

# PUNTING TIME AGAIN!

Join us for our annual Punt 'n' Picnic jaunt to Oxford

## Here's how it's done

Robert Beckwith on the history and techniques of punting

## Brutal beauties

Tim Eyre on the mysterious flak towers of Vienna

## Way out west

Roy Engoron on the truth about California

## Rise of the villains

Gangster-mania reaches its height with our 1932 Film Night presentation *Scarface*

# DESIGN!

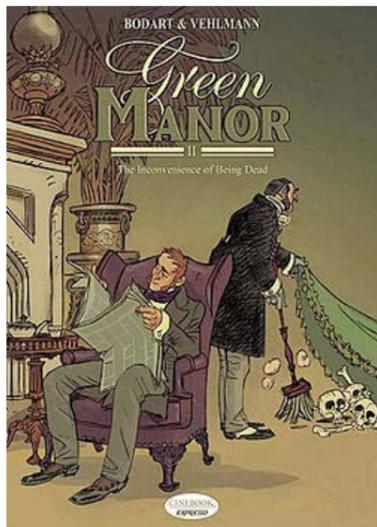
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • ISSUE 114 APRIL 2016



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 6th April in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. Darcy Sullivan will pique our curiosity with Comics for Chaps. "Comic books have become a global media force," he explains, "but still seem dominated by superheroes. Where can the discerning Sheridanite find comics featuring men of breeding and taste, perhaps having the odd scrape with evil masterminds between pipes and visits to their tailors? In this talk, I will reveal a delightful world of graphic novels for chaps and chapettes of all persuasions."



**The Last Meeting**

At our March meeting our speaker was Robert Beckwith, giving what was actually his first Turn, despite being a founder Member of the NSC and the Old Sheridan Club that preceded it. His subject was punting, one that is close to his heart, and something he is particularly good at, as anyone who has been lucky enough to be in his boat at the Club punting picnics will know. The term "punt" came to mean a square-ended, flat-bottomed boat propelled with a pole pushed against the

river bed. Originally they were large vessels for cargo or platforms for fishing or shooting birds and the punter would plant the pole then "walk" the boat past it. With the invention of the "saloon punt" as a leisure craft, with seats in the middle for passengers, the punter was less able to move about the vessel, so the technique of "pricking" was developed: the punter stands still and moves the pole. Robert treated us to a demonstration and even showed us his famous one-handed punting technique, which enables the punter to propel the boat while nursing a drink in his other hand. Modern punts have a raised deck area at one end. This was originally the stern, but passengers would naturally sit themselves at that end, so the punter positioned himself at the other end and reversed the direction of the boat. This is still the tradition at Oxford.

Punting came later to Cambridge, and by that time saloon punts had seating in the middle, so punters continued to treat the stern as the stern. To this day Cambridge and Oxford still punt from opposite ends, a matter of no little rivalry. Many thanks to Robert, whose talk comes conveniently shortly before our annual St George's Day punt trip, on 23rd April. An essay version of the talk begins on page 4.



(Above) Chairman Torquil; (right) Mr Beckwith; (below, l-r) Mark Gidman, Stewart Lister Vickers and Craigoh; (below right) the mob



Robert demonstrates correct technique



(Above left) Chico and Birgit; (above) Incy hatches a plan; (left) Tim's friends Tamara and Rob admire his startling smoking jacket; (Right) Robert and Seonaid Beckwith

# A LANGUID TOUR THROUGH THE WORLD AND ARTS OF PUNTING

“BELIEVE ME, my young friend, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.” —Ratty

Punting is a most delightful pastime that allows the languid practitioner to blend together the joys of English summers, picnics, fine wines, boating, beautiful buildings, rivers and meadows.

## Punt History

The term “punt” was used originally for a wide range of small water craft. Gradually, however, certain craft acquired other labels, such as the Bengali word *dinghy*. The meaning of “punt” settled on craft with flat bottoms, no keel,

Hogarth's *Gin Lake*



BY ROBERT BECKWITH

and square ends. These were common on the Thames, which had been much shallower up to the end of the 18th century before the river was made navigable by dredging and the building of locks. Most of these were working craft and they were large and often walked, whereby the pole is shoved into the river bed and the punter pushes against this whilst walking along the vessel, thus the punter remains in the same position relative to the Earth, and the vessel moves in the opposite direction to that walked.

Fishing punts were also common, and it is these that were most often used for leisure, as, in the latter half of the 19th century, the railways opened up the river to day trippers and boating of various forms became very popular.

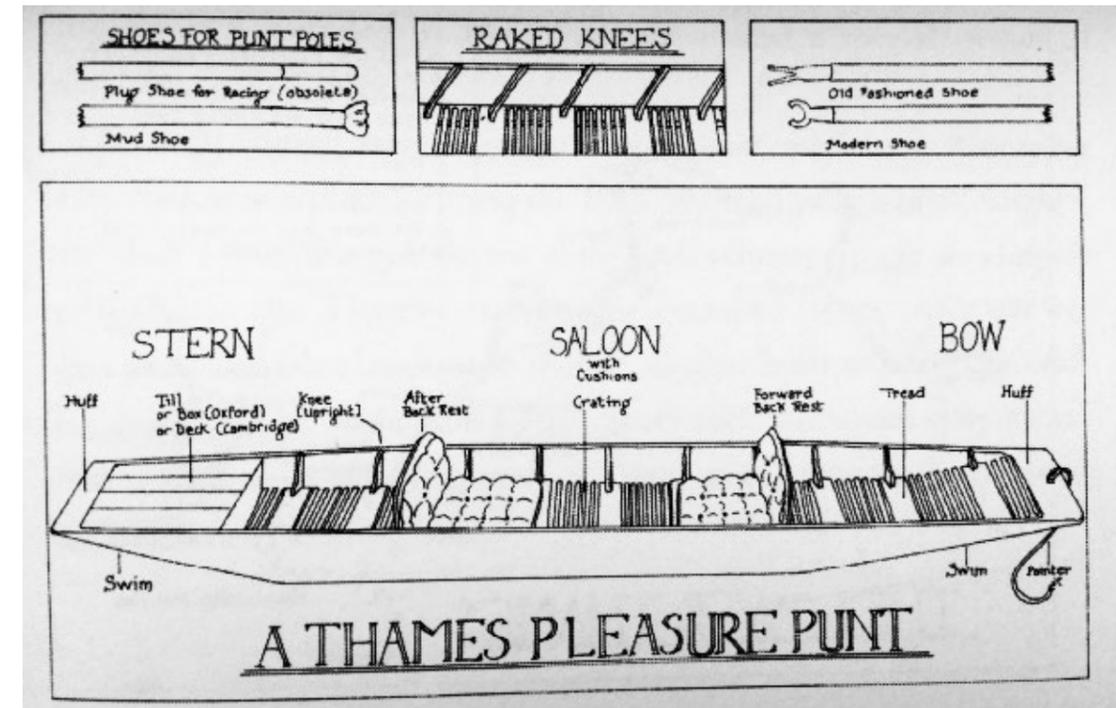
Leisure punting didn't really take off until 1880, when the Thames Pleasure Punt, or saloon punt, was introduced. This was smaller than the working punts and included comfortable seating. The small size meant that the punter could easily remain in one place and did not have to walk the punt. When you stay in one place and push it is called “pricking” the punt.

Punts became very popular for

leisure and picnics, reaching their peak use during Edward VII's reign. During the 1950s and 1960s they were driven off most rivers by the wash from motor boats, but rivers at Oxford and Cambridge were protected from this hazard.

A notable difference between Oxford and Cambridge punting is that in Oxford the punter stands in the bow and punts stern first whereas the reverse is true in Cambridge. This is because when the early punts were used for leisure in Oxford, the most comfortable place for passengers was in the stern where they could lean against the deck, therefore punters stood in the bow. When the saloon punt was introduced, this habit remained despite the new central seating arrangements. Punting was not introduced to Cambridge until after the invention of the saloon punt, therefore the habit was never adopted.

Punt poles for leisure punting were made



from varnished spruce. Later, aluminium poles were introduced though these had problems with leaking, and blackening the hands. Because of these problems Cambridge reverted to wooden poles, Oxford stuck with the metal poles and the problems were later fixed. That is why the poles tend to be wooden in Cambridge and metal in Oxford.

Punting locations outside Oxford and Cambridge include Canterbury, the Great Ouse, various clubs on the lower Thames, Durham, Christchurch in New Zealand and the Okavango Delta. Self-hire seems to be rare outside Oxford and Cambridge, especially in crocodile areas.

## How to punt

For punting on the right-hand side of the vessel (reverse right and left for punting on the left side):

Your posture should be upright and relaxed. Stand facing the water with your toes against the edge and your left foot wedged into a “knee” (see punt diagram). This will stop it slipping. Also,



A fine demonstration of punting by two Timelords



Durham punting in June

this should be slightly upstream so that the pole is at the correct angle when you start the shove (about 10 degrees to the vertical). Fling the pole down with the left hand and move the right hand to grip the pole high up.

**The Shove**

Pull down on the pole and add your left hand as soon as it can reach the

part of the pole just above the right. If the river bed is muddy, then don't shove too hard at the beginning. During the shove, keep your eye on the front of the punt to ensure that you are heading in the desired direction. If you are going too far to the left, then move the pole towards you as you push. If you are going too far to the right, then move it away from you. Make small corrections early.

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**Pickup**

Starting with the pole trailing in the water behind you, pull it forward with the left hand letting it slide through the right hand...

Then pull it forward with your right hand and let go with your left hand.

Finally grip the pole with your left hand below the right (i.e. your arms are now crossed over) and pull forwards and upwards to finish with the pole vertical and your right hand holding it below the left.

**One-handed punting**

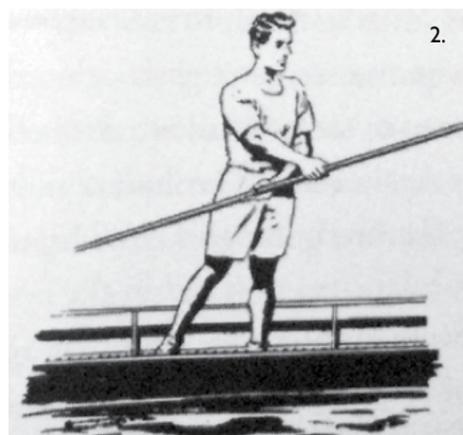
Punting one-handed allows you to drink while punting (see page 13). The main difference is the pickup. Throw the pole forwards in small jumps, catching it in your right hand each time until you reach the point of balance, then rotate to the vertical and let it drop. During the drop reach as high as you can to grip the pole in preparation for the shove as it will be difficult to change your grip position once the pole hits the river bed. Use the left hand to provide refreshments at any point during this process.

**The Drop**

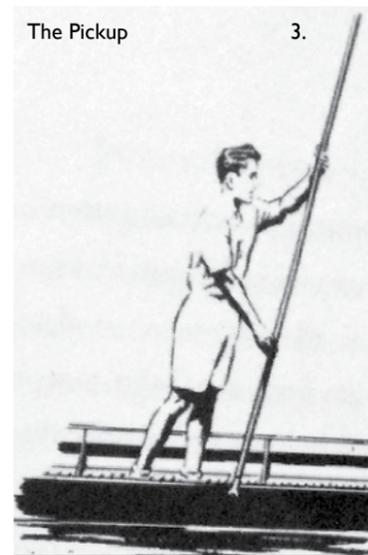
Use your right hand to point the pole in the correct direction. If you are moving then



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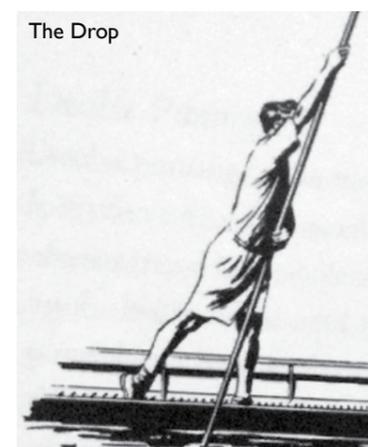


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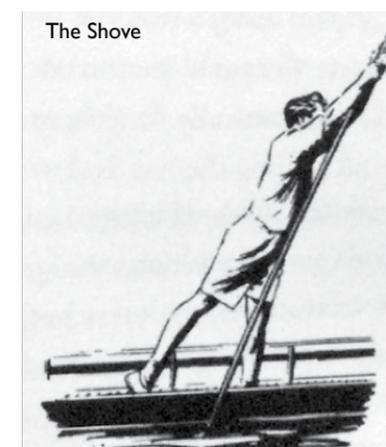


The Pickup

3.



The Drop



The Shove

*Trees* Just crouch down and defend your drink.

*Pirates* Guard your Champagne bottles when other punts come close by. The top of a bottle sticking up over the edge is a tempting target.

*Punter without a drink* Keep the engine room well stoked.

**Punt Racing**

The picture at the bottom of the page is from Tübingen in Germany. As you can see this is quite different from leisure punting. The race is in the early stages, but already all their drinks and quails eggs have been sluiced away into the Neckar river.

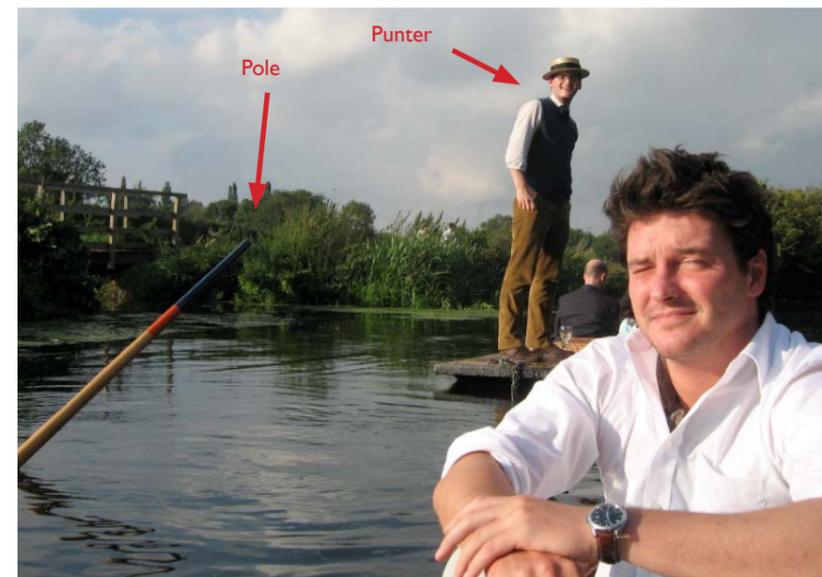
Punt racing was very popular at Eton College until 1852 when it was prohibited because punts were believed to be used for school vices, smoking and drinking.

(Note the comma in that sentence between "vices" and "smoking" which implies there was something else they were up to that was not smoking or drinking and was labelled as "school vices".)

**Punting Hazards**

*Mud* If the pole gets stuck then the golden rule applies: stay with the punt and not the pole. Use the paddle to get back to the pole.

*Bridges* If the top of the pole hits a bridge while the bottom is wedged in the river bed then let go and stay with the punt. Also a Cambridge student on a bridge may be tempted to grab the top of your pole if it comes within reach. This is known as "pole picking".



(Above) Punting hazards: mud; (below) punt racing in Tübingen

**Giants of the Sport**

According to my sources, the greatest punter of all time was Abel Beesley, Oxford University waterman. The main race course was the "Maidenhead Mile". It was, surprisingly, one mile long and at Maidenhead and was used from 1877 until 1953.

The greatest amateur punter was W.H. Grenfell, later 1st Lord Desborough, the so-called "grand old man" of almost every kind of sport. He was president of the OU athletic and boat clubs, twice swam the pool below Niagara falls (though he never found his car keys), made the ascent of five alpine peaks in eight days, captained the British epee fencing team aged 49, and was president of the MCC, LTA and the 1908 Olympic Games. The greatest lady punter was Penny Chuter who won many amateur championships in the early sixties.



**Dampers club**

Oxford and Cambridge each had their own punting clubs that did a bit of racing but mostly alcohol-based frolics. To join the Dampers club in Cambridge, you had to have fallen into the river fully clothed. Graham Chapman of Monty Python fame numbers among their presidents and they occasionally invited members of the Charon club, Oxford's equivalent, up to Cambridge for races and assorted competitions. The Oxford team suffered significantly from the effects of pole picking at the bridges, as they weren't used to that sort of thing.



Lord Desborough in a racing punt

is already on the upper river.

The upper Cam, sometimes called the Granta, winds through bucolic meadows with many good picnic spots. If you get to Grantchester, you may visit many fine inns and also the Orchard Tea Garden which comprises some deckchairs and tables strewn about an orchard with somewhere to buy tea and cakes. The most famous resident of Grantchester was Rupert Brooke, who spent many languid days boating and swimming in the vicinity.

One final note on Cambridge punting is to try, if you are able, to head out during the Trinity or St

John's May Ball fireworks evenings.

**Cambridge**

The Cam through Cambridge is certainly the most famous punting location in the world. The lower level begins at the Mill Pond by the Granta pub and continues

past Darwin College and then through the gardens of all the other riparian colleges such as King's, Clare, Trinity and St John's. This section is known as the Backs. Before powered craft, the colleges would not allow tow-paths to be built in this area and so a submerged "road" was constructed mid-stream. Horses would wade along this road pulling boats and its remains now provide good purchase for your pole. It is therefore best to remain mid-stream while punting the Backs.

To travel upstream from this part of the river you must get to the upper river via the rollers. Going up is quite hard work as punts are pretty heavy things and the rollers are steep. Alternatively you can rent a punt that

**Annual St George's Day Oxford punting**

This has been going for 11 years through sun, rain and hail. The weather last year was superb.

In 2005 on our first ever trip we went downstream. There are good views of the city over Christchurch meadow, but not if you're sitting in the punt as the banks are quite high.

The following year we turned upstream, and this is now the tradition. We usually stop and moor at the "NO MOORING" signs to take a breather and have a bit more food and drink

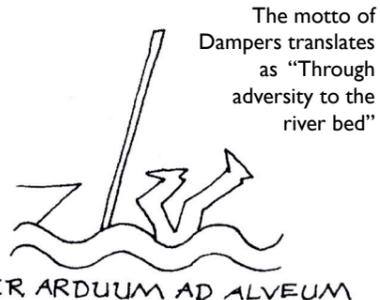


before continuing through the woods and up the rollers to the Oxford parks where we set out a lavish picnic.

Now it should be stated that every year with the exception of last year the river lures at least one of our company into its fluvial embrace. Two years ago it was my wife. Mostly this occurs on the alcohol-fuelled return journey.

It is testimony to the Sheridan Club style that if you type in "punting Oxford" into Google images, then the very first picture is from one of our trips. Further pictures may be found at the Sheridan Club Flickr page (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sheridanclub/albums>).

(Above) a scene from the annual NSC Oxford punting trip; (right) approach this man to participate in the plunge-pot sweep-stake



The motto of Dampers translates as "Through adversity to the river bed"



A sufficient number of punts could support a small car



*There was a young lady from Bude  
Who went for a swim in the Cam.  
A man in a punt  
Stuck a pole up her ear  
And said, "You can't swim here, it's private."  
—Rupert W. Brooke*

# FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Our March Film Night was the fast-paced, quintessential screwball comedy, *His Girl Friday*

IN THIS ERA of CGI and blockbuster action entertainment, there aren't many movies that rely largely on dialogue for their impact. So for a change of pace our March Film Night presentation was *His Girl Friday*, widely considered the best of Howard Hawks's comedies (he also made *Twentieth Century*, *Bringing Up Baby* and *I Was a Male War Bride*).

The film is based on a play, *Hold the Front Page*, by former newspapermen Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, which opened on Broadway in 1928. It is the story of a conniving managing

Hawks was giving a small dinner party when the conversation got round to dialogue, which Hawks felt reached its zenith in *The Front Page*. To prove his point he pulled out a copy of the play and started reading it, taking the Burns role. A female guest read the part of Hildy Johnson. "And in the middle of it," Hawks later recalled, "I said, 'My Lord, it's better with a girl reading it than the way it was!'"

With Hecht's blessing on the sex change, Hawks acquired the rights from Hughes and set about his own version, with the final screenplay by Lederer again. Hildy Johnson was now not only Burns's ex-ace reporter but also his ex-wife, adding sexual tension to the mix. When Burns learns that Hildy is planning to give up her metier as a reporter to get married to insurance man Bruce Baldwin and retire to domestic bliss he has a double reason to want to sabotage her plans... (Hildy remembers the end of their marriage: "A big fat lummox like you, hiring an airplane to write, 'Hildy, don't be hasty, remember my dimple. —Walter.' It delayed our divorce twenty minutes while the judge went out to watch it.")

The film falls squarely in the "screwball comedy" genre. Exactly what defines a screwball comedy depends on whom you ask. In his book *Screwball Comedy* Ed Sikov speaks of "a whole genre developed around the perverse idea that love could only be enhanced by aggravation"; for Molly Haskell (in her introduction to the same book) it is "a sort of existential American version of the French *amour fou*", while Andrew Sarris summarises the genre as "sex comedy without the sex". The name comes from a type of pitch in baseball,

and the movies tended to be romantic comedies that subverted the usual dreamy conventions of romance—irreverent, wise-cracking, undermining the fantasy with everyday social and economic realities. Flowering from the mid-1930s to the end of the 1940s, the genre resonated with a generation enduring the fall-out of the Wall Street Crash.

Screwball comedies were acerbic and fast-paced, and in *His Girl Friday* Hawks took this a stage further by expanding on a technique experimented with in Frank Capra's 1932 *American Madness*—overlapping dialogue. The tone was further enhanced by the cast's own ad libs, with Cary Grant (as Burns) adding a postmodern touch by not only referring disparagingly to himself (by his real name, Archie Leach) but also describing Bruce Baldwin, played by Ralph Bellamy, as: "He looks like, er, that fellow in the movies... you know, Ralph Bellamy." Rosalind Russell was not Hawks's first choice to play Hildy—Carole Lombard, Katharine Hepburn, Claudette Colbert, Margaret Sullavan, Ginger Rogers, Irene Dunne and Jean Arthur were all considered first—and in her autobiography, *Life Is A Banquet*, she wrote that she thought her role did not have as many good lines as Grant's,

so she hired her own writer to "punch up" her dialogue. With Hawks encouraging ad-libbing on the set, Russell was able to slip her writer's work into the movie. Only Grant was wise to this tactic and greeted her each morning saying, "What have you got today?"

One thing that struck me seeing it again was just how joyfully cynical it was. The newspapermen are happy to bend the truth and Burns is ready to promise a politician his paper's support in return for a favour, with every intention of renegeing on the deal. The plot involves a man on death row: the paper champions his innocence while the Mayor has vowed to execute him: when a functionary arrives with a reprieve, the Mayor and the Police Chief try and bribe him to hush it up. So in a

single scene we have the press, the government and the police all unashamedly corrupt. Of course the level of genuine corruption on display during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in Chicago, would astonish the average 21st-century citizen, but this breezy cynicism is very much a characteristic of screwball comedy.

For details of our April Film Night see page 24.



Grant and Russell with Ralph Bellamy as Bruce Baldwin



Cary Grant as Walter Burns and Rosalind Russell as Hildy Johnson

editor Walter Burns (based on *Chicago Tribune* editor Walter Howey) who is trying to persuade his sometime ace reporter Hildebrand "Hildy" Johnson (modelled on MacArthur himself) to come back and work for him again. Howard Hughes acquired the rights and made a movie version as early as 1931. Scripted by Charles Lederer, it receive three Oscar nominations.

Nearly a decade later filmmaker Howard



The gentlemen of the press

# 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.*



*With son and heir William*

## Robert Beckwith

"Opt for the most unusual"

### Name or preferred name?

Robert Beckwith. In the early "Chap Room" I was Edwin Fischer-Pryce.

### Why that nickname or nom de plume?

While thinking of a name I was listening to a

recording of Edwin Fischer playing Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

### Where do you hail from?

Wimbledon.

### Favourite Cocktail?

Classic Daiquiri.

### Most Chappist skill?

Punting with one hand while drinking with the other.

### Most Chappist possession?

An overdraft.

### Personal Motto?

When trying to choose between two similar options, opt for the most unusual.

### Favourite Quotes?

"Your manuscript is both good and original. But the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good."  
[Often attributed to Samuel Johnson – Ed] Just like these responses.

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

If you've waited in a doctor's surgery with one of those red announcement displays then there's a good chance that the software controlling the device was written by me.

### How long have you been involved with the NSC?

Since its genesis

### How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

I was introduced to *The Chap* magazine in the late 1990s, then joined the original Sheridan Club.

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

Morden Hall Park is the most bucolic park that I have encountered in London. It has meadows, chalk streams and a water wheel (no longer turning, sadly).

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

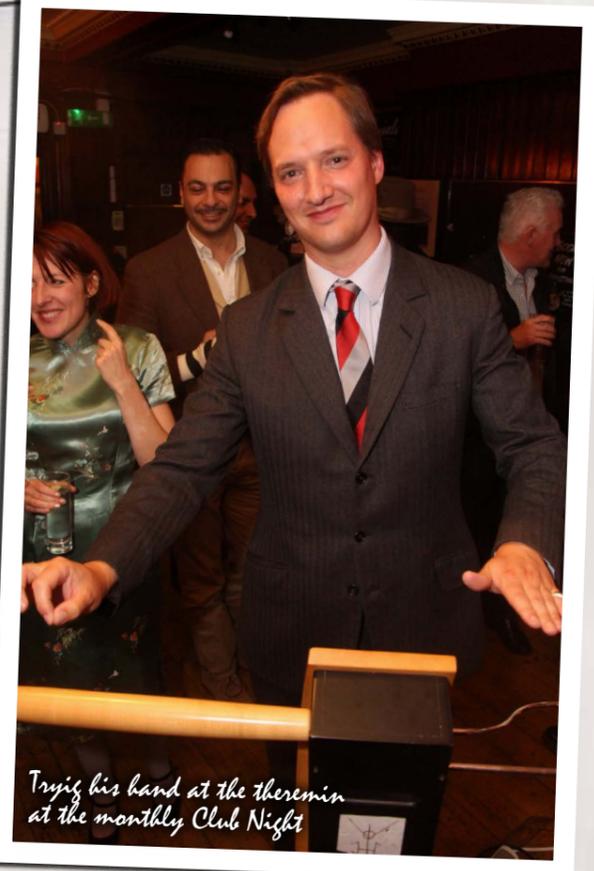
- A younger version of myself to receive stock market advice
- Chopin for musical entertainments
- Kafka, so that I can instruct the doorman not to grant him entry to the dinner despite the clear invitation. If he gets past the doorman then there will be a mini-bureaucracy of 50 maitre d's to contend with before he is finally accused of not paying somebody else's bill and sentenced to wash plates for the rest of his days.

### Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

Artemis Scarheart

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

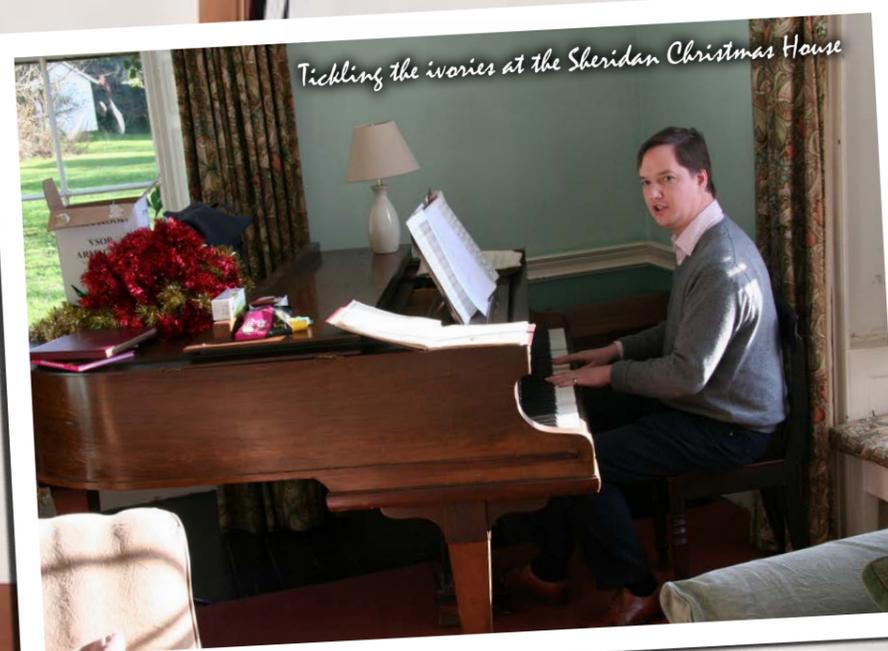
Punting. See this



*Trying his hand at the theremin at the monthly Club Night*

publication for more details.

*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.*



*Tickling the ivories at the Sheridan Christmas House*



*In his natural environment (see pages 4-9)*

# The Flak Towers of VIENNA

Tim Eyre on some unexpected architecture

VIENNA IS A CITY of elegant ballrooms, top-notch opera, white Lipizzaner horses, regal architecture and luxurious coffee houses. Reminders of the city's dark days in the middle of the 20th century are mercifully rare and do not generally confront the visitor. That is unless the visitor happens to walk through the Augarten.

The Augarten is the city's oldest park, dating back to the 17th century. It is beautifully

landscaped in the French Baroque style, with neat rows of trees and manicured lawns. The park contains the white Palais Augarten, which is home to the Vienna Boys' Choir and once hosted concerts conducted by Mozart. Johann Strauss's former residence stands nearby.

However, all this splendour is almost literally overshadowed by a pair of Brutalist flak towers, each a concrete hulk over 50 metres high. They were built in 1945 to help defend Vienna against Allied air-raids. Heavy anti-aircraft guns

were mounted on the roof to fire at bombers, with additional guns being mounted on the platforms extending from the sides. Although the anti-aircraft guns were largely ineffective, the buildings were useful as air-raid shelters and provided emergency space for medical treatment and propaganda broadcasting. They were also a form of propaganda in themselves, providing people with a sense that something was being done to counter the threats facing the city.

The towers were built as a pair. The taller of the two is called the Gefechtsturm and was constructed with 16 sides, making it appear almost circular. It was from here that soldiers fired flak guns at RAF bombers flying overhead. The slightly smaller tower is cuboid in shape and is called the Leitturm. This was a control tower that housed radar equipment, the delicate nature of which meant that it could not be located in the same building as the guns.

Two other pairs of flak towers still stand in Vienna; between them the three pairs form a defensive triangle around the centre of the city. The other two pairs are in current use; one of them is used as a data centre by the Austrian military. However, the Augarten pair remain derelict and occupied only by pigeons. Their construction is so robust that demolishing them at the end of the war would have been almost impossible. Even today some residents call for them to be removed because they act as reminders of a time that many people would prefer to forget. However, the towers are listed as protected monuments and so will remain where they are for the foreseeable future.

There is some talk of using the towers in Augarten for data storage, but the Gefechtsturm suffered a mysterious explosion in 1946 and so has cracks at the top. These make it unsafe, even though it is almost indestructible. So it is that the towers remain fenced off and closed to

the public. There is not even any local signage to explain to visitors what they are. Perhaps in parody of this, someone has affixed a sign to the fence displaying one word: "Amargasaurus" (a type of dinosaur).

These monstrous buildings stand in sharp contrast to the rest of Vienna as a stark reminder of the horrors of war. For those interested in military history or dark tourism they are a must-see. Those wishing to preserve their image of Vienna as a place of Old-World glamour may prefer to give them a wide berth.



The Gefechtsturm



The Leitturm

# THE VIEW FROM ACROSS THE POND

# CALIFORNIA

## FACT, FICTION, FANTASY

Roy S. Engoron is way out west

**I**N THESE PAGES A FEW issues ago, I made mention of the fact that, with all of my trips to the UK, I still had a very romantic view of the place. I said, that in my mind, all of you wore tweeds, put on your bicycle clips, cycled to work after having tea in your quaint, thatched cottages. I made mention of this to friends on my last trip to your shores as we were having tea in London. There was laughter at the table and one of the attendees, rather sarcastically, said that it was silly of me to hold such images when I knew much better that this was not the case at all. He further added that I was going right for the British stereotype which was ridiculous—the stereotype, not the British.

As I thought about stereotypes, I asked him what he thought my life was like being from California since he had never been to the US.

According to him, I would get up with the sun, probably go surfing, work on my tan, eat a diet of macrobiotics, go to work early in a tiny, highly efficient car since I'd be in traffic for hours, all the while dressed in a pair of jeans and Birkenstocks. He further added that on my way anywhere, I would most likely see movie stars in stores, at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, and driving on the freeways. As I thought about our conversation, I realised how stereotypes can shape our impression and vision of a place.

I am reminded of my New York cousin, Ilene, who was aghast when she was told that my parents allowed me to walk to elementary school on my own beginning when I was about eight or nine. She was concerned that I would be attacked or kidnapped by Red Indians. Sadly,

my cousin has the IQ of a carrot. I've lived in California practically all of my life. In that time, we never lived in a tepee, we always had electricity, we always had indoor plumbing, and the natives have proven to be quite friendly.

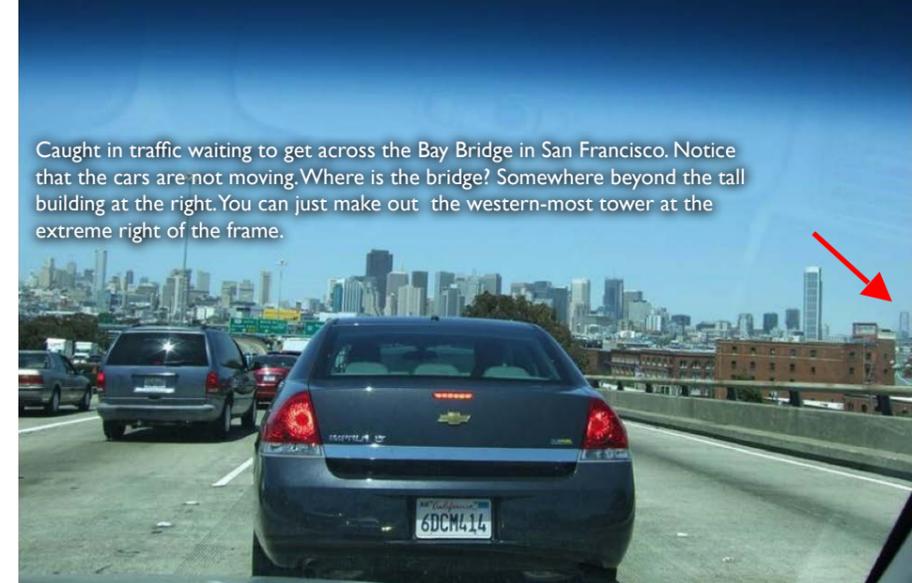
Geography was never my strong suit, but roughly speaking, California is just about 1,000 miles in length and about 250–300 miles wide, give or take. To put it another way, England, Scotland and Wales, could fit nicely nestled within the borders of California. The area is so vast, that within the borders one can go to the mountains, the seashore or the desert. No other state has that varied a land mass. I live in Sacramento, which is the capital of California. Yes, Sacramento is the capital. The capital is NOT San Francisco, it is NOT Los Angeles, and, most certainly, it is NOT Disneyland. Sacramento is about 80 miles from the coast, so the idea of me going to surf every morning is pretty ludicrous. Furthermore, I do not tan. If I'm exposed to the sun, I turn lobster red, peel and go back to fish-belly white. Besides all of that, I don't surf. I can barely roller skate.

There are many trendy diets around. I tend to eat normally, whatever that is. I am not a vegetarian or vegan. I assume the reason I can digest what I eat as an omnivore is a clue to my

diet. I do not like kale in any form—salad, chips, bread, etc. I have tried products that do not contain gluten. If you have never eaten glutenless breads, rolls, cakes, etc., by all means try it. Then you will be more than grateful that you don't have celiac disease. My car, while efficient, is a Honda Accord which is bigger than a shoe box. I wear jeans only when I'm working in the yard or cleaning the house—and that's it. I am saddened that one of the California exports to the rest of the world is that wearing jeans can get one into any function. Wearing the top half of a tuxedo with jeans is abhorrent to me. I've been to weddings, funerals, and the opera where jeans were worn unabashedly. I once bought a pair of Birkenstocks and my feet never hurt so much. I think one must wear those only when grinding one's grains into flour—preferably without gluten.

I grew up in Los Angeles and have been to the corner of Hollywood and Vine many times, most often acting as tour guide for relatives who wanted to see "THE STARS". We never saw one. While the notables of the film industry do have luxurious homes in many cases, they are just people who have to work. They do not have time to lounge around on street corners—unless they're getting paid for it.

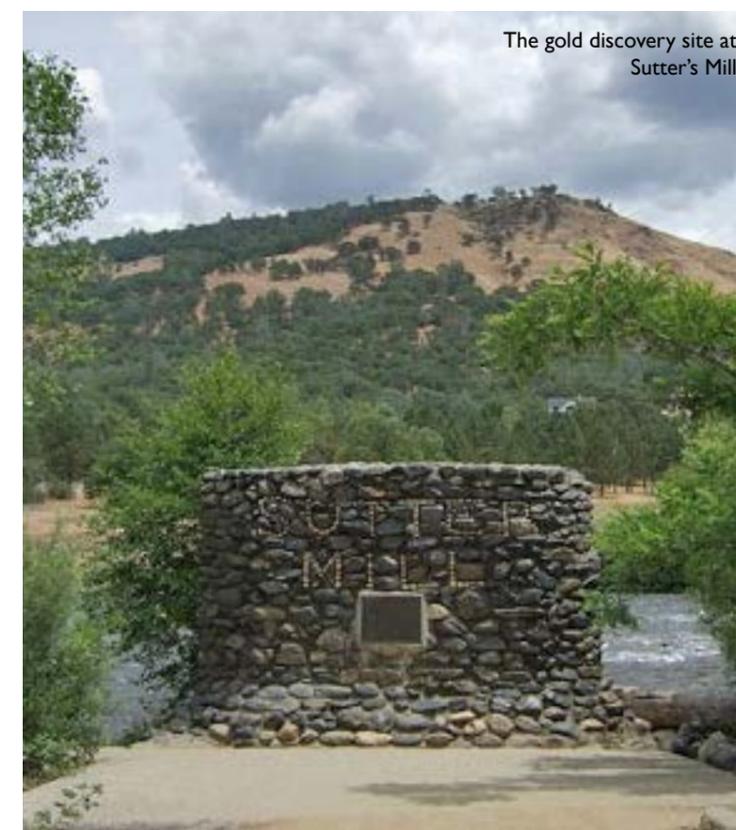
As to getting caught in traffic, well, yes, I have to give you that one. While the state has not yet been completely paved over into one massive freeway, traffic can be horrendous. If there is no traffic to speak of, I can drive from my house



Caught in traffic waiting to get across the Bay Bridge in San Francisco. Notice that the cars are not moving. Where is the bridge? Somewhere beyond the tall building at the right. You can just make out the western-most tower at the extreme right of the frame.



Mendocino, California



The gold discovery site at Sutter's Mill

Justice was swift for claim jumpers in the Gold Country



to San Francisco in a little over an hour. If there is traffic, the trip can take up to three hours. That is not fun, but there are a still a lot of open spaces around. This does not come to most people's minds, but one of the major industries in the state is agriculture. California produces more dairy products than the state of Wisconsin. Most the country's rice is grown within a 50 mile radius of my front door. Much of the world's almonds, about 75%, are also produced here. This has happened to me more than once when traveling in Europe: I'm asked where I'm from and when I say California, the stock response can be, "Oh, where the wines come from." The Napa and Sonoma valleys produce some of the best wines in the world. The region is about a 45 minute drive from my home. You might wonder what the biggest cash crop in the state is. And here is where you might solidify your opinion that this is Crazy California. The biggest cash crop is still marijuana. I said it produced the most money; I didn't say it was legal.

It is not an exaggeration to say that most of the middle of the United States view California and its citizens as crazy. We do have our fads. Like much of the rest of the world, politics is a crazy business here. The central part of the Midwest on into the south-east of the US is often referred to as the Bible Belt. One

will find great consensus there with regard to political affiliations, religion, etc. That kind of homogeneity does not exist in California. This is a very diverse state with regard to religion, ethnicity, political views, race, creed, colour. The population centers of Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego tend to be left-leaning politically while the more rural areas of the great Central Valley, the extreme north, south and desert areas tend to be much more conservative.

California is the state with the largest population in the US. Yes, much larger than Texas or New York. "Why," you might ask, since it's one of the most expensive states in which to live, do people of all economic backgrounds flock to its borders? The mass migration to the state started in 1849 with the discovery of gold. Not everyone discovered gold, but there were other opportunities. Levi Strauss, for example, made his fortune during the era producing durable canvas trousers for the miners and we now know where that led. It's undeniable that climate has a lot to do with it. The film industry got its start in New York, but when weather hampered filming outdoors, which was common at the beginning of the studio system, the powers-that-be moved their operations to Southern California where one could count on about 300 days of sunshine a year.

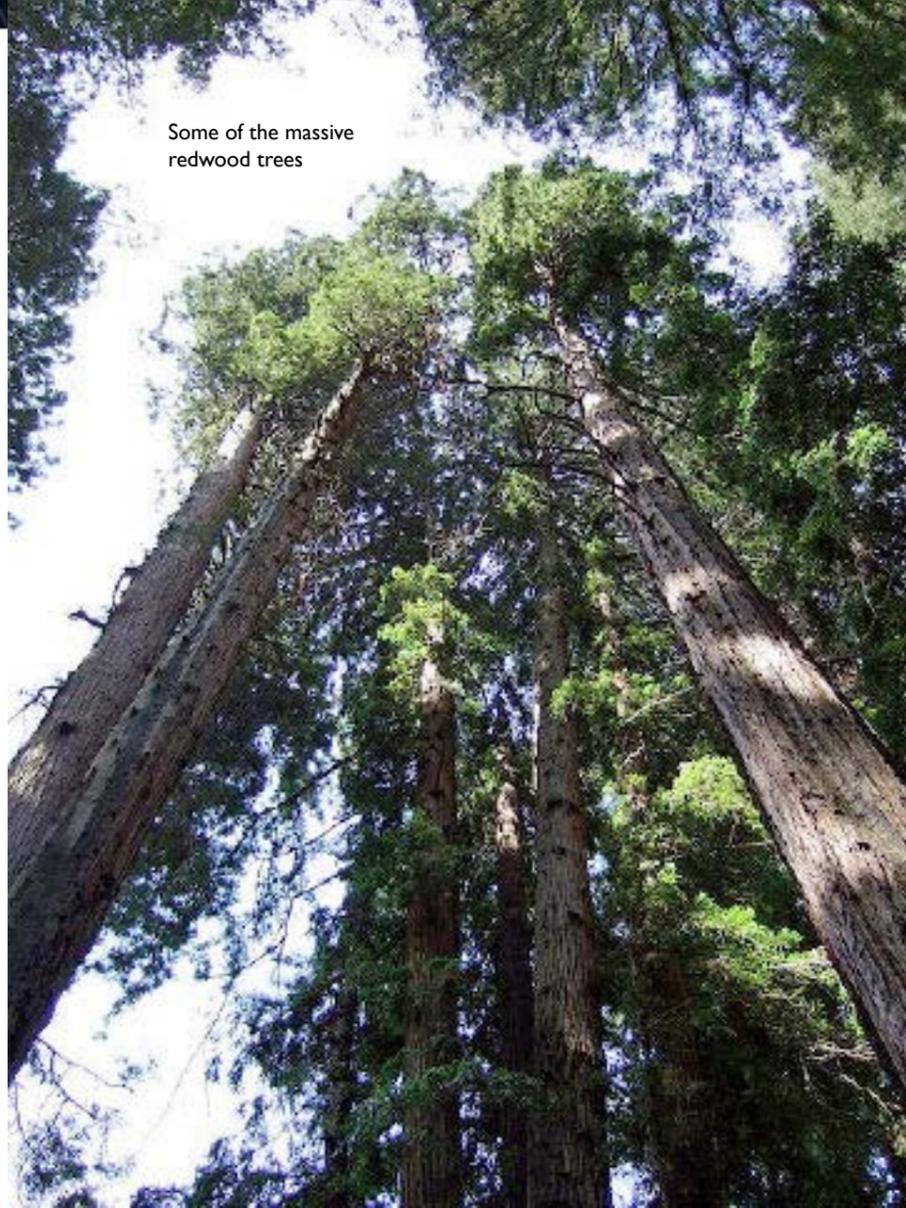


Sunset in the Napa Valley

I am blessed that within a two-hour drive from my front door, I have the Napa Valley, San Francisco, the Bay Area, the Gold Country, Lake Tahoe, Reno and the River Delta area. Within two hours, I can get to the redwood forests of Muir Woods. Sometime in your lives, you must visit the giant sequoias. You will be awed as you stand gazing up at massive LIVING things going on 3,000 years old. Drive another hour to the Mendocino Coast and you'll see one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world. Standing on the shore, you might be lucky enough to see sea lions and otters playing in the surf. I was astounded one year when I saw a pod of whales gamboling off shore.

You may try to stereotype California and its inhabitants, but you would be making a mistake. We are too diverse to be put into a pigeonhole. Like any place else, it has its good and bad points. So I invite all of you to come visit my home state. Yes, we are still in

a drought, but we cope. On the other hand, the economy is much better than it was during the recession. Forget the things you've heard; come to enjoy what California has to offer. California's nickname is the "Golden State", so named because of the Gold Rush. We want to keep it that way, so when you come, by all means bring money. You will need it.



Some of the massive redwood trees

## NSC FILM NIGHT

### Scarface (1932)

Wednesday 13th April

7.30pm–11pm

The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall

Walk, London SE11 5HL

(020 7207 4585)

Admission: Free

Most people are probably aware of Al Pacino's gritty performance in the 1983 film *Scarface* but many might not be aware that it is based on a much earlier movie from 1932.

It was the height of the industry's love affair with the gangster—at a time when, thanks to Prohibition, gangsters were still very much part of the scenery—and is obviously based on the life of Al Capone. In fact writer Ben Hecht received a visit from a couple of Capone's men, wanting assurance that the film did *not* represent their boss; they must have been satisfied with his answer yet Capone apparently loved the film so much that he had his own print.

The script was based on a 1929 novel of the same name by Armitage Trail. It was produced by Howard Hughes and Howard Hawks and directed by Hawks and Richard Bosson. Hecht (who also co-wrote the original script for last month's *His Girl Friday*—see page 10) adapted it in just 11 days. It is the story of an immigrant who works his way up in a ruthless pursuit



of the American Dream, little understanding that there is more to it than just the trappings of material wealth acquired at any cost. He is given a doting mother and a sister whom he obsessively “protects” from everyone and everything. It was the first movie to feature the iconic Thompson submachine gun, or “Tommy gun”, as it was affectionately known.

But where early gangster movies had got away with it, now the Hays Office (industry censors set up in response to accusations of moral turpitude) objected that the film glorified the gangster lifestyle and warned that “The American public... finds mobsters and hoodlums repugnant. Gangsterism must not be mentioned in the cinema.” Of course they were wrong—the public loved gangsters, which was precisely the problem.

At the insistence of censors several scenes were edited, the name changed to *Shame of a Nation*, and a moralising text opening was added. Even the ending was changed. But when censors in New York still didn't accept it, Hughes disowned the remade version and eventually released what is mostly the original in those states that would allow it.

After all the censorship problems, *Scarface* met with critical and box office success. In 2008 the American Film Institute named it the sixth best gangster movie of all time.

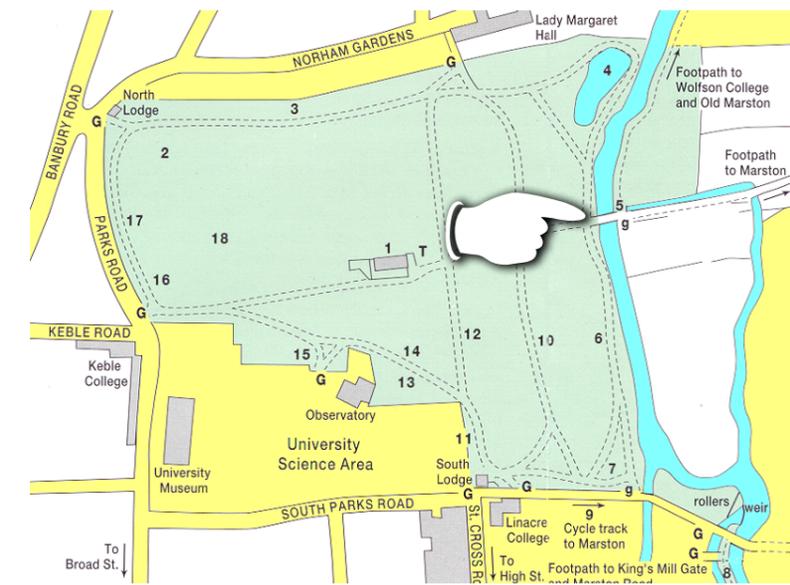


## CLUB NOTES

### Annual NSC Punt, Picnic 'n' Plunge

ONE OF THE oldest Sheridan traditions is the punting trip to Oxford, held on a Saturday near to St George's Day—which this year means St George's Day itself, the 23rd. The main event is frequently preceded by a black tie dinner on the Friday night at some obliging restaurant. On the day, folk generally gather in the Turf Tavern, 4–5 Bath Place, from around 11am for a sharpener (perhaps having raided the market for picnic-grade comestibles) and then aim to hit the Magdalen Bridge Boathouse at midday where the punts are picked up.

Punting then takes place—and thanks to Robert's article in this issue you all know how to do this perfectly now—until the traditional picnic spot is reached by the High Bridge (a.k.a. the Rainbow Bridge) in the University Parks (no. 5 on the map above). After a picnic lunch the party punts back—with someone traditionally going overboard—and repairs to a hostelry, frequently the Turf again.



As the whole event is not necessarily organised by the Committee (indeed the first punt was held a year before the NSC was formed) I suggest you keep an eye on the Facebook event, but I'll endeavour to keep the NSC website Events page updated with details as well.

## New Member

A FUSILLADE OF collegiate shoulder-clapping, or a good-natured sussuration of pipe-stem-sucking commiseration, as you see fit, should be directed towards Mr William Murphy of Ormskirk, Lancashire, who stepped up to the plate this month.



(Below and right) Fun and saucy frolics on the NSC Oxford punting picnic



New Member  
William Murphy.  
Seems like a good  
egg to me

## Club Tie Corner

WE HAVE COLONEL Cyrus Choke to thank for both the tie spots this month. Top right we see Peter Lawford sporting a boater in Club colours in the 1948 Irving Berlin musical movie *Easter Parade*. Meanwhile, it was with a positively Lovecraftian sense of horror that the good Colonel also noticed this image (below) of US Presidential candidate Ted Cruz. As Member John Bozemen pointed out, he also appears to be wearing the Club lapel pin.



Republican Party  
Blobfish



Peter Lawford in  
*Easter Parade*



## 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](http://www.newsheridanclub.co.uk) plus our Facebook page and the web forum.

### 🚫 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 6th April  
7pm–11pm

Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf,  
25 Rathbone  
Place, London W1T 1JB  
Members: Free  
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)  
See page 2.

### At the Mountains of Madness

Until 13th May (with another run  
in the autumn)  
7.30 or 8pm  
Various UK venues  
Admission: Varies  
If you like a bit of H.P.

Lovecraft—and what bug-eyed gibbering wreck of a once-human mind does not?—you might like to check out the Icarus Theatre Company's stage adaptation of Lovecraft's novel *At the Mountains of Madness* starring Tim Hardy. The title tells it all, really, but it is a 1920s-based tale of an expedition to the frozen north that uncovers horrific eldritch truths about the world we thought we knew. "William Dyer returns from a cursed expedition to the Antarctic. To protect the world, he keeps deep secrets about his experience that he knows will shatter his sanity. But as he comes to the realisation that we, the audience, are planning to go further into the penetrating cold than he dared, will his secrets unfold?" Expect adjectives all the way from aberrant to zymotic. The show is currently touring the UK: check [www.icarustheatre.co.uk/shows/mountains.html](http://www.icarustheatre.co.uk/shows/mountains.html) for dates and venues. See the trailer on YouTube.

### 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  
vz8 and 9.30, £5 after that

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

### The Eccentric Club Open Convivial Meeting

Friday 8th April  
6.47pm  
The Drawing Room, The Savile Club, 69  
Brooks Street, London W1K 4ER  
Admission: £25 in advance  
Dress: Eccentrically overdressed, glamorous;  
gentlemen, jackets, preferably club ties and  
badges; ladies, evening wear

Members, friends (which includes NSC Members) and new candidates of the Eccentric Club gather for social intercourse with ladies and gentlemen of a somewhat eccentric persuasion and a taste for good wine and good intellectual company. The Eccentric Club's Monthly Open Convivial Party is designed as a joyful and merry evening, full of entertaining conversations, drinks and performances by the Club members and the surprise guests.

### "Great Gatsby" Gangsters and Molls Night

Saturday 9th April  
8.30–11pm  
The Regency Dance Centre, Market Place,  
Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire NG17  
1AQ  
Admission: £7.50

If you like Jump Jive, Lindy, shag, shim sham, rock n roll then come and dance to Kal's Kats a ten-piece jump jive/swing band led by Kal Vaikla, playing the music of Louis Prima, Louis Jordan, Ray Charles, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Royal Crown Revue, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Caro Emerald plus swing of Glenn Miller, Count Basie and Woody Hermann. The venue has an excellent sprung floor and the evening will also include tuition in swing dancing.



Chow  
down in  
dainty  
vintage  
style at  
Garbo's  
Tea Room



The majesty of the Pasadena Roof Orchestra

### Garbo's Vintage Tea Room

Saturday 16th April  
3.30–9pm  
Café Royal, 68 Regent Street, London W1B 4DY  
Admission: £38 from Eventbrite  
Dress: Channel your inner vintage film star

A pop up event serving afternoon tea in a vintage setting. There will be finger sandwiches, fresh scones, mini cakes and lashings of Cornish clotted cream and homemade jams. Inspired

by Hollywood films from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, this event will transform The Club room at Café Royal with kentia palms, candlelight, old books, Deco statuettes, black and white photos, gramophones and more, accompanied by a soundtrack of tunes from Al Bowly, Edith Piaf, Carlos Gardel, Josephine Baker, et al.

### Auntie Maureen presents Vintage-a-Fair

Sunday 17th April  
11am–5pm  
Orford House Social Club and Institute, 73 Orford Road, Walthamstow Village, London E17 9QR  
Admission: £2 on the door (£1 concs), under-15s free

The NSC's Auntie Maureen presents her own vintage fair. The stalls offering vintage clothes, jewellery, homewares and furniture will be accompanied by a tea room run by Aura Rose Cakes & Patisseries and sometimes other attractions too. If you would like to trade at the fair email Maureen at ask@auntiemaureen.info.

### The Double R Club

Thursday 21st April  
8pm  
The Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, 44–46 Pollard Row, Bethnal Green, London E2 6NB  
Admission: £10 in advance

An evening of mystery and nightmares inspired by the films of David Lynch, featuring a parade of cabaret and burlesque performers. Comes highly recommended by our Chairman.

### NSC Film Night:

#### Scarface (1932)

Wednesday 13th April  
7.30pm–11pm  
The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL (020 7207 4585)  
Admission: Free  
See page 26.

### Black Tie Ballroom Club

Friday 15th April  
Beginners' class from 7pm, followed by the main dance from 7.30pm  
The London Welsh Centre, 157–163 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 X 8UE  
Admission: £15 in advance  
Dress code: Strictly black tie, evening dress or vintage

Ballroom dancing to vintage records and the strict-tempo ten-piece Kewdos Dance Orchestra featuring operatic vocalist Alistair Sutherland singing through the voice trumpet. Candlelit tables for all guests (limited to 100 in number to ensure plenty of space on the large sprung dance floor). There will be a beginners' dance lesson in slow waltz from 7 pm to 7.30 pm, followed by the main dance from 7.30 pm to 11 pm. The venue has a fully licensed bar at pub prices, four or five male and female taxi dancers available at no additional charge, quickstep Bus Stop, an Excuse Me dance and five minutes tuition en masse for the Lilac Waltz sequence dance. A free glass of bubbly for the ten most glamorous female guests. For more info call 020 8542 1490.

More at [www.thedoublerclub.co.uk](http://www.thedoublerclub.co.uk). There are limited table reservations, available from noon April 1st by email to [therrclub@gmail.com](mailto:therrclub@gmail.com) only.

### The NSC Annual

**Punt 'n' Picnic**  
Saturday 23rd April  
From 11am  
Oxford  
Admission: A share of the punt hire (around £20)  
See page 21.

### Pasadena Roof Orchestra: Puttin' On the Ritz

Friday 29th April  
7.30pm  
Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, London SW1V 9DQ  
Admission: £22–30 from [www.cadoganhall.com](http://www.cadoganhall.com)

Dance music from the 1920s and 1930s from hardy perennials the Pasadena Roof Orchestra, featuring tunes from Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, from American Song Book stalwarts Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, plus British dance bands of the era.

### Mrs Peel vs Barbarella

Saturday 30th April  
8pm–2am

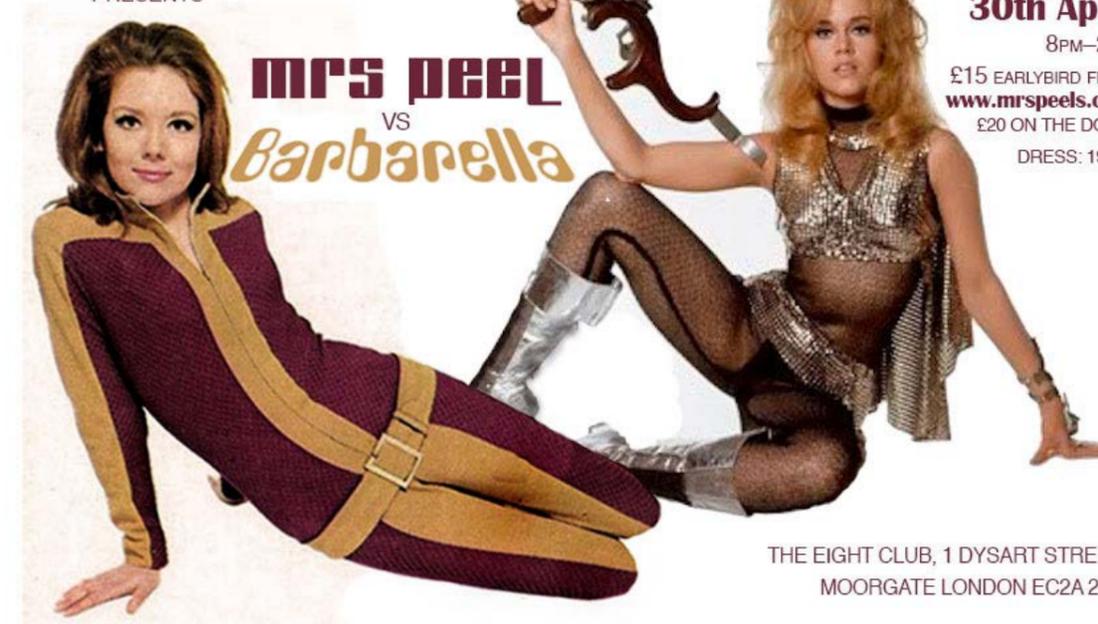
The Eight Club, 1 Dysart Street, Moorgate, London EC2A 2BX  
Admission: £15 in advance, £20 on the door  
Dress: 1960s

The Swinging Sixties party of your dreams in a penthouse lounge club, inspired by Emma Peel, the iconic character from *The Avengers*, played by Diana Rigg. This time it's a special party with a cosmic twist—pitching the aristocratic whimsy and British cool of *The Avengers* against the playful space-fantasy eroticism of *Barbarella*. Who will gain the upper hand? You decide!

Based on a comic strip, 1968 movie *Barbarella* starred Jane Fonda as an innocently sexual, space-travelling agent with an endless supply of glamorously impractical costumes, in a plot involving dangerous clockwork dolls, a blind angel, whip-wielding leather robots, a machine that kills through orgasm and a city built on a pool of liquid evil called the Mathmos. Our party will feature hosting by lounge legend Count Indigo, live music from the Court of St James, sci-fi burlesque from Cherry Shakewell, DJing from Martin Green, psychedelic lighting effects, movie projections, cocktails and splendid views from penthouse terraces. See [www.mrspeels.club](http://www.mrspeels.club).

There will also be a prize of a Mathmos lava lamp for the best costume!

**MRS PEEL'S**  
The Swinging Sixties party of your dreams  
PRESENTS



**Two 1960s icons, one big party**  
HOSTING BY COUNT INDIGO • LIVE MUSIC • DJs • SCI-FI BURLESQUE  
PSYCHEDELIC LIGHTING AND FILM PROJECTIONS •  
MATHMOS PRIZE FOR THE BEST COSTUME  
• VIEWS FROM OUR PENTHOUSE TERRACES

**Saturday 30th April**

8PM–2AM  
£15 EARLYBIRD FROM  
[www.mrspeels.club](http://www.mrspeels.club)  
£20 ON THE DOOR  
DRESS: 1960s

THE EIGHT CLUB, 1 DYSART STREET,  
MOORGATE LONDON EC2A 2BX



Robert Beckwith demonstrates his famous one-handed punting technique, which has the advantage that the punter can nurse a drink in the other hand

## CONTACTING US

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[mrscarheart@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrscarheart@newsheridanclub.co.uk)



FOR THE LATEST information on what the Club is up to, who has been arrested, etc., have a squizz at [www.newsheridanclub.co.uk](http://www.newsheridanclub.co.uk). For more photos of Club events go to [www.flickr.com/sheridanclub](http://www.flickr.com/sheridanclub). You can even befriend us electrically at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).