

Café Batavia

Tim Eyre finds an oasis of Chappist calm in deepest Jakarta

Want to be evil?

Club probes pros and cons of villainy

Gobbledygook

Adrian Prooth on the joys of talking nonsense

My sherry amour

Francis Giordanella on a much maligned and misunderstood beverage

RESIGN!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • No.159 • JANUARY 2020



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 **Thursday 2nd January** in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm, when Luca Jellinek will kick off 2020 in pugnacious fashion by asking, *What's so great about Art Deco?*

The Last Meeting

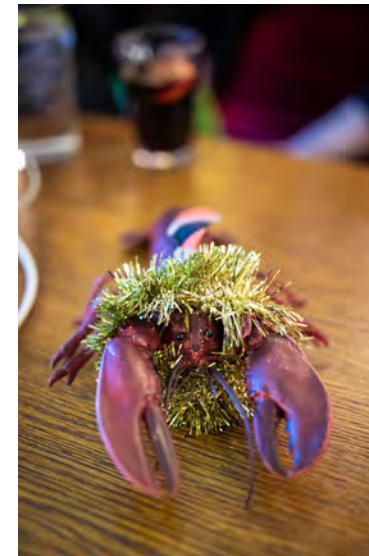
As is often the case at this time of year, we were a select band for the December meeting, which was a shame, as our speaker was Adrian Prooth, talking nonsense. Specifically, he addressed the British tradition of nonsense verse and prose, arguing that embracing it is good for the soul and an important and unique part of our culture. He looked at the likely suspects, such as Lewis Carroll and



Edward Lear, and examined how nonsense couldn't really exist without logic, and indeed some nonsense writing appeals because it seems to have its own internal logic, even though instinctively we know it to be nonsense. In other

cases made-up words strike a chord because they seem to fill a niche, and sound as if we know what they mean even though they don't technically mean anything (see examples from the *Uxbridge English Dictionary*, a spin-off from the Radio programme *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*, and Douglas Adams's *The Meaning of Liff*). Many thanks to Adrian for his stimulating lecture. Or, as Stanley Unwin may have had it, the brainwarmy burblegift and chucklewise. Deep joy.

Many thanks to Adrian for his observations. An essay version of this talk begins on page 4.



(Above left) Torquil opens proceedings; (above) Adrian looking benevolent; (above right) the Mitchells; (left) Bob the Lobster in his Christmas plumage; (right) Adrian



with nonsense god Lewis Carroll; (below) Philip Hancock started by the paparazzi



(Right) Stephen Myhill raises a point of order; (bottom, l-r) the Curé, James Rigby, the Earl of Essex and Francis in a splendid (artificial) fur coat



LET'S TALK NONSENSE

Adrian Prooth on the joys and importance of gobbledygook

NONSENSE IS A very important part of a chap's or chapette's armour. We could adopt a ruthlessly efficient Orwellian Newspeak for language, but that would lead to some kind of hellish world. Language should be deployed with a flourish and variety—making up words to give more expression to an object or just to show that you are not bound by such boring things as the dictionary. In fact making up words and conjuring strange worlds that, on the face of it, do not make sense was something that Shakespeare did.

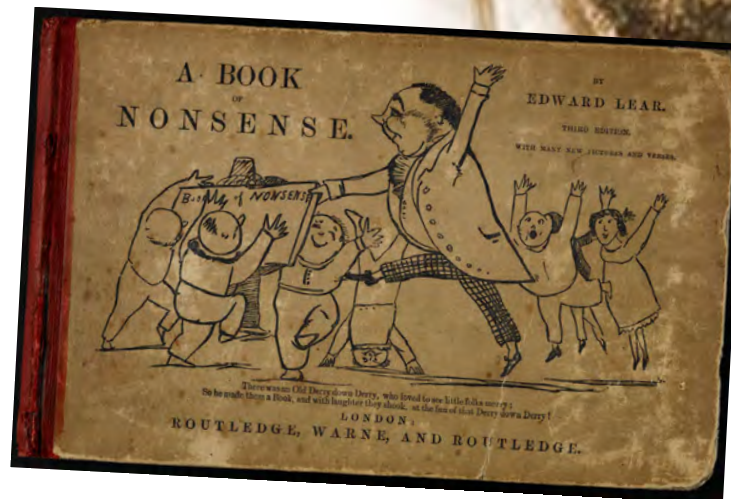
However, Edward Lear is considered to be the first true writer of nonsense. From him the baton passed through many hands—Lewis Carroll, Dr Seuss, Spike Milligan—and into the modern era on radio, with *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*, and television, with Monty Python leading the way. What follows is a short biography of three of the main writers in the movement.

Edward Lear

Born in 1812, Edward Lear is one of the most famous nonsense poets in the English language. He grew up in North London in a big family: his parents had 21 children and Lear was the 20th, though not all of his siblings survived infancy. Because of the family's difficulties with money, after the age of four Lear was raised by his eldest sister when they had to move out of their family home.

Throughout his life, Lear was a misfit. Although he had many close, lifelong friends, biographers say that Lear's intense love for his friends and family was never returned in quite the same way. Unlike his famous Owl and Pussy-Cat, Lear never married. Some of his

Edward Lear



biographers think he may have been in love with his friend Franklin Lushington, but Lushington didn't feel the same way, and this tormented Lear for years.

Lear also lived with lots of chronic illnesses, including

epilepsy, bronchitis, asthma and depression (which he called "the Morbids"). Because of the stigma of these illnesses, he felt ashamed all his life—especially because of his epilepsy, which wasn't really understood by doctors at the time.

But none of this stopped Lear from living a full life, travelling round the world and becoming a much-loved classic of the poetry canon, as well as a brilliant artist and musician.

Above all, Lear saw himself as an artist. He saw and drew so many different, magnificent

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

By Edward Lear

I
The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

II
Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"

They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

III
"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

landscapes across his life which probably influenced the nonsense landscapes in his poems.

Travel and migration are themes in many of Lear's most famous poems, like 'The Jumblies', 'The Owl and the Pussy-Cat' and 'The Dong with a Luminous Nose'. Aged 43, he decided he'd never live permanently in Britain again. He roamed the Mediterranean, eventually settling in San Remo in Italy, where he would die of heart disease in 1888, aged 75.

Lewis Carroll

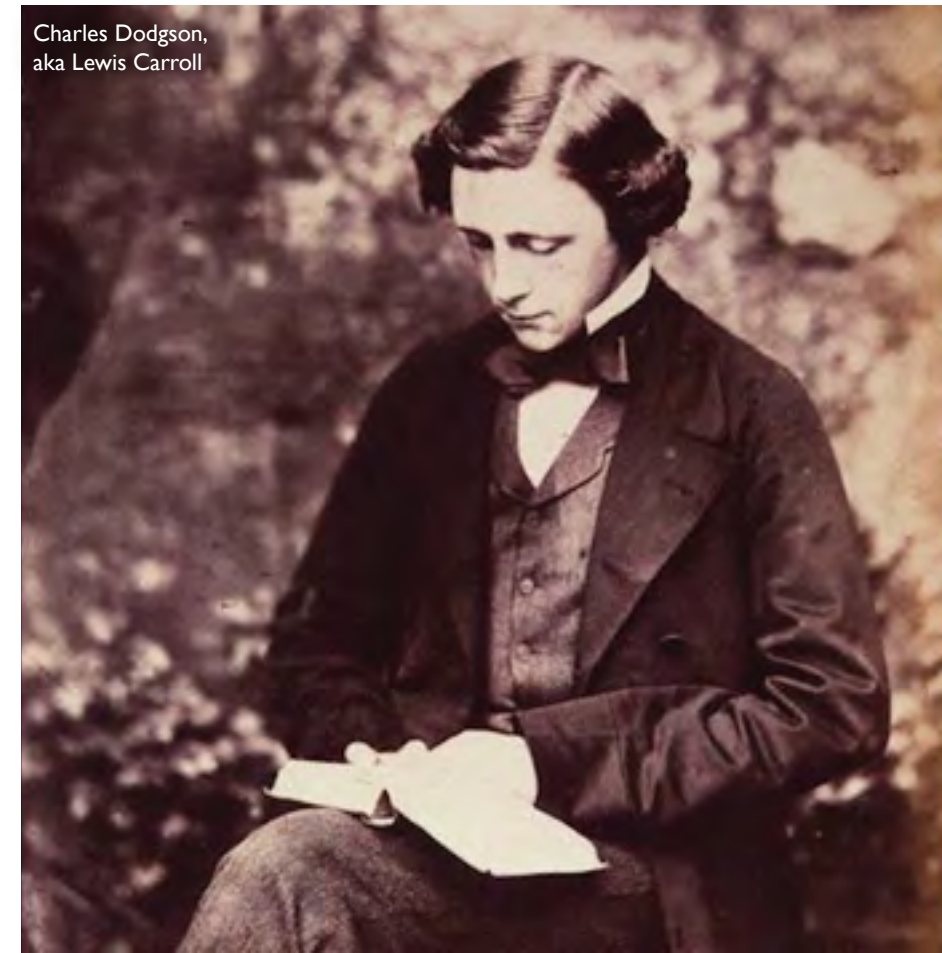
Lewis Carroll is the pseudonym of mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a *nom de plume* he adopted when publishing his famous children's novels and nonsense verse.

The son of a Cheshire parson, Dodgson grew up in a large family that enjoyed composing magazines and putting on plays. In 1851, he went to Christ Church College, Oxford. By 1855, he was a fellow (which necessitated celibacy), lecturing in mathematics. He occupied a tower in the college for the rest of his life. He wrote many

books on mathematics and logic, and enjoyed inventing puzzles and games and playing croquet.

His love of paradox and nonsense and his fondness for small children led to the writing of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), a story which he began while rowing Lorina, Alice, and

Charles Dodgson, aka Lewis Carroll



“Mine is a long and sad tale!” said the Mouse, turning to Alice and sighing.

“It is a long tail, certainly,” said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail; “but why do you call it sad?” And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:—“Fury said to



a mouse, That
 he met in the
 house, Let us
 both go to
 law: I will
 prosecute
 you.—Come,
 I’ll take no
 denial: We
 must have the
 trial; For
 really this
 morning I’ve
 nothing to do.
 Said the
 mouse to
 the cur,
 ‘Such a
 trial, dear
 sir, With
 no jury
 or judge,
 would
 be wast-
 ing our
 breath.
 ‘I’ll be
 judge,
 I’ll be
 jury,’ said
 un-
 ning
 old
 Fury: ‘I’ll
 try
 the
 whole,
 and,
 eon-
 demn
 you to
 death.’



Edith, the three small daughters of the College Dean, H.G. Liddell, up the Thames for a picnic near Binsey. A sequel, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, appeared in 1871. Interviewed when she was old, Alice remembered him as tall and slender, with blue-grey eyes, longish hair, and “carrying himself upright, almost more than upright, as if he had swallowed a poker”.

He published *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* in 1869, *The Hunting of the Snark* in 1876 and *Sylvie and Bruno* in 1889.

Dodgson wrote and received “wheelbarrows full” of letters (a letter register he started in his late twenties and kept for the rest of his life records more than 98,000 sent and received). Many of these were on religious and political

issues while others were full of light-hearted nonsense. He excelled in artfully staged photographs, many of children in costumes and others of friends, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He died, aged 65, of pneumonia.

Dr Seuss

Theodor Seuss Geisel, known to the world as Dr Seuss was born on 2nd of March 1904 in Howard Street, Springfield, Massachusetts. He is widely recognized for his contribution as a writer, poet and cartoonist. He wrote 46 books for children mainly based on imaginative characters and rhymes. His work has also been adopted into many television specials, feature films and television series.

Geisel credited his mother as his first inspiration. She often chanted rhymes to her children in order to sooth them to sleep which developed the desire and affection in Geisel to create rhymes. His early life in Springfield and the memories of his childhood

had an influence on his writings which can be observed in his work.

In 1925 Geisel left Springfield to commence his college education at Dartmouth College. There he became a member of the college’s humour magazine *Jack-O-Lantern*. Later he was raised to the rank of editor in chief of the magazine. His tenure as editor was short lived though because he was forced to resign from all extracurricular activities on being caught throwing a drinking party in his dorm. This however did not stop Geisel from making contributions to the magazine—and in order to continue his publications he started signing his work using “Seuss” as his pen name.

Upon his passing out from Dartmouth College, Geisel went on to Oxford in order to

fulfil his father’s dream that he should become a college professor. He entered Lincoln College to earn a doctorate in English Literature, a task he never accomplished.

After his return to the United States, Geisel became associated with various magazines, such as *The Judge*, *Liberty* and *Vanity Fair*. He started submitting humorous articles to these periodicals. His advertisement for a common insecticide brand called Flit won him national recognition. Seuss made his first publication as a cartoonist on 16th July 1927 in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

During the Second World War era, Geisel turned his focus towards political cartoons. He drew more than 400 cartoons for New York’s daily newspaper, *PM*. With the aim of extending his contributions to the war efforts, Geisel got

enrolled in the US army as commander of the Animation Department. There he made a series of army training films. His work with First Motion Picture Unit of the US Army introduced him to the art of animation.

As the war ended, Geisel moved to California and resumed his work on children’s books. He wrote many famous volumes which won him wide recognition and appreciation. In 1954 Geisel was approached by William Ellsworth Spaulding, the director of the education division at Houghton Mifflin, to write a book using only 250 out of 348 preselected words which William thought were important for first grade students to learn. The idea was inspired by the report published in *Life* magazine on illiteracy among school children. The report said that children were unable to learn reading because

Jabberwocky

By Lewis Carroll

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
 Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
 The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
 Long time the manxome foe he sought—
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree
 And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
 Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,
 And burbled as it came!

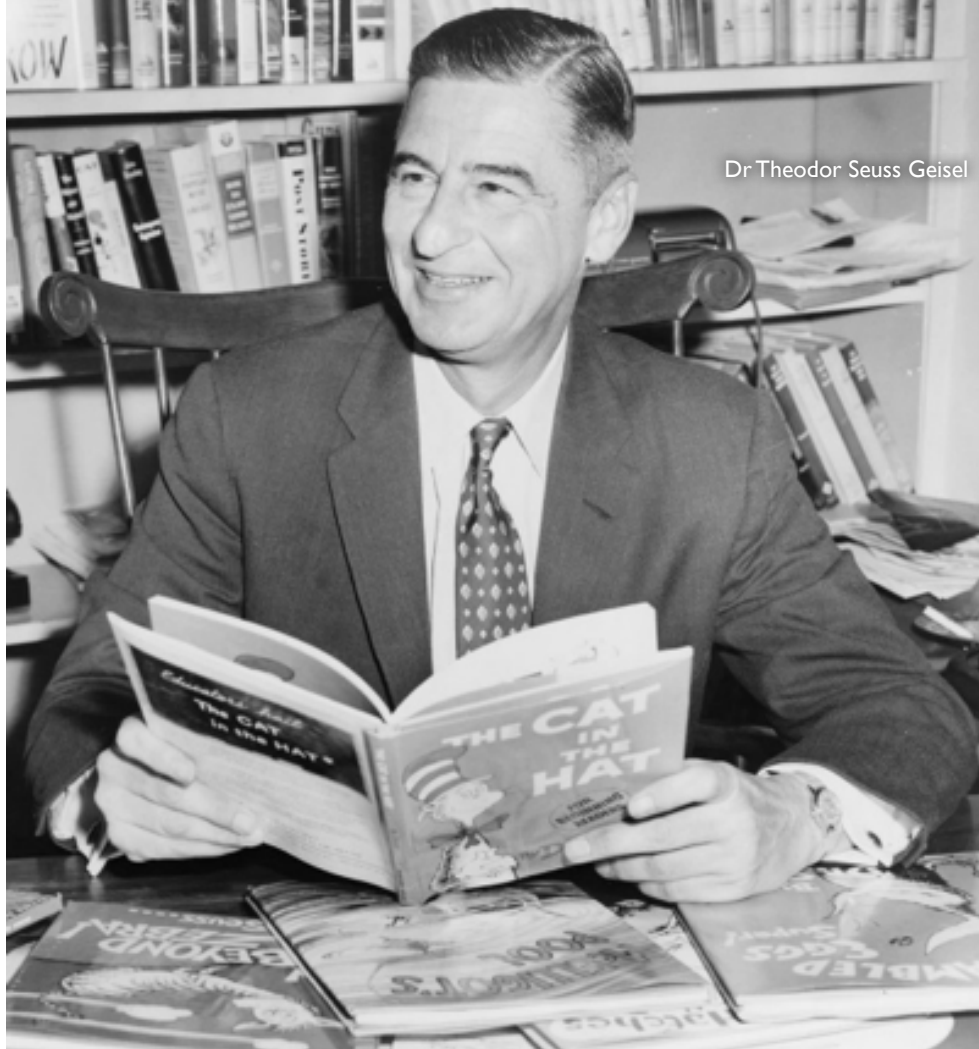
One, two! One, two! And through and
 through
 The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
 He left it dead, and with its head
 He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!



O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
 He chortled in his joy.

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

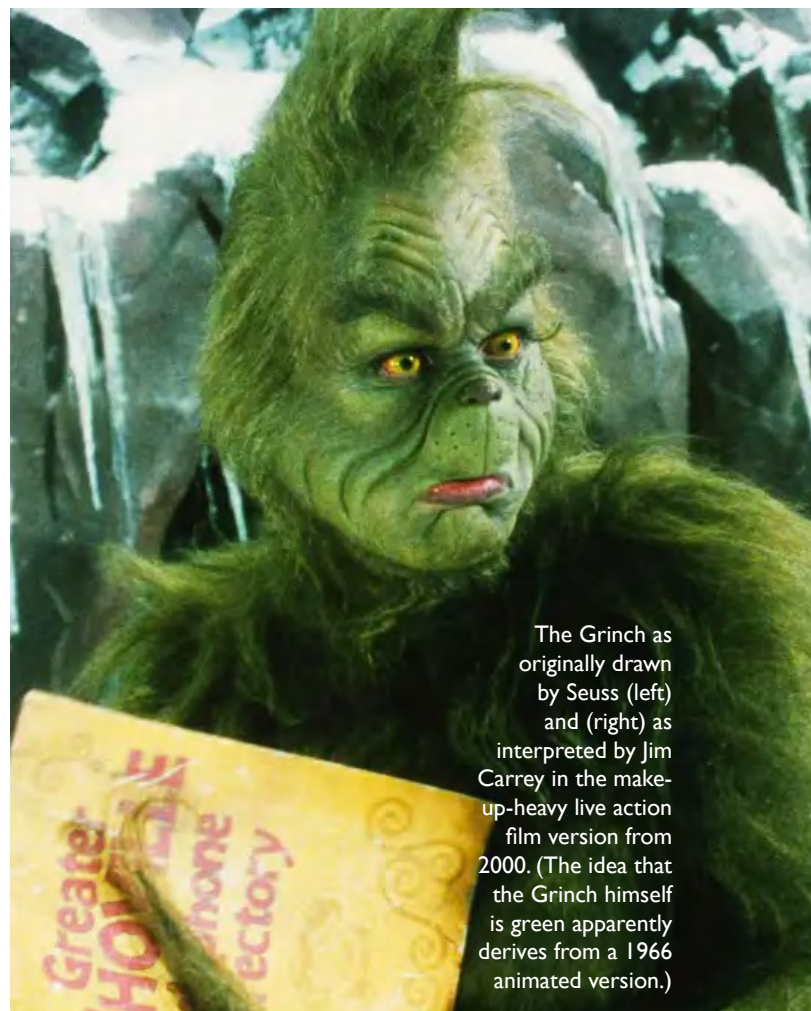
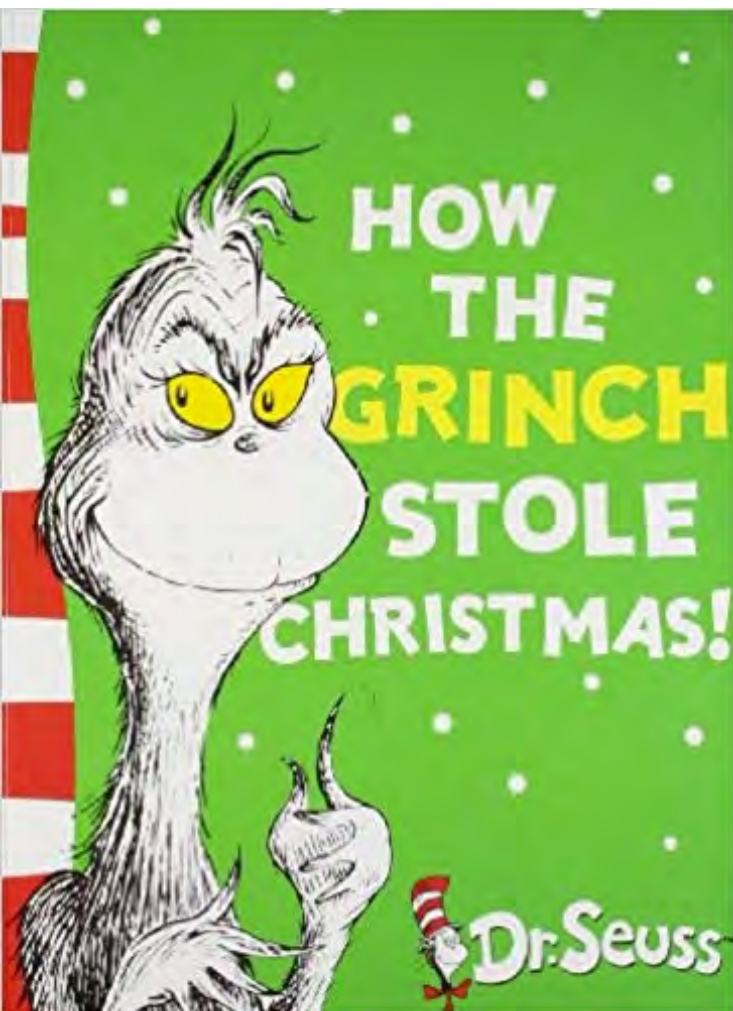


Dr Theodor Seuss Geisel

their books were boring. The result was *The Cat in the Hat*, a perfect blend of Geisel's verse rhythms, drawing skills and imaginative power. This book along with others written for young children, were a huge success both at national and international level.

On 24th September, 1991, Dr Seuss died of throat cancer in San Diego, California. His honours included two Academy Awards, two Emmy Awards, a Peabody Award and the Pulitzer Prize.

One notable source of modern nonsense is the long-running BBC radio series *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*, "the antidote to panel games". The classic line-up featured jazz trumpeter Humphrey Lyttleton as the slightly bemused host giving silly tasks to Willie Rushton, Barry Cryer and ex-Goodies Graeme Garden and Tim Brooke-Taylor. It evolved out of comedy sketch show *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*, when Garden came up with the idea of a scriptless show designed as a satire on game shows. Following Lyttleton's death in 2008 the show continues to this day with Jack Dee as chairman. Popular games include singing one well-known song to the tune of another, and Uxbridge English Dictionary, where players must come up with new meanings for existing words, usually based on some unexpected homonym—a selection is presented below which should give you the idea. This is a good example of the sort of nonsense that works because it does have an internal logic which the listener must recognise, even though they know that what they are hearing is still nonsense. But perhaps the pinnacle of the show's pure nonsense is the game Mornington Crescent: it sounds like an elaborate board game in which players move from station to station on the London Underground map, invoking arcane rules, until someone declares "Mornington Crescent" and is the winner. In reality there are no rules at all. They've been doing this since 1978.



The Grinch as originally drawn by Seuss (left) and (right) as interpreted by Jim Carrey in the make-up-heavy live action film version from 2000. (The idea that the Grinch himself is green apparently derives from a 1966 animated version.)

THE UXBRIDGE ENGLISH DICTIONARY (A-L)

AN absolute favourite with listeners, in which the contestants offer alternative definitions of familiar English words.

Alcopops Alcoholic dads	Farcical A bike that makes you look stupid
Apocalypse Disastrous collagen injection	Flabbergasted Appalled at how much weight you've put on
Asterisk The chances of being hit by an asteroid	Gentile Where they keep the men's products in a supermarket
Bidet Two days before D-Day	Icelander To tell lies about Apple
Candid Past tense of can do	Idiomantic Foolproof dishwasher
Cardiology The study of knitwear	Infantry A sapling
Catastrophe My moggie has won a prize	Isometric I so absolutely don't deal in yards, feet and inches
Catchphrase Howzat!	Jacuzzi French for 'I know who did that in the bath'
Descent To remove the smell	Jigsaw How you feel after Irish dancing
Disdain To insult a Scandinavian	Jukebox What Prince Philip wears for cricket
Earwig A present for someone who's got everything	Kilocycle A bike with no saddle
Easily Like an easel	Kindle A state of the art book that burns itself
Eye-glass A goblet made by Apple	Lactic A stopped clock
Eyesore A carpentry tool made by Apple	Ladder Like a lad, but even more so
	Logarithm Lumberjack on drums

I Want to Be Evil

A party with a whiff of villainy about it...

OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY this year took place at the Morpeth Arms on Millbank, in the upstairs room which they call the “Spy Bar”, because it looks out over the MI6 building. The room is decorated with James Bond novels and secret agent paraphernalia, so we decided to give our party a fitting theme and declared the dress code to be “Come as your favourite villain”.

We did emphasise that the interpretation of “villain” was not limited to Bond villains, and indeed we had costumes ranging from Cruella De Vil to the Taxman. We even had two rival Cardinal Richelieus (Richelieux?).

Traditionally one of the silly games with which we populate the evening involves the ancestral nerf gun, and on this occasion we had a game based on the inevitable scene at the end of a Bond movie where Bond returns to the villain’s lair, this time accompanied by an army of ninjas (or partisans or gangsters or some other group that he has persuaded to side with him—see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JpV5dU8BxA>). As the ninjas descend from the roof on ropes you, as the villain must try and shoot them before they reach the ground. The ninjas in question were Lego Ninjago characters: as a weight pulled on a cord it turned a drum that unwound the Ninjas’ ropes at a steady rate. Scarheart declared that a



hit that knocked the figure clean off the hook that held him was a kill, while a hit that left him still clinging to his rope was a wound.

Our second game followed another tradition—that Action Man must somehow be involved. This time he was pursuing that time-honoured Evil Goal of stealing the Crown Jewels. Action Man, in suitable cat-burglar black attire and armed with a wire hook attached to one arm, was lowered by the player from a rope attached to a pole into a mock-up of the Tower of London. Fortunately there is a company (Crowns & Regalia) who make miniatures of the Crown Jewels of various countries, so Action Man’s target was

a suitably scaled set of jewels on plinths, each with a thin wire loop which the skilful player could catch with Action Man’s hook.

Needless to say this is a lot more difficult than it looks, and most players swung Action Man around carelessly knocking over the plinths, making their goal even harder. There were four items to collect—two crowns, an orb and a sceptre—but no one landed more than two items in the 60 seconds allotted to each player. Some people somehow managed to snare one of the plinths instead: the rules did not award any merit for this, but in the end we decided that, out of the various people who had hooked two jewels, we would award the prize to Stewart Lister Vickers, who landed both two jewels *and* a plinth.

Our final competition was running all the time in the background, in which guests were invited to design their own ideal villain’s lair. The winner was decided by popular vote—each design was held up, the details briefly described, and the audience invited to cheer for their favourite. Fortunately there was a clear-cut winner from Richard D’Astartly, with his highly convincing illustration of the benefits of “maximising evil through multiple occupancy”: there were separate apartments for Vlad the Impaler and Heinrich Himmler, a penthouse for Jeremy Clarkson, but seemingly just deckchairs (albeit with patio heaters) for Prince Andrew and Jimmy Savile. Darth Vader can be seen just arriving, while on the ground floor a row of individual retail units have been rented out to some of the most evil brands on the high street, such as Adidas, Nike, Abercrombie & Fitch, T.K. Maxx, O2 and UKIP.

Sustenance was provided in the form of a buffet laid on by the venue—you’ll only see one photo here that shows it, as it was hoovered up by the locust-like NSC Members pretty sharpish.

The evening ended as ever with our Grand Raffle, free to enter but only to Members (including anyone who joins on the night). Prizes were all themed, addressing different perspectives on evil, such a statuette of Baphomet and a copy of *Sympathy for the Devil*, some Charles Adams cartoons, a ring with a hidden compartment for poison, a burglar’s outfit (stripy top, mask and sack marked “SWAG”), biographies of various scoundrels,



(Facing page) Stuart Mitchell looking truly disturbing as the Joker; (this page clockwise from top) Mrs H. as Medusa; the Beckwiths looking pointy; Guinness’s next advert, featuring Andrew as Richlieu A; Torquil as Richlieu B.

a box of Black Magic, a skull goblet and a bottle of WKD to drink out of it, a Bond-style henchman kit (white boiler suit, hard hat sprayed silver, set off by a red belt with Evil NSC buckle) and an attaché case full of money (which winner Stuart Turner claimed he had spent on whippets and gravy within 24 hours).

Many thanks to the venue for their hospitality and to all the Members who rolled up dressed in their wicked finery.

(This page clockwise from below left) Frances Mitchell as Poison Ivy; the Curé as the Childcatcher from *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang*; Lord Hare as Blofeld; Scarheart as (I believe) Napoleon; Stuart Turner showing invention by coming as Evel Knievel; Rachel Downer as Cruella De Vil. (Facing page, clockwise from top left) Chloe feverishly works on the blueprints for her villain's lair; some of the *objets* dotted around the Spy Bar to establish its character; Mrs H. and Mrs Downer collaborate on their own undersea super-lair; Richard D'Astardly working on his own—ultimately victorious—design; Callum Coates is clearly the Bad Guy; you are spared the details but Matthew Howard had acquired an extra nipple (à la Scaramanga) for the occasion; Francis Giordanela looking gangsterishly villainous in a non-specific way





(Facing page, clockwise from top left) Craigoh and Josie as Muttley and Penelope Pitstop; Adrian as himself; Jen embraces the buffet; Oliver Lane as the Taxman; detail of the Taxman's briefcase; there was always going to be one; Stuart as something devilish; Ed Marlowe as a zombie



The Ninja Shooting Game, with contestants (top) James Rigby; (above) James' companion; (left) Stuary Turner; (below) Robert Beckwith



More photos from this event can be found on the Club Flickr account at www.flickr.com/photos/sheridanclub/albums/72157712395908928





Stealing the Crown Jewels with contestants (left) Miss Minna; (below left) Stuart Lister Vickers hauling in one of the plinths; (below right) James Rigby trashing the place; (bottom right) Scarheart relieves Action Man of the orb he has just stolen

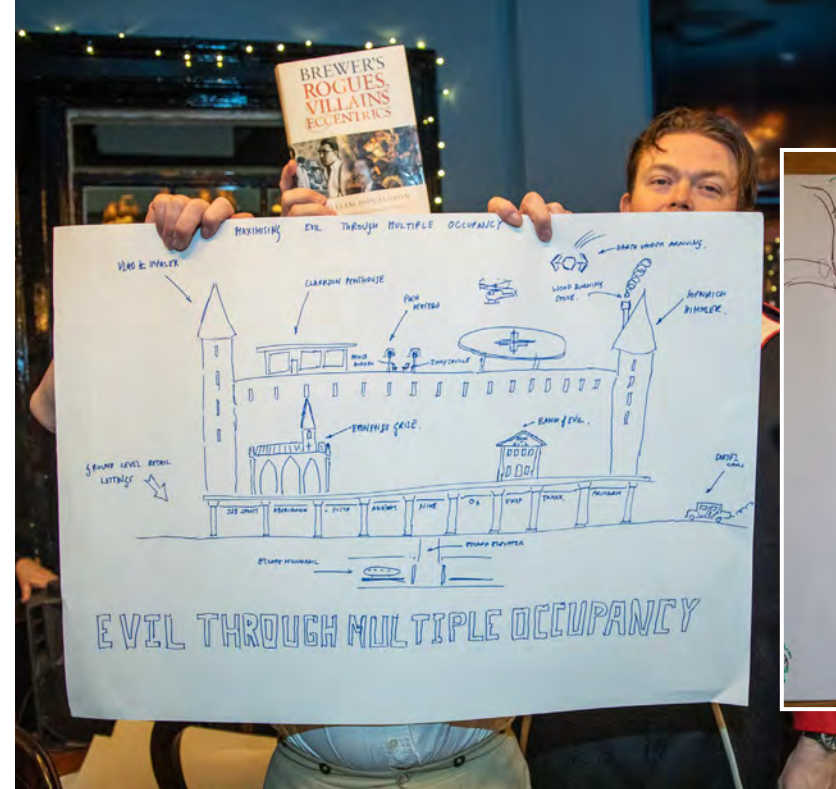


Prize time: (top left) Chloe wins the Ninjago Lego set for her sharpshooting; (top right) Stuart wins the miniature Crown Jewels for his skill at stealing them; (above left) Ian White wins a Grand Raffle prize of *Memoirs of a Professional Cad* by George Sanders; (above centre) James Rigby wins the first of the Flashman novels; (above right) Essex wins the Ripper-themed graphic novel *From Hell*; (below left) Richard D'Astardly wins the skull goblet; (below) Jonny Haart gets the Black Magic; the Lanes' friend Emma wins the burglar's outfit

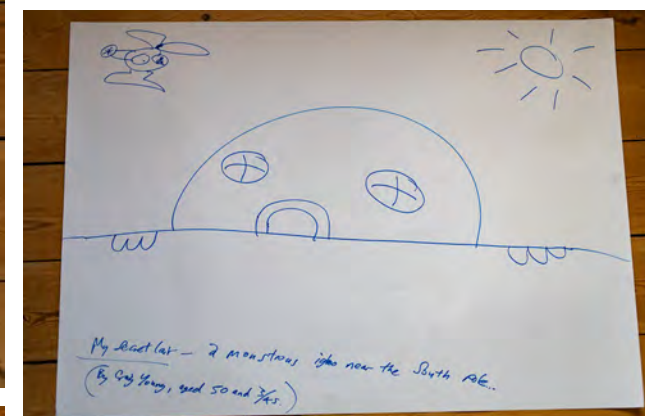
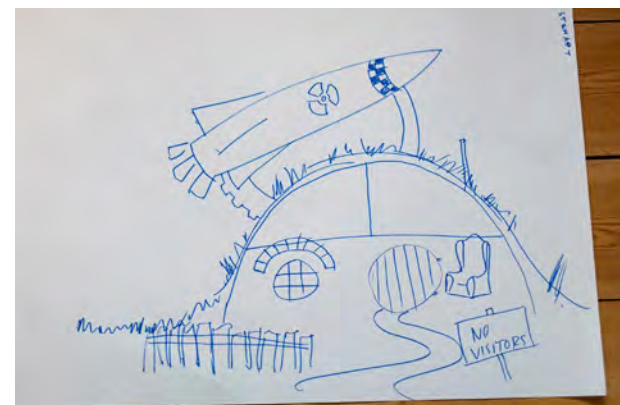
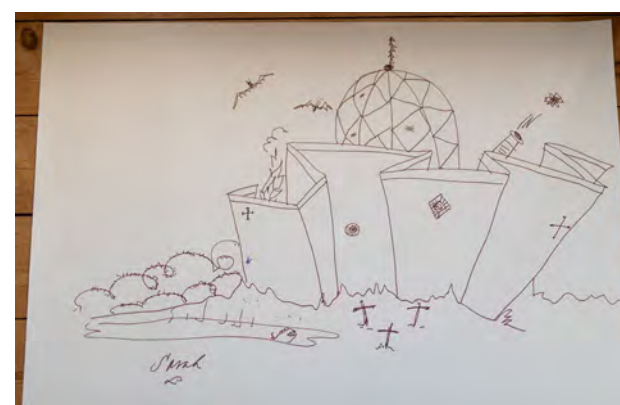




(This page, clockwise from top left) George with a copy of Paradise Lost; Ed Marlowe wins the henchmen kit; Von Grigory wins a statuette of Baphomet; Lorna Mower Johnson with a handmade brooch of deadly nightshade; Bunty gets the bumper book of Chas Adams cartoons; Francis adds to his collection by winning the Black Hat; Mr H. as The Master from Dr Who; (facing page) entries for the villain's lair competition



(Left) Richard D'Astardly with his winning "multiple occupancy" design, and his prize of Brewer's Rogues, Villains and Eccentrics





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.



but I've been living in Wimbledon for some time now.

Favourite cocktail?

An ice-cold lime daiquiri, made by my husband. Preferably drunk on a warm terrace as the sun sinks below the horizon.

Most Chappist skill?

I make a mean pair of trousers.

Most Chappist possession?

Mr Beckwith.

Personal Motto?

Courage!

Favourite Quotes?

"I've got to go to the library!" — Hermione, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

"Adventure is worthwhile in itself." —Amelia Earhart

Seonaid Beckwith

Name or preferred name?

Seonaid Beckwith.

Why that nickname or nom de plume?

I like to confuse people with the pronunciation.

Where do you hail from?

Originally from a little village in the west of Scotland,



Revealing her hooping chops at the Louche Luan party in 2018



With future husband Robert at the Eskmeals Christmas House in 2005

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

Mr Beckwith and I got engaged at an NSC event. [I believe it was one of the Christmas House jaunts, possibly Eskmeals 2005? —Ed]

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

Fifteen years.

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

Chugging gin while her eldest child plays at the water's edge



I think my lovely husband took me along on about our second date.

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

The Wolseley, Piccadilly, very early on a Sunday morning after a night of revelry.

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

Amelia Earhart, Elizabeth Bennet, Cleopatra. That sounds like a good conversation to me.

Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

Answer: Artemis Scarheart.

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

Nope. And I intend to try to avoid it for the next fifteen years. [Let's hear it for that spirit of adventure! —Ed.]

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.



Weeping with gratitude at the Committee's generosity



(Above) Café Batavia's exterior; (below) the interior by day; (bottom) the Jakarta History Museum on the other side of the square



Tim Eyre stumbles upon an oasis of Chappist calm in chaotic Jakarta

JAKARTA IS THE capital city of Indonesia. Ten million people live here and it is primarily a traffic-clogged and polluted megalopolis. Tourists do not linger, and for good reason: there are far more pleasant places to visit in the world's fourth most populous nation, such as Bali and the great temple of Borobudur. However, during a one-month business trip to this city, I was relieved to find a piece of historical charm in the form of Café Batavia.

Batavia is the Dutch colonial name for Jakarta. Evidence of Jakarta's colonial history is thin on the ground in the city today. However, there is a small old quarter in the north of the city, known locally as Kota Tua. Here residents escape the traffic and gather for promenading, socializing and snacking. The focal point of Kota Tua is Fatahillah Square, one of the few open spaces in the entire city. The square has colonial-era buildings on all four sides, the most impressive being the former city hall, built in 1710 and which today houses the Jakarta History Museum.

Opposite the museum stands Café Batavia,

occupying the second-oldest building on the square. The building, erected in the 1830s, was originally used as a residence and offices for Dutch colonial officers. In the 1920s it housed an early travel agent that offered the faithful steamship pilgrimage packages to Mecca. In 1990 an Australian called Graham James saw the building's potential, purchased it and undertook major renovations.

The result is an interior that would make any chapette or chap squeal with delight. On the ground floor is a café-lounge, with a stage for live music. Smoking is permitted in this area so be sure to bring your pipe and a pouch of Tambolaka shag tobacco if you are that way inclined.

On the far side of the lounge is a wide teak staircase. Part-way up this is a landing where the staircase bifurcates.

The wall here is filled with photographs of historic celebrities, with an emphasis on the 1930s. At the top of the staircase, one finds the semi-circular Winston Churchill Bar. Given Churchill's boozy habits, he is a fitting character to give his name to a bar. It is said by some that



Winston Churchill, after whom the bar is named

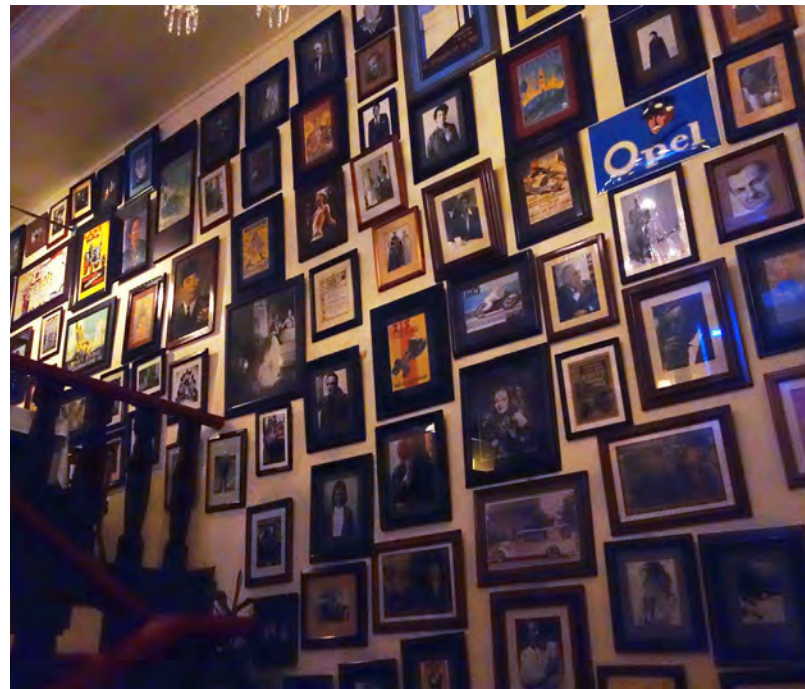


(Above) the ground floor café; (below) the Churchill Bar at night; (opposite top) the Grand Salon dining room at night; (opposite bottom) the mass of vintage photographs adorning the stairs

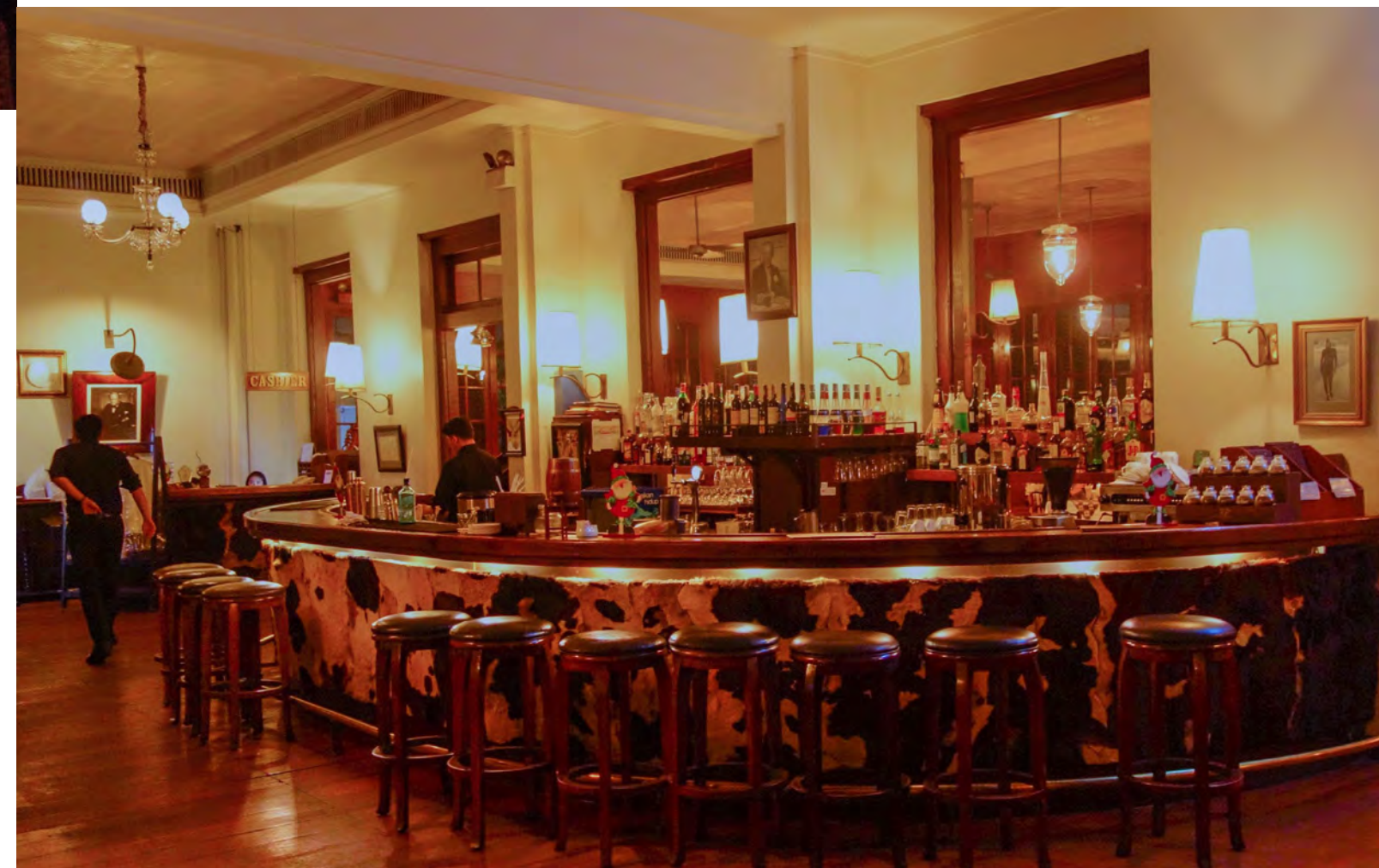
the magazine *Newsweek International* described this bar as the best in the world in 1996. Here one finds many more photographs on the wall, including one of Churchill himself, brooding behind the cashier's desk.

From the bar, one is led into the main dining hall. With dark wood panelling, plantation shutters and ceiling fans, it is a vision directly out of a period film. From here one can watch the busy goings-on in the square outside while dining on traditional Indonesian food or more international fare. I should like to be able to report that the food is splendid. However, although it is served by friendly and well-trained staff, it ranks as decent rather than anything special. One comes here for the experience and the décor rather than the food.

Were the Café Batavia transplanted to London, it would be the ultimate venue for



one of Clayton Hartley's splendid parties. In real life, it provides a charming bolt-hole for a Sheridanite whose derring-dos lead to an unexpected sojourn in Jakarta.



Why you should be drinking more SHERRY

Francis Giordanella on a tragically under-appreciated drink

IT WAS ONLY after studying for my Sommelier's exams that I was fortunate enough to stumble across sherry, a delectable libation still somewhat shrouded in mystery and suspicion.

It is a wine that, through thousands of years, has endured Spain's political turmoil, sacking, conquests and economic upheaval. But the drink's highs have certainly outweighed its lows and it has stood the test of time. It was the official beverage of the 15th- and 16th-century explorers and a treasured gem among characters from Shakespeare, Poe and Dickens. Queen Elizabeth I also had a love affair with this elixir, hence its huge popularity in Elizabethan England after Sir Francis Drake sank Spain's unprepared navy and seized its merchant fleet, thieving from Cadiz thousands upon thousands of barrels of sherry—thus depriving Spain of both its fleet and its tittle.

Despite its celebrated pedigree, however, sherry has been maligned for decades, and so misunderstood that one can only wonder whether it was a victim of a deliberate smear campaign involving all the grandmas across the globe.

But against all the odds, sherry—and that's real sherry, not the warm, blended stuff you find stashed in the octogenarians' drinks cabinets, appearing once in a blue moon to celebrate Mrs Sharple's hip replacement—is undergoing a real renaissance, and about time too.

In simple terms, sherry is a wine produced in the southwestern region of Spain, Andalusia. The historic capital for sherry production is Jerez de la Frontera, followed by Sanlucar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa Maria; these three predominant regions encompass an area

of approximately 11,000 hectares (25,000 acres) historically known as the Marco de Jerez or the Sherry Triangle.

It is a wine that is “fortified”, meaning that an amount of neutral grape spirit (brandy) is added to increase the alcohol content. The use of the term “fortification” within the wine trade is one of the reasons sherry is so misunderstood, along with its wide range of styles from the very dry to the very sweet, and numerous points in between.

There are four dry styles of sherry, each with different modes of production. First there is Fino, and I include Manzanilla in this category—the production being the same as Fino along with its distinct character, and it is essentially a Fino aged and produced in Sanlucar de Barrameda. Some would argue there is a slight nuance of salinity on the palate due to the region being so close to the sea. Fino is then followed by Amontillado, Palo Cortado and Oloroso, in order from lightest to the fullest.

The region also produces two naturally sweet wines: Pedro Ximenez (also known as “PX”) and Moscatel.

After that you have the cheap, blended concoctions produced mainly for the British market—these are the ones generally found buried in the back of cupboards adorning themselves with sticky labels and marinating for decades. These are produced by mixing one of the dry styles with either PX, Moscatel or unfermented grape must and then labelled as, “pale cream”, “cream”, and “medium”.

Sadly many people associate sherry with these ubiquitous, sweetened wines—meaning the entire category is generally considered sweet even though the majority of it is not. This, along



with the general mistrust of fortified wines, has for a long time kept sherry from the dining table. But above all sherry is a wine and one that should be imbibed, like any other wine, with food. In fact, the intense savouriness of the dry wines have a huge compatibility with a wide range of cuisines: from good old English pub grub to sushi.

But although sherry should be considered a wine like any other, it's also true that the methods of its production differ from those of conventional winemaking significantly enough to make it unique within the arena of wine. The differences are dramatic and visceral. No wine differs so much from all the others and the disparities are not merely of taste or colour or scent or sparkle, but of kind. It is not a variant, but a primary, writes Rupert Croft-Cooke in his 1956 book *Sherry*. “There is sherry, and there are all other wines.”

So what are the factors that make sherry so different?

Terroir of the vineyard

The soil in the Jerez can be divided into three types: Albariza, Barros and Arenas.

Albariza: A chalky limestone-rich soil credited with producing the finest wines in the region and today the vast majority of the region's vineyards are planted in this soil type.

Barros: A darker clay-rich soil that is more fertile and less suited to the production of quality wine made from the Palomino grape variety.

Arenas: A sandy soil found near the coastline of Sanlucar de Barrameda. It is not a great soil type for Palomino, although Moscatel, on the



Chalky *albariza* soil in the centre, flanked by *barros* on the right and *arenas* on the left

other hand, positively thrives in it.

The climate in this region is very hot indeed. It is moderated by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The winds also play a major part within the vineyard too, the “Levante”, which is hot and arid, and the “Poniente”, which is humid due to the wind approaching from the ocean. With an average daily temperature around 18 degrees C and almost 300 days of sunshine, this all makes splendid growing conditions for the vine and its production of fruit. The two grape varieties used for sweet wine production, Pedro Ximenez and Moscatel, are both left in the sun once harvested to encourage moisture evaporation, thus bringing the sugar concentration higher as the fruit starts to raisin.



The harvest

The cutting of the grapes usually takes place in the first week of September and is all done manually. The grapes are then taken directly to the winepresses for the extraction of the juice.

After fermentation has finished the wine will have to be classified: wine tasters sample

all of the wines to determine to which ageing type they should be allocated. The palest, lightest wines will be classified to age as Fino or Manzanilla and are fortified with grape distillate from their post-fermentation strength of 11–12.5% alcohol up to 15%. The wine that is found to have a bit more body will be classified as Oloroso and fortified up to 17.5%.

The wines are then transferred to oak barrels called *botas* and then placed in what is known as the *solera* system, where they will stay for the first period of their ageing, a stage called *sobretablas*. This ageing takes place in 600-litre capacity barrels which are filled only up to 500 litres, thus leaving some air space within the barrel.

The solera system

The system of ageing sherry is called the solera system. It is the dynamic process which involves a methodical blending of younger wines with older more mature wines and is based on the principle that the younger wines take on the character of the older wine if properly blended.

The botas are lined up in rows of three or

four different levels, each of which corresponds to a scale. Each row or scale contains wine of a particular average age, and different sherries depending on their age have a different number of scales. The butts closer to the floor are called the *soleras* (from the Spanish word *suelo* or floor) and contain the oldest wines. The row of barrels on top of the solera is called the first *criadera* and contains the younger wines. The row on top of these is the second *criadera* with still younger wines, and so on.

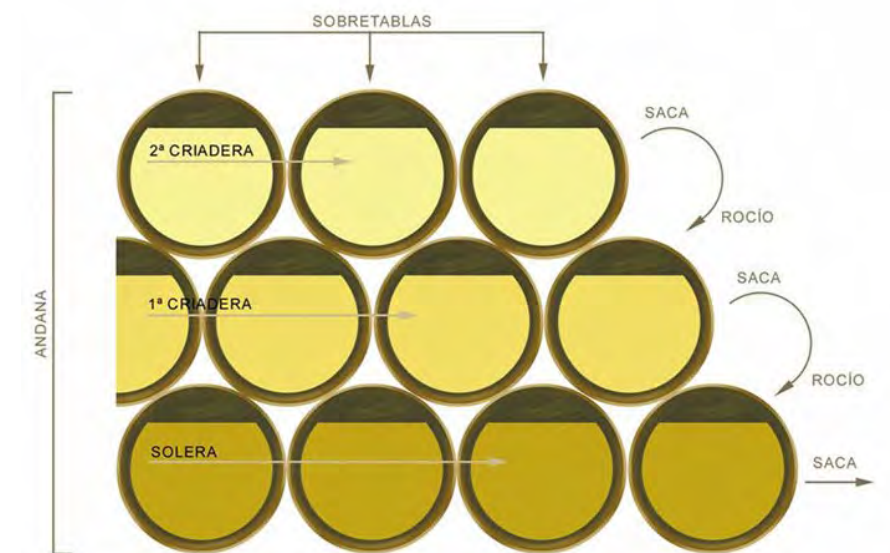
The blending process is called running the scales. Wine ready for bottling is drawn off from the solera with the oldest wine. Never more than one third will be taken out at any time, and this same quantity will be replaced with the wine coming from the superior scale or first criadera. This wine taken out from the first criadera will be replaced with wine from the second criadera and so on up to the wines on the highest row of butts, which are finally blended with the new wines coming from the sobretablas.

The continuous blending means that it is impossible to refer to a specific vintage or age when talking about sherry. However, an average age can be estimated for the solera by studying the number of scales, along with the percentage taken out and the number of times the scales are run.

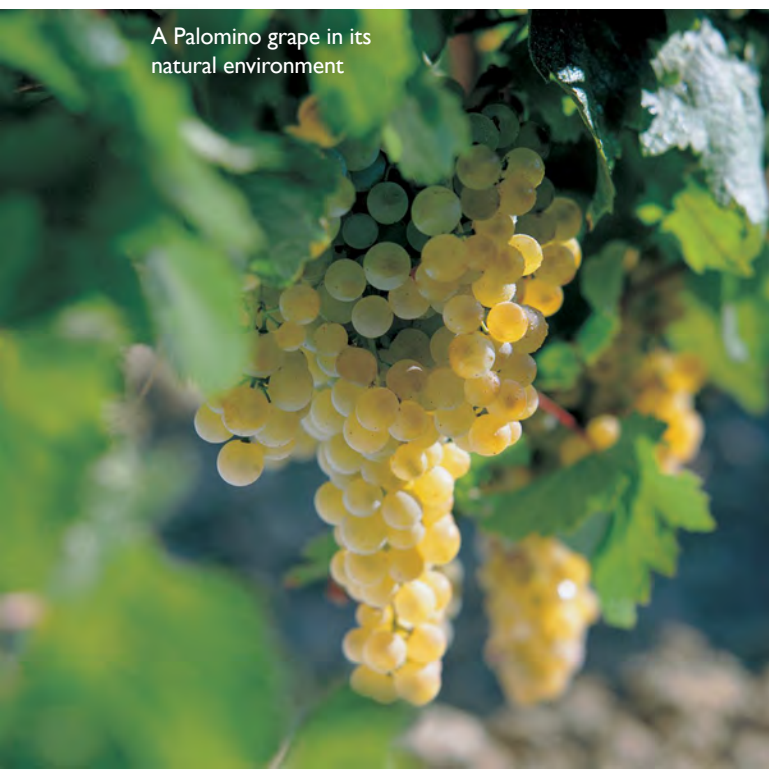
In the case of the Fino and Manzanilla styles, the surface of the wine will soon become covered by a fungus known as *saccharomyces* yeast which rapidly procreates to form a veil known as the *flor* which is what gives this style of sherry its distinctive aroma and unforgettable flavour. (Its a kind of Marmite thing—either you

love it or you just don't, there's no in-between.) Covering the surface of the wine in the barrel, the flor prevents the sherry from oxidising through contact with the air. The alcohol level of 15% resulting from fortification is enough for the flor to thrive, but too high for undesirable micro-organisms that might spoil the wine.

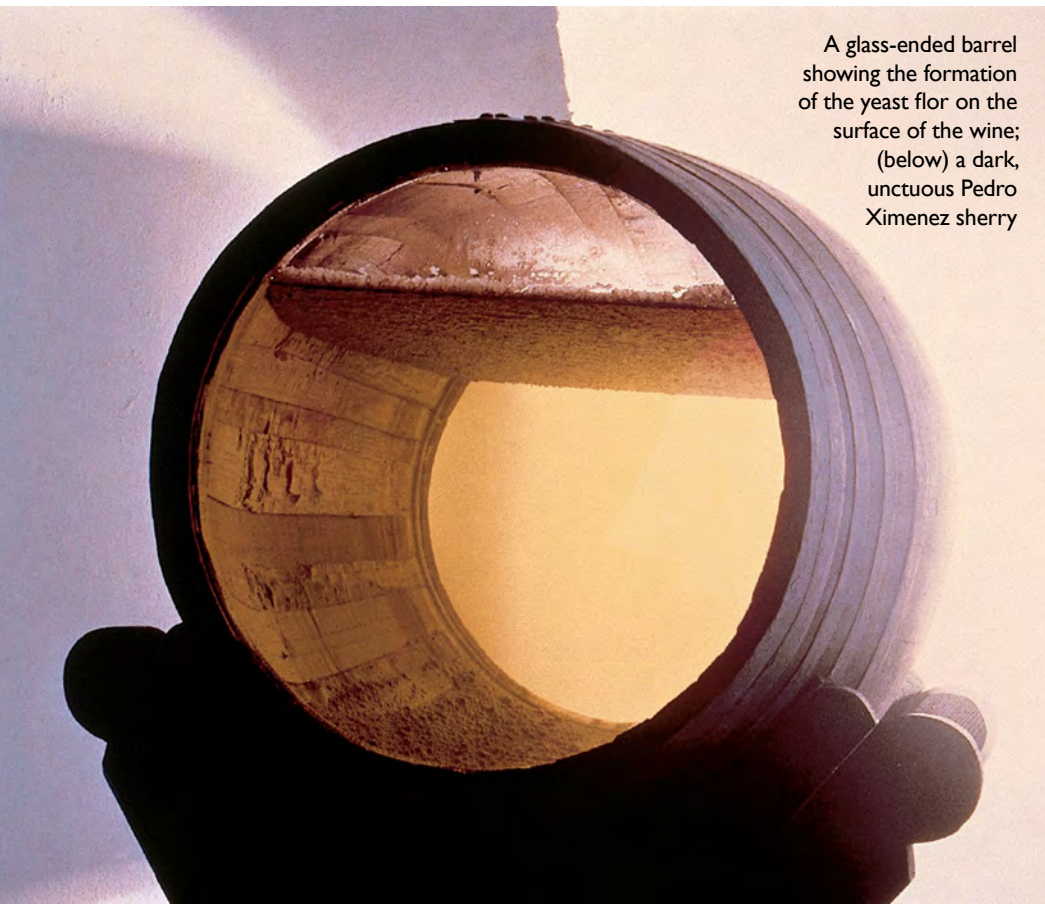
In the case of the Oloroso sherry, the higher alcohol content impedes the growing of the *saccharomyces* spores meaning that, with no flor, the wine will be constantly exposed to the air inside the barrel. It quickly starts to oxidize and evolves into a completely different style of wine.



(Above and below) The solera system, showing the extraction (*saca*) of wine from the higher scales to top up (*rocío*) the lower scales.



A Palomino grape in its natural environment



A glass-ended barrel showing the formation of the yeast flor on the surface of the wine; (below) a dark, unctuous Pedro Ximenez sherry

born to be paired with beef: they are great friends and no Andalusian would contemplate any other accompaniment.

Tasting notes and food pairing of the various styles of sherry:

Fino 100% Palomino. Aged following the solera system under a protective blanket of yeast for a minimum of 5 years. Ranging from bright straw yellow to pale gold in colour. The nose offers a sharp but delicate bouquet reminiscent of almonds with a hint of fresh dough and wild herbs. On the palate, you find a light and delicate aftertaste of wild almonds and bready dough with a slight witness of salinity, and the finish being

medium in length.

This wine works extremely well served chilled, with tapas, olives, cured ham and cheese, or simply on its own.

Amontillado 100% Palomino. Amontillado is unique due to its dual ageing process, first under the veil of flor then exposed to oxidation. This fusion of ageing processes makes the Amontillado wines extraordinarily complex and intriguing. This is an elegant wine which ranges from pale topaz to amber in colour. On the nose its subtle, delicate bouquet has an ethereal base smoothed by aromas of hazelnut and plants; reminiscent of aromatic herbs and dark tobacco. Light and smooth in the mouth with well-balanced acidity; both complex and evocative, giving way to a dry finish and lingering aftertaste with a hint of nuts and wood.

An excellent aperitif served chilled and perfect with white meat, fish and mature hard cheeses.

Palo Cortado 100% Palomino. A wine of great complexity which combines the delicate bouquet of an Amontillado with the body and palate of an Oloroso.



Chestnut to mahogany in colour with a complex bouquet that harmonises the characteristic notes of Amontillados and Olorosos, citric notes reminiscent of bitter orange and lactic notes suggestive of fermented butter. It has a deep, rounded, ample palate with smooth, delicate aromatic notes appearing in the aftertaste, leading to a delicious lingering and powerful finish.

This wine works splendidly with game and red meats.

Oloroso Oloroso is a wine made from palomino grapes. The special structure that it demonstrates at an initial tasting destines

it for oxidative ageing. Full flavoured and structured in the mouth. Powerful, well-rounded and full-bodied. Smooth on the palate due to its glycerine content. It lingers in the mouth, with complex retronasal aromas of noble wood creating an elegant dry finish. The ideal temperature at which to serve an Oloroso is at between 12 and 14 degrees C.

This is the most suitable wine to accompany red meat and game. It combines perfectly with meat stews and casseroles; especially gelatinous meat such as bull's tail or cheeks. The perfect match for wild mushrooms and well-cured cheeses.

Pedro Ximenez (PX) Made from 100% sun-dried Pedro Ximenez grape, this wine is very dark with an intense mahogany colour. Very sweet aromas of raisins and caramel with hints of wood. On the palate velvety and extremely luscious with hints of mature raisins, honey, prunes, dates, figs, dark chocolate. Outrageously sweet with a long and lively finish. A dessert wine perfect with ice cream, chocolate, and intense aromatic blue cheeses.

I hope this article has ignited an appetite for the exploration of this undervalued beverage. From super-dry to extremely sweet, given a chance it's an exciting journey of discovery.

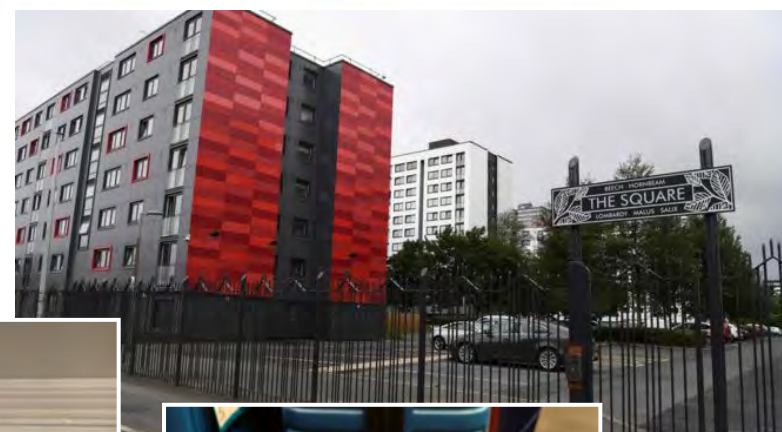
Aclamaciones, sante, cheers!





Club Tie Corner

A SMALL BUT POTENT collection of Club colours this time—and featuring no actual ties. Clockwise from the right we have: this painting by Antonio Tibaldi (1635–75) unearthed by Ivan Debono who describes it as “The Sheridan Club’s Glorious Banner, & its Arms, Accoutrements & Various Other Impedimenta, for Leisure, Love & War, etc. & for the Delectation of its Most Excellent Members”; this sinister building, also spotted by Debono, who suggests the Committee might run intelligence activities from it; a Club luggage strap, of all things, spotted by Oliver Lane; comedian Paul Merton in a, somewhat deconstructed, Club blazer, noted by Mark Christopher; and Matthew “The Chairman” Howard, proudly sporting his star Christmas present, a lovingly produced New Sheridan Club cricket sweater.



Mike Reynolds



Luca Jellinek



CLUB NOTES

Annual Christmas Moot

IN KEEPING WITH tradition, on 20th December the Club met somberly at the Rising Sun pub on Cloth Fair, near Smithfield Market, for the annual gathering to check that Lord Mendrick is not dead. Mendrick works in foreign climes teaching English to the offspring of the rich, and only gets to return to his aged parents for a few hours each Christmas, so this is the brief window we get to check his pulse. Unfortunately, this year he was busy and couldn't make the meeting, but we had a pretty good piss-up anyway, squeezing into one end of the upstairs bar and intimidating the locals. Merry Christmas!



Stuart and Julie Turner



Mark Christopher (l) and the Earl of Essex





Back row (l-r): Brandi Amis-Towler, Ruth Harris, Simone Knol, Adrian Prouth, Sadie Docherty, Rachel Downer, Frances Mitchell; front row (l-r): Lord Hare, Charles Tsua, Bruce Chopping, Laura Whitehouse

Top Hat in White Tie

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE have been having a major season of musicals since October, as part of which they screened the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers classic *Top Hat* (1935). The PR department kindly gave us some complimentary tickets in return for attending the screening in top hat and tails. Other cinema goers certainly seemed amused and appreciative and we had many compliments (and a fair few perplexed enquiries as to what was going on). Many thanks to the BFI for the tickets and to Fred and Ginger for a fun movie (the set-designer's vision of what the Lido in Venice looks like is quite something to behold...).



(Right) A cheery farewell from Adrian; (centre) Charles and Simone; (far right) Ruth enjoys a Porn Star Martini



Forthcoming Events



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

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

🎩 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 2nd January
7pm–11pm (lecture around 8pm)
Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB
Members: Free
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)
See page 2.

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.

Tiger Rag

Every Friday
Arcola Bar,
Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, Dalston, London E8 3DL
10pm–2.30am
Admission: £7 entry after 10pm; dance lessons £10

Live jazz, blues, swing, calypso, Dixieland, ragtime, musette, tango, etc. Try your hand at the beginner lesson in swing, Lindy hop, shag,

Balboa and Charleston dancing, with no partner or prebooking required. Intermediate lessons 8–9pm and beginner lessons 9–10pm.

Sunday Afternoon Swing with the Prospective Collective

Every Sunday
3.30–10pm, live music 4–6pm
Jamboree, 566 Cable Street, London E1W 3HB
Admission: Free on the door with a donation in the hat, or free online advance booking at www.jamboreevenue.co.uk

Sunday Afternoon Swing is back at Jamboree with The Prospective Collective, a band of London-based jazz musicians who perform a repertoire of classics.

An English Lady's Wardrobe

Until Sunday 1st March 2020
10am–5pm
Walker Art Gallery, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EL (0151 478 4199)
Admission: £9 from liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

Displaying more than 70 outfits, this new exhibition explores shopping and style in Liverpool during the interwar years. It offers new insight into Liverpool's wealthy Tinne family, showcasing clothing and accessories purchased by Mrs Emily Margaret Tinne (1886–1966). See November's *Resign!* for more details.



This Friday is your last chance to see 'Hogarth After Hours' at the Soane

Soane Lates: Hogarth After Hours

Friday 3rd January
Timed slots from 6 till 9pm
The Soane Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3BP
Admission: £25 from soane.org
Explore the exhibition *Hogarth: Place*



Experience the thrill of the Mighty Wurlitzer this Saturday

and Progress after normal opening hours, accompanied with a Sipsmith gin and tonic. The exhibition unites all of Hogarth's surviving painted series for the first time. Displayed throughout the idiosyncratic spaces of Sir John Soane's Museum, the exhibition demonstrates how Hogarth's "Modern Moral Subjects" married the idea of progress with the moral geography of London. This special evening opening is a chance to see this exhibition and explore the Museum—a chappist wonderland of statues, paintings and architectural curios crammed into a house too small to hold it all—dramatically lit by spotlights. Tickets are available for arrival at either 6pm, 6.30, 7pm, 7.30 or 8pm and each slot lasts around an hour, including a tour led by one of the expert members of staff and a Sipsmith gin and tonic.

Wurlitzer Showcase

Saturday 4th January

6pm

The Troxy, 490 Commercial Rd, London E1 0HX

Admission: £16.50 (or free if you're under 26, it says here)

Simon Gledhill, maestro of the cinema organ, showcases the mighty Wurlitzer. Gledhill is one of the world's finest players with an international following. "The cinema organ is a

marvel of fantasy, sound, colour and awe-inspiring machinery. Wind rushes through nearly two thousand pipes... drums beat...cymbals crash...bells ring. The sound can become almost anything—a 110 piece orchestra, an 80 piece brass band, a jazz trio, a single pianist or a humble choir—all under the control of one master showman who is at once artist and magician." The Troxy's Wurlitzer used to be at the venue's original sister venue, the Trocadero in Elephant and Castle, and was saved and restored by the Cinema Organ Society. Dating from 1930, it is the largest Wurlitzer ever imported to Europe from the US. More details on the Troxy website (troxy.co.uk).

Mouthful O' Jam

Saturday 4th January

From 7.30pm

The Salisbury Pub, 1 Grand Parade, St Annes Rd, London, N4 1JX

Admission: £5

Gaia Facchini's regular swing night, with a swing dance lesson from Gaia at 8pm. In addition to DJing from Swing Maniac, Rohan The Man, Kid Krupa and StompDown Geoff, there will also be live music from Jimbino Vegan and the Swing Barbarians.

The Candlelight Club

Saturday 18th January

7pm–12am

A secret central London location

Admission: £25 in advance

Dress: Prohibition dandies, gangsters and molls, peaky blinders, decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

London's award-winning immersive 1920s-themed speakeasy party, with live jazz, cabaret and cocktails in a secret London venue filled with candles. Our first party of the year will take us into the Roaring Twenties for a second time, featuring live music from Duncan Hemstock and his All-Stars, hosting from Champagne Charlie and DJing from the Bee's Knees. Ticket-holders receive an email two days before, revealing the secret location. More at www.thecandlelightclub.com.

"The closest you'll find to an authentic Jazz Age experience in central London. Its unique



Aussie jazz firecracker Duncan Hemstock is appearing at the Candlelight Club on 18th January

ambience, fuelled by hundreds of candles, is truly a scene to behold." —*Time Out*

The Eccentric Club presents:

An Evening of Eccentric Poetry

Friday 24th January

7.13–10.30pm

Venue TBA

Admission: £20 from eccentricclub.co.uk

Dress: Black Tie; top hats are welcome. Ladies: eccentric but tasteful evening wear; tiaras are

welcome. No jeans/denim, sports/casual wear, trainers, etc.,

The venerable Eccentric Club honours recently deceased member Adrian Brown, a poet and playwright, with an evening of poems read by his friends, club members and guests. The entry fee covers a glass of wine and room hire. The secret location in London W1 will be communicated directed to guests.

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari

Friday 31st January

7–9pm

The Old Operating Theatre, 9a St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY

Admission: £20 from Eventbrite

A special screening of the Expressionist classic from 1920, with its astonishing angular sets, presented with a live orchestral accompaniment, in the atmospheric setting of the Old Operating Theatre at St Thomas's.

Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 2nd February

11am–5pm (trade from 10.30am)

Freemason's Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AZ

Admission: £5 from Eventbrite

Some 45 stalls offering vintage clothes, shoes, handbags, hats, gloves, textiles and jewellery from the 1800s to the 1980s. There is also a tea room, alterations booth plus sometimes live entertainment too. More details at www.clerkenwellvintagefashionfair.co.uk.



An opportunity to see *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* with a live accompaniment later this month

