

## Secret history

Luke Wenban is surprised to discover his grandfather's explosive past

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

Mr B. salutes the Club at our 10th anniversary celebrations

## Death to the Dover

The end of an era as the Dover Castle pub closes

## You don't know Jack

Jack Defer spills the beans in The Brogues Gallery

# RESIGN!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • ISSUE 120 OCTOBER 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 5th October in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. Harrison Goldman will have us all swooning and crooning with a talk about Noel Coward: "Perhaps one of the most quoted and name-dropped men of 20th century Britain, Noel Coward is well known as multi-talented. I will briefly explore the biography, music, plays, art, quotes, and insults of this legendary chap." Harrison actively invites audience participation, and in true "Cowardian" fashion awaits all manner of banter, interceptions, recollections and *bon mots*.

### The Last Meeting

Our speaker in September was Member Luke Wenban, who told us about his Grandfather's exploits blowing things up in the war. Until recently he knew only that Granfer Wenban had served and nothing more: it was a chance Facebook post by his aunt that revealed the

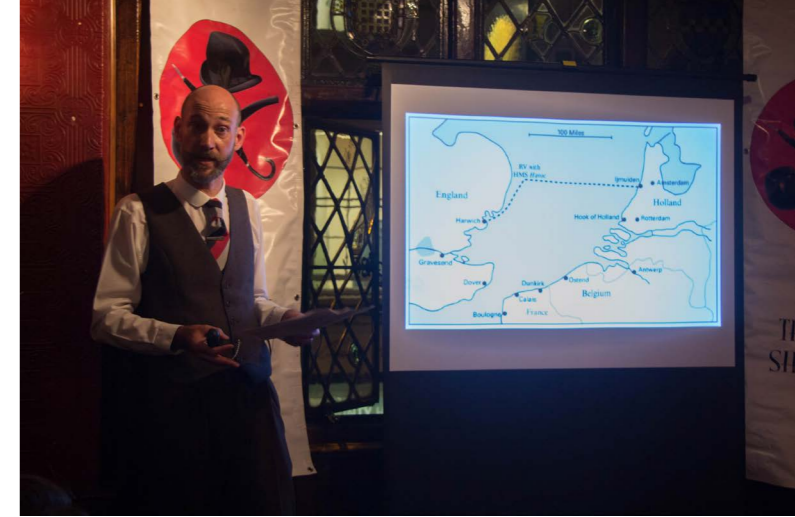


details. From working at a cement factory Luke's granddad was asked to join a new unit (the most rapidly recruited company in history), the Kent Fortress Volunteer Force (later the Kent Fortress Royal Engineers) who were spirited into France and Belgium at the beginning of the war as part of the clandestine XD force tasked with destroying stocks of oil and petrol before the approaching German forces could seize them. While they were at it they took the opportunity to smash up docks and anything else they thought the Germans might find useful. Of course the locals didn't always take kindly to this "scorched earth" behaviour and the

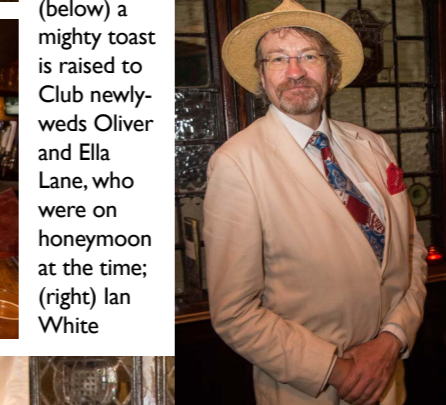
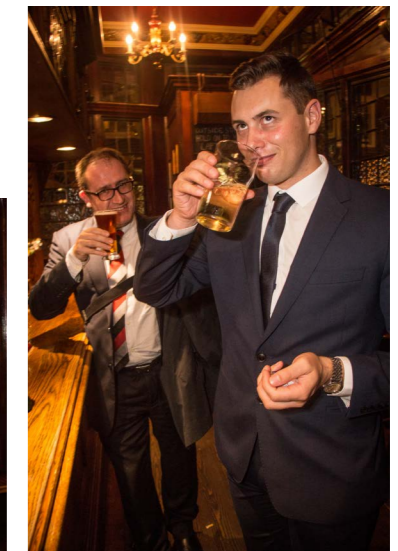
sappers sometimes found themselves fighting off the French military too. Moreover there were no specific plans for their extraction after the job was done—it was up to them to find some way home. But the raids were such a success that the XD force was deployed in Norway, Greece and the Middle East too. many thanks to Luke for his talk about a subject that has not yet been much covered by historians. An essay version of the talk begins on page 4.



(Above) Torquil opens proceedings; (right and above right) Luke begins; (below) Robert Beckwith (l) and Adrian Prouth look stately



(Right) Benjamin mugs for the paps on a rare escape for him from his duties guarding the Royals; (left) a first-time visit for Philip Hancock, seen here with Gabriel Blaze;



(below) a mighty toast is raised to Club newlyweds Oliver and Ella Lane, who were on honeymoon at the time; (right) Ian White



# THE KFRE

## FROM CONCRETE TO CORDITE

By Luke  
Wenban

**M**Y GRANDFATHER, HENRY EDWARD WENBAN, joined the Territorials at the outbreak of war in 1939. He served with the Royal Engineers and was involved in sabotage.

General Sir Richard Gale, who commanded 1 Parachute Brigade and later 6th Airborne Division on D Day, was a Colonel on the staff of the Director of Military Operations at the War Office in 1940. In his autobiography, *Call to Arms*, he wrote of this dark period:

The withdrawal from France and the evacuation from Dunkirk was no direct concern of ours...The tragedy of these events were for us, however, off-set to some extent by the exploits of a Territorial Army Unit, the Kent Fortress Engineers, with whose work we were intimately concerned. Their exploits are little known, which for reasons of security at the time is not surprising. These operations were no less than the destruction of all oil installations in the Low Countries and northern France. The task had to be done by small parties of men who remained behind after the army had withdrawn, subsequently making their getaway as best they could. Some we managed to get off by destroyer; others only made their escape weeks later after the Germans were in the whole of northern France.

General Gale continued:

The firing of oil installations is not simple if this is to be done in such a way that the conflagration caused cannot be put down. It takes time, requires detailed knowledge of the installation, great skill and above all courage. These qualities the officers and men of this unit had in good measure.

The War Office took the decision to replace the

regular gunner and sapper units that manned the coastal defences with Territorial units in 1932. The Blue Circle Cement Company was approached to sponsor this move. Clifford Brazier, a manager of the largest cement works in Kent, and previously a sapper Major in the First World War, formed the Kent Fortress Royal Engineers (KFRE). He recruited a full-strength company in 48 hours—an unequalled record. The members all came from the local Blue Circle cement works, where my Grandfather was employed.

The War Office understood the importance



"Granfer"  
Henry Wenban

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The War Office understood the importance

Basic training



of the oil installations and reserves held on the continent to the German army, particularly around the ports. They put into place a secret plan, codenamed XD, to combat this threat if the Germans began to encroach into the rest of Europe. They chose the KFRE for the job.

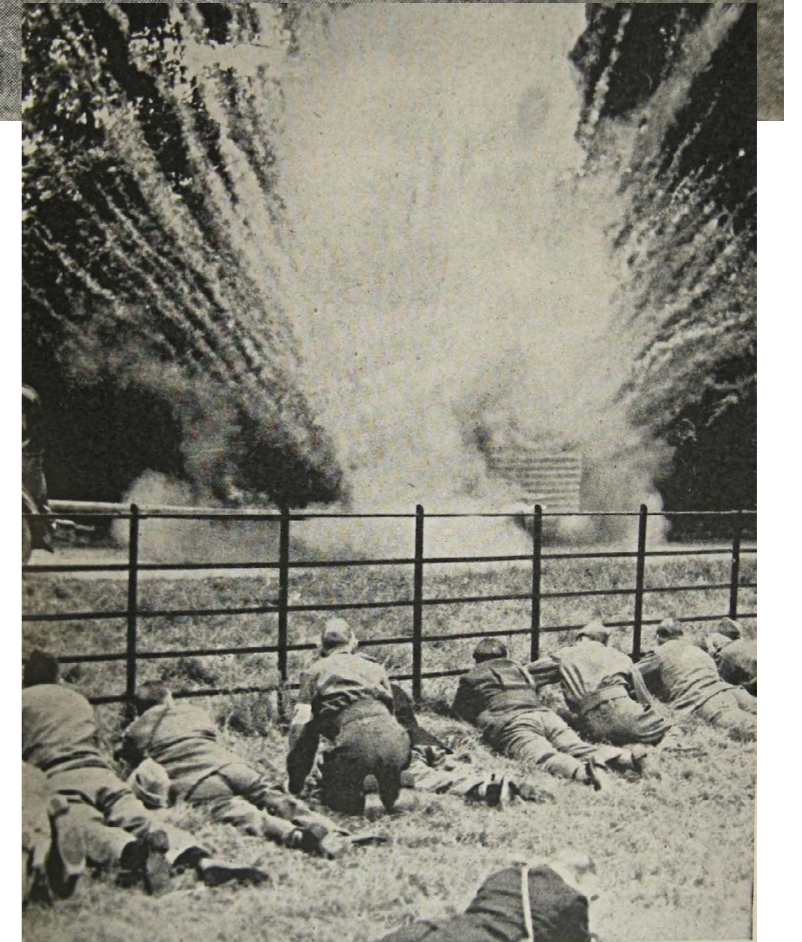
### XD operations

In the early hours of 10th May Hitler gave the order to invade Holland. Three small groups of the KFRE travelled to Dover within the hour. They had no specialist equipment or a grand plan.

Three HM destroyers were commissioned to deliver the XD troops; *Whitshead* to make for IJmuiden, carrying the sapper party for Amsterdam; the second, *Wild Swan* to go to the Hook of Holland with Rotterdam as the sapper objective; *Brilliant* would try to get up the Scheldt as far as possible and put a party off for Antwerp. Importantly, there was no guaranteed return ticket for the sappers.

### Amsterdam

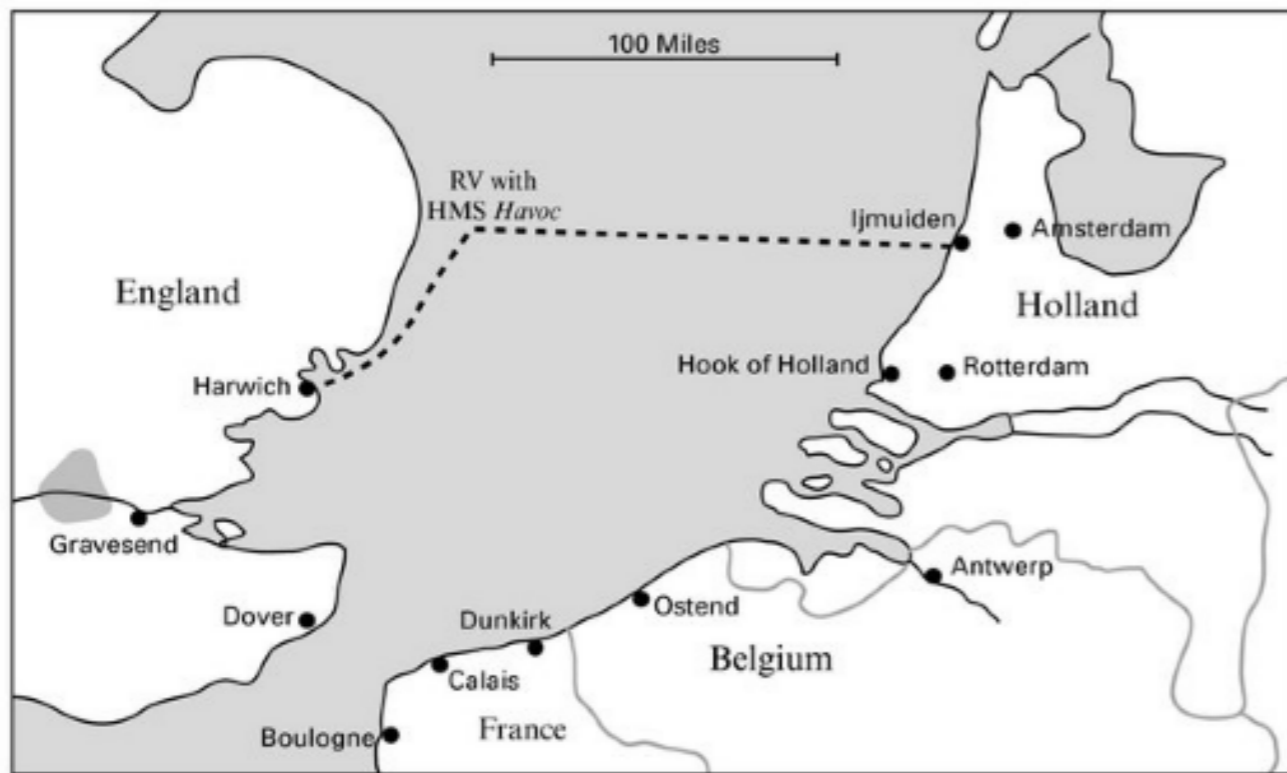
*Whitshead* was attacked by German planes while sailing across the channel and the cordite supply on deck caught fire. If it had not been for two quick-thinking sailors who threw the lot overboard the whole ship could have been



again. They stole a small 32 foot motorboat and headed West. They left IJmuiden just before dusk and were repeatedly attacked by enemy fighters. The sappers had only rifles to defend themselves. Small arms fire from only twelve men sitting and standing in a small boat in a seaway was not likely to be very effective! Their luck held and they managed, after some hours, to get across the channel and back to their base.

### Rotterdam

On arrival the three senior officers went to find



the local authorities and were promptly arrested. It was only through sheer pig-headedness and determination that they got released.

When the officers finally got to the oil plants they were surprised to find German soldiers already patrolling the tanks.

There were small running battles in the streets surrounding the storage area but the sappers managed to get to their targets. Using an anti-tank gun to punch holes in the tanks and then tracer rounds they ignited the petrol.

As a side job they removed 36 tons of gold bullion deposited in the city bank. Unfortunately, the boat they loaded it in struck a mine and sank.

The remaining force made its way cautiously back to Hook. Again, there was no transport to take them back to England. Luckily a destroyer arrived the next morning and took them back to Dover.

### Antwerp

After they landed it took seven days before the group were even allowed to look at their target; the Belgian authorities flatly refused.

Eventually, with the threat of Belgium's being overrun by the Germans, they were allowed to complete their mission and blew the tanks.

They returned to the port to see how much damage they could do there before heading across country in four French lorries they had

commandeered.

It was slow going, the roads were packed with fleeing refugees all heading towards the coast. At night the roads became difficult to negotiate due to the BEF troop movements. The four French drivers constantly got lost and there was continual suspicion of them from the police. The regular bombing and strafing by German planes did not help matters either.

Finally reaching Ostend they found the entire port abandoned and had to head off to Dunkirk, where they found a ship to bring them back.

But they were not home for long. The German advance continued into France, and KFRE were sent to destroy the oil depots along the lower Seine.

### Seine

By 24th May 1940, the 132-man XD force were back in France having been scrambled at 11.30pm the night before and packed off to Dover and across the channel. This time they had to make their way down south to head off the advancing German forces and hit the oil stocks there.

After they eventually found the general of the local French forces it was agreed that the unit could guard the refinery at Rouen but under French command. Only 29 men were allowed to be stationed at the refinery in the end.

Events took over though, as the Germans got closer. The force split in half and headed to different locations. On arriving at Rouen the commanding officer was promptly arrested by the French troops on suspicion of being a fifth columnist. After hasty negotiations he was freed, but they then had to get the French adjutant who had been assigned to them also out of gaol too, as he had been arrested a little while later.

The XD troops spread throughout the area over the next two weeks and covered all petrol depots readying themselves for a planned destruction and withdrawal.

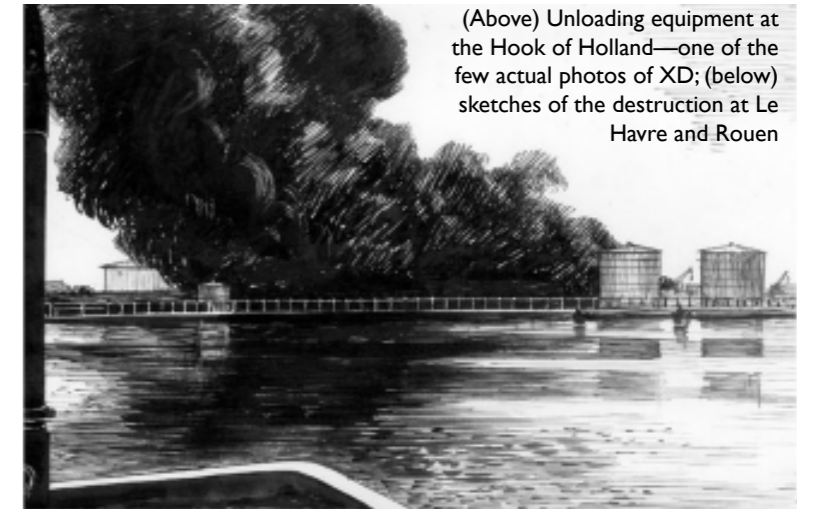
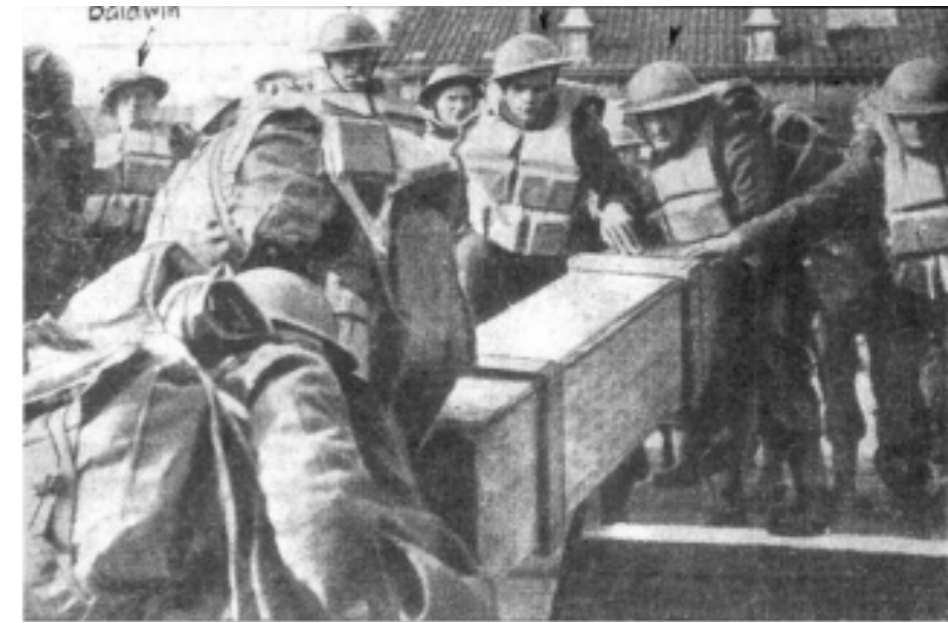
By the beginning of June the threat from the approaching German forces became a major issue. The French HQ withdrew leaving the XD force potentially surrounded. They couldn't afford to take chances so the order was given to blow up all 29 oil storage plants (over a million tons of fuel) and for the scattered sappers to make their own way to a rendezvous point some miles away.

Amazingly the entire force arrived at the rendezvous unscathed and then slowly headed towards Nantes, where there was a British HQ.

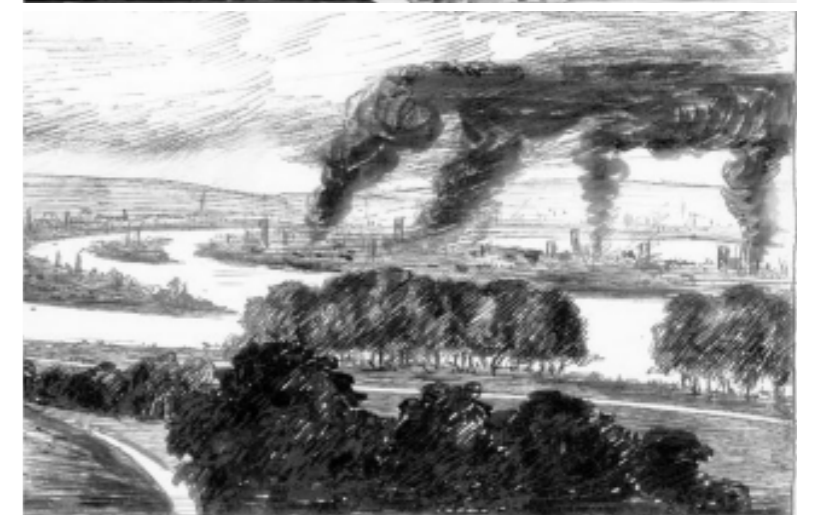
The following day it was discovered that one of the dumps, plus a BEF one, had not been blown and two sections volunteered to travel back to complete the mission. During this operation one of their number was lost in the resulting fire that spread rapidly through the wood where the BEF supplies were stored.

A refinery at Donges did escape their attention, as a British general ordered that no demolition was to be carried out there. The supplies were subsequently thought to have been used to re-fuel U-boats.

As an afterthought, detachments were sent to destroy smaller depots at Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais, but these missions were abortive: the dumps at Dunkirk were destroyed by German bombs, Calais' facilities were unapproachable



(Above) Unloading equipment at the Hook of Holland—one of the few actual photos of XD; (below) sketches of the destruction at Le Havre and Rouen



due to heavy fighting and Boulogne in fact turned out to have none.

Further oil demolition operations were attempted at Caen, Cherbourg and St Malo, but only St Malo was successful. The installations near Caen were captured before the British arrived and the French authorities prevented



demolition at Cherbourg, so KFRE assisted with the general harbour demolitions there.

Then the news came through that a full evacuation of all British troops was required as the French were about to sign an armistice.

On the team's arrival in Liverpool an order was given to head towards Halifax. The CO, Brigadier C.C.H. Brazier, however, would not have this and requisitioned buses from the local depot to transport his men back to London.

This did not mean putting their feet up, of course, and it was not long before the KFRE were called on again to do what they did best.

(This page) Air recon photos of destruction at Le Havre



### Spitsbergen

The Norwegian northern islands of Spitsbergen were inhabited by Russian and Norwegian miners who exploited the rich coal seams there. A detachment from KFRE was part of Operation Gauntlet to destroy the coal mines and stockpiles and deny their use to the Germans.

### Greece

Travelling south, the engineers were transferred to Salonika and Volos and, when the Germans reached the city, arrangements for demolition were complete—all except in the case of one oil installation where the manager had pro-

Axis sympathies. Until the Germans were actually invading nothing could be done, but now the course was clear and, after ten minutes brisk engagement by the sappers, the place was in their hands, all the defenders having been killed or driven off.

As the Germans entered the town, the sappers managed to blow up or fire all their objectives. The petrol refineries were left ablaze from end to end; many industrial plants were wrecked, including a brewery, engineering works and machine shops in the area of the docks. The gas works were wrecked and left burning;

similarly a large flourmill was fired. In the docks, cranes, locomotives and rail wagons were destroyed and dropped over the quay into the harbour. Stacks of timber and all warehouses were set alight and water mains outside the area cut. In those last few hectic hours a large power station suffered the same fate. Craft of all description were either sent to sea or sunk in the harbour. The spectacle of that scene of desolation and destruction, with its raging fires and pall of heavy black smoke drifting away across the landscape was impressive.

Then they retreated to Athens. But Athens did not turn out to be a rest camp. With the enemy sweeping through Greece, small parties went out to destroy an aerodrome under construction at Arexos, blow up bomb dumps and petrol stores. Thousands of pounds worth of valuable machinery had been sent out from England to assist our Allies in their war effort, but now there was no alternative: it had to be destroyed rather than make a gift of it to the Germans.

Some members of the KFRE detachment were lost, as casualties or captured, before the bulk were evacuated to Crete—where others were captured or killed when the Germans invaded. One captured officer, Dennis Alabaster, escaped while being transported through Yugoslavia and joined the Chetniks; he was subsequently killed there. But the majority of the force escaped Crete under cover of darkness and steered a course for safety. They had water but very little food; nonetheless friendly craft helped them get safely across the Mediterranean.

### The Middle East

Those who got away from Crete were then based in Palestine. A detachment was employed during the allied invasion of Vichy Syria in July 1941: during this operation a two-man team was flown behind Vichy lines. Under cover of darkness the following night, they stealthily approached their objective and, overcoming the guard on the abutment, laid their charges. With the first streaks of dawn touched the sky they blew up the bridge, withdrew to the agreed rendezvous and were flown back. This action was subsequently commented upon in official dispatches.

Some months went by and as the excitement

of their past exploits began to fade, life became dull. It looked as if the KFRE might end their days on chores. However, an order arrived transferring the force to Egypt, this time by orthodox method of transport and without adventure. Thereafter the party was absorbed into the Middle East Forces (MEF) and fought against the Afrika Korps alongside the Eighth Army.

Sometimes these sappers were under the command of larger units; at other times they were out in small detachments on a variety of tasks that can only be listed by reference to the RE pocket book (with amendments!).

The tide of war at last turned. Attack and advance were the order of the day and the sappers of the Eighth Army took part in the spectacular and decisive victories which led up to the great advance from the Egyptian frontier through Cyrenaica, Tripoli and on to Tunisia.

Although the actions of the XD forces remained secret at the time there was official appreciation—the KFRE became the most highly decorated unit in the British Army at that time. Major Brazier received an OBE, three officers (Captains R. Keeble, T.F.T. Goodwin and B. Baxter) received Distinguished Service Orders (DSO), Second Lieutenant B.J. Ashwell received the Military Cross (MC). A Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) was awarded to Corporal J.T. Hearnden and three NCOs (Staff Sergeant A.H. Smart, Sergeant A.R. Blake and Corporal J. Matthews) received Military Medals (MM).



# DECADENT

## THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

**Y**ES, BELIEVE IT OR NOT we've been doing this for ten years. To celebrate, instead of our usual summer and Christmas parties, the Glorious Committee decided to throw our scant energies into one big birthday party last Saturday instead. As such, the event wasn't really themed in the way our normal bashes are, but had a general "DECADent" theme (see what we did there?) and a nostalgic air, looking back at our previous 19 parties.

The venue was the events room at Cecil's in London Bridge, a strange space done up like an indoor garden of earthly delights, full of trellising and astroturf, including its own treehouse and fake trees bearing fake fruit. For entertainment we had expert DJing from Auntie Maureen, joined by Member Jennifer Grundulis belting out

some classics, plus the incomparable Mr B. the Gentleman Rhymer, creator of Chap Hop and a stalwart of a number of our earlier parties.



We had three games this time: one was a return of the Indoor Tiger Shoot from our Mad Dogs and Englishmen party of 2008, where contestants shot at a cuddly tiger with the ancestral foam dart gun; but to simulate the problems of firing from a moving howdah players had to sit balancing on a Swiss ball (feet off the ground!). This seemed to tax people more than I remember it doing eight years ago, but I guess we're all older now. The second game was Ten Green Bottles, in which contestants were presented with ten little bottles and

had to identify the Chappism-related aromas emitting from each one (gin, tea, pipe tobacco, linseed oil, petrol, plus more abstruse ones like

the north face of the Eiger). Finally, our Ten Commandments Bowling game involved a ten-pin bowling set, with each pin named after a Commandment. Using a spinner, players were randomly issued with a Commandment to break by knocking over that pin (and only that pin). If a player hit the right pin they scored ten points, but they lost a point for every incorrect pin they also knocked over. (The winner was Susi O'Neill, the only person to take out the target pin and nothing else.)

To keep our blood sugar up we had arranged for a container-load of pizzas to arrive at 8.30, made at the excellent pizzeria next door.

Rounding off the evening was our traditional Grand Raffle, and it was particularly grand this time: in addition to a range of decadence-themed smaller items we also had some exquisite prizes donated by sponsors: Stewart Christie, the oldest tailor in Scotland, gave us a voucher for made-to-measure trows worth £350, Atelier Milliners gave us two splendid hats, Murdock London gave us a voucher for a luxury barbershop experience, Spencer's Trousers gave us a voucher for trousers in any of their wide range of fabrics, Laird Hatters gave us £100 in vouchers and the Black Tie Ballroom Club gave two tickets to one of their events and two dance classes. Moreover,

thanks to SW4 Gin (The Gin of Champions!)



"Chuckles" Youngusband puts in sterling effort on the decadence front



Davina and some gin

everyone took home a bespoke miniature bottle of the juniper nectar. Thanks to all of these fine institutions for their support, and thanks to all who came along on the night and helped make it such a stonking good time. Here's to the next ten years!

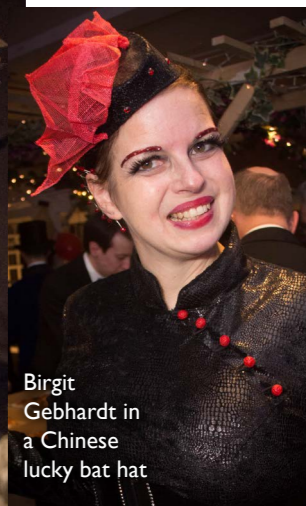
**For many more photos see the Club Flickr account.**



Auntie Maureen and Suzanne Coles



Pandora Harrison



Birgit Gebhardt in a Chinese lucky bat hat



The Glorious Committee for Life: the men who will not be hanged for nothing



(Left) Rupert Bell as a rabbit with Stuart Turner; (above) Fiona's Lucky Dip prize: (right) Stuart and Frances Mitchell; (left) Jennifer sings!



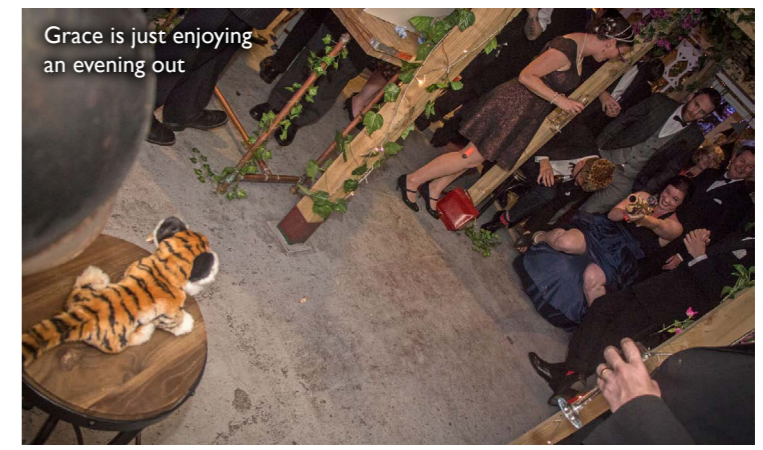
The Ten Green Bottles game: each bottle contains a mystery liquid producing an aroma associated with Chappism; (right) Pandora is clearly not enjoying this particular fragrance



(And below) George Tudor-Hart takes a succession of women for a spin round the dance floor



Zack tries to balance for the Tiger Shoot



Grace is just enjoying an evening out



Susi takes aim

Jack, like many, fails to stay on the ball long enough to hit anything



Jack Defer and Louise Newton, photo-bombed by Zack



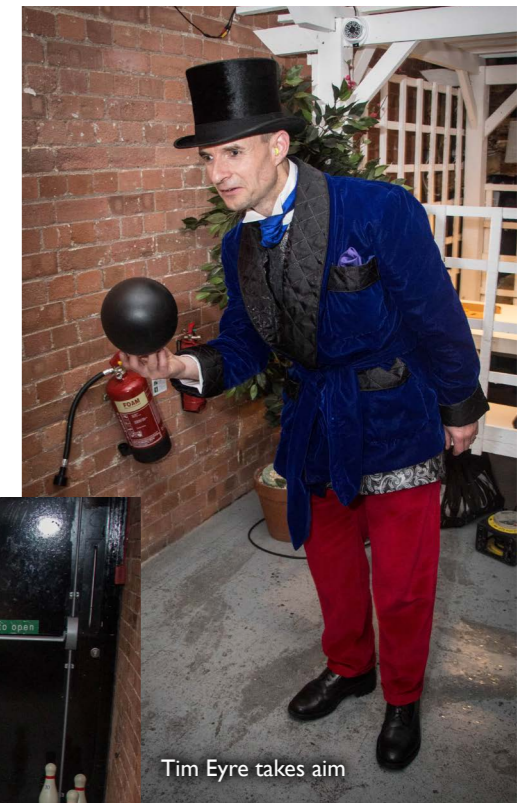
Adrian Prooth



This is the shot that won Gabriel the game: you can see the dart bouncing off the tiger's head



Ten Commandments Bowling: it was a lightweight toy set and avoiding knocking over the wrong pins was extremely difficult



Tim Eyre takes aim



Mrs Palmer-Lewis learns how tough this game is

(Below) Susi O'Neill consults the Wheel of Justice to see which pin she must target—and succeeds in



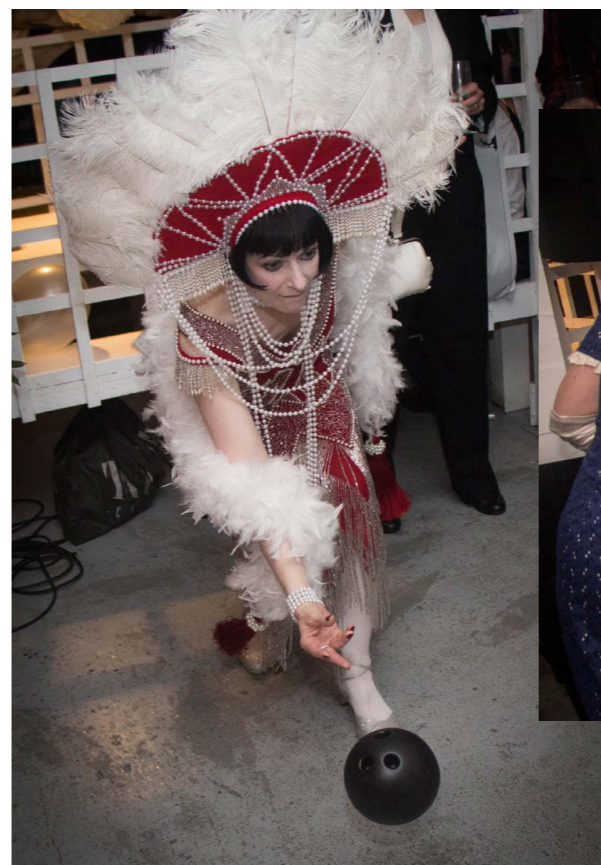
hitting just that one (below), a unique feat that won her the game



All Hail the Chap! Mr B. takes to the stage; (bottom) lighters in the air! (Right) An historic meeting: Mr B., Champagne Charlie and Auntie Maureen



(Below) Pandora, being American, has a natural aptitude







Matthew Howard gives a speech and everyone seizes the opportunity to go to the loo



Mrs H. receives a bouquet for all her artistic handwork



Maximillion Conrad wins a shisha pipe



Doggedly camera-shy Richard D'Astardly wins the Murdock voucher for a luxury barbering experience



New Members Ridade Starsies (left) and Mirek Lawrowski (above) are blooded in the raffle; (above right) Ed wins a smoking hat made by Lorna



As odd luck would have it the lady's hat from Atelier was won by Stewart (above) and the gent's bowler by Grace (right); (below) Giles Culpepper scores the Stewart Christie prize



Mark Gidman with the first of four Laird hatters voucher won by lucky guests



Kellyanne O'Callaghan wins the voucher from Spencer's Trousers



(Above) Oliver's mask is actually a prop from the Shoot the Top Hat Off the Plutocrat game from our Kredit Krunch Kabaret party of 2008; (left) Ellie Turner wins a DVD of Cabaret; (far left) Von Gregory gets the inaugural Suzi Livingstone Prize of a DVD of The Mummy

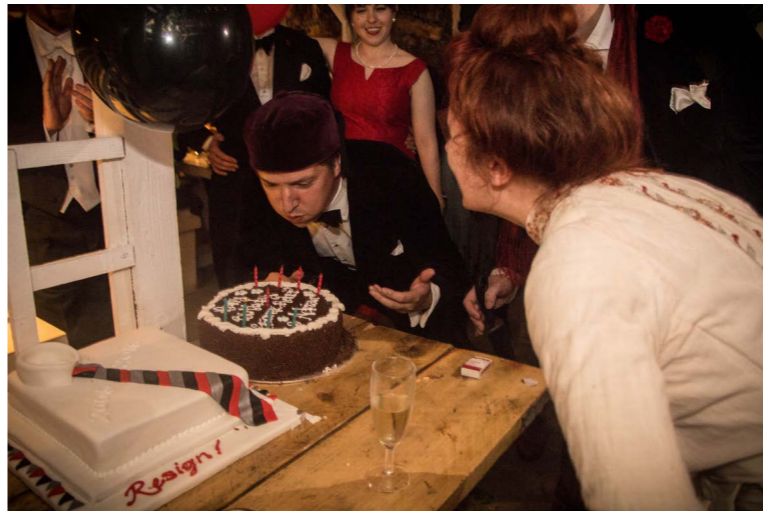




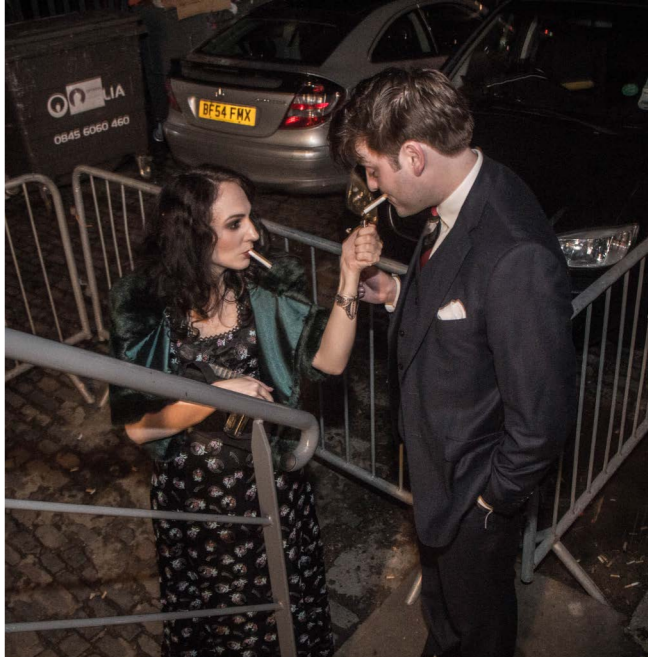
Miss Minna wins Naked Lunch and things start to get a bit rowdy



Auntie Maureen wins a bottle of Glenfiddich kindly donated by Member Malakai Halcyon



Adrian, Robert and George share a birthday cake (above), while a gin craze erupts, dancing breaks out and cigarettes are smoked



(Left) Cyril wins a packet of Forbidden Fruit Pastilles (see detail above); (below) Charles takes the star prize: framed profiles of the Glorious Committee



Craigoh's luck finally changes: he wins a Ferrero Rocher chocolate



Truly the Gin of Champions



(Right) In his eyrie, Scarheart plots



# Fighting the Good Fight

OUR STAUNCH SUPPORTERS WHO HELPED MAKE THE PARTY A CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONAL STYLE AND QUALITY

## SW4 Gin

A friend of both the NSC and the Candlelight Club pretty much since our inception, SW4 is an excellent fit with the Club—a gin that knows it's a gin, a polished, high-quality execution of a traditional style, specifically formulated to make the perfect gin and tonic.

“SW4 London Distilled Gin is a big and complex gin made in the style of the original London Dry Gins of the mid- to late-19th century,” explains Master Distiller Charles Maxwell. “It has twelve botanicals in its recipe, with juniper heavily predominant. Behind that come the citrus and spice notes, from botanicals such as lemon peel and cassia, giving fullness and complexity. The whole is brought together by the orris.

“Gins of this style pre-date the cocktail era of the early 20th century, which gave rise to the austere and less complex gins of that time. The older gins were made to show at their best



when mixed with water, ginger beer and, most especially, tonic. SW4 has taken this heritage and brings you the 21st-century version of the classic gin style.”

## Murdock of London

Murdock is the brainchild of Brendan Murdock who, dissatisfied with modern unisex salons, wanted to create a grooming experience inspired by the tradition of St James's, a welcoming, masculine environment where a gent could relax with his favourite tittle while enjoying a skilled wet shave, beard trim or haircut. These services are now offered at seven London barber shops, deemed by *The Times* to

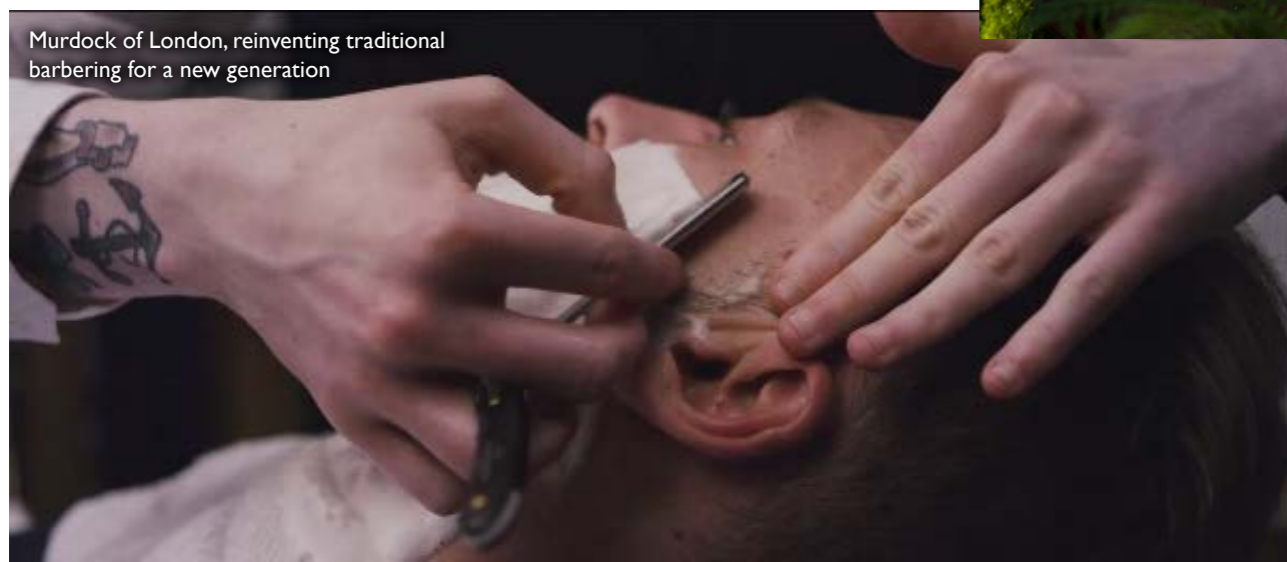
be “a one-stop shop for the discerning dandy”. Back in Newsletter 49 Fruity Hatfield-Peverell reviewed the Murdock experience.

## Stewart Christie

The oldest tailor in Scotland, dating back to 1720, with invoices on file for Sir Walter Scott and numerous Royals, Stewart Christie has a long tradition of offering country wear and holding estate and family tweeds and tartans for clients north and south of the border. Times



Whisky expert Charlie MacLean in a Stewart Christie Inverness cape



Murdock of London, reinventing traditional barbering for a new generation

have been hard for a traditional business like this in the modern age and a new management team have recently taken on the challenge of keeping the craft alive, combining made-to-measure and fully bespoke service with a range of branded clothes and accessories. A ladieswear department opens next month (for the first time in 300 years). For our raffle they offered a pair of tweed or tartan trews worth £350. Subscribe to their mailing list (see [www.stewartchristie.com](http://www.stewartchristie.com)) as they will be giving away free places in their gentlemen's club at Christmas.

## Atelier Milliners

Founded by milliner Georgina Abbott when her ability to source unusual supplies exceeded her personal requirements, Atelier provides bespoke pieces, ready-to-wear hats and fascinators and the raw materials if you fancy making your own, from their own shop in Smith's Court, off London's Brewer Street, a stone's throw from Liberty. They also offer a wealth of courses so you can learn the art of hatting. For our raffle they offered two hats, a lime-coloured lady's number and a plum bowler hat for the gents. Georgina is also the driving force behind London Hat Week which opens this Thursday.



Laird: if you want to get ahead, get a hat...

The two prizes from Atelier Milliners

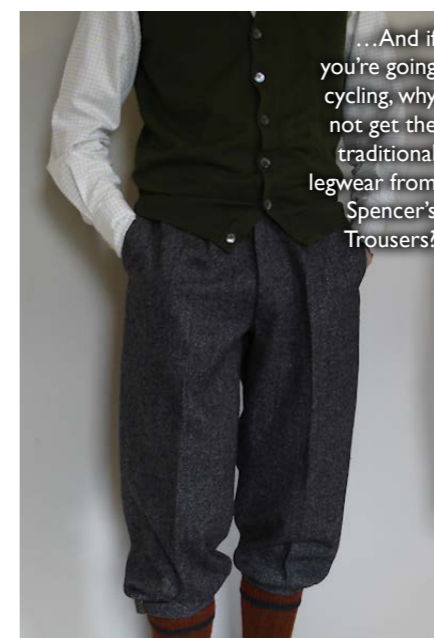


London Fashion Week and London Collections: Men, and they are sponsoring the London Hat Walk next Sunday as part of London Hat Week.

## Spencer's Trousers

Founded in 1920 by R.E. Spencer, this firm offer solidly constructed, traditional trousers, breeks, plus twos and plus fours, handmade in-house at their premises in Yorkshire's

Upper Calder Valley. They offer a huge range of fabrics, all sourced in the UK, including some 400 authentic tartans. They also have a close association with neighbours Brisbane Moss, one of the last producers of corduroy and moleskin in Britain. For our raffle they offered one pair of trousers in the fabric of your choice.



...And if you're going cycling, why not get the traditional legwear from Spencer's Trousers?

## Black Tie Ballroom Club

George Tudor-Hart's monthly meeting place for ballroom and swing dancers to gather in elegant period evening dress, dancing to live music



from the strict tempo Kewdos Dance Orchestra.

## Laird Hatters

Founded in 2009 to bring quality headwear to the general public, evoking a rich English and Scottish heritage but with a modern twist, Laird now have three London shops and one in Cambridge. Keen to make hats relevant to the modern customer, their designs regularly feature in

# ALL YESTERDAY'S PARTIES

**Christmas 2006: The Beau Brummell Boogie:** a general party at the Rampage, Holborn.

**Summer 2007: The Last Gasper,** marking the very last day on which you could smoke in a pub. Much tobacco was consumed in many forms. Games included Smoke-Ring Blowing, Pin the Cigar on Winston Churchill and Endurance Pipe Smoking. There was music from David Saxby and poetry from Niall Spooner-Harvey.



**Christmas 2007: Murder, Mystery and Mayhem at Sheridan Towers,** at the Penderel's Oak, celebrating the country house murder mystery. There was an ongoing murder mystery to solve using clues around the venue, plus Pin the Moustache on Poirot, some police mugshots

of famous people to identify and a composite photo of five famous murderers to unravel. Also featured the NSC Barbershop Quartet, Niall Spooner-Harvey, and the first appearance of Mr B.

**Summer 2008: Mad Dogs and Englishmen,** at Positively 4th Street (since closed down), a colonial wheeze featuring an Indoor Tiger Shoot (starting a tradition of shooting games at every event since), an electric buzzer game to steal grave goods and a puzzle to match up colonial countries with their modern equivalents. Mr B.

and Niall returned, along with Noel Coward piano noodling from Joe Paice and musical buffoonery from Lobby Ludd.

**Christmas 2008: The Kredit**



Cheese-rolling at Tempting Fête (I can't explain the presence of Sooty)

A round-up of all 19 previous New Sheridan Club parties



The Last Gasper



The original Tiger Shoot at Mad Dogs and Englishmen



The Kredit Krunch Kabaret

**Krunch Kabaret,** a Weimar theme in honour of the financial crisis, the first of our events at the Punch Tavern. We had Shoot the Top Hat Off the Plutocrat and Blind Man's Dada, in which blindfolded contestants had to reassemble a photo of Chairman Torquil that had been cut into component parts, the results of which constituted whole new art movements. (The image was printed on to magnetic paper so the pieces could be arranged on a metal surface.)



Onion Battle at Yes, We Can-Can

In addition to cabaret from Maria Trevis and burlesque from Miss Dolly Tartan we also booked German Comedy Ambassador Henning Wehn—who's now quite well known—but he got a hernia and cancelled.

**Summer 2009: Tempting Fête,** a celebration of the traditional English village fête, held at the City Tavern near Bank. We had a tombola, a prize for the most impressive vegetable anyone brought along and a Cheese Rolling Game, in which cheeses were rolled down a grassy slope in an attempt to hit Action Man dressed as a morris man. I think

Action Man has appeared at every party since. Entertainment featured Mr B. once more, plus the Fitzrovia Radio Hour and a demonstration of Bartitsu. The fête was officially opened by local vicar George Bush, rector of St Mary Le Bow, who declared the event "imaginatively conceived and impressively executed".

**Christmas 2009: Yes We Can-Can,** a French themed party back at the Punch Tavern.



The Far Pavilions

Games were Pin the Legs Back on the Frog and Onion Battle (a variant of Orange Battle), where contestants must retain an onion balanced on a spoon while trying to dislodge their opponent's onion with another spoon. Entertainment came from comedian Marcel Lucont and chanteuse Maria Trevis.

**Summer 2010: The Far Pavilions,** held at the short-lived Salon d'Été (which closed down immediately afterwards) the tropical interior of which inspired this theme of colonial decadence. Games include Poppadom Clay Pigeon Shooting and Shaving With a Hangover, in which contestants had to shave a balloon without bursting it. Entertainment came from band Twin and Tonic, plus DJing from our own MC Fruity.



Priest-dragging at Back to the Futurists

**Christmas 2010: Back to the Futurists,** a sort of Expressionist Ball celebrating all things avant garde. Games were Shoot the Lobster Off the Telephone, Priest Dragging (referencing the scene in surreal movie *Un Chien Andalou* and consisting of pulling the long-suffering Curé Michael Silver on an office chair through a slalom of SW4 Gin bottles)

plus Dear Dada, in which guests write down questions and answer other questions without being able to see what the question is, creating some engagingly surreal responses.

**Summer 2011: Kiss Me Quick!** a celebration of the great British seaside holiday, held at the Tea House Theatre. Games included guiding a seagull on the end of a stick to seize chips, sinking the Spanish Armada and of course a knobbly knees contest.



Kiss Me Quick!

**Christmas 2011: Tinker, Tailor, Dandy Spy**, with a spies and secret agents theme, back at the Punch Tavern. The games were Berlin Wall Jenga (using a giant Jenga set painted to look like the Berlin Wall, complete with authentic graffiti) and a game to shoot a Sean Connery action figure through a moving cutout of the gun-barrel animation from the opening sequence of the James Bond movies. Entertainment came from comedy magician Christian Lee.



Berlin Wall Jenga at Tinker, Tailor, Dandy, Spy

Shoot the Crutch from the Cripple, with Action Man playing the role of Tiny Tim (and a crutch ingeniously made from an adapted chop stick). Entertainment came from Mr B.

**Summer 2013: South of the Border**, a Mexican-themed fiesta, held at the Adam Street Club. The, now traditional, shooting game was Shoot

the Wine Glass Off the Head of Joan Vollmer, referencing William S. Burrough's accidental shooting of his wife in Mexico while showing off their "William Tell routine") and an Aztec ritual sacrifice game, using a modified *Operation* game mounted on a ziggurat. And of course there was a Chappist piñata for blindfolded contestants to hit with a stick. Music came from Mariachi Jalisco.



Shooting Joan Vollmer at South of the Border

**Christmas 2013: All Over By Christmas**, in recognition of the WWI anniversary the next year, held at the Adam Street Club. Games included shooting a remote-controlled toy Zeppelin while blindfolded and a table football game lovingly modified so the players were British and German WWI soldiers. Entertainment came from Patricia Hammond singing popular songs of the era.



Table Trench Football at All Over By Christmas



Pin the Safety Pin on the Queen at Never Mind the Jubilee...

**Summer 2012: Never Mind the Jubilee... It's the NSC Summer Party!** A royalty-themed bash at the Tea House in honour of Her Majesty's jubilee attended by royals and Sex-Pistols-era punks in equal measure. Games included Pin the Safety Pin on the Queen, Who's Queen? (in which players had to toss a crown, quoits-style, on to the



Action Man as Tiny Tim

head of Rachel Downer) and Shoot the Romanovs in a Basement. We had music from Lobby Ludd and the Luddites and Niall Spooner-Harvey reading a specially penned Jubilee poem.

**Christmas 2012: What the Dickens?** In honour of Charles Dickens's 200th birthday we themed the party around him, with the venue once more the Punch Tavern. We had a pocket-picking buzzer game, to lift a pocket watch from a pocket without touching the sides, and

**Summer 2014: The Curse of Pharaoh Sheri-Dan**, an Egyptian lark held at the Adam Street Club again (which sadly closed down after this). The games were Shoot the Nose Off the Sphinx, Unwrap the Mummy (essentially Pass the Parcel) and the Tomb Raider game, in which faithful servant Abdul (played by Action Man) is lowered into a tomb and must hook as many grave goods as possible in 60 seconds. Music came from the Top Shelf Band, for whom wearing the fez is second nature.



Tomb raiding and (left) live music from Top Shelf at the Curse of Pharaoh Sheri-Dan

**Summer 2015: 20,000 Cocktails Under the Sea**, a maritime themed party at the Water Poet pub in Spitalfields. Games included shooting Nelson (i.e. Action Man) from a French crow's nest and harpooning a white whale, plus a contest to design a non-Euclidian undersea city to house dread Cthulhu in his sleep of aeons. Music came from the grog-sodden, accordion-driven sick shanties of the Bohemianauts.



Chloe's curious hat at Curiouser and Curiouser



Be seeing you! I Am Not a Number...

**Christmas 2014: I Am Not a Number, I Am a Free Chap!** Referencing dapper Mods and 1960s dandyism in general, and TV show *The Prisoner* in particular, held at The Bear (which closed down shortly afterwards—do you see a pattern emerging here?). In direct reference to the show one game

required one contestant to try and rescue The Prisoner (played by Action Man as usual) with a helicopter on the end of a pole, while another player tried to swat the figure by bowling balloons part-filled with water, representing Rover from the series. Another game required players to shoot JFK in the back of a remote-controlled car.



White whale hunting at 20,000 Cocktails Under the Sea

**Christmas 2015: Curiouser and Curiouser**, taking its theme from the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice in Wonderland*. Games were Shoot the Hat Off the Mad Hatter and Umbrella Croquet, using hoops made from giant playing cards, plus Drink Me!, in which all guests were given a phial of an anonymous cocktail and were challenged to name the ingredients.

# 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.*



## Jack Defer

"Life is full of discovery."

### Name or preferred name?

Jack William James Defer.

### Why that nickname or nom de plume?

My dear mother gave me the name at birth and I thought it terribly rude to part with it.

### Where do you hail from?

I was born and raised in south east London, I

spent my secondary school years in Kent and now reside in Surrey

### Favourite Cocktail?

I do enjoy a Corpse Reviver No.2. I believe the best one I've had was in an Oxfordshire bar after the annual punting trip.

### Most Chappist skill?

The ability to steep an eclectic range of teas in a reasonably proper manner.

### Most Chappist possession?

A gentleman's grooming kit that has accompanied me on many of my travels to places such as Germany, Turkey and America.

### Personal Motto?

Life's full of discovery so pop the kettle on and let's crack on with it.

### Favourite Quote?

"A man who procrastinates in his choosing will inevitably have his choice made for him by circumstance." — Hunter S Thompson

"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it." —Pablo Picasso

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

I have a deep love for cooking. I try to test myself with ever more



challenging dishes. A few weeks ago I attempted Dodine de Canard aux Pistaches, the recipe of which reads like a french Frankenstein film involving a whole duck, pistachios, butcher's twine and a lot of brandy... All in all, rather nice.

**How long have you been involved with the NSC?**  
I joined this year in January and jolly glad I did.

**How did you hear about the Club to begin with?**  
I occasionally work at A Curious Invitation and meet new and bizarre people. One of which was Andy Webb (Chopper) who invited Jess and me to last year's Chap Olympiad where I discovered the NSC.

**What one thing would you recommend to fellow Members and why (cocktail, night out, tailor, watchmaker, public house, etc.)?**  
I would suggest the Tring museum of natural history. It is a fair journey out of London but an excellent day out for any Club Member who possesses a penchant for taxidermy or natural history. After you have gazed upon all the delights of the museum, take a short stroll to the end of the road where you will find a superb bistro. You are advised not to go during term times as the museum echoes little children's screams most tremendously.

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

Charles Darwin, for engaging conversation about the natural world.  
Bombardier Beckford (Rik Mayall) for comedic prowess and complementary ale.  
Captain Nemo, because I do love a good sea tale.

**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?**



I have yet to do a Turn. I believe somebody has covered the history of absinthe so I may prattle on about tea or spin you a yarn about my great uncle Bert who was a fire fighter in the Second World War.

*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.*





CLUB NOTES

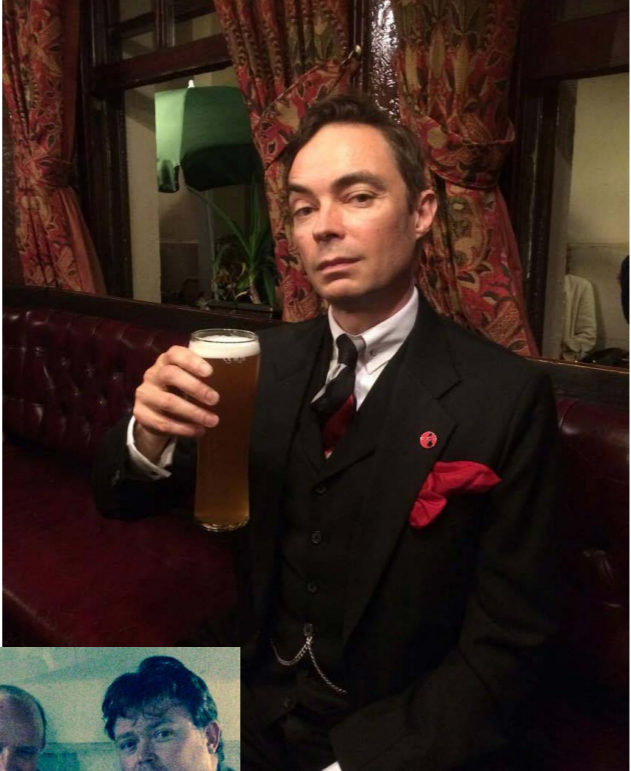
# So. Farewell then, Dover Castle

MANY HAVE OBSERVED that 2016 has been a bumper for groovy people dying—Bowie, Prince, Lemmy, Alan Rickman... And now there has been another death in the family.

I don't actually know why we started gathering at the Dover Castle pub in Weymouth Mews—especially when you consider that it is not even the same pub where we have our monthly Club Nights—but it is a tradition that, I believe, predates the New Sheridan Club itself. It was a Sam Smith's pub, so prices were relatively low. But, as many have observed, the wine was rubbish and the food was pretty awful too. But, hell, it was ours. There was a back room that we regularly took over, and an intimate courtyard for smokers. For years we always gathered there just before Christmas to check that Lord Mendrick was still alive (a tradition so longstanding that no one can agree what it actually is—always the last Friday before Christmas or just a mutually agreed convenient date?).

And now it is no more. On Friday 23rd September it closed its doors for the last time. Unusually for a Sam Smith's pub the premises were not owned by the brewery but leased, and when Craigoh and I visited to pay our respects on the Thursday the barmaid told me the place was being turned into a bistro. A handful of Sheridanites also stopped in to say goodbye on the Friday too, as evidenced here.

The old order changeth, of course, yielding place to new: I strongly suspect we'll find another tavern to continue our traditional pre-Christmas gathering. Watch this space...

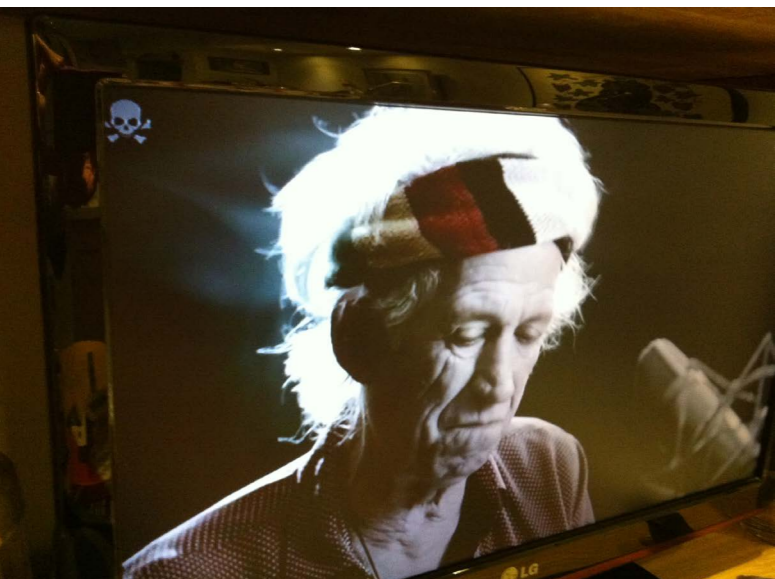


This page: our last visits on 22nd and 23rd September. Opposite: photos from 1944, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Note how Mendrick (top right) isn't dead



# Club Tie Corner

A BUMPER CLUMP of spots (this page, clockwise from right): Pat O'Brien in *Bombshell* (1933, spotted by Col. Cyrus Choke); a geezer on *Antiques Roadshow* (Actuarius); a bizarre blazer spotted by Callum Coates; a jacket in Camden Stables Market (Stewart Vickers); Counties Manukau rugby team, South Auckland (Incy); and Keith Richards in Club bandana (Mrs H.). Opposite: a genuine tie sported by "Chuckles" Younghusband in the Des river in Western Iran; a bloke spotted by Stuart Mitchell in Sardinia; Arnold Palmer (Stephen Myhill); New York Mayor Bill de Blasio's secret service detail (Oliver Lane); and another genuine tie, worn by Stuart Mitchell at the European Court of Justice, Luxembourg.







## 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 5th October  
7pm–11pm  
Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf,  
25 Rathbone  
Place, London W1T 1JB  
Members: Free  
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)  
See page 2.

### **Cakewalk Café**

Every Wednesday  
7pm–1am  
Passing Clouds,  
1 Richmond Road, Dalston, London E8 4AA  
Admission: Free before 9pm, £5 after that

Dress: 1920s/1930s preferred

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

### **The Golden Era of Jazz**

Every Thursday  
7pm  
Jamboree, 566 Cable Street, London E1W 3HB  
Admission: Free before 8pm, £4 between 8 and 9.30, £5 after that

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

### **London Hat Week**

Thursday 6th–Wednesday 12th October  
London

More than 70 titter-related events going on, from retail discounts (Lock & Co Hatters one-off sample sale, anyone?) to millinery workshops, to supplier fairs to art exhibitions. If nothing else, join the London Hat Walk on Sunday 9th October (see below). LHW organiser Georgina Abbott, the woman behind Atelier Millinery, kindly donated two hats as a raffle prize for our recent party. More on the week's activities at [www.londonhatweek.com](http://www.londonhatweek.com).

### **The Candlelight Club's 6th Birthday Party**

Friday 7th and Saturday 8th October  
7pm–12am  
A secret London location  
Admission: £20 in advance (Saturday sold out)

The Candlelight Club is a clandestine 1920s speakeasy party in a secret London venue completely lit by candles, with live period jazz bands, cabaret and vintage vinylism. The bar dispenses vintage cocktails and the kitchens offer bar snacks and sharing platters, as well as a fine-dining set menu option.

Believe it or not, it's been six years since we first started doling out the hooch and blowing a mean horn. To celebrate we'll have live music from cheeky Frenchman Benoit Viellefon and his Quintet, plus vintage vinylism

Happy Birthday, Candlelight Club. Love from Vinnie and the boys



from the NSC's own DJ Auntie Maureen spinning shellac. And keeping everyone in order with a song, a slap and a tickle will be that Lord of Cabaret Misrule, Champagne Charlie.

Guests receive an email two days before revealing the secret location and are encouraged to dress in 1920s outfits—so pull on your flapper dress and get ready to Charleston!

“The closest you'll find to an authentic Jazz Age experience in central London. Its unique ambience, fuelled by hundreds of candles, is truly a scene to behold.” —Time Out

As seen last summer on BBC2's *Hair!* More at [www.thecandlelightclub.com](http://www.thecandlelightclub.com). See the video.

### **London Hat Walk**

Sunday 9th October  
1pm  
23–23a New Row, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4LA  
Admission: Free  
Dress: A hat, obviously

An excuse to stop traffic with your finest tile. Begin outside Laird Hatters' Covent Garden location with coffee and cakes (although a little bird tells me whisky will be involved at some point), after which the assembled hat-wearing mob will promenade through London. More at <http://www.londonhatweek.com/event/laird-hatters-promenade-london-hat-walk-2016>.

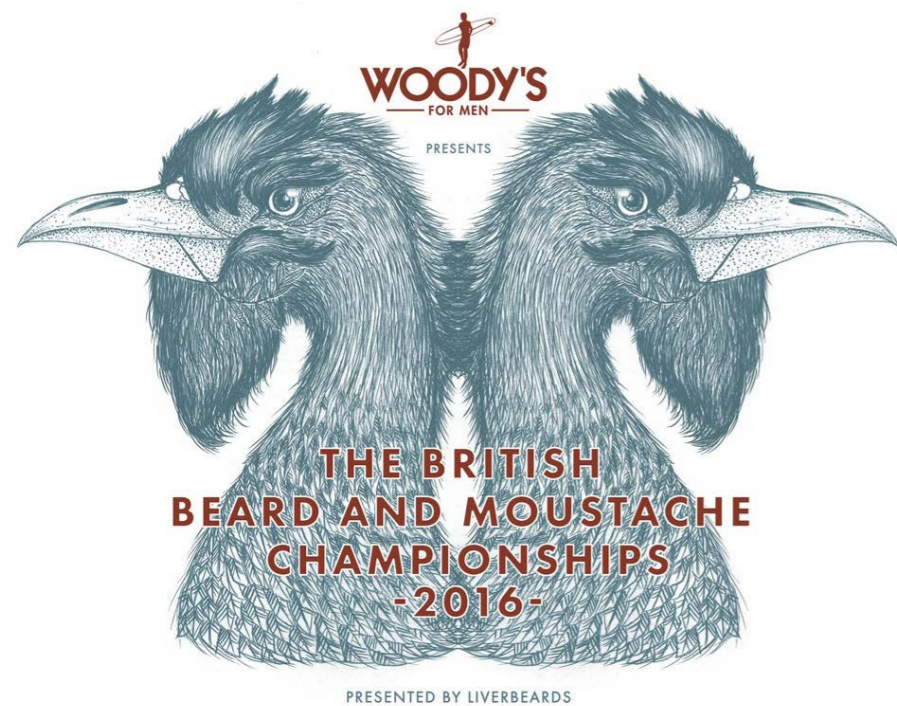
### **Black Tie Ballroom Club**

Friday 14th October  
7.30–11.30pm  
The Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ (020 7387 0411)  
Admission: £10 in advance, £15 on the door

Benoit Viellefon at his last Candlelight Club appearance



Get ready to walk the Hat Walk



phone George Tudor-Hart on 020 8542 1490. For more details see the Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/BlackTieBallroomClub](http://www.facebook.com/BlackTieBallroomClub).

**The British Beard and Moustache Championships**

Saturday 15th October  
10am–7pm  
St George’s Hall, St George’s Place, Liverpool L1  
Admission: £15 for spectators, £20 for competitors (from liverbeards. [bigcartel.com](http://bigcartel.com))

Beards, moustaches, natural and styled, are invited to join hosts The Liverbeards in Liverpool for the third British Beard and Moustache Championships, an open event welcoming competitors with or without affiliation to facial hair clubs and of all nationalities. Tickets include entry to all events under the championships umbrella, across the championships weekend. The day begins with the parade in St George’s Hall Gardens at 10am, followed by registration at St George’s Hall. The competition begins at 11.30am. There is also an after-party at the Jacaranda Club.

Dress code: Strictly black tie, evening dress or vintage

**The Eccentric Club Open Convivial Meeting**

Friday 21st October  
6.47pm  
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE  
Admission: £20 for members, £25 for guests, in advance

Dress code: Strictly black tie, evening dress or vintage

Evening tea dance on a large sprung floor to vintage records plus a one-hour set from the ten-piece Kewdos strict tempo dance orchestra with vocals from operatic baritone Alistair Sutherland. Quickstep, foxtrot, waltz, tango, jive, swing, rumba plus some cha cha, samba and Charleston. Ballroom dance lesson for absolute beginners from 7pm to 7.30 pm. No need to bring a partner. Balcony with tables and chairs for those who prefer not to dance. Five male and female taxi dancers available at no extra charge for all guests. Quickstep “bus stop”, “snowball” and “excuse me” waltz and five minutes of instruction in one sequence dance. Our new venue is the Indian YMCA in the beautiful Fitzroy Square, five minutes walk from Warren Street and Euston station. The dance floor is on the lower ground floor with large opening windows, so there’s plenty of fresh air. Upstairs, the canteen with a garden serves a set two course authentic vegetarian meal for only £9. Any questions please



Dress: Eccentrically overdressed, glamorous (expressly no trainers, as if you needed telling); 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.

**October Plenty**

Sunday 23rd October  
From noon  
Bankside, London, outside Shakespeare’s Globe  
Admission: Free

Mummers the Lions part (featuring our own Callum Coates) invite everyone to their 20th Autumn Harvest celebration in association with Borough Market’s 9th Apple Day, beginning on Bankside near Shakespeare’s Globe at noon and continuing at Southwark’s historic Borough Market. A glorious collective celebration of the seasons, weather and food, October Plenty mixes ancient seasonal customs and contemporary festivity with theatre performance. (For full details of the plays presented see the Facebook event.) Join the procession, sample food, cider and apple juice, play apple games and see the Ravensbourne Morris dancers. All afternoon a little orchard of young apple trees creates a space for storytelling for children with master storyteller Pat Ryan. Discover the apples of old England before they all disappear! Enjoy our display of London-related types: taste the old, the rare, the local



and the downright odd. Bring your own mystery apples and see if they can identify them! At the end of the day everyone is invited to visit & decorate the historic Cross Bones Graveyard in Red Cross Way.

**The Candlelight Club’s Halloween Spooktacular**

Friday 28th & Saturday 29th October  
7pm–12am  
A secret London location  
Admission: £20/25 in advance  
Dress: Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, degenerate aristos and decadent

aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

See above. The Jazz Age crowd loved nothing better than a fancy dress party (though their idea of a Halloween costume was more along the lines of coquettish witch or spider-web veil, as opposed to the gore-spattered zombies and toilet-roll mummy of today), so come and celebrate All Hallow’s Eve in Prohibition style, with host cabaret cove Champagne Charlie, live music from the appropriately named Silver Ghosts and DJing from Auntie Maureen.

**Mrs Peel’s Halloween Happening**

Saturday 29th October  
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 Halloween party of your dreams in a penthouse lounge club. Inspired by Emma Peel, the iconic character from *The Avengers*, played by Diana Rigg, this event features live music from the Bikini Beach Band, freakbeat and loungecore DJing, compère and lounge legend Count Indigo, go-go dancing, cocktails, psychedelic light effects and more. See [www.mrspeels.club](http://www.mrspeels.club).

This Lovecraftian vision is the result of an ill-advised expedition to the bottom of the Lucky Dip tub at our party. Modelled by Louise Newton



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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](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).