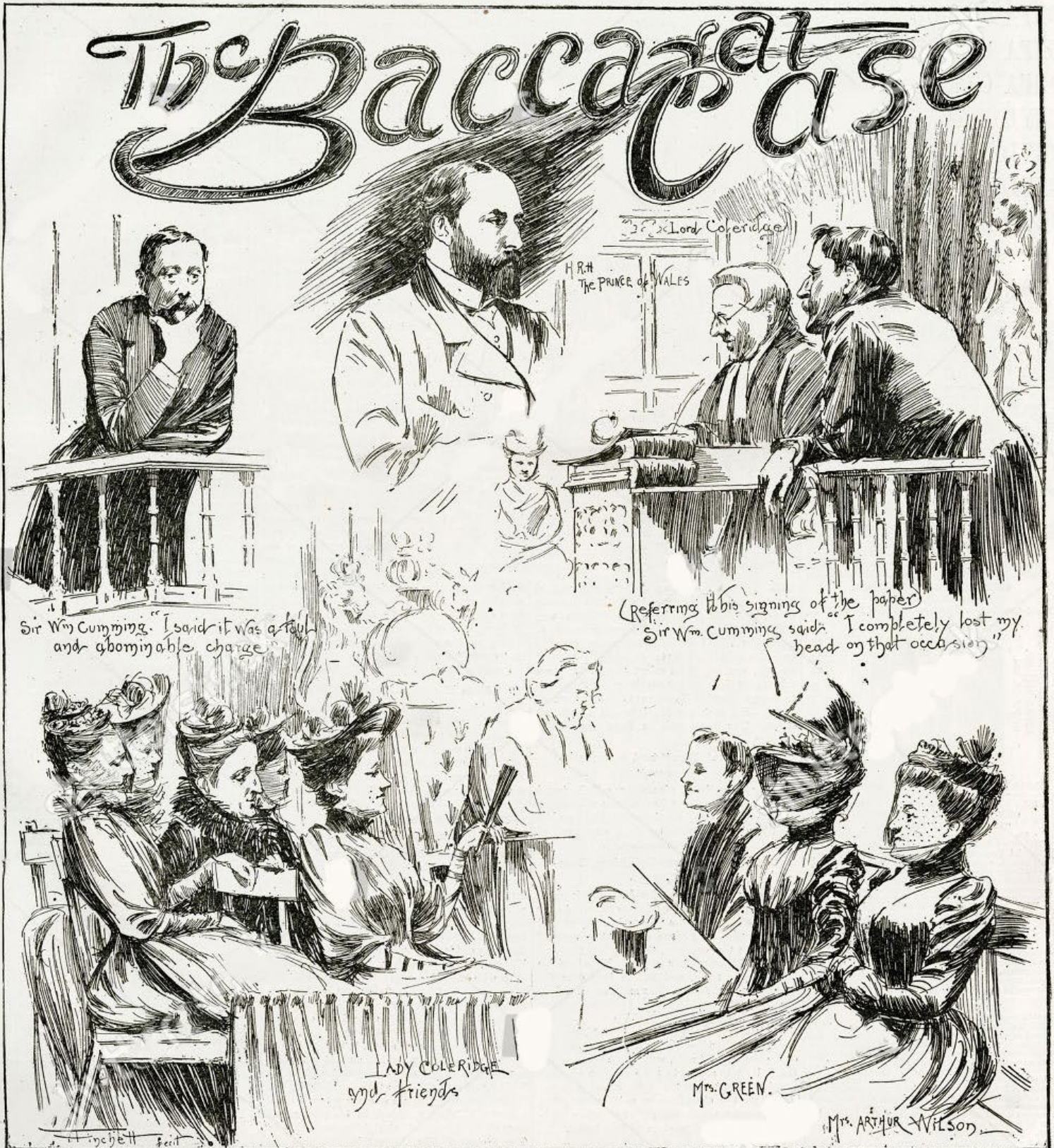


RESIGN!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • No.160 • FEBRUARY 2020

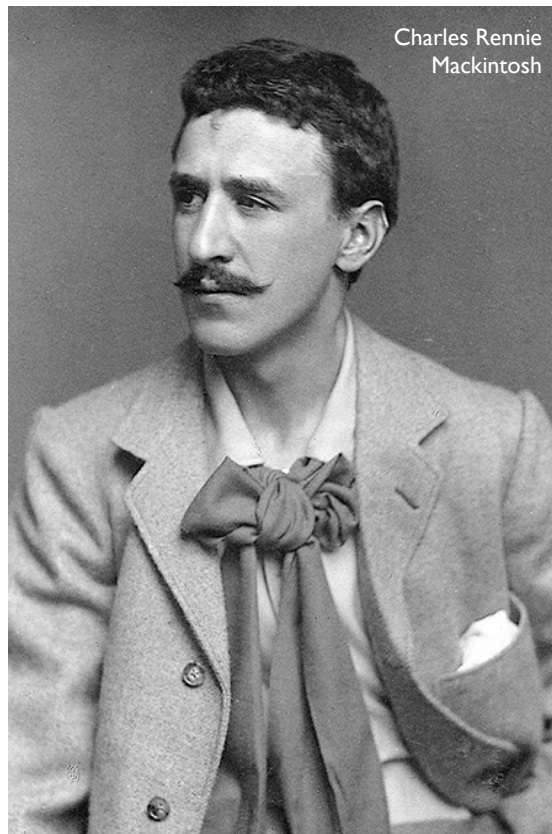




The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of The Wheatsheaf, just off Oxford Street. The Wheatsheaf is one of Fitzrovia's historic pubs, a one-time haunt of Dylan Thomas, George Orwell, Augustus John and Julian Maclaren-Ross. In fact Thomas met his wife Caitlin in The Wheatsheaf 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 **Wednesday 5th February** in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm, when Philip Hancock will tease us with *Charles Rennie Mackintosh—Dandy Architect?* Exhibiting the devil-may-care attitude to linear chronology characteristic of the NSC, the talk was planned to follow the previous month's address on Art Deco by considering the life and work of a man whose creations are considered by some to have been a major influence on Deco—not to mention Art Nouveau and Secessionism before it—yet owing to time-travelling bacilli (see below) these talks will now run in correct order. More importantly, Prof. Hancock will ask some uncomfortably penetrating questions about the aesthetics of dandyism and if there really is more to it than simply wearing a big floppy bow tie or sipping tea on Sauchiehall Street.



Charles Rennie Mackintosh

The Last Meeting

Our first meeting of 2020—falling on only the second day of the new year—saw a compact but respectable crowd (well, as respectable as NSC Members get). Sadly our scheduled talk from Luca Jellinek on *What's so great about Art Deco?* had to be cancelled at short notice, as Luca had fallen ill, but our Glorious Chairman Torquil stepped in with an off-the-cuff address on *The Royal Baccarat Scandal of 1890*, which took place at a house party at Tranby Croft in Yorkshire and involved the Prince of Wales—the future King Edward VII. One member of the party, Sir William Gordon-Cumming, was accused of cheating at the (not even very highly regarded) game of baccarat, an affair that would eventually require the prince to give evidence in court...

Many thanks to Torquil for stepping in at such short notice with a fascinating subject. An essay version of his talk begins on page 4.



(Clockwise from top left) Torquil begins his tale; Philip Hancock pretends he is shrewdly assessing the evidence; Philip gives up and just drinks more beer; Culpepper and Andrew exchange badinage under the remnants of the Christmas decorations; Robert Beckwith chortles



at some pithy observation; George rises above the chaos around her to get on with some knitting; Matthew Howard directs a cannonade of opinion at Frances Mitchell; Frances looking stoic, showing that hat in detail; Stuart, Andrew and Adrian displaying the mixture of anxiety, confusion and resignation that characterises a night with the NSC.



The Royal Baccarat Scandal

ALSO KNOWN AS
THE TRANBY CROFT AFFAIR

THIS SCANDAL CENTRED on the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) attending a house party at Tranby Croft, where another guest was accused of cheating at cards. Surrounding the prince at that time was a fashionable clique known as the “Marlborough House set”, named after the prince’s home overlooking The Mall. The set was a mixture of old titled families and “plutocratic and parvenu” families with fortunes from new industry, and Edward carried out an active policy to spread the social circle of the royal family to include new industrialists such as the shipping magnate Arthur Wilson.

In September 1890 the Prince of Wales was a guest at a house party at Tranby Croft, the home of Arthur Wilson. By the prince’s special request, Sir William Gordon-Cumming, at that time a lieutenant colonel in the Scots Guards had also been invited. Among the party were also the prince’s advisers Lord Coventry and Lieutenant-General Owen Williams. After dinner the guests settled down to play baccarat.

*By Torquil Arbuthnot,
Royal Correspondent*

Baccarat is a game for up to 20 players, together with a banker and croupier; several packs of cards are used, depending on the number of players. The value of the ace to nine cards are as their pip value, while tens and court cards count as zero. A player is dealt two cards and adds up the combined pips, discounting 10s and court cards, and only using the single digit value as a score—a King and a 6 will equal 16, but their value will be 6; two 8s will equal 16, and their value will also be 6. Two court cards will count as zero, or baccarat. The idea of the game is to get 9 points. A player may ask for one extra card to be added to their hand. Betting is between the player and the bank, with the closest to reach 9 on a hand receiving the stake.

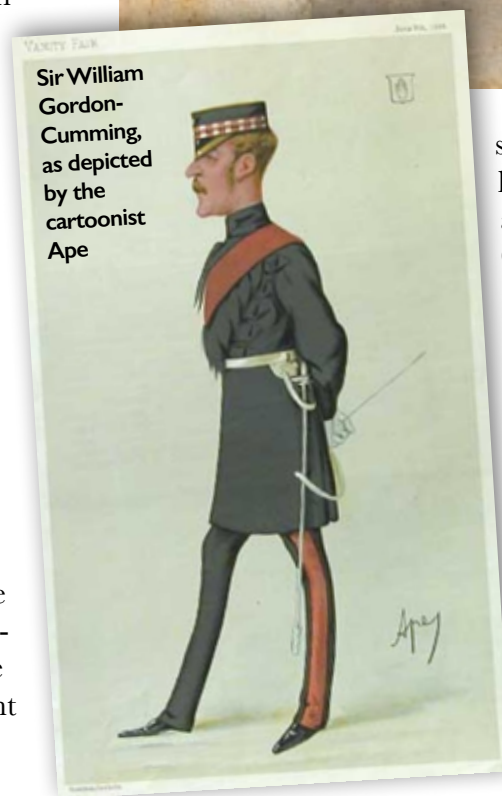
In 1886 the High Court of Justice ruled that baccarat was a game of chance rather than skill and was therefore illegal when gambling

Tranby
Croft



was involved. *The Times* described baccarat as “a new game, partly of chance, at which £1,000 may be lost in 20 minutes”. After a solicitor asked the Home Secretary to clarify the position regarding baccarat in social clubs and private houses, the Home Office civil servant stated that there was nothing in the court’s judgment that made baccarat illegal if not played for money. Although gambling at baccarat was illegal, “worse still in the eyes of many Englishmen, it was thought to be popular in France”.

On the evening in question the host’s son Stanley Wilson put two card tables alongside the smoking room table—all of which were of differing sizes—and covered them with a tapestry cloth. As the game began Gordon-Cumming discussed the tapestry with Wilson, commenting that the different colours of the cloth made it difficult to see the counters. Gordon-Cumming put a piece of white paper in front of him on which to place his now highly-visible stake. Although many of the inexperienced party were playing for small stakes, Gordon-Cumming was betting between £5 and £25 for a coup; he played the *coup de trois* system of betting, in which if he won a hand with a £5 stake, he would add his winnings to the stake, together with another £5, as the stake for the next hand. Soon after play began Stanley Wilson thought he saw Gordon-Cumming add two red £5 counters on to his



stake after the hand had finished, but before the stake had been paid—a method of cheating known in casinos as *la poussette*; after he thought that this had happened a second time, Wilson turned to Berkeley Levett and, according to the later court transcripts, whispered, “My God, Berkeley, this is too hot!” further explaining that “the man next to me is cheating!” After Levett also watched for a few minutes, he agreed, saying to Wilson “this is too hot”. After half an hour the game was completed and the prince congratulated Gordon-Cumming on his play; the prince also asked Mrs Wilson for a more suitable table for the following day. Stanley Wilson instructed the butler to move a longer, three-foot wide table in and cover it with green baize. Wilson then discussed the cheating with Levett. The two men were uncertain what steps to take, and agreed that Stanley would ask his brother-in-law, Lycett Green, for his advice. Although Lycett Green thought it impossible that Gordon-Cumming would have cheated, Stanley told him that he was certain, as was Levett.

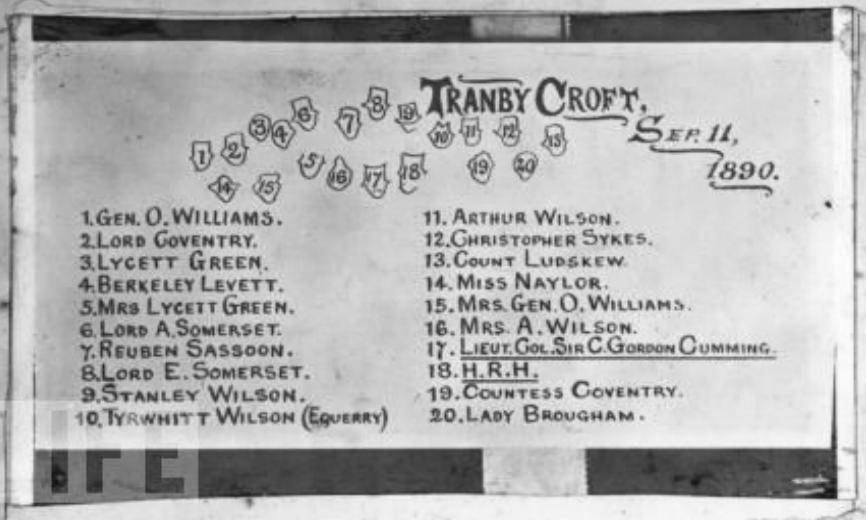
The following day, 9th September, the party visited the races, where the prince’s horse won the Clumber Stakes. After dinner the prince once again wanted to play baccarat and asked for a chalk line to be drawn on the baize, six inches from the edge, behind which players were to keep their counters when not placing their stake. Edward was banker and Williams acted as the croupier. When Gordon-Cumming arrived at the table, there were only two vacant



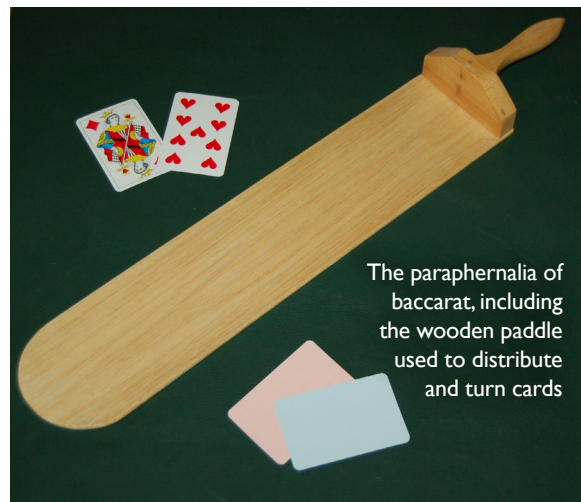
Gordon-Cumming won a total of £225, £100 more than anyone else—and worth about £28,000 in today’s money.

Lycett Green asked Edward Somerset his advice, telling him that several members of the party were convinced of Gordon-Cumming’s guilt. Edward Somerset decided to consult his cousin, Arthur Somerset, and the two men suggested that Lycett Green inform the prince’s senior courtier, Lord Coventry. After Lycett Green had told Coventry what he had seen, the latter summoned Williams, who was a mutual friend of both the prince and Gordon-Cumming. Lycett Green repeated the allegation once again. Williams later recounted that he was “shocked and overwhelmed with a sense of calamity”, and said that Edward must be informed immediately. There was some disagreement between the courtiers on whether to tell the prince; Coventry and Wilson both thought it the

right move, but Arthur Somerset felt that the matter could and should be dealt with by those present. Later he was persuaded that informing the prince was the right course of action. Lycett Green grew more pugnacious throughout the discussions, and threatened to accuse Gordon-Cumming in public at the races the following day; he also



seats. At either of them, Gordon-Cumming would be surrounded by members of the Wilson family, all of whom had been informed of Stanley and Levett’s suspicions. After half an hour’s play Lycett Green once again became convinced that Gordon-Cumming was cheating. He left the table and sent a note to his mother-in-law—still at the table—recounting his suspicions: she took no action. By the time the game was finished Mary Wilson, the two Lycett Greens and Stanley Wilson—all of whom had been watching Gordon-Cumming closely—were convinced that he had been cheating, although they differed in their versions of what they saw. Others saw nothing, including people sitting closer to him, such as the prince, Lady Coventry (sitting next to Gordon-Cumming) and Levett (sitting opposite him). Over the two nights’ play



The paraphernalia of baccarat, including the wooden paddle used to distribute and turn cards

stated that, “I will not be a party to letting Gordon-Cumming prey on society in future.” The men decided that Gordon-Cumming should sign a document admitting his guilt in exchange for their silence, and Williams and Coventry went to Edward to inform him of what had been happening. The two men told the prince that “the evidence they had heard was absolutely conclusive and they did not believe Sir William Gordon-Cumming had a leg to stand on”.

The prince believed what he had been told by his courtiers, and also assumed that cheating had taken place; he later said that with accusations from five witnesses he believed the worst of his friend straight away. At no point had any of those concerned investigated the situation more closely, by asking others present or seeking out Gordon-Cumming's side of events, but they had believed the events as told to them by Lycett Green and Stanley Wilson. After informing the prince, the two courtiers sought out the accused man and informed him of what had been said. Coventry broke the news to him, saying that "There is a very disagreeable thing that has occurred in this house. Some of the people staying here object...to the way you play baccarat", and that the accusation was that he had "resorted to foul play" at the game. Gordon-Cumming denied the accusation, asking "Do you believe the statements of a parcel of inexperienced boys?", and demanded to see the prince.

After dinner the guests signed the visitors book, after which the prince—accompanied by Coventry, Williams and the two Somersets—received Lycett Green and the other accusers. After hearing what they had to say, the prince

dismissed all except Coventry and Williams, and called for Gordon-Cumming, who told Edward that the accusation was "foul and abominable"; the prince pointed out that "there are five accusers against you". Gordon-Cumming then withdrew while the royal party discussed what the next steps would be. He returned after half an hour to find just the two courtiers, who urged him to sign a document that they had drafted. Under pressure, and still denying the accusations, Gordon-Cumming signed the document without knowing who else would sign it afterwards.

In consideration of the promise made by the gentlemen whose names are subscribed to preserve my silence with reference to an accusation which has been made in regard to my conduct at baccarat on the nights of Monday and Tuesday the 8th and 9th at Tranby Croft, I will on my





Lillie Langtry

part solemnly undertake never to play cards again as long as I live.

— (Signed) W. Gordon-Cumming

The courtiers took the document to Edward, who summoned the other members of the house; he read the note to them and signed it, pointing out to everyone that the promise of secrecy was incumbent on all of them. He also added that Gordon-Cumming was still protesting his innocence, despite signing a paper that “practically admitted his guilt”. The paper was then signed by the men present. Although the prince hoped that this would bring an end to the affair, Arthur Somerset pointed out that it would not remain secret. Edward asked him “not even when gentlemen have given their word not to divulge it?”; Somerset replied that, “It is impossible, sir. Nothing in the world known to ten people was ever kept secret.”

On the advice of Williams, Gordon-Cumming left Tranby Croft early the following morning, 11th September; he left behind a letter to Mary Wilson apologising for his early departure, and one for Williams, again stating his innocence, but acknowledging that “it is essential to avoid an open row and the scandal arising therefrom”.

At the time of the events Sir William Gordon-Cumming was a 42-year-old and had seen army service in South Africa, Egypt and the Sudan. Gordon-Cumming’s biographer, Jason Tomes, thought that his subject



Daisy “Babbling”
Brooke

possessed “audacity and wit [and] gloried in the sobriquet of the most arrogant man in London”, while the *Sporting Life* newspaper described him as “possibly the most handsome man in London, and certainly the rudest”. In later life Gordon-Cumming boasted that he had “broken all the Ten Commandments except murder”. In addition to considerable land holdings in Scotland, Gordon-Cumming

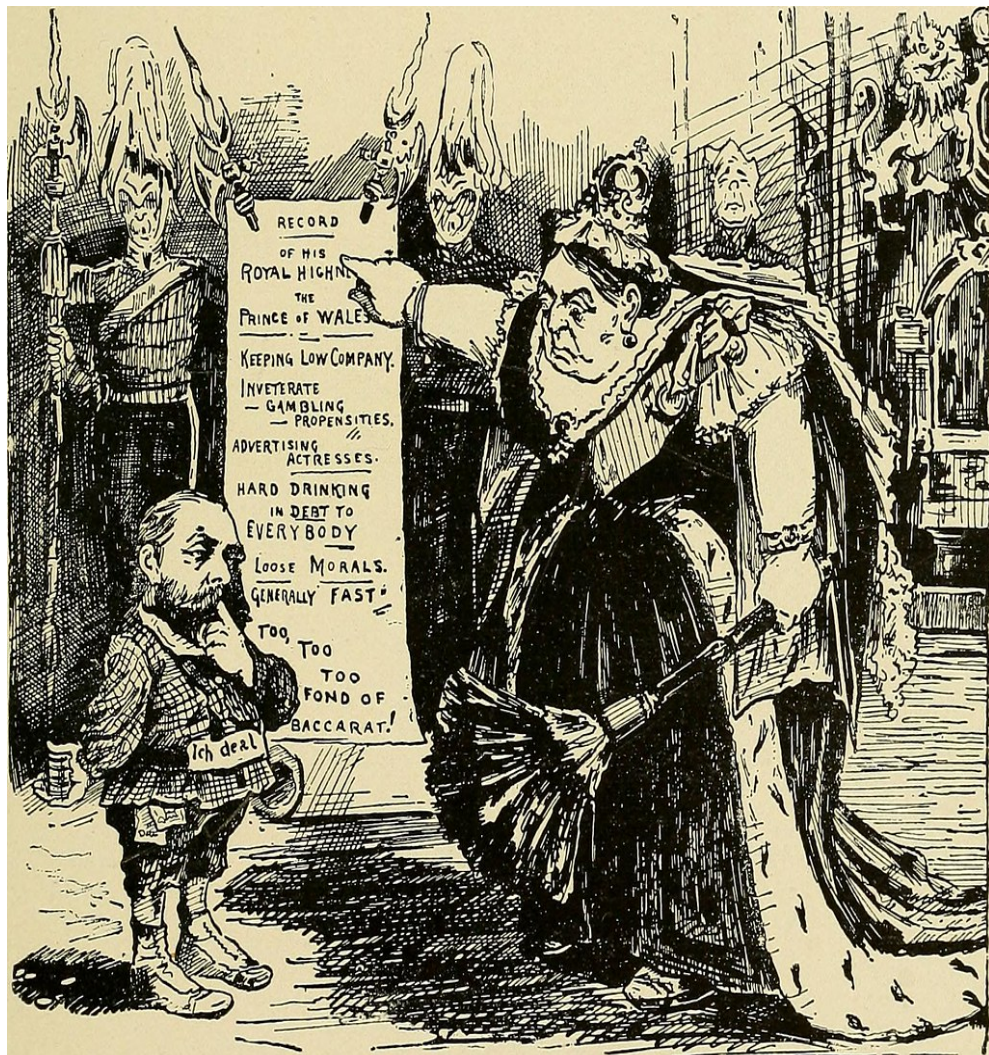
owned a house on Harriet Street in Belgravia, which he would lend to the Prince of Wales for assignations with royal mistresses. Gordon-Cumming was a womaniser, and stated that his aim was to “perforate” members of “the sex”; his liaisons included Lillie Langtry, Sarah Bernhardt and Lady Randolph Churchill. He was unmarried at the time of the events and subsequent court case.

Incidentally, Daisy Brooke, the wife of Lord Brooke, was the prince’s mistress at the time, and was known to some journalists as “babbling” Brooke because of her propensity to gossip. Just before the Tranby Croft weekend the prince returned early from travelling in Europe; he visited Harriet Street where he found Daisy Brooke “in Gordon-Cumming’s arms”, which soured the relationship between the two men.

Anyway, back to the scandal: by the next day the affair was being discussed openly at Doncaster races. Three weeks later, on 27th September, Gordon-Cumming received a letter from France saying that it was the talk of Paris and Monte Carlo. After briefly considering suicide, he decided to sue instead, and his solicitor issued writs for slander (“damage and mischief caused by calumny”) against the Wilsons, the Lycett Greens and Berkeley Levett. The prince’s courtiers tried to have the matter dealt with by a military court, as Gordon-Cumming was an army officer.

In June 1891, the case was heard before the Lord Chief Justice, and the Prince of Wales was subpoenaed as a witness. Although the prince was not on trial, Gordon-Cumming’s solicitor was merciless and insulting in his cross-examination, especially about the prince’s personal life, and the public perception began to form that he had done something horribly unlawful at Tranby Croft. Rumours also spread that Gordon-Cumming had “taken the fall” for the Prince of Wales. (This was fuelled, in part,

by the perception of baccarat being a “foreign” card game.) Cartoonists and the tabloid press had a wonderful time with the scandal. One cartoon published showed the Prince of Wales emblem, but instead of the motto “Ich dien” it said “Ich deal” (see this page). Queen Victoria stood beside her son in public but scolded him in private (this wasn’t the first scandal he had gotten into). The prince’s nephew Kaiser Wilhelm, whom he cordially despised, got very stern and pious about the affair. The Queen wrote to her eldest daughter, Vicky: “The trial is indeed dreadful...the whole thing must do Bertie harm... He must give up gambling and



high play or the result may be most dangerous... for the Monarchy almost is in danger if he is lowered and despised.”

The defence was one of justification, i.e. that Gordon-Cumming had cheated. The Prince of Wales appeared as a witness, but his evidence was inconclusive. Gordon-Cumming claimed that he had signed the document because “it was the only way to avoid a scandal”.

The Solicitor-General of the time, Sir Edward Clarke, represented Gordon-Cumming. He opened the case for the plaintiff, telling the jury that, “It is a simple question, aye or no, did Sir William Gordon-Cumming cheat at cards?” After describing Gordon-Cumming’s background and record, he explained the rules of baccarat, which he described as “the most unintelligent mode of losing your own money, or getting somebody else’s, I ever heard of”. Clarke also outlined Gordon-Cumming’s *coup de trois* system of placing bets which, he explained, could have been mistaken by the inexperienced players as cheating, rather than a correct method of gambling. After his opening speech, Clarke then questioned Gordon-Cumming, and his approach was to show that Gordon-Cumming “was a man of honour who had been sacrificed to save the courtiers”. Gordon-Cumming was asked about why he had signed the document agreeing not to play cards: Gordon-Cumming stated that he had “lost my head...on that occasion. If I had not lost my head I would not have signed that document.” *The Illustrated London News* considered that “Gordon-Cumming made an admirable witness...leaning easily on the rail, his grey-gloved left hand resting easily on the bare right, perfectly dressed, his tones equable, firm, neither over-hurried nor over-deliberate, cool, but not too cool”.

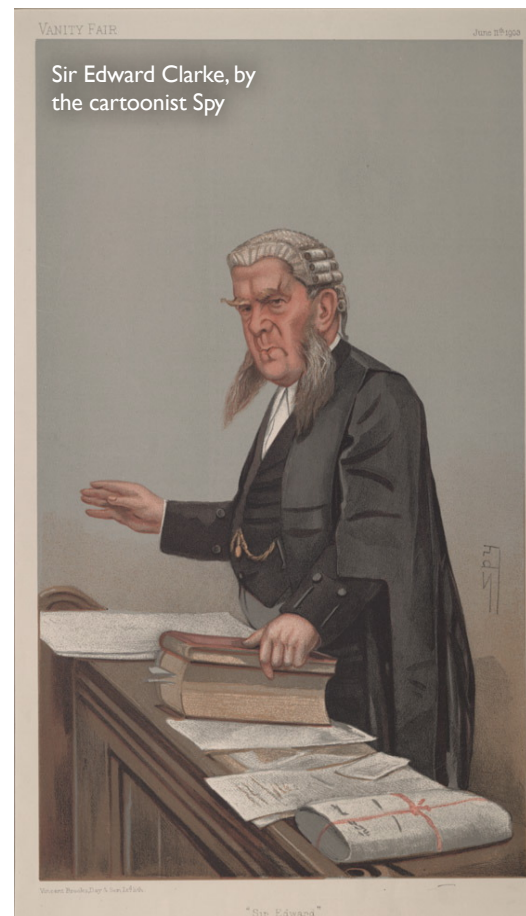
Gordon-Cumming was replaced in the witness box by the prince. Examined by Clarke, he stated that he had not seen any cheating, and was ignorant of the accusations until he was told by Coventry and Williams. After 20 minutes of questions, the prince was free to depart. As the prince was leaving the witness box, a member of the jury put two questions to Edward: whether the heir had seen “nothing of the alleged malpractices of the plaintiff?”, and “what was your Royal Highness’s opinion at the time as to the charges made against Sir William Gordon-Cumming?” To the first question the prince replied that he had not, although he explained that “it is not usual for a banker to see anything in dealing cards”; to the second, he stated that “the charges appeared to be so unanimous that it was the proper course—no other course was open to me—than to believe them”. In comparison with Gordon-Cumming’s performance in the witness box, Edward did not

make a strong impression; the reporter for *The New York Times* noticed “that the heir apparent was decidedly fidgety, that he kept changing his position, and that he did not seem able to keep his hands still... Except to those near him, only two or three of his answers were fairly audible throughout the courtroom.” *The Daily News* agreed, and stated that the impression gained from the prince’s performance was unfavourable.

Examined by H.H. Asquith for the defence, Wilson recounted seeing Gordon-Cumming illicitly add counters to his stake twice on the first night and at least twice on the second night, although he could not remember the full details.

When cross-examined by Clarke he was not brow-beaten by the lawyer’s questions, although Clarke made him appear “brash, conceited and callow”. Wilson was replaced in the witness box by Levett; *The Morning Advertiser* considered that Levett “felt somewhat uncomfortable” appearing against Gordon-Cumming, and reported that he had “described his position as an ‘awkward’ one”. Despite his discomfort, Levett confirmed that on the first evening he had seen Gordon-Cumming add counters after the hand had finished but before the stake had been paid. He was unsure of other details of the evening’s play, and had not witnessed anything on the second night.

Clarke, in his summing up, pointed to the many inaccuracies in both the written statement prepared by Coventry and Williams, and in the memories of all concerned. He went on





to outline that there had been celebrations at the races—the prince’s horse had won on the first day, and the St Leger had been run on the second—combined with the full hospitality of the Wilsons to consider: according to the court reporter for *The Times*, Clarke “alluded to the profuse hospitalities of Tranby Croft, not with any idea of suggesting drunkenness, but as indicating that the guests might not be in a state for accurate observation”. He also drew the jury’s attention to the gaps in the defendants’ memories, where they were so precise about some of their observations, but could not remember other, key, details. Clarke lampooned some of the involved parties, referring to Lycett Green as “a Master of Hounds who hunts four days a week”, while Stanley Wilson was a spoiled wastrel from a rich family who lacked initiative and drive. Above all, Clarke indicated, the defendants—with the exception of Stanley Wilson—saw what they had been told to expect: “The eye saw what it expected or sought to see... There was only one witness who saw Sir William Gordon-Cumming cheat without expecting it—young Mr [Stanley] Wilson. The others were all told there had been cheating, and expected to see it.” At the end of his reply, Clarke’s speech was greeted by applause amongst those in the galleries.

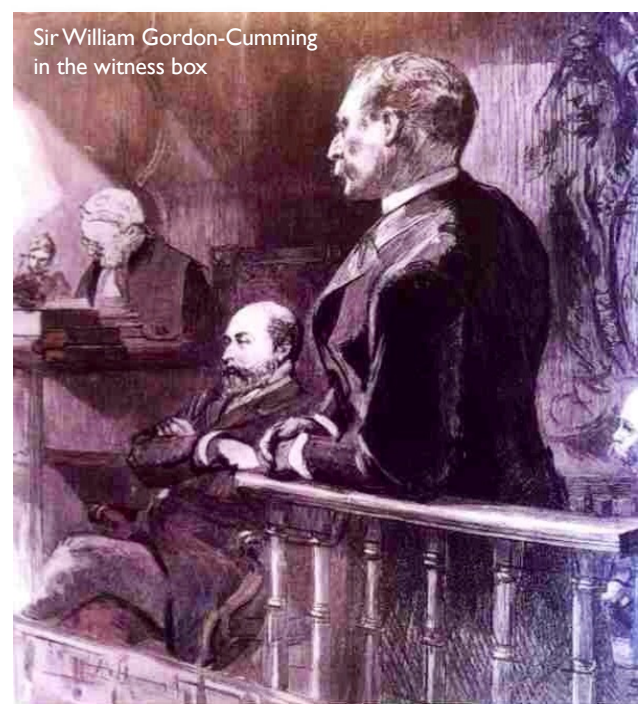
The judge’s summing-up was against Gordon-Cumming and was described by one reporter as “polished, skilful, and fiendishly

unfair”. The jury (who were “not particularly bright looking”, as one reporter noted) took only 13 minutes to find the defendants not guilty and to award them their costs. The crowd hissed and booed the jurors and tried to attack the defendants as they left the court. This was due less perhaps to the belief that Gordon-Cumming was innocent and more to dislike of the Prince of Wales. Gordon-Cumming was immediately dismissed from the army. He was ostracised by society for the rest of his life. A leader in *The Times* stated that “He has committed a mortal offence. Society can know him no more.”

The day after the trial Gordon Cumming married his 21-year-old fiancée, an American heiress named Florence Garner, who had stood by him throughout his ordeal, and who continued to believe that her husband had been “set up” by the Prince of Wales. The Gordon-Cummings spent the rest of their lives in Scotland. Gordon-Cumming remained bitter about the events until his death in 1930. Clarke retained his faith in his client and, in his 1918 memoirs, wrote that, “I believe the verdict was wrong, and that Sir William Gordon-Cumming was innocent.”

In 2000 George MacDonald Fraser placed his fictional antihero, Harry Flashman, into the scandal in the short story “The Subtleties of Baccarat”, one of the three stories in *Flashman and the Tiger*.

Incidentally, after Gordon-Cumming’s death in 1930, his house at Gordonstoun was obtained by Kurt Hahn, who turned it into the eponymous school. It has been attended by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and the current Prince of Wales, Prince Charles.



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.



Luigi Sbaffi

Name or preferred name?

I have plenty: Ludwig Von Diekirch, Ludovico il Calvo (the bald), Tlaloc il Piumato (the feathered), Larth, but I still have to find a proper one for the "London Environment".

Why that nickname or nom de plume?

The first I use in the Steampunk world, the second and third in the Cocon Event (a kind of medieval/fantasy battle system) and the last is

my Etruscan name. (You can find something about my Etruscan "alter ego" on the Facebook page Risveglio degli Etruschi and also on the site www.risvegliodeglietruschi.it. When I announced that I would move to England the Etruscan community was quite in despair!) Most of the costumes are made to order by my wife (she is an excellent seamstress). In Italy I have a room in the basement almost exclusively for costumes and the weapons/armour/shields, etc.

Where do you hail from?

Italy, specifically a small village called Agugliano, but I was born in Arezzo and I have lived in many places.

Favourite cocktail?

A White Lady.

Most Chappist skill?

I can read Etruscan.

Most Chappist possession?

My pipe.



*What time-travelling
madness is this?*



Personal Motto?

“Pugnando Esprit”. It was a motto I found from a French (or possibly English) family that means (more or less) “It is in the fight that you express yourself”.

Favourite Quotes?

From Admiral Makarov: “You cannot know in war what you didn't prepare in peacetime.”

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

I love bees

and know how to breed them. I've also been practising Kendo by many years; I'm currently with the London Kenyukai in Poplar.

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

I haven't yet, unless you consider my visits to the Candlelight Club a “prelude”.

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

I'd seen something on Facebook but then Adrian Prooth told me about it.

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

A nice pub near Victoria Station called the Duke of York and a vintage shop called Retromania, also close to the station.

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

George Bryan Brummell (to teach me to tie a tie properly), Cleopatra and Marilyn Monroe (why not?).

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?

Not yet. Perhaps I should get acquainted with the other members to get more of a clue.

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.



Why you should be drinking more MADEIRA

Francis Giordanella on an indestructible wine from a volcanic island

THE PORTUGUESE ISLAND of Madeira lies in the north Atlantic Ocean some 1,000 kilometres South West of Portugal.

Historically its geographical position made the island a very important supply station for the merchant navy. As a result, the island's wines became widely exported. The long voyages in warm tropical seas had a direct impact on the style of the wines.

The unique character of Madeira wine is intrinsically wrapped up in its history and, as with port and sherry, its original production came about as something of an accident.

During the late fifteenth century, European merchant ships would sail around the Cape of Good Hope, laden with treasures and riches from the vast expanse of Africa and the East. Furs, jewels, gold, silk and spices were in great demand in the royal courts of Spain, Portugal, France and England, and the seas were, for the first time in history, teeming with vast vessels intent on exploiting the riches of far-off lands, and establishing the roots of what would become the great empires of the age.

It was during one of these long and perilous voyages that the first Madeira wines were inadvertently created. As one ship, stocked full of wine made from the fine grapes grown on the island of Madeira, was tossed about on the waves, the movement had a powerful effect on the wine barrels and their contents; the wine was transformed by the activity, vaporized, condensed, aerated, aged and heated steadily by the equatorial sunshine beating down upon the decks. Upon arrival at port, the sailors were instructed to dispose of the wine, which was surely spoiled by the rough journey. But, the story goes, the sailors (who were

never ones to waste a drink) starting drinking that which they were told to throw away and developed a taste for this "ruined" wine. They discovered that the wine was far from destroyed, but was, in fact, delightful; full of new flavours and fascinating aspects that hadn't been tasted before.

There's something special about Madeira wine. For most of us it tastes of sophisticated celebration, its flavours packed with memories of Christmas, of full rich dinners, dates and dried fruits, all spicy-sweet, sticky unctuous toffee notes, roasted nuts and caramel. Ranging from extremely sweet to dry, Madeira is one of the fortified wines, both historically and in the present day, once tasted, rarely forgotten.

Climate

Madeira has a mild subtropical climate with warm summer months and temperate winters. Nevertheless, higher up the mountains temperature and humidity vary dramatically and on occasions the ground can be covered in snow.

The north side of the island is subjected to



Malvasia grapes

One of the *Levadas* that bring water to the vineyards



Irrigation is provided by deep canals called *Levadas* that bring water down from the mountains.

Different styles of Madeira

This is by far the easiest and the hardest part to explain about Madeira wines. To be honest, Madeira wines are neither easy to find nor easy to understand at the best of times.

Madeira is more often made as a monovarietal using one

of the four noble grape varieties, which is due to the legislation that also determines the wines sweetness level. The four levels of sweetness, associated with the four grape varieties, are Dry (*Seco*), Medium Dry (*Meio Seco*), Medium Sweet (*Meio Doce*) and Sweet (*Doce*). I have listed below the sugar levels typically associated with each variety.

Terroir

Madeira has rich and diverse terroirs as a volcanic island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. As the vineyards are exposed to the ocean breeze, the grapes can show a hint of salinity and notes of iodine.

The soils are rich in minerals, acidic and full of iron and phosphor, but very poor in potassium—it is for this reason the wines are high in acidity. The acidity plays a major role in the wine's character, and is the reason why the wine, once opened, can remain so fresh.

Sercial grape variety: Dry (59.3 grams of residual sugar per litre)

Verdelho grape variety: Medium Dry (54.2–78.1 grams of residual sugar per litre.)

Boal grape variety: Medium Sweet (78.1–100.04 grams of residual sugar per litre)

Malvasia grape variety: Sweet (100.04+ grams of residual sugar per litre)

The variety Tinta Negra Mole (a cross between Grenache and Pinot Noir and therefore not a noble grape) produces wines within the whole arena of sweetness levels. This varietal may also be found blended with one of the four noble varieties.

OK, one would assume you now go down to your local wine merchant, pick out a grape variety according to your desired level of sweetness and voila! If only it were that simple. Dry is not always the Dry you might expect it to be. Here's the thing: the minimum level of sugar per litre is 20 grams, thus technically making each style sweet. Compare this to a dry bottle of red or white wine which typically will have only 10 grams of residual sugar per litre.



Producing the wine

Madeira is not only a unique wine due to its wonderful sweetness and textured palate, but also for its ability to stand the test of time. Most wines in the world, once open, will quickly succumb to oxidation, leaving you with a flavourless wine and eventually turning it to vinegar. But Madeira doesn't change. I have tried Madeiras that have been open for years and they haven't altered at all. How so? The formula for Madeira is simple: oxygen, time and heat. Although the nemesis of most wines, these are the three main factors needed for Madeira.

To make the wine the pressed juice is fermented then quickly fortified with alcohol



Madeira wine can be incredibly long-lived

of grape origin. The timing of the fortification process is relative to the particular variety of grape being used: the must from the Malvasia variety is fortified at the beginning of fermentation, whilst the Boal and the Verdelho get fortified on the fourth day and the Sercial about a month after the fermentation was started. These timings allow the wine to be either sweet or dry, depending on when fermentation was arrested. But all the wines will have a high alcohol content, much as with port and sherry, as these are fortified in the same manner.

The fortified juvenile wine is then heated in one of two ways—the *Estufagem* or *Canteiro* methods.

An *estufa* is a large container usually stainless steel and lined with pipes. The pipes circulate

hot water around the container until the wine reaches a temperature of around 50 degrees Celsius, the wine is cooked at this temperature for around 3 months before being ready for bottling. As the cooking process is rather quicker than the *Canteiro* method the resulting wine tends to be less complex and offers burnt caramel notes.

In the *Canteiro* method, the juvenile fortified wines are transferred into wooden barrels and placed in a rooftop attic where they are exposed to the heat of the sun on the tiled roof. As the period of heating and cooking the wine takes considerably longer—anything from 20 to 100 years of careful storing—the

result is a kaleidoscope of tertiary notes consisting of cooked and stewed flavours, prunes, liquid Christmas pudding, caramel, raisins, dark chocolate, toffee, hazelnuts raisins, date, orange peel, molasses, cinnamon, and burnt sugar all the makings of a very complex wine indeed.

The process of heat, oxygen and time leaves you with a wine that is so beautifully abused that absolutely nothing more can further destroy it. This wine has the ability to outlive its owner and is practically immortal!

Let us now look at the taste and draw our attention to the balance on the palate.

When you have a food or drink that is extremely sweet or even cloying we balance it with something with enough acidity to make it more palatable and fresh. A good illustration of this would be a honey and lemon drink: the lemon on its own would be far too acidic and sharp to make it a pleasurable experience but add a teaspoon of honey and you have a combination that instantaneously becomes more approachable and harmonious. With this in mind, we can now take a look at food pairing with these interesting wines. Naturally, these unctuous liquids can be savoured for their own merits, but why not create a symphony of velvety dreamy elegance on your palate by enjoying this elixir with some well-matched food.

Sercial Now for this style, I would



Barrels of Madeira wine maturing in a sun-heated attic

recommend marrying with starters and mayonnaise, flambées, feathered game, fish mousses, tinned fish, sushi, starters of Indian cuisine and dried fruit.

Verdelho This style of Madeira would benefit from being accompanied with consommé, soups and creams, starters with

mayonnaise, feathered game, paté and foie gras, starters from Asian cuisine, dried fruits, milk chocolate and dry cheeses. Or simply drink it as an aperitif.

Boal This expression would work exceptionally well with the following foods as a digestive, tropical fresh fruits, dried fruits, butter biscuits, milk chocolate, dark chocolate, pralines, petit fours, at tea time with dried fruit cake, cream cakes, honey cakes and dry cheeses.

Malvasia This expression, being the sweetest of the four noble grape varieties, works superlatively as an after dinner digestive, or with flambées, dried fruits, butter biscuits like shortbread, milk and dark chocolate, petit fours, pralines, at tea time with cake, chocolate mousse, custard tarts and soft blue cheeses.

All of the above also make a wonderful companion with aromatic tobacco, cigarillos, cigars, and a pipe, especially if paired with old or very old examples, say 20 years plus.

I hope this has given you some insight into the wonderful world of Madeira wine and I encourage you to search it out and have some fun with it. I appreciate it won't be to everybody's palate but nonetheless it's well worth a go.

Cheers and happy imbibing!



Despite its sweetness, Madeira goes well with a wide variety of food



CLUB NOTES

Club Tie Corner

MEMBERS CONTINUE THEIR radical critique of history and the present, constantly unearthing evidence of Chappist infiltration. This page, clockwise from top right: Stephen Myhill asks, “So the entire House of Lords is simply the formal version of the NSC? Everything is beginning to make sense...”; Col. Cyrus Choke noticed bandleader Benny Goodman in Club silk; Torquil Arbuthnot passed on this black and white image of Kissinger, assuring us the colours were correct, then Mark Christopher did indeed discover a colour image that proved it; another black and white image that is clearly a club tie, this time sported by the character Pinsent (Joss Ambler) in the eerie film *The Halfway House* (1944), submitted by Stephen Smith. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Benjamin Negroto manage to snap the usually retiring NSC bodyguard; then he went further back to prove the existence of the Club’s Praetorian Guard; Ivan Debono noticed this vision of the future from 1970 in which everyone will be driving NSC mini-cars; Debono is also responsible for this utterly bizarre saddle; as if the Watergate scandal couldn’t get any more Byzantine, this figure in Nixon’s entourage in *Frost/Nixon* (2009) is wearing a Club tie; and to close the show, Callum Coates observes, “The Boss finally breaks cover. But only to those in the know.”





THE NEW URBAN CAR

modern living
By KEN W. PURDY





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 5th February
7–11pm (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.



Come and help Ian White wassail
his cider orchard on the 8th



Just some of the diversions on offer in the Candlelight Club's House of Love on the 15th



Wassailing of One Tree Hill

Saturday 8th February

From 2pm

Meet at 10 Walters Way, London SE23 3LH

Admission: Free

Come and wassail trees at the allotment! Wassailing apple orchards is an ancient tradition in cider-making parts of the country, a way of blessing the orchard to ensure a good crop. It involves making a noise to scare off evil spirits, pouring libations of cider on to the roots and consuming a certain amount of it too. (More details at ianwhite.info/Wassail.html). Interested parties can gather at Ian's house at 2pm before the wassailing of the site begins at 2.45. From 3.30 there will be scoffing of jacket potatoes and quaffing of mulled apple juice and cider, before retiring back to 10 Walters Way. Guests are requested to bring noise-making instruments and snacks and apple-derived drinks to share. In addition to the "pagan" dress code, guests

are advised to dress warmly and wear suitable footwear, bearing in mind that the going can be slippery.

The Botanical History of the Gin and Tonic

Thursday 13th February

6–8pm

The Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BF

Admission: £5 including a Kew gin and tonic: register at linnean.org

Kim Walker and Prof Mark Nesbitt FLS, Kew botanists and authors of *Just the Tonic: A Natural History of Tonic Water* (Kew Publishing, 2019) explore the history of the popular effervescent mixer. They believe that tonic water has been the unjustly overshadowed partner in the famous gin and tonic. The cocktail is thought of as a quintessentially English drink, yet its origins lie in the cinchona trees of the

Lydia Kavina, aged eight, with Leo Theremin. See her recital on the 19th



eastern slopes of the Andes and the malarial landscapes of Asia. In this richly illustrated talk, Kim and Mark cut through centuries of legends to reveal a history of botany, medicine, empire and drinking to discover how the tree came together with alcohol and soda to create the perfect gin and tonic.

The Candlelight Club's House of Love

Saturday 15th February

7pm–12am

A secret central London location

Admission: £65 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.

In honour of St Valentine's Day, the Candlelight Club brings you a special event in a new, exotic venue—the Gatsby house party of your dreams. Across three floors of an opulent town house in the heart of London (a stone's throw from Oxford Circus) enjoy a feast of entertainment.

In the first floor Ballroom there will be live music from Champagne Charlie and his Bubbly Boys, raising the rafters as they inspire you to cut a rug. On the ground floor we have the Cabaret of Desire, a variety show hosted by Weimar androgyne Victor Victoria, with burlesque from Ruby Deshabillé, comedy magic from Christian

Lee and feats of balancing and juggling from Ian Marchant.

Meanwhile in the cellars our DJs will be pumping out vintage rhythms into the night, while curtained crannies in the crypt hold a fortune teller and a sketch artist.

Instead of a sit-down dinner there will be high-class grazing as you drift from room to room—all included in the price. The ticket covers all the entertainment, a welcome glass of fizz plus canapés and bowl food through the event, and the bars will offer a further selection of wines, Champagne, cocktails and spirits, plus the famous Rum, Absinthe and Cigar Bar.

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

Humdinger Nights: Ray Collins' Hot Club

Sunday 16th February

7.30–11pm

The 100 Club, 100 Oxford Street, London W1D 1LL

Admission: £18 in advance from www.humdinger-events.com/nights, £20 on the door

The 1940s/1950s weekender now brings you one-night events at the 100 Club, serving up rockin' rhythm and blues, jump jive, swing, doowop and rock 'n' roll, this time featuring Ray Collins' Hot Club.

Theremin Centenary Concert

Wednesday 19th February

7pm

St Alfege Church, 3 Greenwich Church Street, London SE10 9BJ

Admission: £5 from Eventbrite

Virtuoso Lydia Kavina leads a theremin ensemble in a diverse programme celebrating the 100th anniversary of the invention of this early electronic instrument by Leo Theremin.

How Eva Von Schnippisch Saved Hollywood

Wednesday 19th February

9.15pm

The Vault Festival, Leake Street, London SE1 7NN
Admission: £13 from vaultfestival.com

Weimar cabaret maven Eva Von Schnippisch, having previously related how she won WWII single-handed, now presents her new show: “The world’s greatest cabaret star turned double agent is following her dream and is Tinseltown-bound. As she basks in the glitz and glamour of the LA lifestyle of pool parties, cocktails and orgies, she unearths a dark truth behind its red velvet curtains. The Golden Age of the Silver Screen is plagued with scandal, sex, drugs, desire and deceit. Is Eva to blame? Or is she saving it from self-destruction?”

Sugarpush Social

Sunday 23rd February
4–7pm

The Lexington, 96–98 Pentonville, London N1 9JB

Admission: £5 for the social, £12 for one class and social, £15 for two classes and social

Swing dance event, with a beginner’s class from 2–3pm and an improver class from 3–4pm then a social from 4–7pm. Expect more of the finest swing, R’n’B, jump blues and boogie woogie with DJs Holly France and Romayne Etwaroo. “Air con and disco ball will be out in full force,” we are assured.

Black Tie Ballroom Club

Saturday 29th February
7–11.30pm

Colliers Wood Community Centre, 66–72 High

Street, Colliers Wood, London SW192BY
Admission: £15–35 from Design My Night
Dress: Strictly black tie, smart vintage and evening wear

Dance the waltz, quickstep, foxtrot, tango, jive, rumba and Charleston to live music and a selection of pre-war records. You are welcome just to watch, or if you can’t yet dance but would like to, there’s a “Learn to dance in a day class” for absolute beginners with musicality, and rusty dancers, from 10am to 4.30pm—so far all beginners with musicality have been able to dance around the floor with a partner in time to the music, looking reasonably elegant, by the end of the lesson. There is no need to bring a partner.

There are candlelit tables and chairs for all guests. Entry price includes two glasses of wine or beer, and a small portion of scampi. Doors open at 7pm with a half hour class for improvers of a new short ballroom routine, taught by former world champion Raymond Root. This is followed by one hour of pre-war dance records, then live music from 8.30pm. Doors close at 11.30pm.

Activities include a quickstep bus stop, a snowball waltz, a Paul Jones and one popular sequence dance. There are photos and videos on our Facebook page and ticket link. Tickets are £15 (early bird) or £20 (standard) online or £25 on the door. Tickets for the class are £25, or a combined ticket with the lesson is £35. The venue has a free car park, and is less than five minutes walk from Colliers Wood tube station. If you have any questions, feel free to phone George Tudor-Hart on 020 8542 1490.



A Sugarpush display team: catch their classes and social on the 23rd

New Member Luigi Sbaffi
in one of his many
historical guises.
See pages 12-13.



Foto Roberto Fusconi