balchin, about whom he has just written a biography, *His Own Executioner* (SilverWood Books Ltd). Balchin was a mercurial figure who studied natural sciences then worked as an early industrial psychologist, an experience he then used to write satirical books



about how businesses are run. He worked in marketing and invented Black Magic chocolate (and possibly Aero and Kit Kat too). During the war he worked first for the Ministry of Food then as a military scientific advisor. He reached the rank of Brigadier (unusual for someone so young) but felt constantly frustrated that scientists were not paid more attention. On the side he was also writing novels, and it is this for which

Christmas. He hopes to inform, amuse and educate attendees about the delights, both meteorological and otherwise, of the Dark Continent in what he promises will be the most entertaining and illuminating in his occasional series. But he says that every time.

*Chairman of the Witham Rowing Club, that is, not the NSC

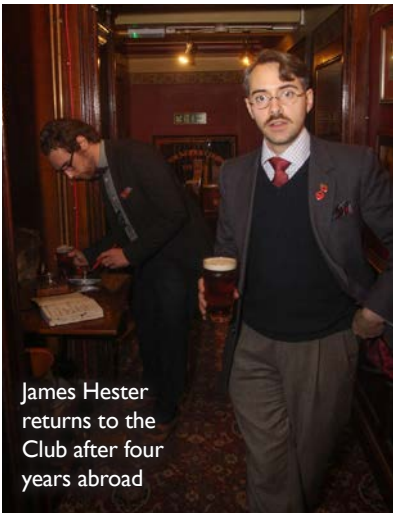
he is probably best known. He also worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood and was a county level cricketer. Yet problems in his love life and eventual divorce led to alcoholism, as with so many writers. Many thanks to Derek, whose book you can buy on Amazon. An essay version of the talk begins on page 4.



Torquil gives his opening remarks and introduces our speaker Derek (left)



(Left) Harrison Goldman (standing) with Stephen Myhill and the Contessa di Campari; (below) Eva with William Cole



James Hester returns to the Club after four years abroad

(Above) Balchin wrote a screenplay for *Cleopatra*, though it wasn't used (right) Mark looks like he can see into the Curé's mind; (right) Robert Beckwith (l) with Chico St Martin; (below) two Eds, O'Callaghan (l) and Marlowe; (bottom) Oliver with an anarchist flag plundered from a demo outside his office



HIS OWN EXECUTIONER

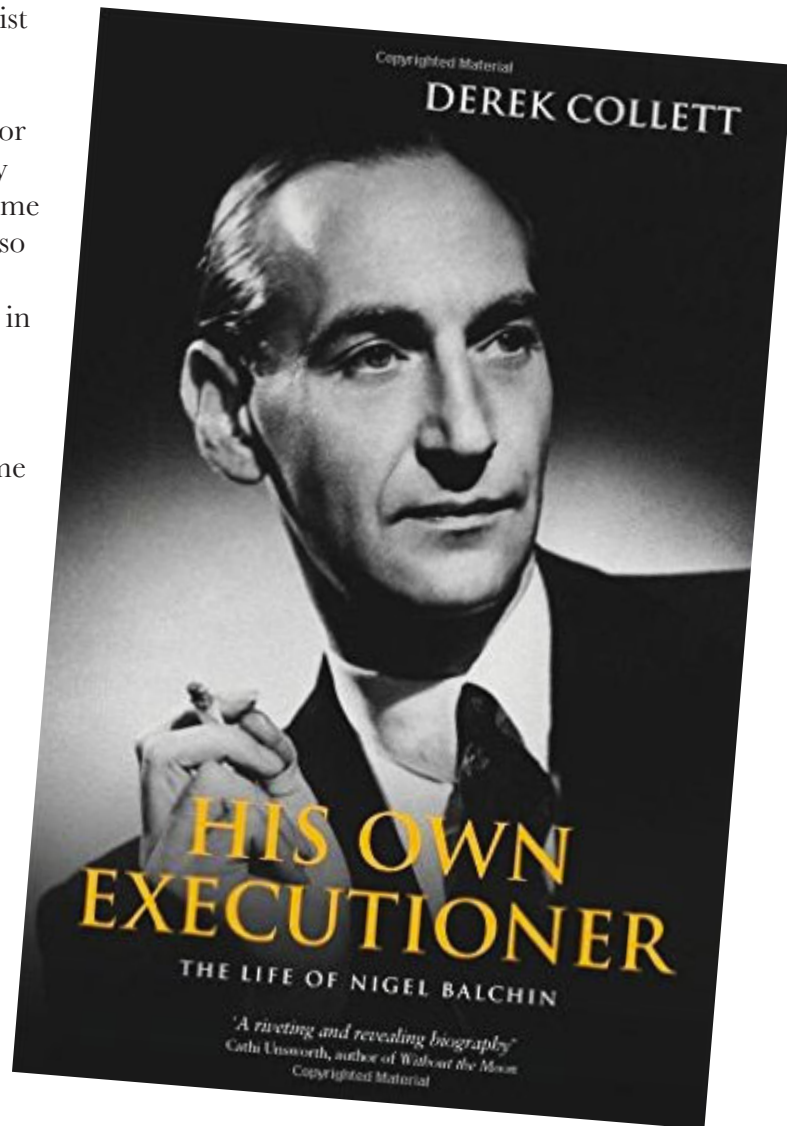
Derek Collett on how a famous novelist—and seemingly a Chappist role model—went off the rails

ACCCLAIMED SECOND WORLD WAR novelist Nigel Balchin was born in the small Wiltshire village of Potterne, near Devizes, in 1908. He came from a poor background: although his ancestors were wealthy Surrey farmers, all the money had gone by the time Balchin was born. His father was a baker who also ran a grocer's shop.

Balchin attended his local school, Dauntsey's, in West Lavington, a few miles from his birthplace. Nowadays, Dauntsey's is quite a well-respected public school but in Balchin's day it was more of an agricultural college, as reflected by its full name of the Dauntsey Agricultural School. Many of its pupils were farmers' sons who attended the school for the shortest time possible, learned the rudiments of agriculture and then left in order to help their fathers run their farms. With due respect to the farming community, Balchin was destined for something rather better.

Despite being a big fish in a small pond while at Dauntsey's, Balchin was a very high achiever as a schoolboy. He was made head boy in his final year, won a number of prizes, captained the school at cricket and football and played many other sports for the school team. In terms of his cricket, he combined the roles of opening bat and wicketkeeper—a physically demanding thing to do—and so can be thought of as a sort of prototype Alec Stewart, for those whose memories extend back as far as the 1990s!

Balchin won a scholarship from the Ministry of Agriculture to study Natural Sciences at Peterhouse, Cambridge. Here he met both his wife-to-be Elisabeth Walshe, an English student at the all-female college Newnham, and the future film actor James Mason. Both Balchin and Mason were choristers and the former later joked that “I suppose the only really distinguished thing about me is that I sang in the college choir with



Mr James Mason. And very good he was too.”

An early turning-point in Balchin's life occurred during his final term at university. After a long wrangle with the Ministry of Agriculture about the direction of his studies, he was released from the agricultural demands of his scholarship and allowed to study psychology. He attended lectures given by Frederic Bartlett, a very charismatic psychologist who would later

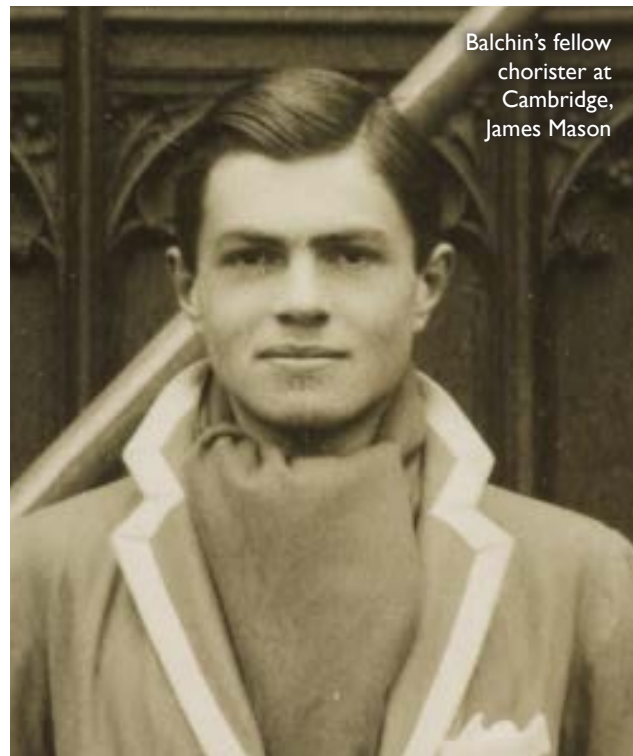
exert a strong influence on Balchin's career.

Balchin graduated in the summer of 1930. In the few weeks at his disposal between leaving Cambridge and entering the world of employment there seems to have been only one thing on his mind: playing cricket. The apogee of Balchin's cricketing career occurred in August when he appeared for Wiltshire in a Minor Counties game against Berkshire away at Reading. With the exception of Samuel Beckett and Arthur Conan Doyle, both of whom played a small amount of first-class cricket, no serious literary writer would appear to have played the game at a higher level than Nigel Balchin.

On 18th August 1930, Balchin commenced work with the National Institute of Industrial Psychology. The NIIP was a pioneering, non-governmental, non-profit organisation that was supported financially by wealthy benefactors such as members of the aristocracy, prominent figures from public life such as H.G. Wells and numerous industrial concerns, including the chocolate manufacturers Rowntree and Cadbury. The mission of the NIIP was to take psychology out of the universities and apply it to problems faced by industry. It had two main goals: increasing productivity and improving the lot of the worker.

While working for the NIIP, Balchin went around factories, offices and other workplaces studying the procedures in place and decide how to make them more efficient. That was his official line. In private he adopted a more cynical tone, once telling a friend that his career as an industrial psychologist had entailed "seeing a good idea in Factory A and selling it to the manager of Factory B".

In 1932 the Institute branched out into the field of market research. Rowntree were losing market share to their fierce competitors Cadbury. They needed a low-cost, high-quality alternative to Cadbury's market-leading King George assortment and gave £3,000 (a little over £150,000 today) to the NIIP to conduct some market research. Balchin coordinated this work: he sent questionnaires to 7,000 consumers and 2,500 shopkeepers, asking them what, in their opinion, would



Balchin's fellow chorister at Cambridge, James Mason

constitute the perfect chocolate assortment. This was an unusual approach to take at the time because consumers were generally given what was easy and convenient for the confectionery company to make, and not what they themselves might want to eat. The responses to Balchin's questionnaires helped to determine the composition of the first boxes of Black Magic.

The Black Magic box was a departure from existing designs, which generally tended to deploy stereotypical "chocolate-box" paintings of subjects such as idyllic, creeper-clad country cottages, angelic, rosy-cheeked children or adorable kittens or puppies. In a quest for something different, Balchin conducted some market research of his own. He stood in front of a confectioners' window, and saw that it contained "every colour but black". Balchin's Black Magic design—a plain black box

BLACK MAGIC
(CASKET and CARTONS).
1 3/4 lb. Casket (5/-), 1 lb. Carton (2/10),
1/2 lb. Carton (1/5), 1/4 lb. Carton (9d.).
1 3/4 lb. Casket three layers.
1 lb., 1/2 lb. and 1/4 lb. Cartons two layers each.

BLACK MAGIC CARTON.

BLACK MAGIC CASKET.

Our most popular Assortment of universal appeal, with a very exclusive range of centres, only the most carefully chosen centres and highest grade covering being employed. Packed in ribboned container of a new and striking type, the popularity and success of this casket has been truly remarkable.

adorned with thin white lines visible from any angle—has been altered in the last few years but remained very much the same for many decades after it was first introduced in January 1933.

In the same month that *Black Magic* was launched, Balchin married his Cambridge sweetheart Elisabeth. The couple had three children over the course of the next 12 years, one of whom grew up to be the well-known childcare expert Penelope Leach.

Balchin left the NIIP in 1935 after he was offered a position at Rowntree. He consumer-tested a lot of chocolates, including Aero, for the next four years. It has been claimed that Balchin invented Aero and also came up with the name “KitKat” but there is no firm evidence for either assertion.

Balchin had written short stories on scientific themes while at Cambridge. His early published writing arose naturally out of his work for the NIIP. Published in 1934, his first novel, *No Sky*, was set in a Lancashire engineering works and concerned the daily routine of a young time-and-motion man. Just a few weeks later, a second Balchin-authored book appeared. *How to Run a Bassoon Factory; or Business Explained* was a satire of Balchin’s work as an industrial psychologist.

It was written under the pseudonym Mark Spade and, much later in his life, Balchin explained why he had been forced to take this course of action: “I had to use a pen name because it wouldn’t have done for me to reveal that I found anything funny about business life.” Balchin was worried that if his superiors discovered that he had been writing books in his spare time then they might conclude that he was obviously not working hard enough at his day job!

Balchin’s second novel, 1935’s *Simple Life*, caused controversy at his publishers. It is about

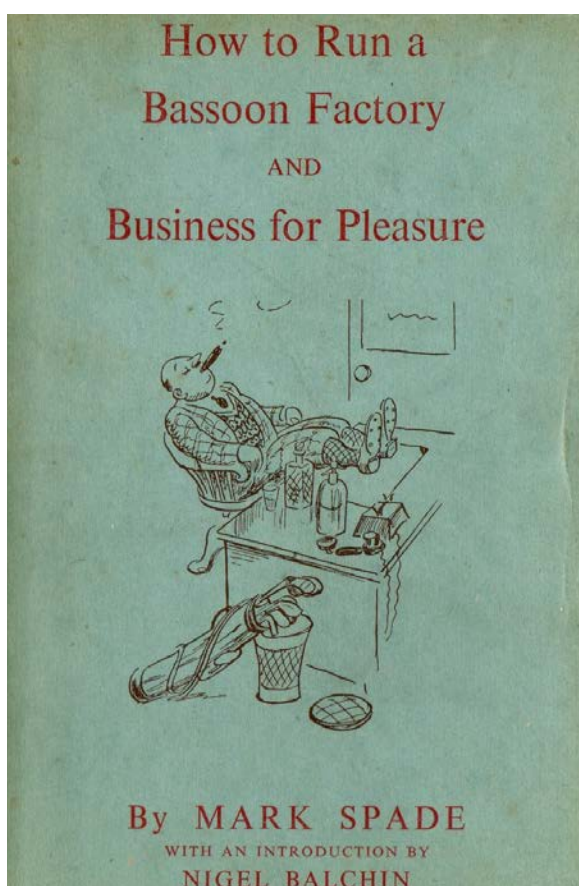
a young advertising copywriter living in London who is tired of the rat-race and so decides to go and live a simpler life in the country. He journeys to Wiltshire and, while there, sleeps with two women. Although incredibly mild by today’s standards, Balchin thought that the titillating content of his book might have been a good thing so far as potential sales were concerned. He told his publisher, Hamish Hamilton, that *Simple Life* might be “a possible book for the repressed spinsters who, apparently [sic], are the mainstay of the libraries.” Hamilton disagreed. He was worried about offending the big lending libraries and so asked Balchin to tone down certain passages.

The author refused and Hamilton was proved right when *Simple Life* was banned by Boots Library. In a copy of the novel that he inscribed for a family member, Balchin lamented, “One can only hope that no one seeking pornography will waste 7/6 on buying it. Was it for this that I took my contraceptive custom to Messrs Boots?”

Balchin’s other writings from this period included some stage plays (one of which starred James Mason and closed after only one night in the West End), a lot of magazine articles, some short stories and a series of broadcast talks on the BBC. This was all a part

of Balchin trying to find his voice as a writer and the medium it was going to be best suited for. When war broke out in September 1939 it is fair to say that it wasn’t very obvious which medium Balchin would later choose to excel in.

In the early part of the war, Balchin was responsible for allocating raw materials such as sugar and cocoa to food manufacturers. He did this first for the Manufacturing Confectioners Alliance (a trade body, where he looked after Rowntree’s interests) and later for the Ministry of Food.



Balchin wrote very little about his working life but he did once make a comment about his work as a raw materials allocations officer. It concerned an “atrocity story”, which he defined as a complaint made in the press or in parliament about his department which was true on the surface but looked very different if one was in possession of all the facts: “I, myself, once had to tell a man who wanted seven pounds of some substance of which the country was very short that I couldn’t give him seven pounds, but that if he could show a case for having fifty-six pounds I could arrange it. This sounds fantastic. But the simple and obvious explanation was that the stuff was in fifty-six-pound units and I had no means of breaking them.”

This sort of wartime absurdity would later infiltrate his fiction.

In 1941, Balchin joined the army. He worked initially in the field of personnel selection and later as a scientific researcher, where his work included the evaluation of new weapons. On 7th May 1945 (one day before VE Day), Balchin was made Deputy Scientific Adviser to the Army Council and promoted to Brigadier. Even in a time of war, at 36 he was extraordinarily young to have ascended so high up the army hierarchy.

During the war, Balchin wrote the three great novels on which his reputation largely rests and this trio of books decisively altered his standing as a writer. He was fortunate of course that he had a relatively cushy job in Whitehall—air raids notwithstanding—and could obtain material for his fiction without serving in the frontline.

The war energised Balchin’s writing: in his own words, he said that he had experienced “a burning need to say something” during the conflict. He was furious about governmental bureaucracy, the incompetence of some of his colleagues and the vested interests of those he had to work with, some of whom, in his opinion, were more interested in feathering their own nests than in winning the war. Balchin also felt that scientists had generally not been listened to during the war or, if they had, their opinions had largely been ignored.

Balchin’s breakthrough novel, *Darkness Falls from the Air*, has been aptly described as “the classic novel of the London Blitz”. Like many of his novels, the book can be divided according



Balchin’s first wife and daughter Penelope

to its “work” and “personal” themes. In this case, the working background was influenced by Balchin’s experiences at the Ministry of Food. The personal side of the story was inspired by his wife Elisabeth’s affair with a minor avant garde classical composer, Christian Darnton, in the early months of the war. Balchin caricatured Darnton quite viciously in the form of Stephen, an unreliable, self-obsessed and self-pitying poet.

Released a year after *Darkness Falls from the Air*, *The Small Back Room*, which was informed by Balchin’s research work for the army, is undoubtedly his best novel. In addition to being widely admired by the critics, it was Balchin’s first best-seller, selling hundreds of thousands of copies. Like its predecessor, *The Small Back Room* has just been reissued by Orion Books. In 1948, it was made into a highly regarded film by the team of Powell and Pressburger.

The third book in Balchin’s very loose “war trilogy” was entitled *Mine Own Executioner*. It was accorded the best critical reception of any Balchin novel and also sold hundreds of thousands of copies. It was a different sort of novel from the previous two, as it was not directly influenced by Balchin’s war work. The book is about the routine of a London psychoanalyst, and his treatment of one very difficult war casualty, and I believe that Balchin

probably obtained the information he required to write the book by talking to psychiatrists he had met while working for the army's personnel section.

Although Balchin never practised professionally as a psychoanalyst, he certainly wanted to be one in his younger days and he claimed that he had practised informally after leaving Cambridge. There was definitely a seedy side to Balchin. His novels are full of references to spanking, he was interested in pornography and enjoyed the company of prostitutes. Penelope Leach has told me that her father would sometimes attempt to psychoanalyse the teenage daughters of his friends by asking them to tell him about their sex lives and he had done something similar at Cambridge too. In defence, Balchin said that he was simply interested in the scientific side of sex but maybe there was more to it than that!

Another significant turning-point in Balchin's life occurred in 1947. Soon after the end of the war, the Balchins had moved from London to a large farmhouse in Kent. Here, Balchin expected Elisabeth to be "a country lady, caring for three children, breeding bees and playing the clarinet". This wasn't such a great idea for many reasons, not least the fact that Elisabeth was highly allergic to bee stings.

Elisabeth had held several positions of considerable responsibility during the war, particularly when she had been in charge of vetting agents for the espionage unit the Special Operations Executive. In peacetime, Balchin, who had a marked chauvinistic streak, expected his wife to live a life of domesticity based around looking after him, their children and the garden. She wanted to continue working, grew bored and became resentful of her husband's attitude.

Balchin's response to his wife's unhappiness was to start bringing home men for her to meet that he thought she might find interesting. Sadly for him, she found one or two of them a little bit too interesting. The painter and sculptor Michael Ayrton came to spend a weekend with the Balchins in Kent and was immediately attracted to Elisabeth. His interest was reciprocated and as Balchin quickly became fond of Joan, Ayrton's partner, a light-hearted partner-swapping episode ensued. But when Ayrton and Elisabeth fell decisively in love, Joan could see how the chips were likely to

fall: she backed out of the arrangement at this stage, leaving Balchin in the cold. A tussle for Elisabeth's affections between Ayrton and Balchin dragged on for several years until finally being brought to an end in 1951 when Balchin divorced Elisabeth.

The break-up of his marriage had a devastating effect on Balchin: in my opinion, he was never quite the same again. But he responded—as he often did to adversity or personal upheavals—by writing a book about the events of the previous few years. The resultant novel, *A Way Through the Wood*, will be reissued next spring by Orion.

An important insight into Balchin's character can be gleaned from an incident that occurred in the aftermath of his wife's affair with Ayrton. Balchin and Ayrton were both members of the Savile Club in Mayfair and, in fact, had first met at the Club. After Ayrton had effectively stolen Balchin's wife, a proposal was put to the Savile's membership committee, suggesting that Ayrton should be thrown out as a punishment for his antisocial behaviour. As Balchin wished to go on using his club, one might perhaps expect him to have backed this move, so as to avoid the embarrassment of bumping into the man who had cuckolded him. Far from it. When news of what was planned reached Balchin's ears he let it be known that if Ayrton was expelled from the Savile then he would resign his membership too. Unsurprisingly, the move was quietly dropped.

Balchin did not mope for too long after the disintegration of his marriage. In 1953 he remarried, his bride being a Yugoslavian refugee called Yovanka Tomich, who had worked originally as his secretary. Yovanka was much younger than her husband: she was 22 and he 44 when they married. It was to prove a very fractious relationship, characterised by trial separations and constantly teetering on the edge of divorce without ever reaching the final tipping-point (the pair remained married until Balchin's death).

Despite his personal problems in the 1940s and 1950s, Balchin continued to write books (including several very good ones such as *A Sort of Traitors*, *Sundry Creditors* and *The Fall of the Sparrow*) before, in 1956, he decamped to Hollywood. He was offered an astronomical sum—equivalent to about half a million pounds a year nowadays—to write film scripts for

three years for Twentieth Century Fox. But he soon found that Hollywood did not suit him: separated from his wife and young son, he found his work boring, drank far too much and laid the foundations for his eventual alcoholism. Hollywood also wrecked his writing career because he wrote no novels for the seven years for which he was employed in the film industry.

Balchin's film career had begun in 1947 when he adapted his own novel *Mine Own Executioner* for the screen. The adaptation was widely admired by critics, one of whom described it as the "fourth notable British post-war film", following on from *Great Expectations*, *Brief Encounter* and *Odd Man Out*. Two and a half years after the war had ended, that comment is quite a damning indictment of the post-war native film industry.

Shortly before leaving England for Hollywood, Balchin adapted Ewen Montagu's book *The Man Who Never Was* for the screen. The book was based on the wartime deception plot Operation Mincemeat, the story of which was restored to popular attention in 2010 when *Times* journalist Ben Macintyre wrote a book about it. *The Man Who Never Was* is the best film that Balchin scripted, probably largely because it played to his strengths as a writer, and it duly won him the 1957 BAFTA for Best British Screenplay.

In 1959 Balchin wrote three draft scripts for the Liz Taylor/Richard Burton cinematic extravaganza *Cleopatra*. His work was ultimately discarded, in Yovanka's opinion because it was probably too highbrow for Hollywood, but for several years afterwards Balchin took wry delight in telling people that he had penned "the first folio edition of *Cleopatra*".

Balchin was afflicted by alcoholism and a raft of associated health problems in later life. The origins of his drinking remain obscure but he was undoubtedly an alcoholic by the mid-1960s and remained one until his death.

The second half of the 1960s was a very bad period for Balchin for many reasons. In addition to drinking too much, his relationship with Yovanka remained tempestuous, he was permanently short of money, not helped by his predilection for living in palatial properties, and he was struggling to make any headway with his

writing. In essence, he had hit rock bottom.

Balchin's fortunes appeared to have picked up at the start of 1970 when he was signed up by the Famous Writers School. This was a correspondence course in creative writing that was very big business in the States. Other writers who were contracted to write the course material for a British version of the FWS included Frank Muir and Richard (*Doctor in the House*) Gordon. Balchin went to the USA for a meeting with the FWS, returned with pneumonia and was immediately admitted to a nursing home. He died three days later, aged just 61, after suffering a heart attack.

Nigel Balchin is remarkable for having



succeeded in so many different fields of human endeavour: as an industrial psychologist, army officer, novelist, film scriptwriter and so on. Although he was largely forgotten by the literary world soon after his death, a handful of his novels have since attained classic status and provide a valuable insight into how ordinary people lived and loved in England in the 1940s and 1950s. It's no surprise that Clive James called Balchin "the missing writer of the Forties" and that John Betjeman described him as "a writer of genius". With the recent reissue of his two best novels, Balchin's work is now available for a whole new audience to discover.

Derek Collett's biography of Balchin, His Own Executioner: The Life of Nigel Balchin, is published by SilverWood Books.

The New Sheridan Club Christmas party

CURIOUSER & CURIOUSER

OCCURRING SLIGHTLY EARLIER than usual this year, on 28th November, the New Sheridan Club's Christmas party this year took its theme from the 150th anniversary of the publication of Lewis Carroll's classic of Victorian nonsense literature *Alice in Wonderland*.

In addition to the expected consignment of Mad Hatters, White Rabbits and Alices, we also had a Walrus and a Carpenter, some louche, loose takes on the hookah-smoking caterpillar, and some amazing hats and headpieces with trippy Alice-inspired decoration.

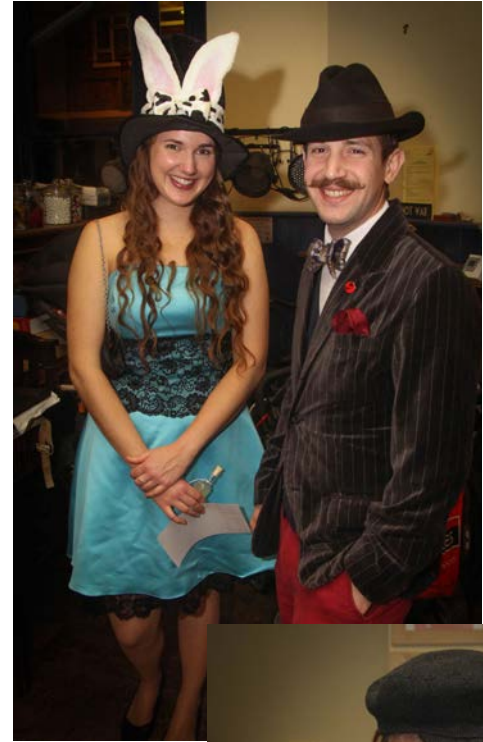
Our games included the traditional shooting game, this time attempting to shoot the hat off the Mad Hatter (gamely played by Action Man as usual) without actually hitting the hatter himself—something that at first seemed almost impossible, but in the tie-breaker between players who had managed it, Stuart Mitchell succeeded in doing it three times in a row!

Umbrella Croquet involved using an umbrella to knock a hedgehog-ball through hoops made from giant playing cards. And the Drink Me game required participants to taste

the contents of a mystery miniature bottle and guess the ingredients of the cocktail contained therein.

In addition we had our traditional Christmas bran tub, filled with glorious tat and the odd genuinely desirable item. And finally, of course, our Grand Raffle, with a groaning table full of prizes. Like the party itself, the Raffle is free to enter for Members of the Club, including anyone wise enough to sign up on the night. Many thanks to all who came to the party and to Hal and Grace for letting us use the appropriately named Tea House Theatre as a venue.





(Clockwise from above left) The lush raffle prize haul; Baron Solf II and Helen Hanekom; Paul delicately samples the mystery cocktail in one of the Drink Me game bottles; Ophelia Golightly-Hampstead (after emergency costume surgery courtesy of Birgit); Lord Hare of Newham, in full Peaky Blinder mode, looks like he's itching for a horse-whipping, with Stuart Mitchell in the background; this terrifying vision is Lorna Mower-Johnson in a Cheshire Cat mask; the Curé inspects Birgit's Lobster Quadrille costume with Minna on the left





Umbrella Croquet
 (Clockwise from above left) Scarheart offers each player a choice of umbrellas; George Tudor-Hart kicks things off; Ella negotiates the slalom; the Curé, fired up by the Drink Me cocktail, freestyles with some snooker moves; Emma Craik-Horan looks demure enough but she won this game by getting through all the hoops in just 20 seconds; Maximillion Conrad shows his war face; the hedgehog ball





Liam Craik-Horan takes aim



Craigoh relives his re-enactment days



A beleaguered Action Man at the point at which his hat is shot off

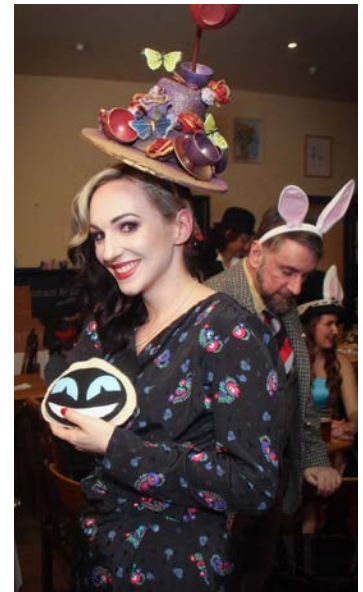


Ed Marlowe relives his childhood



Shoot the Hat off the Mad Hatter (Above) William Cole in the tie-breaker, with six rounds to reprise his hit; (left) a sniper's-eye view of the target; (below) a chillingly relaxed Stuart Mitchell who won the tie breaker with three hits in a row





(Clockwise from top left) Eugenie's dreamy Alice dress; some sort of rabbit hunt breaks out in the car park; Minna's spectacular gothically Alice-inspired headpiece; Chloe's costume prize is a Cheshire cat bag, handmade by Lorna Mower-Johnson, and filled with chocolates; Birgit seems thrilled with her Drink Me prize of a bottle of St Germain elderflower liqueur; sharpshooter Stuart wins a lobster and some pink flamingo cocktail sticks; Emma's prize for winning the croquet game is the hedgehog ball and a full pack of the giant playing cards; (centre) Rachel's walrus costume



The Grand Raffle
(Clockwise from top left) Dorian is ecstatic with his notebook; the Curé wins CDs by Jefferson Airplane and the Mock Turtles: he's never heard of them so gives them to Eugenie, much to her delight...



Ella wins a dormouse in a teapot



...Fiona wins a history of the Alice books; it's all too much for the dormouse; those without prizes are given a free Lucky Dip; Craigho wins the croquet set; Nicholas gets some lawn flamingos



DECO DOWN UNDER

Tim Eyre takes us to the Kiwi town that, through an accident of history, is like stepping back into the Jazz Age

WHAT'S THE BEST place in the world to see Art Deco architecture? Miami Beach in Florida is rightly famous for its Art Deco buildings. However, Miami Beach has a strong rival some eight thousand miles away across both the Pacific Ocean and the equator. Should you ever get a chance to visit the city of Napier in New Zealand you will find that almost all the buildings that form its commercial centre are built in the Art Deco style. As such, Napier is widely considered to be one of the most architecturally unified cities in the world.

This architectural purity was born of disaster. At 10.47am on 3rd February 1931 Napier was struck by an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 on the Richter Scale, with the epicentre just ten miles north of the city. The earthquake flattened Napier, killing 256 and hospitalising hundreds more; even the Christchurch earthquake of 2011 was less deadly. The power of the earthquake can be gauged from the fact that it raised a large area of former seabed above sea level, thus increasing the area of Napier by more than fifteen square miles.

It was clear that the local borough council would not be able to cope with rebuilding the entire city, so the central government sent in two commissioners to organise the reconstruction. They worked with the Napier Reconstruction Committee to come up with an overall plan. The prominent local architect Louis Hay sat on this committee and helped ensure that the work of designing the new buildings went to local architectural firms.

Although the term Art Deco was unknown at the time (the expression only came into common use in 1968), the architectural style now known by that name was all the rage. The architects who designed the buildings for the new Napier embraced the cutting-edge fashions of the day, influenced not just by Art Deco but also by Modernism, Stripped Classical, the Spanish Mission style and Frank Lloyd Wright. The value of these influences extended beyond appearance: the clean lines and absence of heavy ornamentation made buildings that were less dangerous in an earthquake than those with pediments to fall and Doric columns to collapse.

Napier in ruins after the 1931 earthquake





(Clockwise from left) The Daily Telegraph Building; the Masonic building with the A&G dome in the background; the Ellison & Duncan facade; the ASB Bank building; the Smith and Chambers Buildings



The A&G Building with its iconic dome



The architects worked like Stakhanovites and within two years Napier had risen again. The city is all the more remarkable because at the time the world was in the grip of the Great Depression, which meant that few major building projects were undertaken. Even the buildings of Miami Beach date from the latter half of the 1930s, by which time architectural styles had naturally evolved. This makes Napier a unique repository of the architectural styles of 1931–2. The seismic instability of the region meant that high-rise buildings were out of the question, so Napier has a calming low-key feel. This is enhanced by the moderate climate and seaside location.

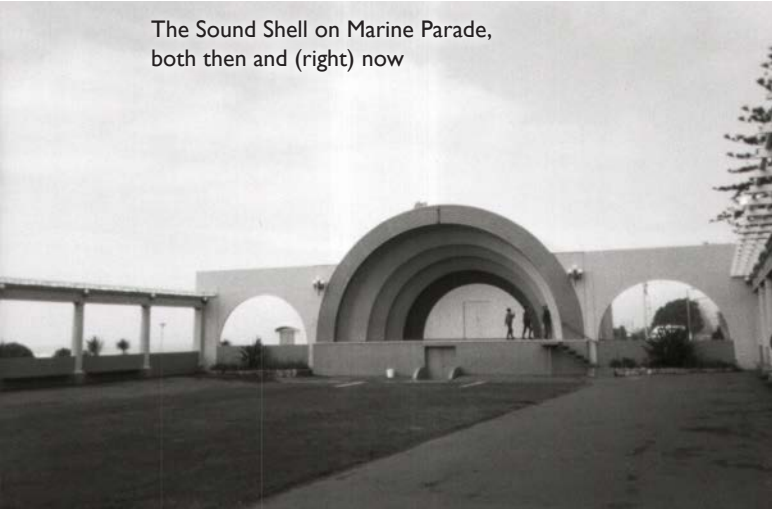
The buildings of Napier mostly escaped the architectural disasters of the 1960s and 1970s. By 1985 it was clear that Napier was a city of considerable architectural importance and the local Art Deco Trust was formed to preserve, restore and promote the city's architecture.

Napier was nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007, although it didn't quite meet the criteria so the application was denied in 2011.

Today Napier's Art Deco heritage acts as a major tourist attraction, with guided and self-guided tours available to help visitors interpret the buildings. An ideal way to survey some of Napier's most notable edifices is to wander along the oceanfront boulevard called Marine Parade. Here the iconic dome of the T&G building faces the Sound Shell, an outdoor performance stage built in 1931.

The Art Deco draw of Napier culminates in the annual Tremains Art Deco Weekend, which attracts around 40,000 people from around the world each February for a celebration of the styles of the 1920s and 1930s. Having visited Napier in 1997, I can attest that, travel practicalities for non-Kiwis aside, there could scarcely be a better location for such a shindig.

The Sound Shell on Marine Parade,
both then and (right) now



The Halsbury Chambers



Napier and the Kriegsmarine

Despite being on the other side of the world from the European theatre of WWII, Napier had a visit from a Germany U-boat on 16th January 1945. Under the command of Korvettenkapitän Heinrich Timm, U-862 sailed close to the shore of Napier and attempted to attack a small merchant ship. Fortunately the torpedo missed its target and U-862 sailed away without anyone in Napier even noticing that an Axis vessel had paid them a visit. There is an urban myth that Timm ordered some of the crew ashore to milk cows to supplement their rations. This started as a joke made by Timm himself in the 1950s.

The Colenso Chambers



THE BROGUES GALLERY

WITH ARTEMIS SCARHEART



In which a Member of the New Sheridan Club is asked to introduce themselves to other Members so that those at Home and Across the Seas may all get to know fellow Club Members. No part of this interview may be used in court or bankruptcy proceedings.



Baron Solf II

“Everything can be solved with a stiff drink or soft words”

Name or preferred name?

Bn. Christopher Patrick Wilhelm Solf II

Why that nickname or nom de plume?

This is in fact my own name and title. The title inherited from my father's bloodline.

Where do you hail from?

I am Home Counties born and bred, however I currently reside in Somerset.

Favourite Cocktail?

Far too many. Is that acceptable? No? Well, in that case an Old Fashioned.

Most Chappist skill?

Being able to dress well (according to my own opinion) on a most modest budget.

Most Chappist possession

A collection of family-crested signet rings from the late 1800s.

Personal Motto?

Everything can be solved with a stiff drink or soft words.

Favourite Quotes?

“A chap is a boy by birth, a man by age, but a gentleman by choice.” —Unknown

“Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess.” —Oscar Wilde

“It only takes a room full of Americans to make the English and Australians realise we have so much in common.” —Stephen Fry

Not a lot of people know this about me, but...

My title is in fact inherited from my great-great grandfather.

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

I think since 2008, though I may well be corrected.

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

An internet search for London Clubs.

What one thing would you recommend to fellow Members and why (cocktail, night out, tailor, watchmaker, public house, etc.)?

The Covent Garden Cocktail Club. A mere English Pound for lifelong membership (allows you up to seven guests), so avoids becoming a tourist trap in a popular tourist destination. Good happy hour and not a bad cocktail at the end of it all. Has a Cuban basement charm as a venue.

Your three chosen dinner party guests from history or fiction and why?

Stephen Fry as I have always admired him as both a pipe smoker and dashed clever chap.

The Marquis de Sade for the tales.

Sherlock Holmes to see such purist talent at work.

Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

Artemis Scarheart, as he spoke to me...once.

Have you done a Turn yet? If so what was it on, if not what are you planning to do?

Not as yet as I do live some distance, so attending monthly meetings is a rarity. When I do it shall be on the aforementioned great-great grandfather who was German Ambassador to Japan and Govenor of Western Samoa. During the Second World War he helped Jewish-German literati escape Nazi Germany. Eventually imprisoned, he was 24 hours away from execution

At this year's NSC Christmas party



when he was saved only by a fortunate Allied bombardment of the courthouse.

Thank you for allowing yourself to be interviewed in the palatial surroundings of the NSC Club House. On behalf of the Members may I respectfully ask you to resign.

Grand Raffle riches at the party



'This place is a r

CAMRA luminary **Ian White** on the annual NSC pub crawl



The extraordinarily ornate interior of the Viaduct Tavern



IN PREPARATION FOR the visit to the area in London known as Smithfield—purveyors of meat to the retail market—we assembled on the outskirts in an ancient tavern called The Olde Mitre. It was a task for hardened explorers to find this place, only accessible down alleyways, with no pub sign on the street. Once you arrived it was still an endeavour to navigate through a hotch-potch of rooms to find our finest drinkers hidden in a snug.

A few fine Fullers beers, then out on to the next venue, an old gin palace called the Viaduct, which is Grade II Listed, with a stunning interior full of craftsmanship, carved wood panels and cut glass, for more Fullers beers and a great gin menu. It is certainly a place for gin-lovers to visit.

Into Smithfield itself, and our first stop was the Bishop's Finger (such a lovely name—also known as the Nun's Delight—named after a style of Kentish road sign) a Shepherd Neame boozier for a quick pint. Then we were on for a diversion to see some fine listed buildings in the market: four old telephone boxes. This gave rise to some great photo opportunities, including Clayton taking great risk to his clothing, lying on the ground to get a stunning shot of us and the market's clock.

Into the fine Grade II Listed Hand and Shears tucked down a narrow road, an excellent Victorian public house. Despite a plainer interior than the other pubs, it still retains a multi-room partitioned layout. As we left we took another photo opportunity, against the pub's entrance and well-lit windows.

Into the last place of refreshment, The Fox and Anchor with lovely entrance of mosaic flooring and friezes. Craigoh and I delighted to enjoy some Monteith's fine beer from New Zealand. In a blur for us it was time for carriages home and the end of a grand evening of fine establishments.

Real meat market...!



(Below) Inside the Fox and Anchor; (above) posing by the vintage phone boxes in the market itself





FOX & ANCHOR

FOX & ANCHOR

HOTEL

PUB

NO VIOLENCE

FL
FOX &
ANCHOR

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FOX &
ANCHOR

FOX &
ANCHOR

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ANCHOR

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3
3



(Left and right) The Art Nouveau exterior of the Fox and Anchor; (above) a well-earned pint in the Viaduct Tavern; (below); survivors' photo at the Hand and Shears



Juniper 2.0

By David Bridgman-Smith

As the inevitability sets in that winter is coming, many of us are looking to snuggle up to the fire with a companion and a large, warming glass of something dark and woody. Not so your intrepid drinks correspondent, who braved the impending destruction that Storm Abigail had threatened to bring, and travelled to Northumbria on a Gin Expedition.

The exact destination was an estate near Hepple, about 30 miles north-west of Newcastle, and just 15 miles from the Scottish Border. This is the home of Hepple Gin.

A recent release, Hepple Gin (bottled at 45% ABV) is described as having juniper in “high fidelity”—a welcome claim to many gin traditionalists who despair of the new “non-gins” on the market (I recently had a gin that tasted like 1980s hairspray. If you are looking for a gin with a contemporary twist and less overt juniper, I can recommend Ginabelle from Northern Spain.)

But what exactly is high fidelity gin? Hepple takes juniper berries from three different sources and uses three different methods to extract their flavours.

The juniper

- Macedonian Juniper—purple berries that are 2–3 years old;
- Italian Juniper—purple berries that are 2–3 years old; and
- Northumbrian Green Juniper—green berries that are 1 year old.

The methods

- Pot distillation in a Mueller Still with 11 other botanicals.
- Rotovap (reduced pressure) distillation—this is distillation at a much

lower temperature as a result of reduced pressure; this stops the botanicals from cooking and releases a more nuanced flavour.

- Supercritical extraction—ground juniper is placed in an insulated chamber and chilled carbon dioxide is then forced through. The carbon dioxide is in a supercritical state, which means that it has the extraction properties of a liquid, while keeping the permeating qualities of a gas. This last method is currently unique in its use in producing Hepple Gin and results in a thimbleful of super-concentrated juniper flavour. If you taste the juniper berries after the extraction, at least 80% of their flavour and aroma has gone.

The folks at Hepple have had gas chromatography—mass spectrometry (GCMS) analysis performed on some of their distillates (different junipers and different methods), and the results indicated that the rotovap and supercritical extraction methods extracted chemical compounds—i.e. flavour—not found in



DBS harvesting juniper on the Hepple estate

the pot still distillate.

Hepple uses locally, nationally, and internationally sourced botanicals. Their coriander comes from the UK, and the Douglas fir, bog myrtle, lovage, blackcurrant leaf and green Hepple juniper are all sourced from the estate.

Hepple juniper

Juniper bushes (*Juniperus communis*) take about seven years to reach maturity and grow berries (the berries only grow on the female plant). It takes 2–3 years for the berries to turn from green to purple, so most juniper is around ten years old before it can be harvested in the traditional manner.

Hepple use the one-year-old, greener juniper, which makes a brighter, less resinous, more jammy flavour, with some creamy, floral notes, too. It is often used in Scandinavian cooking. Purple juniper berries can be hit with a stick or shaken free from the bush, often caught in an umbrella hung upside-down from a branch. Green juniper, on the other hand, has to be picked by hand, which is more time-consuming, making it generally harder to source and, when it is available, more expensive.

The folk at Hepple were kind enough to let me help them with the harvest. I spent a couple of hours at it, and it was very good exercise; juniper likes boggy, churned-up earth, so each step was twice as difficult as I had expected.

This indigenous conifer is under severe threat in Britain at the moment, most notably from the deadly *Phytophthora austrocedrae* fungus. Hepple are undertaking a rejuvenation programme, taking the seeds from the locally grown purple berries and growing them for two to three years before planting the seedlings.

Walter Riddle, who owns the estate where the distillery and juniper are located, says that using local plants, rather than ones from nurseries or from outside the UK, helps to maintain the biosecurity of the area and, if



we're lucky, keep the blight away. Significant areas that were previously clean have been infected by well-meaning individuals who sourced plants from a nursery that were either infected or kept in contaminated soil and inadvertently helped to spread the disease.

The taste of Hepple Gin

After all of this, I'm sure that the patient reader is thinking, *This is all fascinating, but what does the gin taste like?*

On its own

Nose: Complex from the start, gradually unfurling to release a symphony of juniper notes that are fresh, crisp, and leafy. There's then a light sweetness, combined with gentle floral notes.

Taste: This is a very soft and smooth spirit—silky, with some woody, dry notes accompanied by brilliantly resinous juniper pine. A little berry jamminess appears, before a long, dry finish.

Gin & Tonic

Vibrant, crisp, and very refreshing: this has a lovely mix of juniper and citrus that really lends itself extremely well to this drink.

Martini

This is a very clean and juniper-intense Martini that is very raising to the appetite. Simple, but crisp and delicious.

Negroni

Another excellent cocktail: it has a mix of deep herbaceous and lighter, honey and juniper notes, followed by a tangy, earthy, bitter finish. Smooth and well-integrated.

Having an interesting back-story, production method, and geography is a great way to capture the imagination of the drinking public, but it needs to be backed up by a quality product; thankfully, in the case of Hepple, the liquid does not disappoint. Long live the juniper!



CLUB NOTES

Club Tie Corner

WE HAVE COLONEL CYRUS CHOKE to thank for this life-affirming photo (right) of the Honorable Richard J. Leon, U.S. District Court Judge, sporting the, as yet not publicly available, NSC bow tie. Meanwhile, Ed Marlowe wonders if there is a law suit in what is clearly a knock-off NSC scarf (right)

currently on sale at T.M. Lewin. If you think that's bad, I am reminded of Hackett's outrageous appropriation of our logo a few years ago (inset).



New Members

A HEARTY WELCOME to Helen Hanekom who saw the light and joined up at the party, plus Francis Hull from Nottingham and Andrew Webster from Billingshurst, Sussex.



Helen Hanekom



Francis Hull





Forthcoming Events



**BOTH OFFICIAL NSC JAUNTS (🔴) AND
THIRD-PARTY WHEEZES WE
THINK YOU MIGHT ENJOY**

FOR THE LATEST developments, see the Events page at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk plus our Facebook page and the web forum.

🔴 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 2nd December

7pm–11pm

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

Members: Free

Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)

See page 2.

Cakewalk Café

Every Wednesday

7pm–1am

Passing Clouds, 1 Richmond Road, Dalston, London E8 4AA

Admission: Free before 9pm, £5 after that

Dress: 1920s/1930s preferred

Live swing jazz every Wednesday hosted by Ewan Bleach with guest performers each time.

The Golden Era of Jazz

Every Thursday

7pm

Jamboree, 566 Cable Street, London E1W 3HB

Admission: Free before 8pm, £4 between 8 and 9.30, £5 after that

A weekly night of 1920s jazz and 1930s swing presented by clarinettist Ewan Bleach with various guests.

The Sohemian Society presents

Bongo the Bomb: A Beatnik Xmas Party

Friday 4th December

7.30pm

The Harrison, 28 Harrison Street, King's Cross, London WC1

Admission: £5 (for reservations email sohemian@yahoo.co.uk)

Dress: Beatnik

The Sohemians' Christmas party with a 1959 theme (perhaps too modern for some in these halls), with live music from Earl Okin, Brian and Mick Denny and Donnie Lonigan and the Ding Dong Rhythm Club, "happenings" courtesy of Cathi Unsworth, Jon Glover (aka Mr Cholmondley-Warner) and Ben Newberry, plus special guest Jean-Paul Sartre "absolutely live, straight from the fridge, Daddy-o". Patrons are requested to wear at least one item of beatnik attire—berets, duffel coats, CND badges, pipes, polo-neck sweaters, ski pants, horn-rimmed glasses, goatee beards, a moody, existentialist countenance, etc.

BEATNIK XMAS PARTY
(1959 style)
Friday, December 4th,
7.30-till late

BOMB!

LIVE MUSIC!
The incredible **Earl Okin**
Brian & Mick Denny
Donnie Lonigan & The Ding Dong Rhythm Club

HAPPENINGS!
Cathi Unsworth
Jon Glover (AKA Mr Cholmondley-Warner)
Ben Newberry

SPECIAL GUEST STAR
Jean-Paul Sartre
Absolutely LIVE!
STRAIGHT FROM THE FRIDGE DADDY-O!

PATRONS ARE REQUESTED TO WEAR AN ITEM(S) OF PERIOD BEATNIK FANCY DRESS:
Berets, Duffel coats, CND badges, pipes, polo-neck sweaters, ski pants, horn-rimmed glasses, goatee beards, a moody existentialist countenance....

ADMISSION: £5

THE HARRISON, 28 Harrison Street, Kings Cross, WC1
Reservations: sohemian@yahoo.co.uk



Auntie Maureen's Festive Food-a-Fair

Sunday 6th December

11am–5pm

Orford House Social Club and Institute,
73 Orford Road, Walthamstow Village,
London E17 9QR

Admission: £1 on the door, but buy in
advance from Eventbrite and you get a
free tea towel; under-15s free

Auntie Maureen's food fairs offer
the very best in local food-inspiration.
As in previous years, this will be a fine
gathering of seasonal, inspired festive
food gifts and treats to give, share
or serve. If you would like to trade
at the fair email Maureen at ask@
auntiemaureen.info.

Christmas Tea Dance

Sunday 6th December

2–5pm

Hoxton Hall, 130 Hoxton Street, London
N1 6SH

Admission: £10/£8 in advance

The Swing Time Dance Company
presents an afternoon of dazzling dance
moves and a fantastic opportunity to
learn at your own pace in this unique

Come and immerse yourself in Prohibition-era yuletide fun at the
Candlelight Club (above); or for something more modern, how about a
Swinging London themed Christmas courtesy of Mrs Peel (below)?

MRS PEEL'S
CHRISTMAS CRACKER
Saturday 12th December
8PM–2AM

**The Swinging Sixties penthouse
party of your dreams**

- LIVE MUSIC FROM
THE COUNT INDIGO REVUE
- DJ SETS FROM THOMAS DYNAMIC
- DAZZLING DANCE ROUTINES FROM
OUR SIX-PIECE TROUPE CATSUIT A-GO-GO
- BURLESQUE FROM DIANA RIGG
LOOKALIKE AGENT LYNCH
- PSYCHEDELIC LIGHT EFFECTS
- VINTAGE STYLING FOR GUESTS
- AWESOME VIEWS FROM OUR
ROOFTOP TERRACES

COUNT INDIGO AND
CLAYTON HARTLEY OF CANDLELIGHT
CLUB
PRESENT

THE EIGHT CLUB,
1 DYSART STREET,
MOORGATE, LONDON
EC2A 2BX
DRESS: 1960s

£15 earlybird tickets
FROM

www.mrspeels.club
£20 FULL PRICE
LIMITED TABLE
RESERVATIONS £30

setting, complete with mulled wine and tinsel aplenty. Regularly performing all over the country, with an impressive string of TV, film and theatre appearances, these guys really know how to shake up a fuss. Specialising in the Lindy Hop and the American Jitterbug.

The Eccentric Club Christmas Dinner

Friday 11th December

7.13–10pm

David Lloyd George Room, National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

Admission: £60 members, £65 “friend of the club” (includes the NSC), £70 guest

Dress: Gentlemen black tie (and its eccentric interpretations), ladies glamorous, tasteful and elegant (though slightly eccentric...)

The Eccentric Club, of which NSC Members are officially friends, is hosting a Christmas dinner. You can attend as a guest without actually being accompanied by a member, though you are requested to contact the club secretary first.

The Candlelight Club’s Christmas Party

Friday 11th, Saturday 12th, Friday 18th and Saturday 19th December

7pm–12am

A secret London location

Admission: £20/25 in advance

Dress: Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, degenerate aristos and decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

The Candlelight Club is a clandestine pop-up cocktail party with a 1920s speakeasy flavour, in a secret London venue lit by candles. Each event offers a classic cocktail menu, plus live period jazz bands (this time from the Original Rabbits Foot Spasm Band on 11th and 12th, the Dixie Ticklers on 18th and Benoit Viellefon on 19th) and vintage vinylism from the New Sheridan Club’s own DJ Auntie Maureen. Ticket holders get an email two days before revealing the location.

Mrs Peel’s Christmas Cracker

Saturday 12th December

8pm–2am

The Eight Club, 1 Dysart Street, Moorgate, London EC2A 2BX

Admission: £15 in advance, £20 full price and on the door

Dress: 1960s

The Swinging Sixties Christmas party of your dreams! Inspired by Emma Peel, the catsuited, karate-chopping heroine of surreal and stylish 1960s TV show *The Avengers*, Mrs Peel’s celebrate’s London’s most cool, creative, confident and playful decade. In a penthouse private club with views across the city from our heated terraces, master of the revels Count



Join the Fitzrovia Radio Hour for a quadruple whammy of wireless-related mirth

Indigo presents a Yuletide extravaganza with live music from his own band, dance routines from our six-piece dance troupe Catsuit A-Go-Go, burlesque from Diana Rigg lookalike Agent Lynch, DJing from Thomas Dynamic, plus vintage styling services, a cocktail bar and mind-expanding lighting effects. See www.mrspeels.club.

JUMP STEADY PRESENTS



RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND

★ KNEES-UP 2015 ★

18 DEC • 8PM TIL MIDNIGHT

★ ★ ★ WITH GUEST BANDS ★ ★ ★

**KNIGHTS OF MENTIS
BALKAN WANDERERS
BANGTAILFEATHERS**

O2 ACADEMY

190 COWLEY ROAD, OXFORD

£8 ADV FROM WWW.TICKETWEB.CO.UK

The Fitzrovia Radio Hour Christmas Special

Saturday 12th–Wednesday 23rd December
8pm

St James Theatre, 12 Palace Street, London,
SW1E 5JA

Admission: £20–30 (book online)

The Fitzrovia Radio Hour spoof the style and attitudes of vintage wireless programmes from the 1930s. Their shows present a “live” broadcast, with humour deriving from the production of sound effects as much as the scripts themselves, plus the plugs for imaginary sponsors. Their Christmas shows offers four thrilling tales:

It's a Passable Life! When a failed businessman tries to jump from Vauxhall Bridge on Christmas Eve, a mysterious woman comes to his rescue...

The Woman Who Didn't Prepare! A young housewife finds the pressures of Christmas too much to bear. But will “taking it easy” this year

shepherd in disaster?

Boxing Day Champ! Former world boxing champion Ted Miller is forced to dust down his gloves to make ends meet. Can he conquer his demons and find glory?

The (Christmas) Day They Stole the Eiffel Tower! Paris! The crime of the century! On Christmas Day! What gang of insanely brave daredevils could be behind such a caper?

Generously sponsored by Soho Special Pipe Tobacco. “Soho. So-ho. So-HO HO HO HO HO.”

Rabbit Foot Spasm Band Knees-Up 2015

Friday 18th December

8pm–12am

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road,
Oxford OX4 1UE

Admission: £9.05 in advance

The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band's annual Knees-Up is now an Oxford institution. Expect music, mayhem and mirth from these vintage troublemakers. Support this year comes from ten-piece sizzling country vagabonds The Knights of Mentis, gypsy ska band The Balkan Wanderers (favourites of

BBC Radio 6's Tom Robinson) and party Scrooge-busters Bang Tail Feathers. Dickensian Fancy Dress optional. Unhinged dancing essential.

The NSC Christmas Drinks

Wednesday 23rd December

6pm till closing time

The Dover Castle, 43 Weymouth Mews,
London W1G 7EQ

Admission: Free

The traditional get-together just before Christmas so we can check that Lord Mendrick is not dead yet. (He works overseas so this is usually the only point in the year when we see him.) There is a schism between those who think it should be the last Friday before Christmas and those who think it should always be the 23rd, but after a protracted democratic process we have settled on the date. The venue is the Dover Castle, a Sam Smith's pub which, for reasons lost in time, has a long association with the NSC.

Tango Supper

Sunday 27th December

6.30–11pm

Palm Court Ballroom, Waldorf Hilton,
Aldwych, London WC2B 4DD

Admission: £69

A regular event at London's Waldorf Hilton, in the beautiful Palm Court Ballroom, where Tango first scandalised Edwardian London society in 1910. These black tie events are hosted by professional Argentine Tango dancers, Leonardo Acosta and Tracey Tyack-King. On arrival at 6.30 you will be greeted by your hosts and receive the specially created cocktail, Tango Essence. Leonardo and Tracey will then give a 45-minute lesson of Argentine Tango which is suitable for all levels. The two-course supper and dance will follow and during the evening there will also be a performance of Tango through the ages by your hosts. Carriages at 11pm.

The Candlelight Club's NYE Party

Thursday 31st December

7pm–2am

A secret London location

Admission: £45–55 in advance

Dress: Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, degenerate aristos and decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

See above. For this special end-of-2015 extravaganza there is cabaret from Champagne Charlie, burlesque from Sophia St Villier, Charleston hoofing from dance troupe the Gatsby Girls, music from Charlie's band the Bubbly Boys, and vintage vinylism from the New Sheridan Club's own DJ Auntie Maureen. Ticket holders get an email a few days before revealing the location. Be warned that 80% of the tickets sold in the first week, so jump to it if you want to grab one of the last few.

Mrs Peel's Sky-High Hogmanay

Thursday 31st December

8pm–2am

15th Floor, Saint George's Hotel, Langham
Place, Regent Street London W1B 2QS


Admission: £47–65 in advance

Dress: 1960s

Mrs Peel invites you to a special NYE party: in a penthouse hotel bar offering a breathtaking setting from which to see in the New Year, there will be live music from the Adventures of Parsley, orgiastic gyrations from dance troupe Catsuit A-Go-Go, DJs El Diabolik and the Psychedelic Milkman and your host Count Indigo, plus a cocktail bar and mind-expanding lighting effects. See www.mrspeels.club.

The Dover Castle in spring 1944. Looks much the same today, especially when we are there



A group of seven people are posing for a photo in a large, dark wooden structure. In the center, a woman dressed as an elderly woman with a grey hat and a patterned coat holds a wooden cane. To her left, a man in a suit and a woman with glasses smile. To her right, a man with a beard and a flat cap looks towards the camera. In the foreground, a man with glasses and a dark suit looks down. The background features a large, ornate clock with Roman numerals hanging from the ceiling. The lighting is warm, with a bright light source visible in the background.

The hardy attendees at the NSC annual Pub Crawl pose under the mighty clock at the heart of Smithfield Market, the hub of this year's odyssey

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. You can even befriend us electrically at www.facebook.com.

CONTACTING US

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