

INACTION COMICS
Issue 115
May 2016



NOT
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BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

RESIGN!

EVERY MONTH • FOR INTREPID COVES AND FEISTY LADIES

The greatest
show on earth

Roy Engoron on the mystifying
spectacle of a US election



COMICS FOR CHAPS

Darcy Sullivan argues that
gentlemen do read
comic books

Oxford punting trip

The River God takes his prize once more

New light on Dorian Gray

Mrs H. on the reappearance of that portrait



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 4th May in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. The Earl of Essex will chat to us about *The English Cricket Tour of Nazi Germany, 1937* (thus maintaining his admirable tradition of noticeably Nazi-heavy lecture subjects). Hitler himself viewed cricket as un-German and frankly decadent, but fanatical cricket fan Felix Menzel persuaded Nazi leaders to invite an English team to come and play his part-time team. The Gentlemen of Worcestershire were the ill-matched group of Englishmen who went out to Berlin to meet the challenge, led by former Worcestershire County Cricket Club captain Maurice Jewell, and ordered “not to lose” by the MCC.

The Last Meeting

At last month's meeting our speaker was club member Darcy Sullivan (at what was his first ever attendance at a Club Night, I believe), talking to us about “Comics for Chaps”. While on the

Continent there is a long tradition of comic strips (Bande dessinée or “BD”) and graphic novels aimed at an adult audience, the UK is still a culture where it is considered a format for children—despite the fact that some of the most famous and respected writers and artists within the form hail from these shores (and frequently have to look



to overseas publishing to achieve any success). Darcy took us through some of the most notable examples of the genre, organised by category such as “Adventure Chaps”, or graphic adaptations of classic literature, for example. An essay version of the talk begins on page 4.

Special thanks go to Mrs H. for creating this month's cover design, in honour of the theme of Darcy's talk.



(Above, l-r) Jack Defer, Simon Pile, Robert Beckwith



(Above, right and top right) Darcy attacks his subject



(Above and below) The rapt throng



(Above left) Craigoh tucking into a plate of “chups”; (above right) the Curé (I) and Paul Fletcher; (below left) Tim Eyre (I) and Lord Hare lock horns in debate; (below) a rare Club Night appearance by Mrs H.

(Below) No Club event is complete without Bob the Lobster and his Club Tie



COMICS FOR GENTLEMEN



(AND THE LADIES WHO TOLERATE THEM)

READING COMIC BOOKS has never been a gentlemanly pastime, at least not in Britain. Comic books have been associated with two principal genres—mischievous children and punch-happy superheroes, neither of which could be presumed to offer much to people of breeding and taste. If one read or (perish the thought) collected comics, this was best kept a secret, lest one lose that treasure which, once abandoned, can never be reclaimed: one's reputation.

Dear reader, I hope you can judge then my reluctance in confessing to you that I am a comic book fan. This I cannot explain; genetic abnormalities may be at the root, which shall one day be discovered and curable, or at least punishable. But before you turn away in understandable disgust or pity, I hope you will allow me to share with you a remarkable fact. Where once there were few chap-type persons in comics, now there are many. Their adventures

BY DARCY SULLIVAN

—thrilling, sombre or humorous—are well worth your investigation.

No one wants to get lost in a Forbidden Planet or other comics shop, squeezing between overstuffed adolescents to scan the garish covers of superhero pamphlets in a sorry search for something suitable. No, if one is to venture into the “graphic novels” section of the bookseller, one ought to know what to look for, so as to get out sharpish before spotted by sniggering teens or one's bank manager.

Here then are some choice examples of comics that feature the kind of ladies and gentlemen who populate our own Sheridan Club. This is not and could not be a comprehensive list, but it should provide an entry point or two into that rarified world of comics for chaps.

ADVENTURE CHAPS



British comics sensation Alan Moore (best known for *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta*) and Kevin O'Neill created the **League of Extraordinary Gentlemen**—a team of adventurers from various famous fictions, including Allan Quatermain, Dr Jekyll, the Invisible Man, Captain Nemo, Mina Harker from *Dracula* and, in later books, gentleman thief Raffles and Virginia Woolf's sex-changing Orlando. They band together to fight such Victorian-era villains as Professor Moriarty, Fu Manchu and the Martians from *The War of the Worlds*. If you've ever idly longed to watch Mr Hyde thrash a Martian tripod while singing George Grossmith's “You Should See Me Dance the Polka”, this is the series for you.

Availability: Multiple editions exist, but stick with the first and second volumes, as it gets rather more esoteric from there.

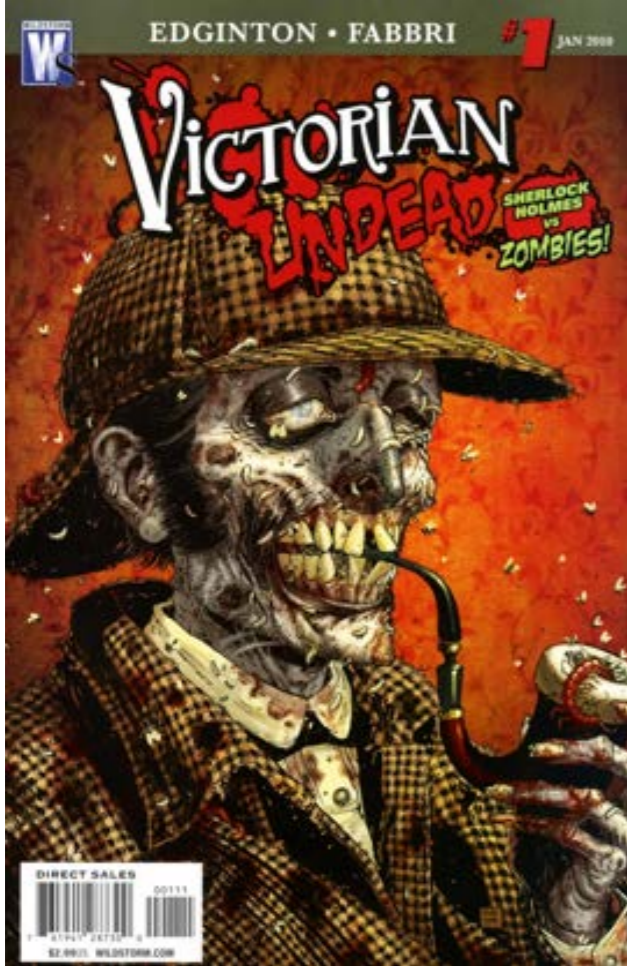
Sherlock Holmes is a prototype for the whole superhero genre that dominates comics—Superman with a meerschaum. Worth our attention are recent, faithful adaptations by Ian Edginton and Ian Culbard of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Valley of Fear* and *The Sign of Four*. These books have garnered positive notices from people who review real books for a living, and should delight the detective's fans.

Availability: Four graphic novels from SelfMadeHero, available in many bookstores.

Ian Edginton, a specialist in Brit Lit classics, has also created his own Holmes stories in the series **Victorian Undead**. These lock the deductive fellow and his partner Watson into battle with zombies, *Dracula* and *Dr. Jekyll / Mr. Hyde*.

Availability: Two paperback collections.





Ian Edginton has also created the Victorian villain **Stickleback**, who classes up the enduring British comic *2000 AD*, home of Judge Dredd. Stickleback is a Dickensian criminal occupying a steampunk London, illustrated beautifully by D'Israeli.

Availability: Two paperback editions, but you

may also see him peeking out from the cover of *2000 AD* on occasion.

Our final entry in Ian Edginton's gallery of retrogenets is **Ampney Crucis**. Named after a Cotswolds village, Mr Crucis wears a dinner suit and sports a monocle in his ocular, despite again hailing from the brutish pages of *2000 AD*. Crucis investigates occult threats that threaten what is generally known as "our very plane of existence". If you dropped Miss Marple into an *Alien* film, you would have a similar effect, and honestly, who has not wanted to drop Miss Marple into an *Alien* film?

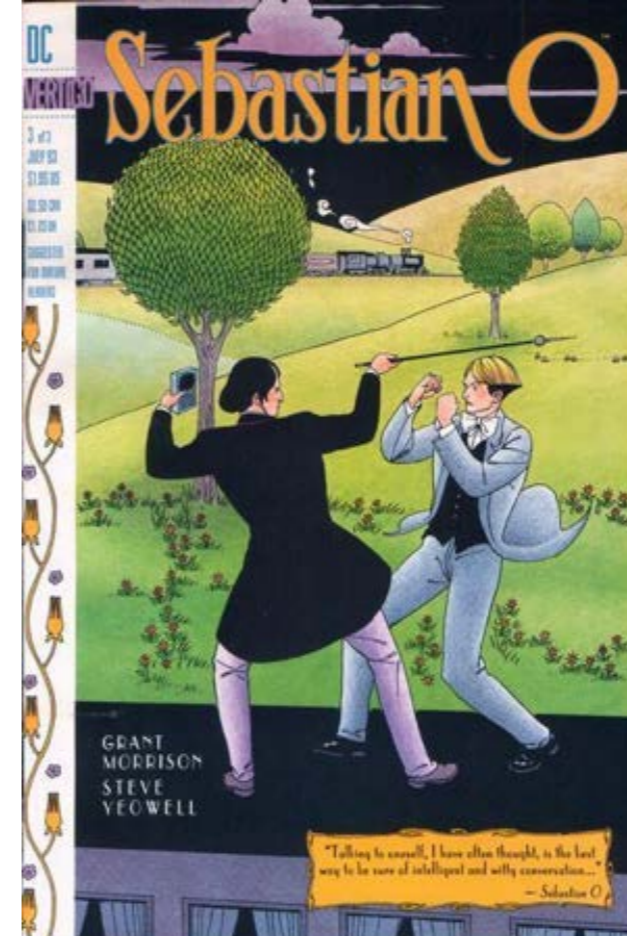
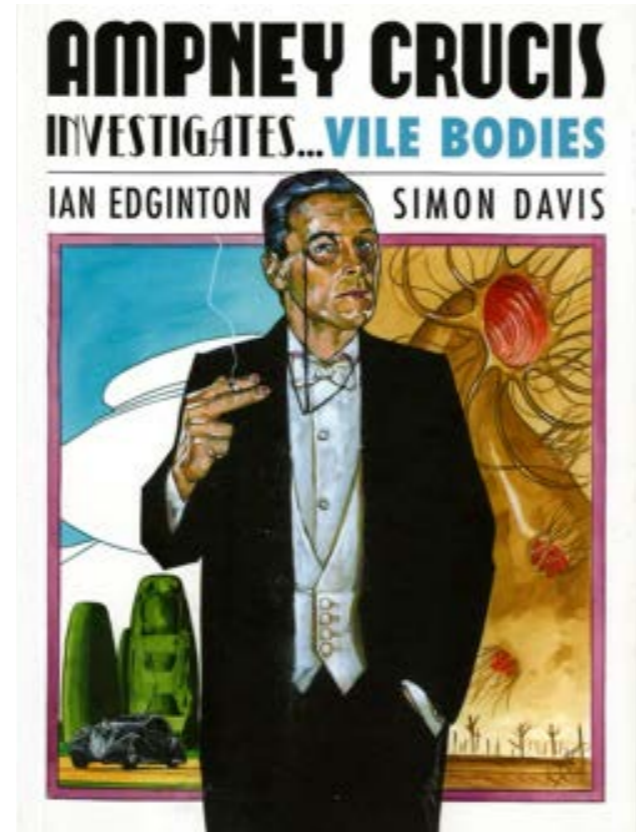
Availability: One paperback collection, plus infrequent appearances in *2000 AD*.

Sebastian O is an effete spy created by British comics superstar Grant Morrison. He's very much in the Dorian Gray mould, and while not the first gay superhero, he is the first to sport a wedge haircut.

Availability: One rather scarce paperback.

For those who prefer the weird western genre, there is no finer comic than **The Sixth Gun**. Beautifully drawn and masterfully written, it takes readers on an epic journey and features an admirable heroine in Becky Montcrieff.

Availability: Several paperback collections (the comic itself is nearing its 50th issue). Start with the first, as unlike many comic series it must be read in sequence.



I threw **The Whistling Skull** in here simply for Tony Harris's conception of the hero's costume. It lasted only six issues, but the rotting-skull-with-monocle-and-derby-hat look needs to have a moment, with or without steam valve.

Availability: One paperback collection.

An homage to Michael Moorcock's sci-fi dandy assassin Jerry Cornelius, Casanova Quinn is the spawn of superstar writer Matt Fraction and Brazilian artist Gabriel Bá. Quinn's an amoral

dandy out to screw the future in today's wittiest comic, **Casanova**. He rogers the ladies, gets the drugs and blasts his way through seemingly infinite timelines with panache.

Availability: Image just published the three series of Casanova as three oversize hardcovers. Start with the one numbered 1.





For those of the gothic persuasion, the delightfully dark series **Wormwood: Gentleman Corpse** by Ben Templesmith features a charming suited-and-booted fellow who must battle forces from beyond despite the fact that he is, not to put too fine a point on it, no longer living, and animated only by a talking worm who lives in his eye socket. Still, he likes his drink, and is generally down the pub when the eldritch trouble starts. Imagine a revenant Terry-Thomas trouncing H.P. Lovecraft's elder gods between rounds and you're halfway there. Only Wormwood would greet a horde of malevolent cephalopod deities with a hearty "Allo, chaps!"

Availability: Three graphic novels.

SERIOUS CHAPS

Tired of adventure and looking for something a tad more down-to-Earth? Look no further than Seth, a Canadian artist and illustrator who dresses like a contestant in "Am I Chap?" Seth's **Clyde Fans** series, published by Drawn and Quarterly, presents mismatched brothers Simon and Abraham Matchcard and their failing electric fan business, and it is precisely

as miserable as that sounds. Why is this for gentlemen? First, it captures the agony of gainful employment: we follow Simon for 75 pages on a failed sales trip, the likes of which no self-respecting man should ever need to undertake. Second, it takes place in the 1950s, so everyone wears hats.

Availability: While it's now serialized in *Palookaville*, the best place to start is a collection called *Clyde Fans*, which has the first instalments.

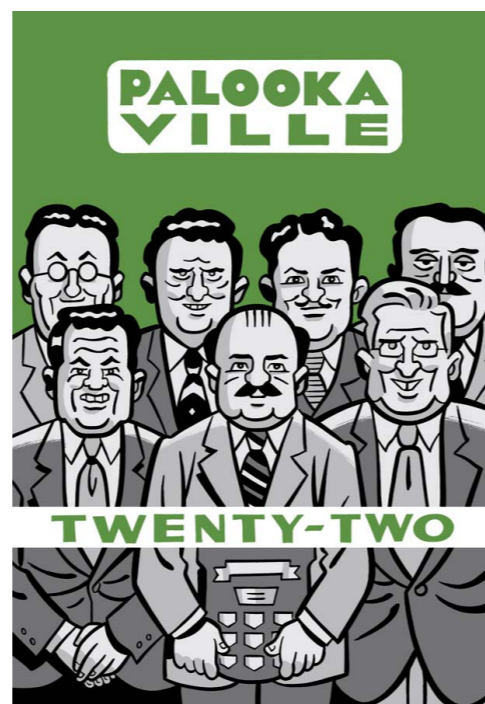
If you've always wanted to tackle Proust, but couldn't get past the first thousand pages of madeleines and ennui, Stéphane Heuet has made your life easier. He created a graphic novel adaptation of **Remembrance of Things Past**, drawn in the *ligne claire* style, which means it looks like Tintin; one keeps expecting Snowy to race through Mme Verdurin's parlour.

Availability: A new English translation is available in hardcover.

Despite being a story about a picture, **The Picture of Dorian Gray** has only recently come into the picture-story format—not once but four times since 2008. Oscar Wilde's tale of a young man who trades his soul for eternal beauty (not a bad swap, one must admit) received a faithful but dull run-through from Marvel Comics, and there are two European *bande dessinée*

versions, including an excellent one by Spanish artist Corominas. The best English version is by Ian Edginton and Ian Culbard, published by SelfMadeHero.

Availability: The Marvel and SelfMadeHero editions are both widely available, but the European editions are sadly untranslated.



IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME: SWANN'S WAY

A Graphic Novel

MARCEL PROUST

Adaptation and Drawings by Stéphane Heuet Translated by Arthur Goldhammer



EUROPEAN CHAPS

Roco Vargas (or Rocco Vargas, as he's known in English) is the swashbuckling creation of Spanish *ligne claire* master Daniel Torres. While his adventures transpire in the future, Roco favours a Clark Gable 1930s look, including pencil moustache and wide-brimmed fedora.

Availability: There are a few hardcover collections, but the first and best is the large edition published by Dark Horse in 1999. It may require some searching, but it's worth it.



Jacques Tardi is one of the absolute masters of the comics form. While most of his work is in a realist vein, he did create the ill-tempered heroine **Adele Blanc-Sec**, who has encountered paranormal threats from dinosaurs to mummies and mad scientists. Her adventures take place in the Paris of the early 19th century,

of which she is an elegant representative.

Availability: Fantagraphics published English hardcover editions of her first four adventures a few years back.

When *Le Monde* polled readers on the 100 greatest books of the 20th century, **Blake and Mortimer** made the list. These two Brits (a Scot and a Welshman) unite science and military skills to defeat a whole host of threats to Blighty and, one need hardly add, the world. They're the star of over 20 adventures, and maintain their chappish, pipe-smoking cool even when in outer space or the Jurassic period. In terms of popularity, they rank just behind Tintin and Asterix among European comics, and new adventures are still published today, long after creator Edgar P. Jacobs' death.

Availability: Their adventures have been translated into English by Cinebook.



In the delightful series **Green Manor**, members of an English gentleman's club lower their port glasses to make outlandish wagers that invariably end in murder. It's curses, duels and skulduggery all around in these tales from the Regency and Victorian periods featuring, as the first book's title has it, *Assassins and Gentlemen*.

Availability: The three original French volumes by authors Denis Bodart and Fabien Vehlmann will be difficult to track down outside the Boulevard Saint-Germain, but Cinebook has helpfully published an English translation in two volumes.

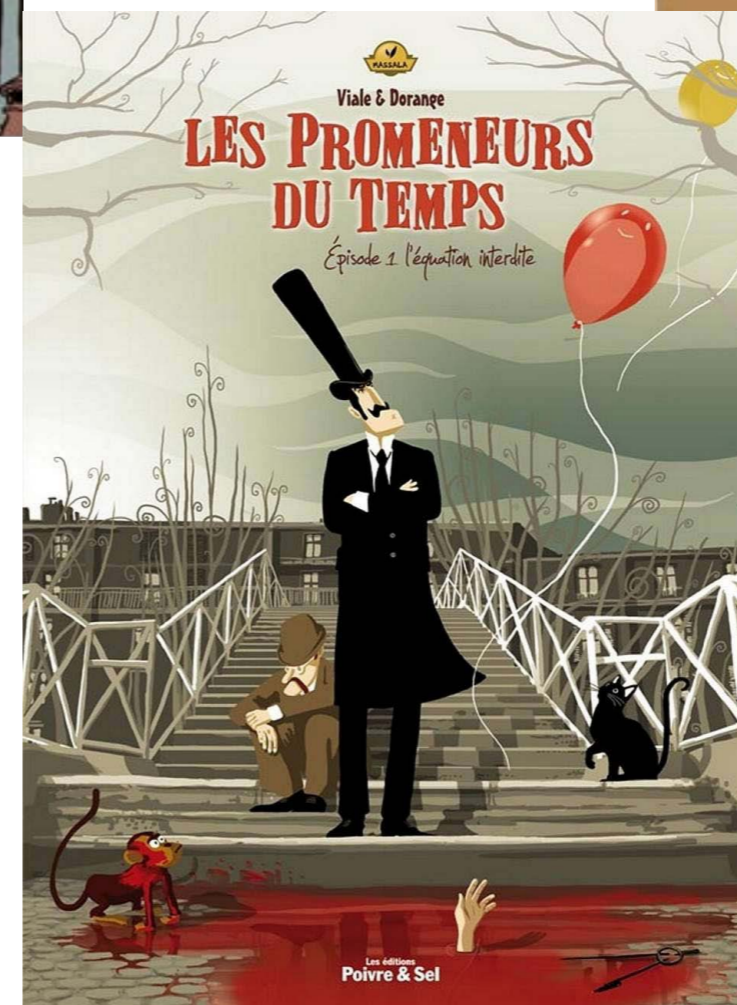
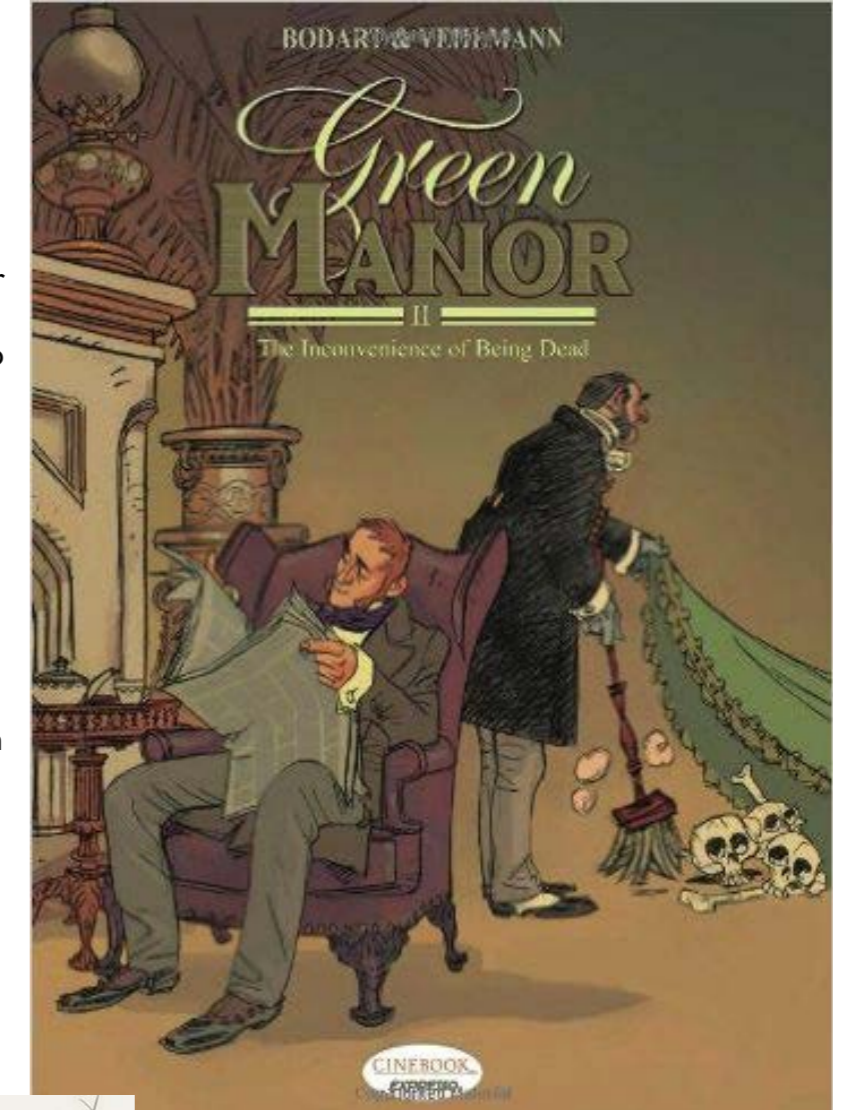
Francis Albany and Olivia Sturgess, pictured opposite, would fit right into any Sheridan Club do. They are the stars of one of two "**trilogies Anglaise**" by artist Floc'h and writer François Rivière. Floc'h is an immaculately dressed gentleman himself, perhaps best known for his magazine covers

(especially *Monsieur*), and he brings to their adventures an Anglophile's passion.

Availability: While hugely popular in France—there is a blog about them—they are not translated into English.

While "Time Walkers" would be the proper English translation of **Les Promeneurs du Temps**, "Time Flaneurs" might be closer to the spirit. The super-elegant Ambroise Clé with his exclamation-point topper solves crimes that may have occurred—in the future? This series by Franck Viale and Sylvain Dorange is funny, clever and beautifully illustrated.

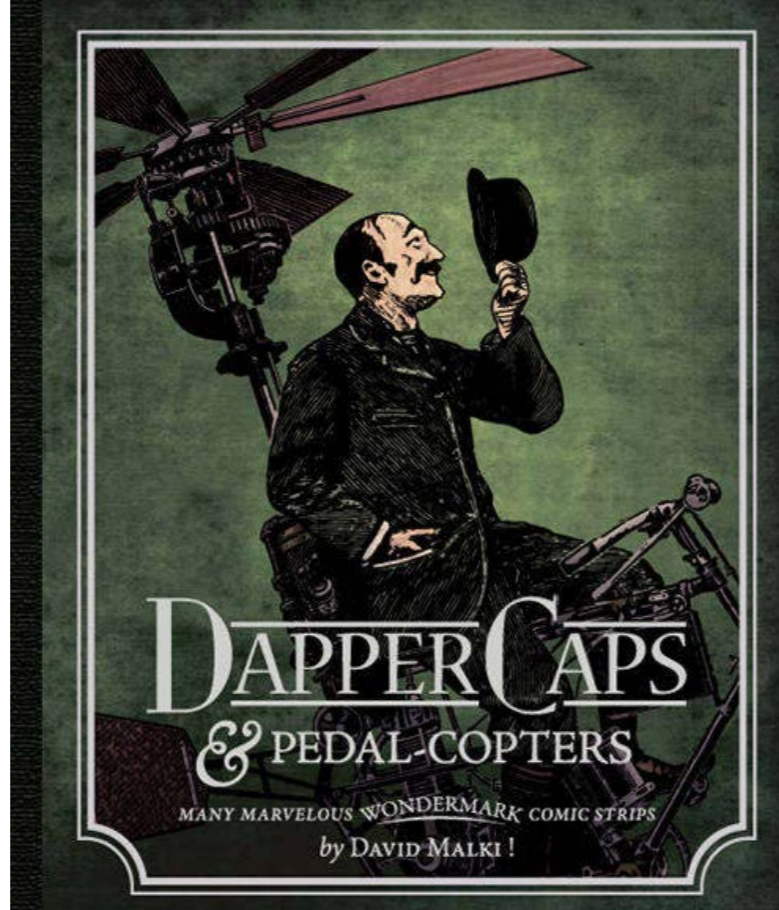
Availability: There are three hardcover *bandes dessinées* of these adventures, but they are all in French and have not as yet been translated.



FUNNY CHAPS

When Greg Broadmore is tired after a long day's work designing for film effects house Weta Workshop, he writes and illustrates satirical cartoons featuring steampunk space colonist **Lord Cockswain**. Cockswain believes in pacifying the universe one kill at a time, using the most astonishing set of ray guns ever imagined, with names such as The Unnatural Selector and Manmelter Sub-Atomic Disintegrator Pistol. He's the kind of man's man Judge Dredd would be if he were not so much of a pussy.

Availability: Hardcover books from Dark Horse.

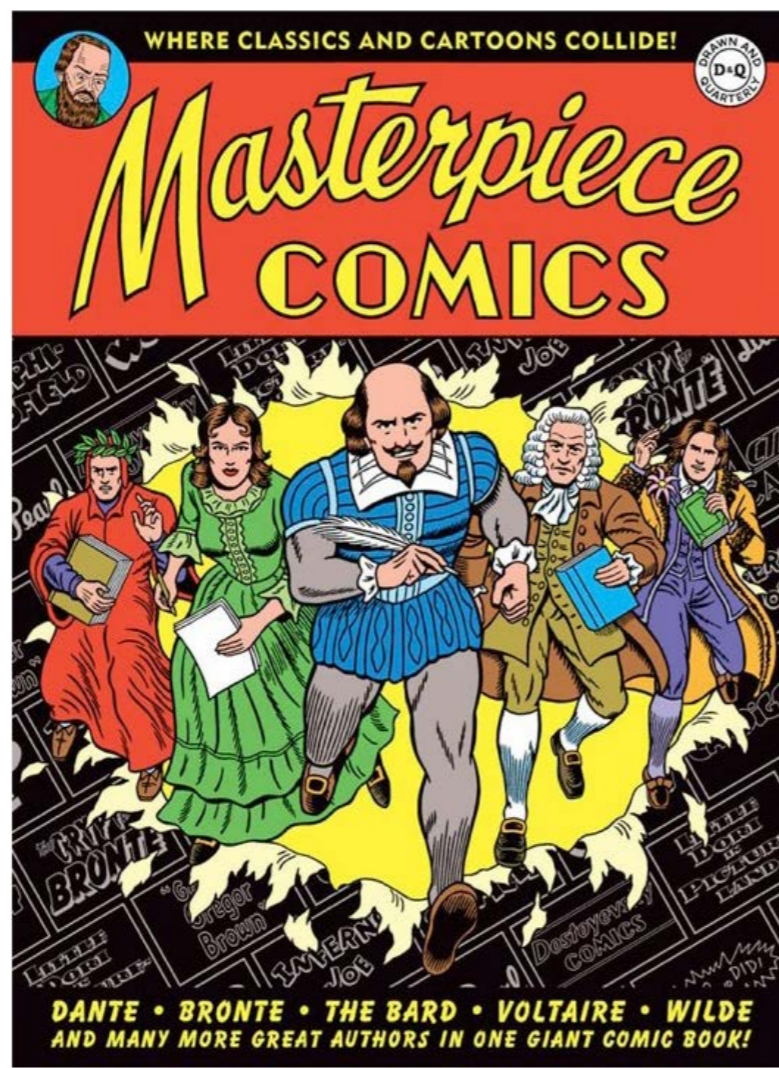


A satirist and ingenious forger of other artists' styles, R. Sikoryak took the convention of literary adaptations in comics one step further, fusing his source material with the style, format and even characters of classic comic strips and comic books. **Masterpiece**

Comics (its title alone a riff on *Masterpiece Theater*, America's programme presenting British TV adaptations of literary works) includes such mash-ups as *Action Camus*, *The Crypt of Bronte* and *Little Dori in Slumberland*, which retells *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the style of Windsor McCay's early comic strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. What's chappish about this? Everything, dammit.

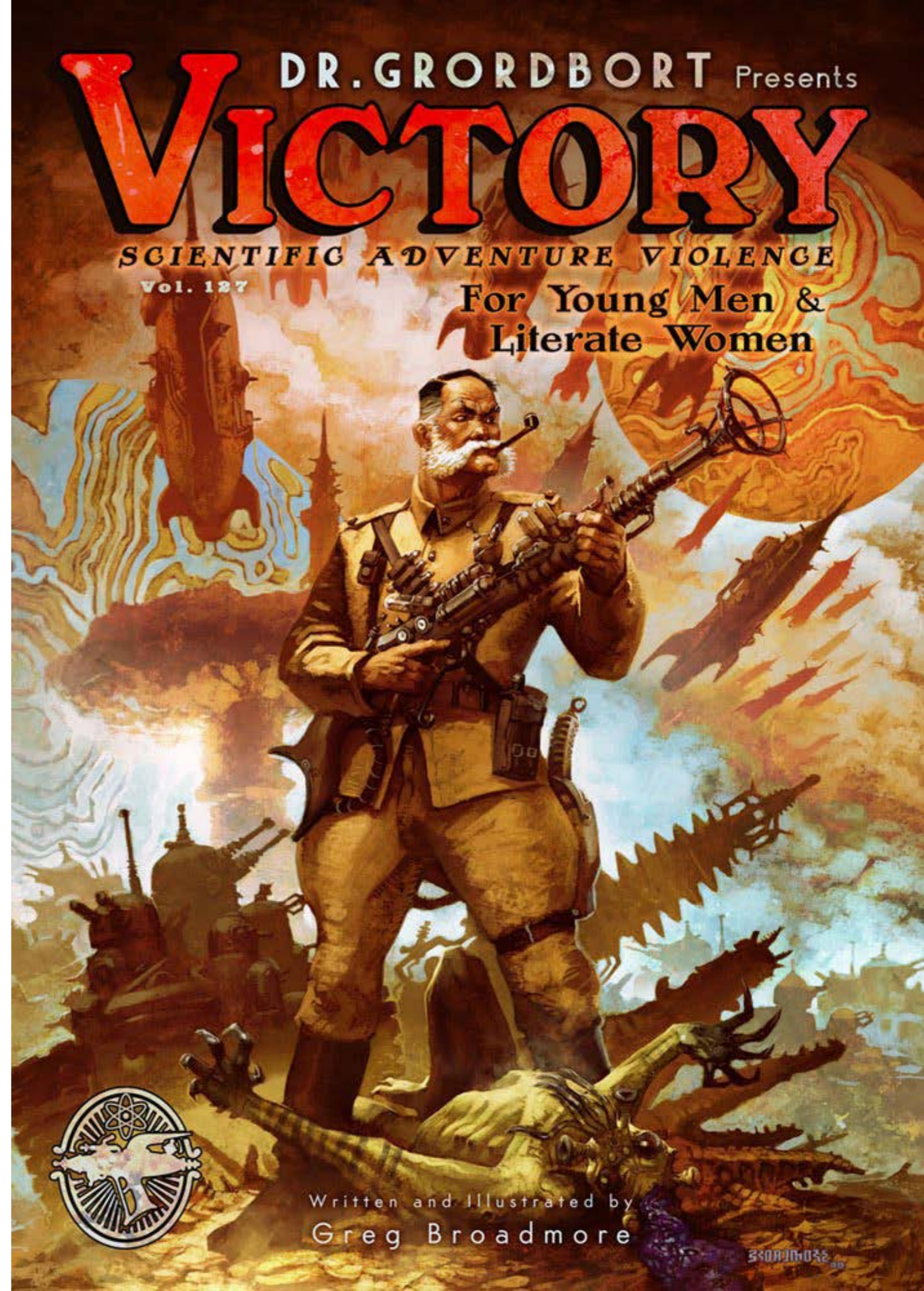
Availability: One hardcover book.

Everything else in this brief survey has been a comic book—**Wondermark** is the exception, being a comic strip (for the uninitiated, a horizontal comic, typically of one row, such as appears in the comics section of American newspapers). Author David Malki! takes found Victorian and Edwardian art, rearranges it into the rhythms of



a comic strip, and adds his own captions. This sounds unutterably effete, but the result is in fact hilarious.

Availability: Four hardcover books, but if you want to immerse yourself for free head over to <http://wondermark.com>.



Written and Illustrated by
Greg Broadmore

NEW LIGHT ON *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

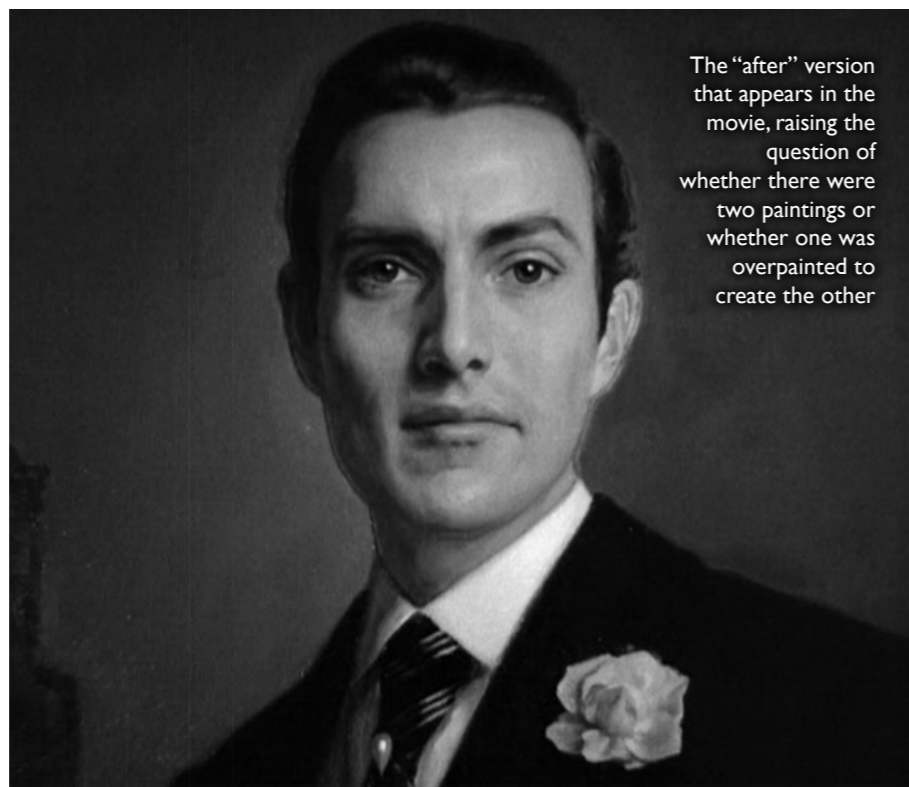
By Mrs H.

AT AN NSC Film Night in 2013 I gave a short account of the artworks made for the 1945 movie *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (see *Resign!* issue 76). The pre-corruption portrait of our hero was a full-length oil of actor Hurd Hatfield by Portuguese painter Henrique Medina. Apparently sold at the MGM studio sale (probably in 1970) for \$25,000 and given by “a friend” to Hatfield, it had reportedly been auctioned again after the actor’s death in Ireland in 1998, and I could find no more on its whereabouts thereafter. More information has now emerged...

On 21st March 2015, the painting was sold (lot 1330) at Christie’s, New York, at the auction of the collection of Robert Hatfield Ellsworth, an influential US art dealer, particularly in Asian antiquities. As his name suggests, he was a cousin of Hurd Hatfield, and one blogger has speculated that he was the “friend” who bought the portrait in 1970 and gave it to the actor. A commenter on another blog post by the Clark Library (more on them below) states that



Medina’s handsome “before” painting of Hurd Hatfield as Dorian Gray



The “after” version that appears in the movie, raising the question of whether there were two paintings or whether one was overpainted to create the other



Medina’s portrait of Hatfield currently hanging in the Swiss Institute alongside Cindy Sherman’s response *The Evil Twin*

the picture was not in the 2007 sale of the contents of Balinterry House, where Hatfield had lived, and it could be that Ellsworth had simply reclaimed his gift after his cousin’s death. Whatever the case, last year the portrait sold for \$149,000 (on—as it turned out—a rather pessimistic estimate of \$5–8,000) to set an auction record for Medina.

The Christie’s catalogue entry straightforwardly describes the painting as “signed and dated ‘Basil Hallward G ’86’” (at lower left—the ‘G’ is seen being added by Hallward’s young niece Gladys in the movie; after filming Medina must also have signed his own name at lower right). The catalogue illustration of the painting in its current state confirms that it was *not* altered to show Dorian “on the turn” and the question remains whether a separate painting was done, or whether there was only one. About 40 minutes into the film the painting of Dorian with a smirk can be seen full-length and close-

up, and there is a visible outline around the head (see left) which suggests it was less finished, and might have been painted over by Medina to produce the surviving, innocent portrait.

It turns out that Medina had previously painted portraits of the founder and staff of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at the University of California, Los Angeles, perhaps not coincidentally the largest collection of Oscar Wilde material in the world (including the original typescript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with Wilde’s handwritten amendments).

Finally, any chaps visiting NYC before 19th May may be interested in an exhibition on contemporary art’s relationship to film, *Fade In: Int. Art Gallery—Day*, at the Swiss Institute, where the *Portrait of Hurd Hatfield as Dorian Gray* can be seen beside a response by Cindy Sherman, a “hidden painting” wrapped in black velvet, called *The Evil Twin*.

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.



Lord Mendrick

"HOW DARE YOU!"

Name or preferred name?

Lord Mendrick.

Why that nickname or nom de plume?

My birth certificate states my name as "Matthew Hendrick". The rest you can deduce for yourself.

Where do you hail from?

Originally London. The last decade or so has taken me further afield, first to Egypt and now Malaya where I specialise in sowing chaos in previously stable countries.

Favourite Cocktail?

A mojito. Common perhaps these days, but I like it.

Most Chappist skill?

An uncanny ability to find public houses in the most unlikely of surroundings.

Most Chappist possession?

The Chap Manifesto of course.

Personal Motto?

HOW DARE YOU?

Favourite Quotes?

"Every time a friend succeeds, something inside me dies." — Gore Vidal

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

Despite hardly ever attending club nights I was in fact one of the "founding generation" of such occasions.

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

Since before it came officially into existence and was simply the Sheridan Club.



A the Queen's Birthday Ball in Cairo

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

I have been a reader of *The Chap* magazine since university days. Later I went to the launch party of what I believe was *The Chap Almanac* (though could indeed have been *The Chap Manifesto*) in 2002 which was my first encounter with such events in the tweed. A couple of years later a "chap room" appeared, www.sheridanclub.co.uk, and shortly thereafter a few regular posters decided to meet up in corporeal form. The rest is history.

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

Despite a request for one, I am going to recommend three fine drinking establishments from the three major cities I have lived in: **The Nag's Head in Knightsbridge**, London, remains one of the few public houses in London which forbids the use of field telephones (a chumrade of mine was sternly warned for checking the time on his). Besides which it has well-kept Adnams on tap, a welcoming landlord (as long as you follow his rules) and an overall convivial atmosphere. Plus it is convenient for various other fine public houses.

The Windsor Hotel in Cairo was the British officers club in better, that is to say former, days, and the bar retains a splendid colonial atmosphere. I would just go for a drink rather than stay there though (some readers may have seen Karl Pilkington's stay there in *An Idiot Abroad*).

The Coliseum Bar in Kuala Lumpur is also a former colonial institution. Established in 1921 it was regarded as the planters' bar where our chaps



The annual sighting of Mendrick, at the traditional Xmas get-together at the Dover Castle pub, here in 2013

in the city would come for their pink gins. Now one of the few old buildings, let alone bars, left in KL after recent break-neck development, it maintains an old "east meets west" timeless charm.

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

- Winston Churchill, would be good company and I would put him in charge of bringing the wine. I gather the fellow had an acceptable cellar.
- Mark Twain, liked a drink or ten and would have some good stories to tell.
- Cleopatra, also liked a drink, and of course had what could boringly be described as an extremely interesting life.

Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

That dreadful oaf, Artemis Scarheart

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

Unfortunately since the establishment of the NSC seemed to coincide with my moving abroad, I rarely attend on a more than annual basis (if that), so despite being a long-serving member I am yet to do a turn. Should it ever be possible for me to do so, living in this part of the world, I could perhaps talk about James Brooke. A splendid adventurer, who served in the East India Company's army before being invalided out, took a ship over to Borneo and carved out his own kingdom, becoming the first white Rajah of Sarawak.

Chico Time

Return of the River God

Artemis Scarheart heads upriver in search of Man's eternal heart of darkness

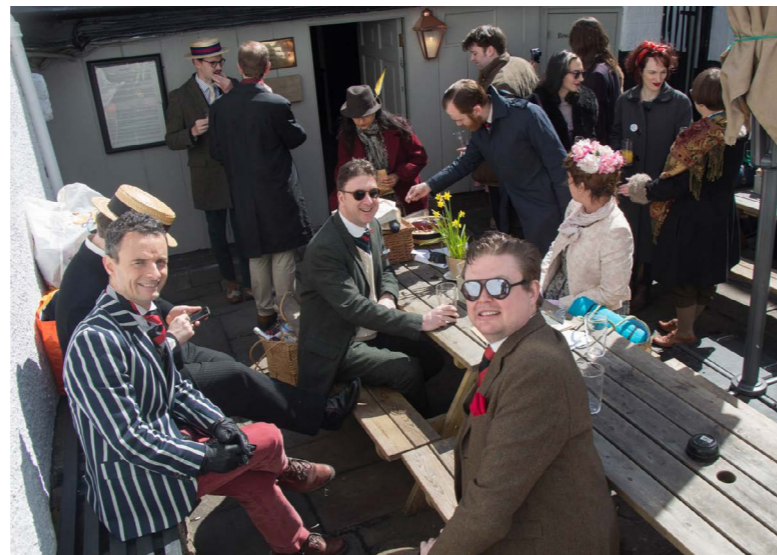
IN A TALE AS OLD as time, as the day of celebration for the patron Saint of England draws near, as the peasant in his field looks towards the heavens wondering if rain, hail or sun shall come, as the lord in his manor dithers between putting more logs on the fire or opening up the veranda the New Sheridan Club returns to Oxford to punt like a salmon swims upriver to spawn.

And so it was this year, with excitement even higher based on the two miraculous occurrences last year. The first was that the weather was, simply, gorgeous and we crashed over the rollers laughing gaily as goose excrement dotted our hems and petticoats. The second, even more momentous, was that the River God took no brides nor bridegrooms as not one sozzled sausage fell into his clammy embrace, not one iPhone found itself in a ziplock bag of rice for a week, not one set of tweeds sat there steaming in the pub. Had we cheated the Cherwell? Was this the end of the noble tradition? Why had Scarheart insisted that the (unclaimed) sweepstake money was just resting in his account as part of a routine credit refund via a Panamanian account to Zurich after the collapse of the Krugerrand? All would be revealed and the weekend began with a splendid black tie dinner at the Cherwell Boathouse.

The table was booked for 7.45 and this being the NSC we of course sat down at around 8.30. Each person had their seat assigned (as it will be in Heaven) and before long the gin which had been quaffed at the bar was joined with



Artemis Scarheart prepares a libation for the River God



(Above) Sheridanites assemble in the Turf; (below) the first boat heads out, propelled by Lucky Henry



Men in stripes: Will Smith punts while Tim Eyre reclines

wine, guinea fowl, port, pea soup, beef, crab and other delicious comestibles. Fourteen of us sat late into the night with much talk around who would be falling in tomorrow, what time people were heading to the covered market (for most excellent pies), those we were sorry not to see that year due to impending children; and then, as a surprise, a birthday cake arrived for Lucky Henry. This cake ensured we bumped into the evening with our sugar levels at a dangerous high and some souls oiled their way into a local pub.

It had been rather wet and blustery the previous couple of days but Stuart Mitchell who works as a weather sayer (for some terrifying organisation quite frankly) assured the assembled company that there would be no rain on the day. Other oracles were consulted and it was decided that, as he was right in front of us, he could be believed. You can't very well throw the BBC Weather Service into the river if they get it wrong but you can when the weatherman is right in front of you. If we were to get wet, so would he.

The morning arrived and a fine morning it was too—a little sharp perhaps but at the meal the previous evening many of us agreed we would be in our river tweed. Stuart Turner assured us all that if he was bundled up in his warmest and most waterproof clothes, we would be guaranteed a warm, fine day with no rain and so hopes were high. Plus, here was another



Robert Beckwith punts his family



The flotilla gathers ahead of the Big Push



Twenty clicks up the Nung river. It's quiet. Too quiet



(Clockwise from left) The group pauses at the traditional spot for all the boats to catch up; the sign on the bank where they choose to moor; Jessie teaches the children about piracy; Chloe gets her priorities right; Stewart Lister-Vickers punts heroically; Stewart Mitchell paddles his own canoe

Stuart we could throw in the river if it rained. I scarfed down some breakfast and then headed off to the covered market with Lucky Henry where we picked up a few odds and bobs (I've still to buy "Oxford Sauce" and if anyone has tried it I'd love to know what it tastes like) and then those of us camped out on Ship Street headed to the Turf Tavern, traditional meeting spot and post-punting locale.

Here, sadly, the tale must take a different note. Over the past few years we have found that pre- and post-punting the landlord/manager of the Turf has become ever more rude and unpleasant to those who throng to his public house to press cash into his hand and enjoy the good food, good drinks and history of the place. Yes, in the past someone has arrived at the pub still eating the scrag end of a breakfast sausage roll and ordered a pint to go with which may have got his back up. He is running a business after all. But to a well-trained and professional landlord there are many ways to handle such scenarios (from my dissolute youth I was in a few similar situations as barman and customer) from paying customers especially considering the many hundreds of pounds that ring in his till and how much "colour" (a tourists words, not ours) we add to the place so early in the year. Does one person from one group mean that all must be poorly treated? No. Does the pub need our custom? No. It is a real gem and could only sell Fosters and McCoy's and still do a roaring trade. But we have tired of his poor attitude, bad customer service and aggression and will not return for a few years.

Anyhow, leaving such issues aside this fine day we met and enjoyed handshakes and cheek kisses aplenty. Shoulders slapped, drinks bought, tales of derring do exchanged. And, of course, the Plunge Pot. Resting in my battered boater was already a princely sum and more gold and notes flowed in as everyone wanted a slice of the pie this year. With our company all assembled we made our way to Magdalen Boathouse and our noble watercraft, chatting away like birds in springtime under a clear blue sky.

In stark contrast to another Oxford business, we were warmly greeted by Andrew and his team and our punts were swiftly brought around. He remarked on how many new faces we had with us, and we talked for a while about how we are becoming a more family-friendly



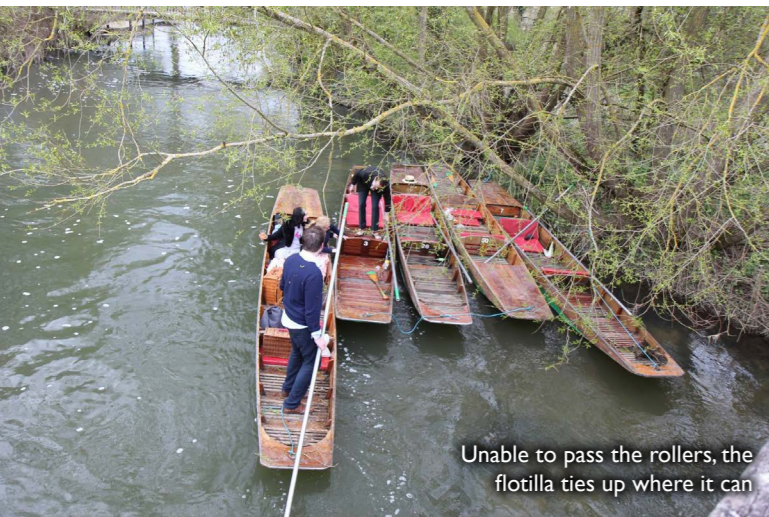
(Above) Floyd and Dr Blah decide to follow on land; (below) Hartley thinks, *What have I done?* Chico little suspects his fate



group, in stark contrast to our early years. Indeed this year one punt had three adults and three children and in future years we all look forward to Second Generation Sheridanites punting their parents drunken chums about. Grow strong, young folk, grow strong, so that my own record of zero punting miles completed can remain (I did once try and punt us off from the dock but after fifteen minutes of spinning in a circle Dame Fforbes grabbed the pole from my hands and propelled us off at speed). I made my way into the final punt after enquiring if Andrew needed a deposit for the five craft we had but he shook his head—after ten years he

knows us well even though we visit but once a year, and though he can hear dozens of corks popping as soon as we are just out of sight and we return laden with litter the punts are always tidied up when we return, rubbish neatly packed on the dock and nothing lost or flooded. These are expensive boats and the trust he showed us warmed my heart. Accusations that I was looking at eBay for the first half of the day are entirely misplaced.

My own punt had Lucky Henry on the pole, my wife, sister in law (of Vintage Notebook fame who beat *Resign!* to the punch with a first review of the day: see thevintagenotebook.com) and Suzanne Coles and as we turned the corner the sun came out and the smoked glasses went on. Perfection. True Oxford delight. The river was running rather swiftly but not too dangerously and we could see other punts in the distance, some bouncing from side to side as they hacked upstream and—of course—the Beckwith punt



Unable to pass the rollers, the flotilla ties up where it can

in the lead. I had taken along some guides to punting written by the punt master of that ship in the hope they would assist and I believe they did. It was hard to tell from my position of Champagne and pies. Leadership is so tiring.

Eventually we hove around the corner and could see the traditional first stopping place, the **NO MOORING AT ANY TIME: PROPERTY OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE** signs. A number of us jumped out (tying punts to these signs) or carefully slipped empties into the punts of others and those new to the pole swapped tips with the more experienced. I believe Henry collapsed wheezing and exhausted at this point but I was busy lighting a cigar. Some music played and hip flasks were offered. But then it was time to move

on and away we shoved. As we had progressed we had noticed that the river was very shallow this year. In previous years we have had to contend with fallen trees and the like, but this year it was a struggle to get over some of the more shallow areas and the punters really had to put their backs into it (Pro tip: sit with your back to the person doing all the work as that way there is no chance of feeling guilty by having to look at them). Perhaps a dredge of the river is in order?

After bashing our way past the weirs (much rowing required here) we arrived at the spot just shy of the rollers and there was foam aplenty. This signalled, so the old sea dogs tell us, that we will not be able to conquer them and should look to moor up. In true panic-mongering mode, an unnamed punter (Mr R. Beckwith of Wimbledon) decided that we would have to moor up where we were as any further would prove impossible. This was the cue for 30 minutes of shenanigans including dismounting punts, scrambling up river banks, climbing through trees, lashing ropes to trees, nearly falling out of trees, posing for pictures in trees, trying to figure out how to get up a riverbank when pregnant and/or in heels and more larks until it became clear that it was possible to punt through the foam and moor up in a very reasonable place slightly round the bend. Therefore off we went and managed to tie ourselves off next to the other punts and we headed across to the picnic field.

Here it was a little cooler, as if to punish us just a little for there not being any rain, but we all fell upon the food and drink with gusto. As usual there was far too much food but it certainly helped refuel those who were punting and soak up the booze of those who were not. Heroes all. A small lecture on Champagne was delivered to the children, a ukulele was played, some particularly inept sabrage was attempted and all was good cheer. As no one had yet fallen in there was much talk of who it might be. Amongst us were brand new punters and they can certainly fall prey to the River God, especially post punting. Even getting back into the punts after lunch can be dangerous but that is all part of the fun of the day. Pies consumed and ale quaffed we stumbled back to our punts for the trip downstream. This is always so much faster than going upriver and so it was again,



(Clockwise from top left) picnic time; Henry corrupts the youth; Scarheart fails sabrage with a butter knife, more picnicking; Henry looking perky; group shot; Stuart Turner looking perky; ukulele karaoke





The moment when Chico is swept overboard by an enemy branch; at this point the river was so deep he couldn't touch the bottom

albeit with at least one stretch of river where my punt was travelling sideways down the river.

But then, rising like an invisible Cthulu, the River God chose his sacrifice. Some would say that the showboating punting display put on by Stewart (yes, another one) Lister Vickers played a part. Some that Chico was too far forward and too enthusiastic in his rowing. Others would point to the augurs and what that old crone has spat at us as we punted past her earlier refusing to buy her lucky heather. But, as an eyewitness free of bias or hyperbole, I can say that what probably played the largest part were the dozens of branches that pushed Chico off his punt and into the Cherwell. Splash. We could see that he was clinging to the side of his punt and so was safe and Henry punted us off to the Boathouse.

On arrival there, we disembarked gingerly and made arrangements to pay, remove the rubbish and finish off any bottles we had in our hand. As word went round that Chico had taken the plunge, I consulted my sheet to see who had his number. Oh yes—you don't know who you need to fall in to claim the cash. That way you can't hurl yourself in and you can't push someone else in either. You have to wait until all is revealed and this year there was £44 to be had. After we had all arrived back and people had offered Chico their commiserations we went to the top of the boating ramp where, lifted on to the shoulders of others, I gave a short yet deeply moving speech. Strong women wept and weak men fainted. Then the announcement. The winner was... apparently me! But that was too much for the crowd to bear and so on the basis that he would now need a new jumper, to

wild acclaim the pot was handed to Chico.

Post this little ceremony we decided that instead of the Turf we would head elsewhere, this time to the Bear Tavern on the suggestion of Will the Tailor. A tiny pub which served mutton and was decorated with hundreds of ties this would be our first destination and as the crowd moved off I along with Hartley and Robert Beckwith took a bottle of fizz down and presented it to Andrew, of the Boathouse. We "didn't need to give him anything" he protested, but we have been going there for over ten years now and he and his staff are always friendly and helpful, eager to give tips to new punters and we wanted to mark the moment. A quick handshake and a photo for the press and off we moved.

From there it was to the Bear and then on to the Blenheim (haunt of Chap Olympiad legend Chopper) and the evening softly dissolved, like so much icing sugar in a sink. Drinks, conversation, perhaps a quick song at one point and much, much conversation and good cheer. Aching arms for those who had punted. Aching livers for those who had not. Night busses and trains for some. Overnight stays for others. The next day was bright but not as warm and we had clearly had the best of the weather. A small number of us were still biffing about and had a few pints and a bite and then it was back to our respective lairs to await the next year's punting.

Thank you to all those who joined us this year, especially to those who punted and special cheers to those Chumrades who punted for the very first time in their life. As I told the wife, "Maybe next year I'll give it a try."



(Clock-wise from top left) Scarheart is hoisted aloft to make a vacuous and misleading oration; by universal consent Chico is given the proceeds of the sweepstake to go towards a new jumper; Jessie with punt first-timer Caroline; the statutory appearance by Bob the Lobster; in the Bear pub, the oldest in Oxford and quite possibly the most cramped; Scarheart presents a bottle of fizz to Andrew from the boatyard. Thanks to Chloe Clark, Birgit Gebhardt and Floyd Toussaint-Kaye for additional photographs



THE VIEW FROM ACROSS THE POND

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Roy S. Engoron is not a political animal

HERE IS AN event that occurs every so often. It's usually held in tents, arenas or stadia. It has all kinds of strange personalities—high-wire artists, clowns, freaks, daredevils and wild animals. I believe in the UK it is referred to as a circus. In the US, we refer to it as a presidential election. Those of you not familiar with our elections might be confused. You are not in the minority. I still don't understand and I've lived through these things for decades.

The Primaries

Believe it or not, not all of our politicians, past and present, are always of the highest moral fibre. Candidates used to be chosen by party bosses in back-room meetings. Citizens were presented with a fait accompli. Either vote for our candidate or not, but it's not up to you to decide who the candidates should be. Candidacy was awarded for favors given or promised. So the primary was implemented. Doesn't that sound like a good idea? Let people choose who will run and then have an election. The state party machines, who were loath to give up all of their power, came up with the system that became unwieldy and complicated beyond belief—especially if there is no heir apparent.

Each of our 50 states is made of wards, parishes or precincts, depending on what they're called in a particular state. Voting is done at the local level, but the guidelines come from that state with regard to the timing of the primary, and the party, which determines what kind of primary they want to hold. The typical primary is quite simple. People go to the polls, mark their ballots and leave. Some parties and states like the idea of a caucus. There are two kinds of these. In one instance, people must show up

and physically stand with the representative of a particular candidate. If a candidate does not gain a certain percentage of the votes, all of those people must physically move to another surrogate. In another type of caucus, people must still physically show up, but all they need do is simply mark their ballots and leave.

Now each state chooses when its primaries or caucuses will be held. By tradition for some reason, the Iowa caucus is always first. It's in late January or early February, and always seems to occur in the middle of a blinding blizzard which affects turn-out since people have to actually be present to vote. The last of these events are usually in June just weeks before the conventions. If you are in a state that votes early, you have to wait for the rest of country to take its turn. What does one do in the meantime?

The nightly news provides all the entertainment:

In the race for president, here are the latest polls. Today, X remains in front of the pack, while Y picked up the endorsement of several high profile politicians. All this while Q insulted M's spouse causing a fist fight to break out at a rally. Some people were outraged when R changed her hair-do and T forgot to wear a tie.

This goes on for months. And people wonder why there is so much voter apathy.

Are you following all of this?

The Conventions

A few weeks after the primaries are done, the conventions are held. These take place in various cities around the country and bring in an enormous amount of business to the local community. There is a new city chosen every four years; that's one for each party in each election cycle. The sites are chosen to court favour with the locals and/or to pay off some promise. It is important that sites be diverse and

in different parts of the country. Ostensibly, the convention is where all the delegates come together, agree on the party platform and formally cast votes for the candidate to whom they are promised. If the

number of votes reached is the number set by the party, they have their nominee. He will then select his vice president. Speeches are made and thousands of balloons drop from the ceiling. If the number is not reached, then there is an open or contested convention. After the first ballot, delegates can vote for anyone they choose; their pledge is no longer mandatory. It is conceivable that the person getting the most votes after six months running in all the primaries and caucuses can be denied the nomination. Stand by: we just might have a contested convention this year. If so, it's going to be a messy proposition. You are going to laugh yourselves silly.

The Election

Presidential elections are always in November on the first Tuesday. So after all the craziness of the primaries and the circus atmosphere of the conventions, everyone is supposed to go to the polls and cast a vote for the candidate of his/her choice. Now here's the thing most foreigners don't know—it's something most Americans don't know—no one can directly vote for the president or vice president, no one ever has. Shortly after the War of Independence, there were discussions about who would be eligible to vote. Women were banned out of hand, as were all slaves. The question of who was a citizen really came to bear. Add to that very poor communications given the size of even the fledgling United States. So, after numerous debates, in 1787 Congress devised the Electoral College. This consists of a group of delegates who come together to do the actual voting. There is one elector for each congressional member which translates to each representative and each senator for the various states. That's

435 representatives and 100 senators, plus three votes for the District of Columbia. It is these electors who do the actual voting; the average citizen is just voting for a slate of electors. Are these electors actually members of congress? They can be. Are these electors made up of the delegates that were selected during the primaries? Not usually. Are these electors pledged to a specific candidate? Yes. Is that mandatory? No. It is this system that led to the contested election of 2000 where one candidate substantially won the popular vote, but lost the election. The Electoral College has been threatened with the chopping block for years, but the axe has yet to fall. Considering modern communications and the fact that the definition of a citizen was settled long ago, it is an archaic practice still to be in use. So while you might be amazed that we ever get anyone elected, be equally amazed that we do the job—eventually. And you must at least admit, it's good entertainment.

And so, dear reader, that is the gist of an American presidential election. It is complicated, antiquated and, what with the length of time it all goes on, tedious beyond belief. While writing this piece, I have diligently tried to stay as neutral as possible. It is easy to express opinions, but that was not the purpose of this essay. There are still months to go before the results are in. These are months of more exposure to polls, robo-calls, leaflets, lawn signs, canvassers, bumper stickers, bands, balloons, baby kissing, hotdog eating, arguing, charges, counter charges and money being spent at such a rate that Midas would blush. However, I think it only reasonable to tell you now where my sympathies lie. Above is a photo of the hat I will be sporting during this entire election season.



Getting High in the Sky

By David Bridgman-Smith

I was recently given a copy of Richard Foss' entertaining and interesting tome *Food in Air & Space*, and this month's Cocktail Cabinet is inspired by its tales of drinking at 20,000 feet.

The history of food and drink in flight is rather fascinating. In the early days of single- or two-seater craft, occupants had to make do with sips of water from a canteen, but, as passenger travel by air grew increasingly popular, the desire for in-flight refreshment also became apparent. Passengers on early London to Paris flights in 1919 were offered "Lunch Baskets", full of cold items and luxury sandwiches. Some passengers also brought their own food and drink onboard.

A drinks menu from around 1926 on Imperial Airways' "Silver Wing" included Perrier Water, Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Gordon's Gin, Whisky, 3 Star Brandy and two mixed drinks: Gin & Bitters, and Gin & Italian Vermouth. I explored a few of these drinks at home, keeping in mind that it seems unlikely that ice would have been available, although the bottles may have been stored in a cool pantry pre-flight.

- The *Gin & Bitters* is big and bold, and works well at room temperature. The bitters would have also been seen as something settling to the stomach, which might help to combat air sickness.

- The *Gin & Italian Vermouth* has a similar smooth, mellow flavour with a good level of herbal intensity.

- *Ginger Ale*, still a favourite on planes today, has long been held as a cure for an upset stomach. The sweetness also provides some energy and there is a little kick from the ginger.

- Finally, the *Perrier* (the only company whose logo appears on the menu): unlike still water, this still has a sense of celebration and occasion—after all, flying was a new and rare experience at the time. The combination of

French and British ingredients in the menu helps to symbolise the unifying nature of the route.

For longer journeys, aeroplanes needed to stop every few hours to refuel and so main meals were often served within the airports. But as the range and size of planes increased, so did the food offering and the chance to use in-flight service as a point of differentiation between services or routes. As such, it was common for some air services, especially flying boats, to serve a signature cocktail on board. While no exact recipes exist, these clipper cocktails are inspired by such drinks.

Limeade Cooler Frappé

50ml fresh lime juice, 20ml sugar syrup, 50ml water. Stir with ice and serve in a glass filled with crushed ice. If you travelled on a Northwest Stratocruiser flight from Miami to Chicago in 1959 and paid an extra \$3 for their lavish "Imperial Service", this drink would have been served to you at the beginning of your flight (on your return flight you would have been served coffee). It's bright and refreshing, with the delightful zest of fresh lime. When travelling from the hot, balmy climate of Miami, I would choose this every day over a cup of mediocre coffee. If only more airlines served this these days.

China Clipper

50ml yellow gin, 15ml dry vermouth, 5ml grapefruit juice, 3 dashes orange bitters, 2 dashes absinthe. Stir with ice. A good aperitif and a pretty good choice if you're looking for a pre-flight or pre-dinner drink. The yellow gin helps to keep the drink mellow and rounded, whilst the orange bitters and grapefruit add an invigorating zing.

Pan-Am Clipper

60ml Calvados, 15ml lime juice, 15ml grenadine, 3 dashes absinthe. Shake with ice. The warm, slightly tart apple notes work well with the refreshing lime, while the jammy notes of the grenadine add sweetness and the absinthe adds

complexity. This is certainly flavoursome, but I'm not sure if I'd order it in-flight today.

Clipper (as served aboard the Boeing 314)
60ml light rum, 20ml dry vermouth, 5ml grenadine. Shake with ice. A simple drink with a good fresh flavour, like a Martini but with some richer, fruitier flavours and a touch of sweetness. Having said that, I think that the greater nuances would be lost in the modern pressurised airline cabin environment.

With the invention of jet engines, planes could fly faster and higher, but this required the pressurisation of the cabin, which affected the perception of taste. In fact, there are three things that impede one's ability to taste in the air: air pressure, low humidity and noise.

These factors led some first class passengers of the early jet flights to question the legitimacy of the fine vintage wine that they were supposedly drinking; it tasted different from how it did on the ground. It is harder to perceive the fruitiness of wine in flight and instead you focus more on the acid and tannins. A wine that is well-balanced when tasted at sea level may taste bland and watery at 20,000 feet. This is why Italian, Chilean, and Australian wines, with their bolder characters, are often chosen to be served in flight over French ones.

On a recent flight, I decided to experiment with the impact of noise on my tastebuds. I had a pair of noise cancelling headphones with me, which are great for keeping out the roar of the engines. I then started to wonder whether switching them on or off would change the flavour of my beverages.

Glenlivet Single Malt Whisky

Noise-cancelling off: Pretty standard, run-of-the-mill whisky; difficult to distinguish it from more mainstream brands such as Bells.

Noise-cancelling on: Fuller and more complex, with hints of the malty base coming through and a touch of ale.

Hardy's Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon

Noise-cancelling off: Basic, but OK; relatively smooth, with a little red fruit.

Noise-cancelling on: High on tannins, tart, almost sour, with a slight vinegar note. Far less pleasant.

Gordon's Gin & Tonic

Interestingly, there was very little change when switching the noise-cancelling on and off for this drink—one to try wherever you are!

Smirnoff vodka, Britvic tomato juice, Worcester sauce and pepper

Noise-cancelling off: Bright and refreshing, with a spicy kick. Very moreish. *Noise-cancelling on*: A little on the bland side and lacking the satisfaction of the previous taste.

Mrs B also recently had some Green Tea Tiramisu on a BA flight and, while it was quite palatable, if perhaps a tad sweet when you ate it sans-headphones, with the noise cancelling active, it was so syrupy it was almost inedible.

Airline food is, of course, designed with

the olfactory limitation of an airline cabin taken in mind. BA even have a special Twinings tea blend for use on board, although they have yet to develop a suitable coffee blend.

The world of airline food and drink is fascinating and in this article I didn't even touch on food and booze in space or tales of early airline staff throwing out refuse from the fuselage of seaplanes off the San Francisco coast (the government was more concerned with their quarantine than environmental matters). But my one tip for the next time that you are eating or drinking a mile high in the sky would be: your airline food may taste better if you switch those noise-cancelling headphones off.



ORIGINAL GANGSTER

Our April Film Night was the first version of *Scarface*, the organised crime movie the censors tried to ban

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. In common with *The Public Enemy* starring James Cagney and *Little Caesar* with Edward G. Robinson, both released the year before, *Scarface* is obviously based on the life of Al Capone. Like the character played by Paul Muni, Capone himself was also nicknamed Scarface because of a scar received in a bar brawl. The hero's implication in his own boss's death and the assassination of his Irish rival in a flower shop are taken from Capone's life and there is even a version of the St Valentine's Day Massacre, with some of the killers disguised as police, just as in the real murder arranged by Capone. In fact writer Ben Hecht received a visit from a couple of Capone's men, wanting assurance that the film did *not* represent Capone;

In true Film Noir tradition *Scarface* uses dramatic lighting and visual symbols—bars are a common one, suggesting confinement, and in this film we are treated to cross shapes (including the scar itself) portending death

they must have been satisfied with his answer (and rumour has it Hecht even persuaded them to act as consultants for him), 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 wrote the original script for our March film *His Girl Friday*) 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; Hawks told Hecht he wanted to depict the family “as if they were the Borgias set down in Chicago”. It was the first movie to feature the iconic Thompson submachine gun, or “Tommy gun”.

Although the Hays Code (a set of rules adopted by the industry in response to accusations of moral turpitude) would not be heavily enforced for another couple of years, the Hays Office was already throwing its weight around and claimed that the film was glorifying the gangster lifestyle. While *Little Caesar* and *The Public Enemy* had more

or less got away with it, the Hays Office told Hughes on the eve of production, “The American public and all conscientious State Boards of Censorship find mobsters and hoodlums repugnant. Gangsterism must not be mentioned in the cinema.”

At the insistence of censors several scenes were edited, the name changed to *Shame of a Nation*, and a moralising text opening was added. There was even an alternative ending in which Scarface is shown to be a coward, before being duly tried, ticked off by the judge and hanged for his crimes. 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. He also tried to sue the New York censors and to release the film under the name *The Scar* (the Hays Office objected to *Scarface*).

One side-effect of Prohibition was to criminalise anyone who drank booze—i.e. most people. While the average middle-class citizen probably never did anything more heinous than drink bootleg liquor at a house party, it created a new atmosphere at ease with criminality. Although there is no denying that gangsters are bad people, Hecht knew from his days as a Chicago newspaperman that “nice people—the audience—loved criminals, doted on reading about their love problems as well as their sadism”. As the Code kicked in, studios were faced with a balancing act: *G-Men* (1935) tried to glamorise the newly-created FBI instead, but Cagney's role in it would not change his perennial image as a bad guy. In *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938) Cagney's villain does indeed go to the chair screaming, but it's clear that, in a final show of conscience, he fakes his fear so that impressionable youngsters will not idolise him—so he gets to be a gangster and a hero too.



In the end a shift in movies came with a shift in American society, from the tough times of the Depression when gangsters were the only ones who seemed to be wealthy and successful, to the bright future of the affluent 1950s, when criminals became more of a squalid embarrassment. Note how Humphrey Bogart went from playing mobsters in *The Petrified Forest* and *The Roaring Twenties* to laconic private detectives. Where gangsters had been glamorously immoral bogeymen, hard-boiled private eyes of Film Noir were essentially good men struggling to make sense of an amoral world.

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 (and the only one to make the same Top Ten list as its own remake).

A young George Raft got his first leading role in the movie. He taught himself to flip a coin without looking at it and Hawks decided to use

this trick in the role to draw attention away from the actor's inexperience. Twenty-eight years later in *Some Like it Hot* Raft's gangster character does the same thing, leading a fellow hood to comment, “Where did you pick up that cheap trick?”

By neat segue, see this month's Film Night on page 32.



NSC FILM NIGHT

Some Like It Hot (1959)

Wednesday 11th May

7.30pm–11pm

The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall

Walk, London SE11 5HL

(020 7207 4585)

Admission: Free

Repeatedly topping polls as the funniest movie ever, our May film got a muted response at the time (although it did win an Oscar for best costumes) because no one had seen anything like it before. Many test audiences didn't at first realise they were watching a comedy—but then how many comedies feature a mass execution 15 minutes in? Villain Spats Columbo is played by George Raft with just as much menace as he displays in last month's 1932 flick *Scarface*.

Where *Scarface* suffered because the Hayes Office was just beginning to clamp down on sex and violence, *Some Like It Hot* represents the final throwing off of those shackles. It too is set in the Roaring Twenties (albeit a very 1950s-looking version) and concerns



two musicians, played by Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, who witness the gangland slaying (essentially the St Valentine's Day massacre) and must flee to save their lives. So they disguise themselves as women and join an all-girl band led by Marilyn Monroe.

The threat of violence aside (and that was already a staple of the comedy horror genre), the film boils over with sex. Not actual sex, but we have Marilyn singing "I Want to Be Loved By You" in a dress that renders her almost naked, and running gags revolve around the fact that the heroes, whom the girls assume to be girls, are treated to an endless scantily-clad slumber party. Marilyn and Jack squeezing together in a sleeper train bunk would never have been allowed by the Hayes Code.

And of course the film is about sex in the sense of sexual attitudes, sexual stereotyping and sexual identity. Curtis's Jack-the-lad character finds that being a woman gives him access to women and their normally hidden thoughts, while Lemmon slips quite comfortably into womanhood, relishing the girtalk. He even gets romanced by an ageing playboy and somehow finds himself engaged. The famous last line (no spoilers here) which leaves hanging the suggestion of gay romance was, according to co-writer Billy Wilder, just meant to be a temporary one while they thought of something funnier. But since they had no idea what was supposed to happen to the characters next, they left it in...



CLUB NOTES

Club Tie Corner

THE NSC is clearly a broader church than even the Committee realises. We have Adrian Prooth to thank for the spot of the Man of Steel himself (in his guise as Clark Kent) sporting club colours, while Col. Cyrus Choke sputtered over this photo byline of US political journalist George F. Will. Chairman Torquil himself noticed this appearance of the Club Tie on the cover of a Graham Greene novel.



VINTAGE GREENE



England Made Me

New Member

MEET THE LATEST lamb to the slaughter, Francesca Albini, who hails from Wood Green in north London and joined up this month.

Francesca Albini





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 4th May
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 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 clarinetist Ewan Bleach with various guests.

🚗 NSC Film Night: *Some Like It Hot (1959)*

Wednesday 11th May
7.30pm–11pm
The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk,
London SE11 5HL (020 7207 4585)
Admission: Free
See page 32.

The Tweed Run

Saturday 14th May
From 11am
Location and route to be revealed
Admission: £25
Dress: Smart vintage, tweed or otherwise
The eighth annual Tweed Run, an idea that is now replicated in many other cities around the world. The idea being simply to dress impeccably and cycle at a leisurely pace around town en masse, and preferably on vintage bicycles. Along the route there is a stop for tea, a stop for a picnic lunch and usually an after-party. Tickets were released on Monday 29th February at noon (and doubtless sold out five minutes later), and £5 of the ticket price goes to the London Cycling Campaign charity (www.lcc.org.uk). Tickets are still available for the afterparty: see here. The route is generally kept a secret and revealed to ticket holders nearer

the time. See www.tweedrun.com for details.

Cigar Walk with Nic Wing

Saturday 14th May
From 9.30am
Begins at the Churchill and Roosevelt
statue on Bond Street
Admission: £21.79 from Eventbrite

Cigar expert Nic Wing will take you on a walking tour (a good two hours or more) of various shops, hotels and historic sites connected with the world of cigars. You can get an idea from this video.

East Anglia Transport Museum 1940s Weekend

Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th May
EATM, Chapel Road, Carlton Colville,
Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 8BL
Admission: £9

A 1940s-themed special weekend at this repository of vintage buses, trams, trolley buses, etc. There will be a free park and ride as well as a free bus service running to Beccles and Lowestoft using period buses, along with many visiting vehicles of the era on both days. There will be trade stands and a BBQ in the park. For more details see eatransportmuseum.co.uk.

Hammersmith Vintage Fashion & Accessories Fair

Sunday 15th May
8am–5pm
Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London
W6 9JU
Admission: £10 from 8–10am, £5 thereafter

Running since 1999, this regular fair offers some 100 dealers selling vintage clothing and accessories from 1800 to 1980.

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



Grease
your gears
for the
Tweed
Run

the strict-tempo ten-piece Kewdos Dance Orchestra. 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. A free glass of bubbly for the ten most glamorous female guests. For more info call 020 8542 1490.

The New Sheridan 10th Anniversary Party 🚗 DECADENT

Saturday 1st October
7pm–1am
Ground floor events room, Cecil's, 8 Holyrood St, London SE1 2EL
Admission: Free for Members, £5 for guests and strangers (refundable if you join the Club on the night)
Dress: Decadent, or revive your favourite costume from the previous 18 parties
As this October will see the tenth anniversary of the Club, the Glorious and Infallible Committee have decided that, instead of having a summer party and a Christmas party as usual, we would have one big birthday party instead, on the date closest to the actual anniversary. The venue is basically an indoor Garden of Earthly Delights, complete with treehouse.
More details to come, but we are thinking of revisiting Members' favourite games from previous parties, so please contact us with your votes, or any other suggestions of how you would like to mark this occasion.

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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.



A moment of calm during this year's Oxford punting trip