

Does absinthe make the art grow fonder?

Busting myths about the Green Fairy—plus a scientific test to see if it enhances artistic flair

Dave of Reckoning

Revealing the mysteries of Dave Hollander

Cravat like that

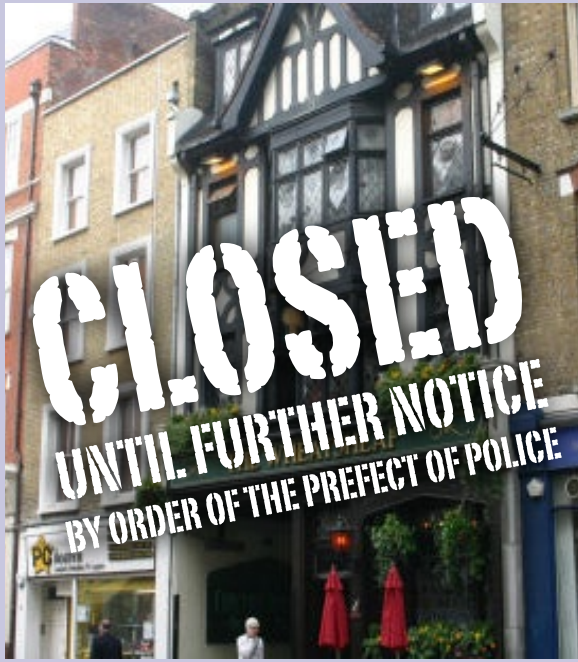
The rise and fall of the 'Belcher' neckcloth



DESIGN!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • No. 165 • JULY 2020

Maffino



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 1st July**. With the Wheatsheaf still closed we're staying virtual for now, and our online lecture will be *The Gin & Tonic Companion: A closer look at the history, science and taste of the ultimate sundowner*. Join Club member, spirits writer and drinks historian David T. Smith as he shares an insight into his "research" in pursuit of mastering what is perhaps the most deceptively simple drink, the Gin & Tonic. Behind the façade of this seemingly basic combination of just two ingredients is a wealth of variation in glassware, ice, methodology, garnish and—of course—the selection of the ingredients themselves.

This talk will be delivered by YouTube livestream to the <https://youtu.be/fXu0TzYzwXA> at 8pm.

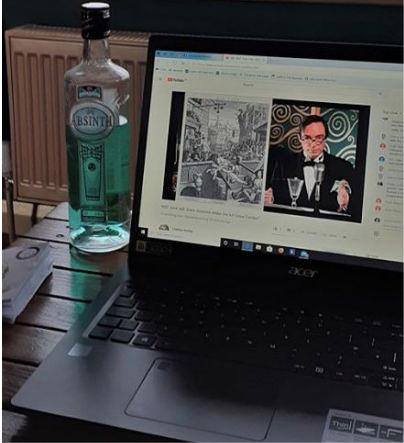
There is a Facebook event at www.facebook.com/events/274657257084053, which might be useful to keep an eye on if we have technical problems and need to change the plan, or create a new URL.

The Last Meeting

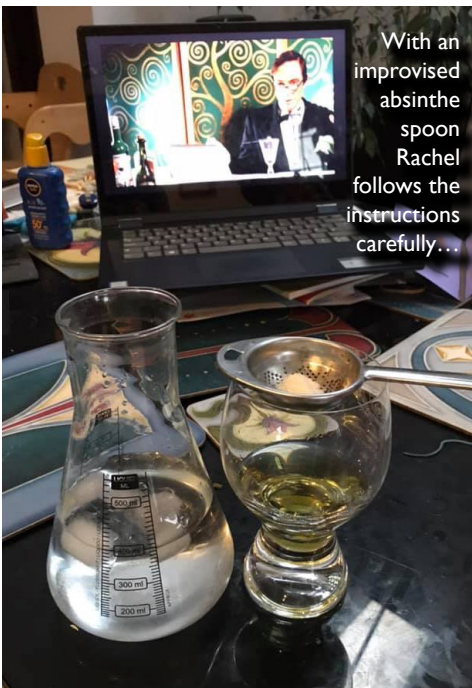
Once again the Club showed that—despite what one might assume—we are not averse to learning new skills, and our third virtual lecture embraced the powers of broadcasting software OBS to include pop-up slides. The subject was absinthe—what it is, how it rose to popularity, why it was banned and how it has returned from banishment. With the help of some guinea pigs in the Club we also attempted to establish if it really does inspire you to greater artistic creativity. You can see a video of the talk at <https://youtu.be/aZtQBcorZS4>, although note that owing to a copyright complaint the film clip from the movie *From Hell* was surgically removed by YouTube—you can see the missing clip at https://youtu.be/L1RWyzVv_-A. An essay version of this talk

begins on page 4. Because we could not physically meet up at the Wheatsheaf, there are none of the usual photos, but Members did post pictures of themselves enjoying a snifter at home, mostly thanks to Stuart Turner's weekly virtual pub Wednesdays.





(Above and far left) The Actuarius household is fully prepared for the talk, as are Birgit (left) and Adrian (right); (below) Pandora's supplies were secured on the way back from Egypt, while David Smith (below right) is drinking the same brand that was sent to our guinea pigs; (left) Frances has made hers into a Death in the Afternoon



With an improvised absinthe spoon Rachel follows the instructions carefully...



And here's the end result

Stuart bucks the trend by rejoicing in the marked-down prices on this unfortunately named lager



Does absinthe make the art grow fonder?

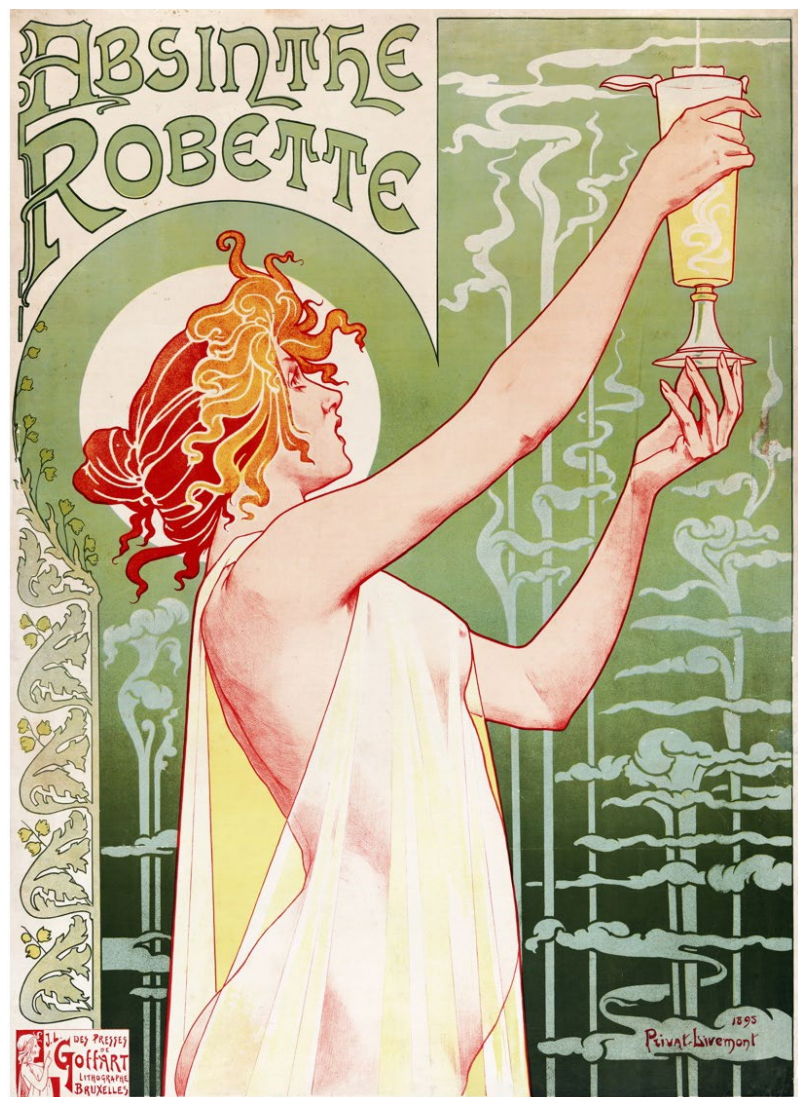
Clayton Hartley on the rise, fall and rise again of the drink they call the Green Fairy

WHAT DO YOU know about absinthe? I'm willing to bet most of you reading this have heard of absinthe, but what do you think of when you think about it? If I were delivering this talk face to face in the Wheatsheaf I'd ask for suggestions, but since we're apart let me guess:

1. It's green. Yes, it is. Except sometimes when it is not—you can also get colourless absinthe. Some people will tell you that this was created in Switzerland by illegal distillers after the drink was banned, so that, being colourless, it would be harder to detect. Well, anyone who has ever stood in the same room as a glass of absinthe will know that you smell it long before you see it. And while bootleg distilling of absinthe certainly did go on in Switzerland after it became illegal, the colourless type, known as a *blanche* in France and *la bleue* in Switzerland, was an established tradition long before the ban.

2. It drives you mad. So some people would have you believe, though I've drunk a fair amount and I'm as sane as I was before, which admittedly isn't much of a yardstick. It did achieve a reputation for being uniquely dangerous as alcoholic drinks go, but any absinthe you are likely to encounter today is certainly as safe as any other booze. Which is not to say it isn't any *different*.

3. It's drunk by poets, painters and



arty types. It undoubtedly did become fashionable with the creative crowd, and that is perhaps partly why the citizenry at large became suspicious of it. Oscar Wilde described the distinct pleasures of it, and poet Ernest Dowson seems to have consumed little else. Does it make you more artistic? This is something we attempted to find out when I delivered this talk via YouTube last month

(preserved for repeat viewing at <https://youtu.be/aZtQBcorZS4>), as 15 Sheridanites had been sent samples of absinthe which they consumed during the lecture. Earlier they had been asked to produce control artworks, and after they'd scoffed their absinthe they were tasked to produce a new artwork, so we could compare the two and see if the Green Fairy had

unlocked the doors to their creative genius.

4. It's illegal. Emphatically not. It *was* banned in most of Europe and America in the Edwardian era, but it was never banned in Britain. It didn't really have to be, since it

The absinthe on the left is artificially coloured while the sample on the right is naturally coloured: note the blue tone of the fake one



had never become popular enough to be seen as a problem and, besides, all the absinthe came from France and Switzerland and they were no longer producing. Moreover, after some lobbying by absinthe distillers over the last ten or 20 years, the sale of absinthe is now legal in the EU and the US.

So what exactly is absinthe?

Absinthe is an alcoholic spirit flavoured with various herbs and spices, known as 'botanicals'. In that sense it's much like gin: you take a base spirit, already distilled from grain, grapes or sugar beet, soak your botanicals in it, then redistil it—you heat up the liquid till the alcohol evaporates, taking with it flavours from the plants, then condense the vapours back into liquid. Of course it doesn't taste like gin because the plants used are different. And what about that green colour? Colour is one thing that won't pass through distillation—distillates are always colourless. So any spirit that has a colour has had that added afterwards. Whisky and brandy are colourless when first distilled, but acquire a brown colour from the barrels they sit in for years. In the case of absinthe, some of the plants used can't impart the desired flavours through distillation, only through infusion, so they must be added *after* the distillation process, leaving a green colour. (To give another example, cucumber is an increasingly popular flavour in gin, but the desired flavour doesn't survive passing through distillation: so any gin with cucumber as a botanical has had that added later. In the case of Hendricks they add a commercial cucumber syrup before bottling, which I have tasted and it's rather nice, if you can imagine what an intense cucumber tastes like. The Summer Edition of the Cornish gin Caspyn uses slices of fresh cucumber, infused after distillation, and they leave a faint green tint.)



Artemisia Absinthium



The natural green colour of real absinthe is not very stable: these two samples are both of the reformulated La Fée, the one on the left a new bottle, the one on the right bottle a few years old, both kept in opaque containers.

anise are common, along with fennel, lemon balm and hyssop. Absinthe recipes can involve huge numbers of ingredients.

So, with wormwood as a major ingredient, absinthe must be pretty bitter, right? Actually, no. Real absinthe is not really any more bitter than coffee, though it is subjective. This is all down to that business of redistilling the spirit after you've soaked your botanicals in it. The molecules that cause bitterness are pretty heavy and at the temperature that alcohol evaporates it's pretty easy to leave them behind. There is a man called Ian Hart who makes an excellent gin called Sacred: he makes it in his house in north London, using a vacuum pump rather than heat to cause the spirit to evaporate, and he distils all his botanicals one at a time, then blends them to make his gin. He once gave me samples to taste of infusions of wormwood, gentian and hops, all famously bitter and all extremely foul-tasting. Then he gave me samples of the same infusions after they had been redistilled—not one of them had a trace of bitterness. Instead you were left with subtle, pleasant flavours—in the case of wormwood a sort of earthy, rooty, herbal quality.

It's worth noting that the green colour left in absinthe by these botanicals is a sort of olive green. Evidently this colour can't be created using food dye, so any absinthe you see with a bluish green colour has been artificially coloured. The high alcohol content of absinthe is at least in part to keep the green chlorophyll colour stable. Without its preservative effect the colour turns brown and starts to precipitate out as a sediment.

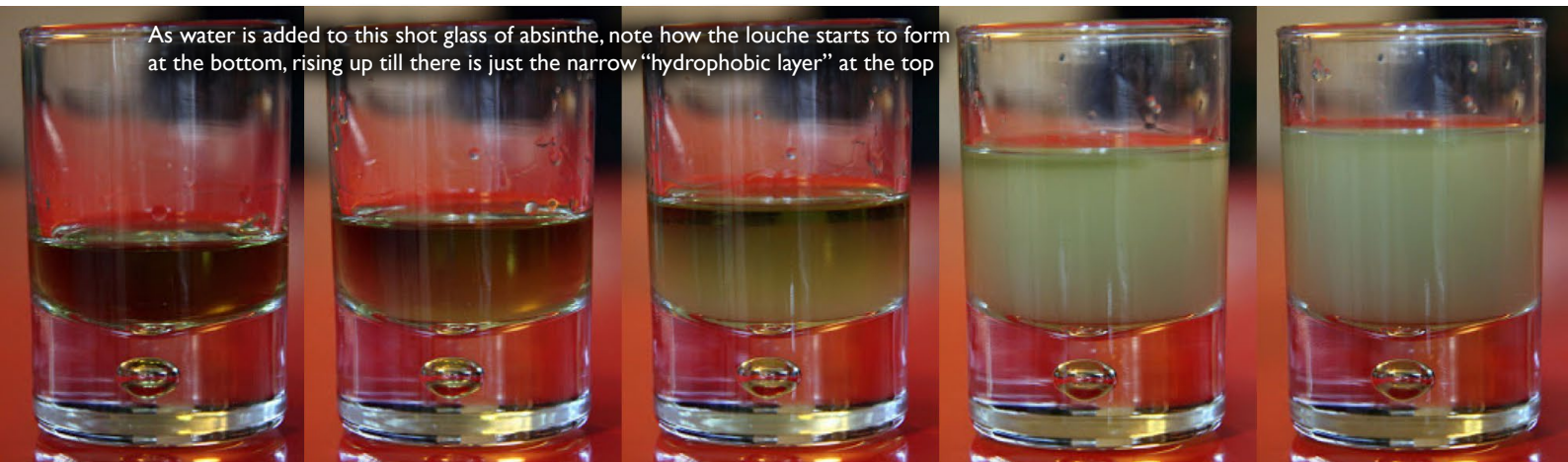
As anyone who has opened a bottle of (real) absinthe will know, the most prominent flavour is aniseed. But in fact the defining ingredient in absinthe is wormwood. This is a famously bitter plant that has long been considered to have medicinal properties—in fact its name comes from its use as a treatment for intestinal worms, something that goes back as far as the Ancient Egyptians. It's likely that absinthe originated as a way to extract and preserve the medicinal benefits of wormwood. (The same goes for both gin and tonic, which started life as vehicles for juniper and quinine respectively, as medicines.)

Wormwood turns up elsewhere too. It's an important ingredient in vermouth—the name of which comes from *Wermut*, the German for wormwood. In Victorian times it was used to make purl, a sort of mulled ale with wormwood and spices added, popular as an early-morning drink with labourers. *Artemisia absinthium*, also known as Grand Wormwood, is the main variety used, though Small or Roman wormwood is also sometimes included. Both star and green



Behold the milky, opalescent appearance of this fellow's "louched" absinthe

As water is added to this shot glass of absinthe, note how the louche starts to form at the bottom, rising up till there is just the narrow “hydrophobic layer” at the top



How is absinthe consumed?

Green absinthe is usually around 65–72% alcohol by volume, and white absinthe usually in the mid-fifties. Do not be tempted to drink it neat: this is not how it is intended to be consumed. Think of it as a concentrate, designed to be diluted. If you drink it neat you’ll probably get less of the flavour, as some tastes and aromas only really emerge when a certain dilution is reached. How much water you add is entirely a matter of taste—the instructions on the bottle will often encourage you to use four, five or six parts water to one part absinthe, but I think that’s a bit watery. Best to start with less and see how you like it: you can always add more. I was doing some absinthe judging for *The Spirits Business* magazine and we settled on a ratio of 2½ to 1.

Distiller Ted Breaux, who makes his own Jade brand of absinthe, gave me a handy tip to finding the right degree of dilution. As you add water to absinthe it starts to go cloudy—there are a lot of essential oils dissolved in that high alcohol content, and as you add water the alcohol level goes down until it is no longer alcoholic enough to keep the oils in solution, so they form an emulsion, a suspension of oil droplets (like milk). In the absinthe world this is known as “louching”. In some absintnes the louche can have an opalescent appearance and aficionados will consider the beauty of the louche when judging an absinthe. The louche starts to form at the bottom of the glass and rises up. The dark, transparent band of un-louched absinthe at the top is known as the hydrophobic layer. Ted recommended adding



Some examples of absinthe fountain design, with two or four spigots



ABSINTHE IN COCKTAILS

In this article I talk about the traditional way of serving absinthe just with water, but it also plays a role in cocktails. With such a powerful, pungent taste it often appears in very small quantities: indeed it is often enough to rinse some absinthe around your glass or cocktail shaker, then pour it back into the bottle and carry on.

Sazerac

2 shots rye, bourbon, Cognac or a blend
Absinthe rinse

1 sugar cube or sugar syrup

3 dashes Peychaud's and/or Angostura bitters

A New Orleans classic that's essentially an Old Fashioned with absinthe. Usually made with rye, some say it was originally Cognac-based and it's now popular to use a mix of the two. Traditionally stirred with ice then strained into a chilled glass without ice. Twist a strip of lemon peel over the top but do not drop it in.

Corpse Reviver No.2

Absinthe rinse, then equal parts gin, Cointreau, lemon juice and Cocchi Americano

Originally made with the now-defunct Kina Lillet; nowadays Cocchi Americano is probably the closest replacement. Shake with ice and garnish with lemon peel or a cocktail cherry.

Monkey Gland

2 shots gin

1-2 shots orange juice

1 tsp grenadine

1 tsp absinthe

Proportions vary a lot: some recipes have more grenadine and/or less absinthe.

Death in the Afternoon

2 tsp absinthe

1 tsp sugar syrup (optional)

Top with Champagne

Attributed to Ernest Hemingway—whose original recipe uses a whopping 1½ shots absinthe and no sugar.



ABSINTHE SUPERIEURE



across the top: unlike a regular spoon this is flat and perforated, which in fact makes it fairly useless for normal spoon duties. On to the absinthe spoon is placed a sugar lump. Then the glass is placed under one of the spigots of the fountain and water is dripped, drop by drop, on to the sugar. This slowly dissolves so the absinthe is sweetened as it is diluted.

What, you're probably asking, is the point of all this malarkey? Well, as discussed above, you may be particular about precisely how much water you add, so doing it slowly is the only way to get that just right.

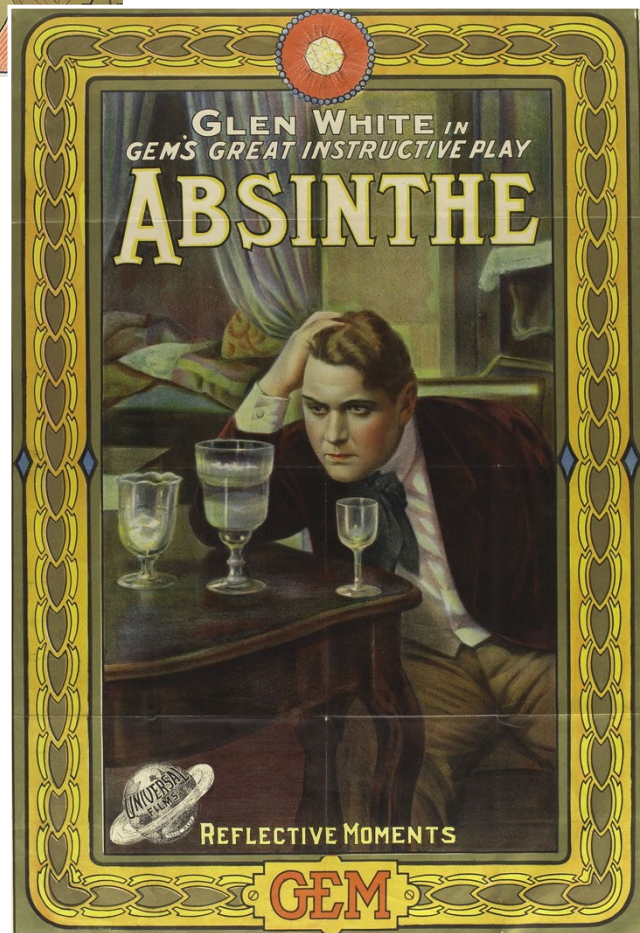
Moreover, if you try just adding a sugar lump to a glass of diluted absinthe and giving it a stir, you'll be disappointed: a sugar lump dissolves easily in hot tea, but very reluctantly in ice-cold absinthe. I've also heard it suggested that sugar in Victorian France was less refined than it is today, so it may have dissolved even less readily.

Some might also argue that having to wait while your drink slowly dilutes encourages you to take the time to contemplate its mysteries. But from a practical point of view I should



water only until the layer has just disappeared or is just about to. I can recommend this technique—it does seem to hit the sweet spot in terms of the right amount of dilution.

As you may know, part of absinthe's mystique is the Absinthe Ritual. The traditional preparation involves an "absinthe fountain". Despite its name, it does not dispense absinthe but water. The body is filled with iced water and there are tiny spigots coming out of the side—usually at least two, frequently four and sometimes even six or eight. The measure of absinthe (known as the "dose", which admittedly doesn't help dispel absinthe's image as a drug) is served in a glass, often designed with a bulb or marked section at the bottom to show precisely how much absinthe to add. Then the drinker places an "absinthe spoon"



emphasise that none of this is really necessary. You can just add water from a tap if you like. Indeed the contemporary posters on this page show happy absinthe-bibbers simply adding water from a jug (with or without the spoon). But part of absinthe’s mystique is that the process of preparation was depicted as something you could easily get wrong: too much water or the right amount added too quickly and you’d bruise the absinthe, and would be best to discard it and start again. Absinthe dens were apparently inhabited by grizzled “absinthe professors” happy to tutor the neophyte in the hope of getting a free drink out of it. Even diluting your drink simply from a jug was sometimes evolved to an art where the pouring had to be done in a narrow stream but from a great height.

In the poster for the “instructive” play *Absinthe* (previous page), notice the device our hero is using, a glass bowl that sits over the absinthe glass: I think that crushed ice is placed in the bowl, which melts and drips slowly into the absinthe. See also the vintage see-saw dripper: iced water goes in the top, while a see-saw paddle at the bottom flips back and forth, regulating the rate at which water can escape.

One thing you should *not* do with absinthe

Vintage see-saw dripper

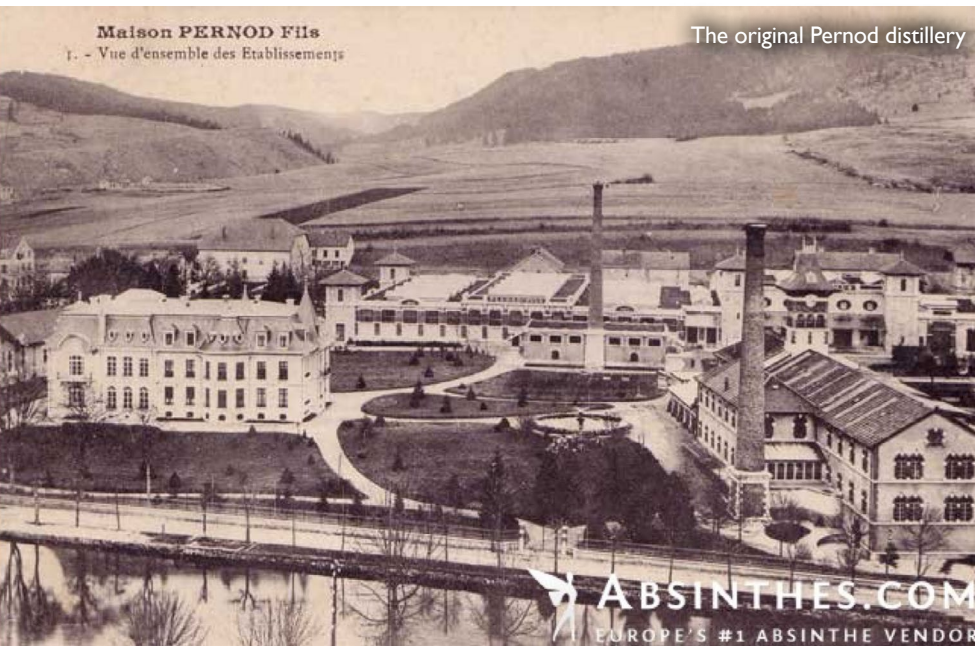


is set fire to it. You may have heard of the “absinthe fire ritual”—a sugar lump is soaked in absinthe and ignited, allowed to caramelize, then stirred into the absinthe in your glass, setting fire to that too, which is then doused with the water. But this was just made up by marketing people in the 1990s who were trying to reintroduce absinthe as a product and realised that club kids weren’t going to sit around dreamily while their drink took shape drop by drop. The idea may have come from US frat antics or perhaps the tradition of lighting the Italian liqueur sambuca—which is also anise-flavoured.

The idea that absinthe requires fire and spoons and other drug paraphernalia wasn’t helped by the scene from the movie version of *From Hell* where Johnny Depp has a snifter in the bath. In this version he first puts his sugar on an absinthe spoon across an empty glass, then pours the absinthe over the sugar (inevitably spilling half of it down the side), then sets fire to the absinthe itself, which toasts the sugar a bit before he tips it in, clearly fails to dissolve it by stirring, then apparently drinks it neat. All bad ideas. (He also adds some laudanum for good measure.) You can see the clip at https://youtu.be/L1RWyzVv_-A.

If there was such a fondness for absinthe that all this reverent ritual arose about how to consume it, then how did it get banned? Brace yourself for a potted history. Although wormwood drinks date back centuries, absinthe as we understand it is traditionally dated to 1792, when Doctor Pierre Ordinaire, a monarchist fleeing the French Revolution, settled in the Swiss village of Couvet. A lot of wormwood grows wild in this region and Ordinaire allegedly came up with the recipe for absinthe. Some say that two sisters named Henriod were already making absinthe when Ordinaire arrived, while others say





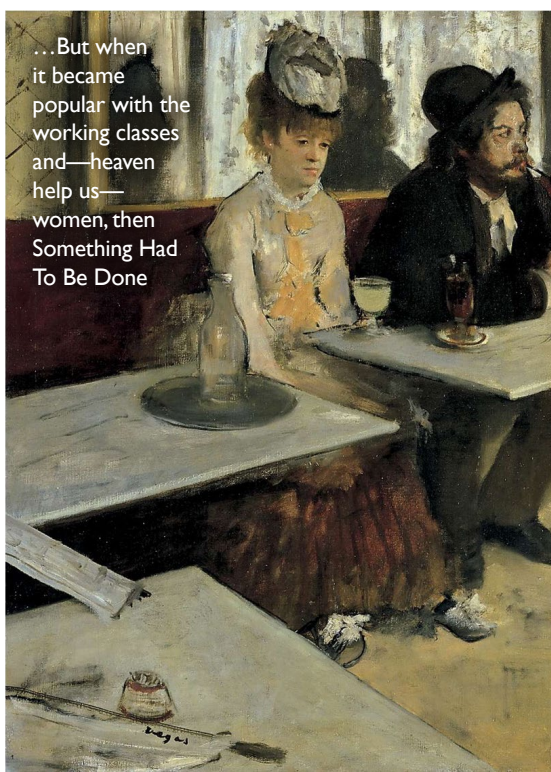
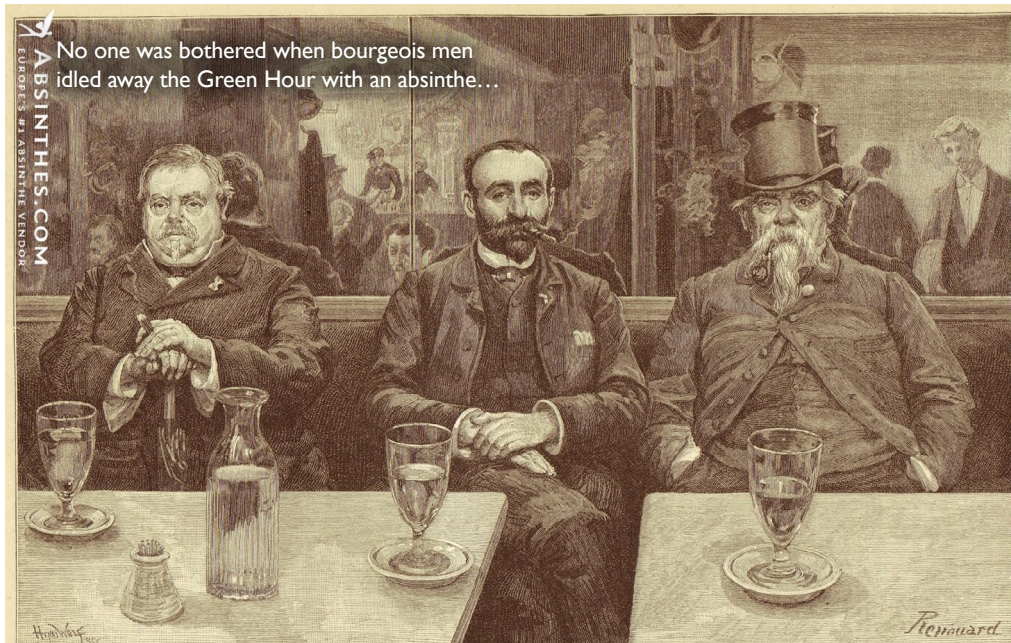
their drinking water and fend off malaria. Apparently this worked so well the policy spread to all French troops everywhere. They developed a taste for it, and what soldiers do can often lead fashions. Before long the bourgeoisie were sitting in cafés sipping absinthe every evening during the “green hour”, to sharpen the appetite between leaving work at 5pm and heading off for supper.

At this stage absinthe was still seen as a health tonic: fashionable people would have just one, at a particular time of

Ordinaire gave them the recipe. It became popular locally as a health tonic. A Major Dubied liked the medicinal benefits so much he bought the recipe; in 1797 the Major’s daughter married one Henri-Louis Pernod, leading ultimately to the Pernod drinks empire. (Pernod Ricard is today the second largest wine and spirits merchant in the world.) During absinthe’s heyday Pernod was the biggest producer: when absinthe was banned they switched to making the wormwood-free anise drinks that we know as Pernod today.

Dubiet moved across the border to avoid import tax, settling in the French town of Pontarlier which became the traditional home of absinthe, at one time supporting 25 distilleries. Couvet to this day is the main absinthe town in Switzerland.

Absinthe may have stayed a local delicacy if it weren’t for the Franco-Algerian War in North Africa in the 1830s and 1840s. Soldiers were issued with absinthe to purify



day, for a particular purpose. But fashions have a habit of trickling down and it was when absinthe became popular with the working classes that it began to be seen as a problem. And as the demand grew, unscrupulous producers looked for ways to fabricate it more cheaply, using industrial ingredients. Copper sulphate

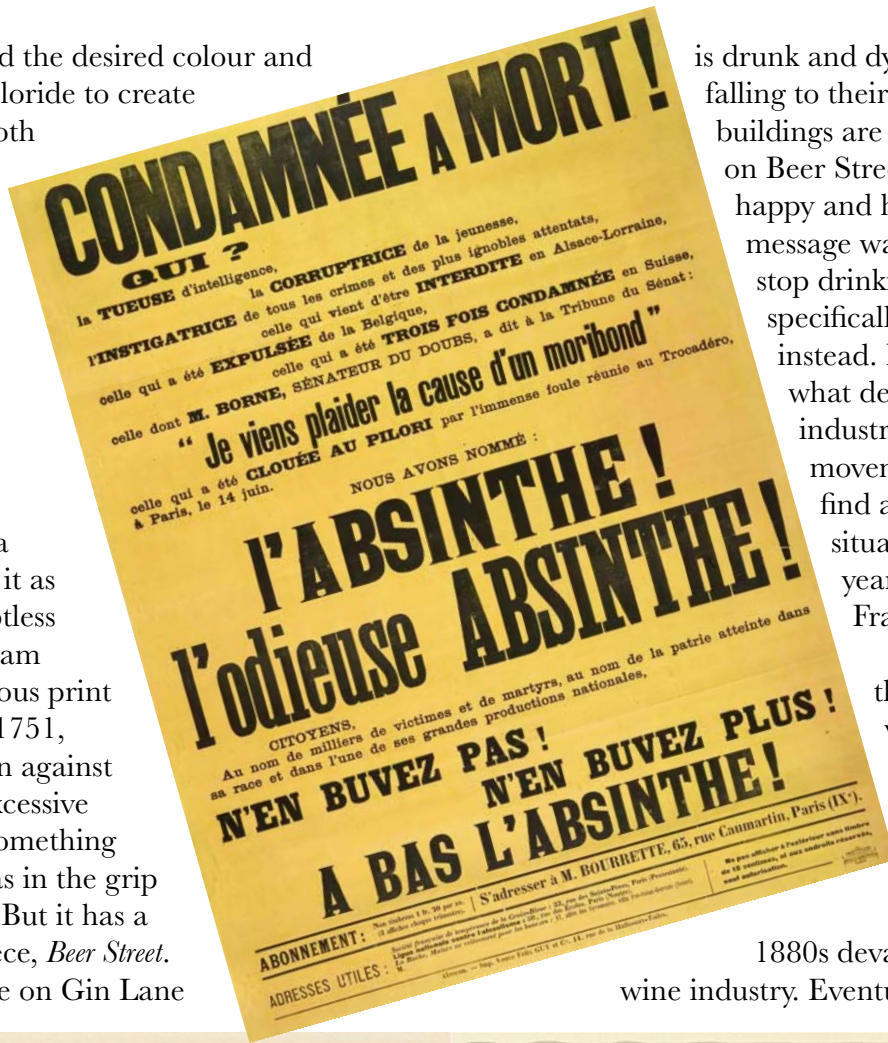
was used to add the desired colour and antimony trichloride to create the louche—both poisonous. So it has to be admitted that some of the liquids being sold as absinthe probably did make you mad and dead.

But there's a PR element to it as well. You doubtless recognise William Hogarth's famous print *Gin Lane* from 1751, created to warn against the perils of excessive gin drinking, something the country was in the grip of at the time. But it has a companion piece, *Beer Street*. While everyone on *Gin Lane*

is drunk and dying, babies are falling to their deaths and buildings are collapsing, on *Beer Street* everyone is happy and healthy. The message was not just to stop drinking gin, but specifically to drink beer instead. I don't know to what degree the beer industry financed this movement, but we find a very similar situation a hundred years later in France.

It starts with the phylloxera vine weevil, which ravaged French vineyards in the 1870s and

1880s devastating the wine industry. Eventually they



BEER STREET.



Beer, happy Proves of our Life
Gin, our only Drink, our only
And our only with Falgout and Tull,
Can cheer our mazy Heart.

Labour and Art upheld by Trade
Sheweth the Cause of our
We quaff the healthful Juice with Glee
And Water, leave to France.

Genius of Health, thy grateful Taste
Sheweth the Cause of our
And warm our Estomach generous Brest
With Liberty and Love.

GIN LANE.

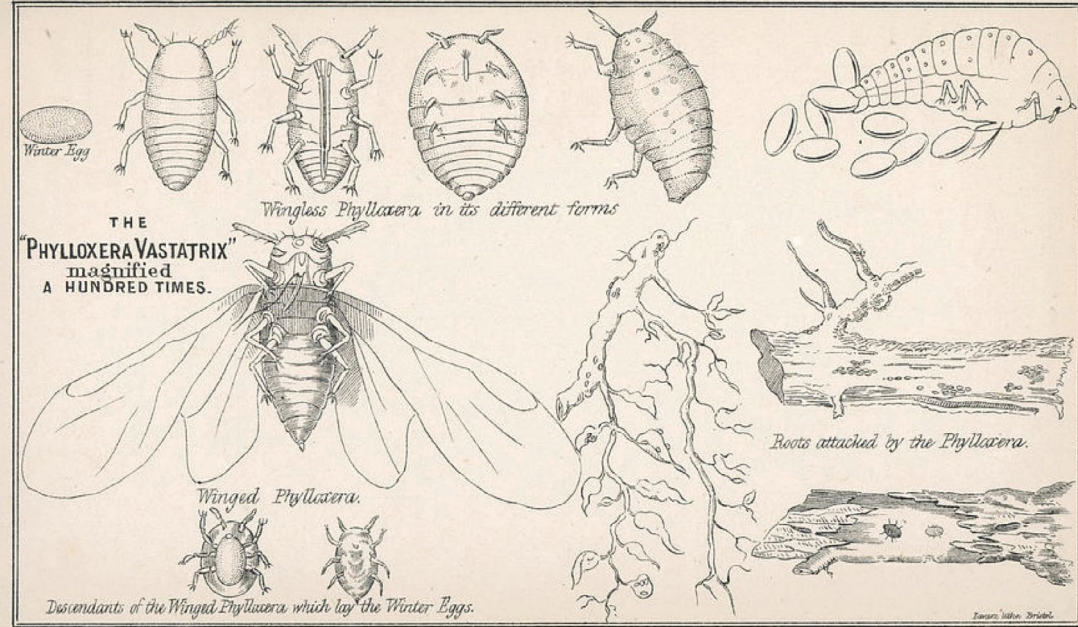


Our usual Food, with Pure Gin, we
Make human Brains a Prey,
It makes our Blood, through
And leads our Life away.

Verbs and Death, do us to Despair,
It's Gin, we should be
That, Murder, Peppery.

Dam'd Cup, that on the Vitals preys,
That fatal Fire contains,
Which, Madmen to the Hell convey,
And rolls it thro' the Veins.

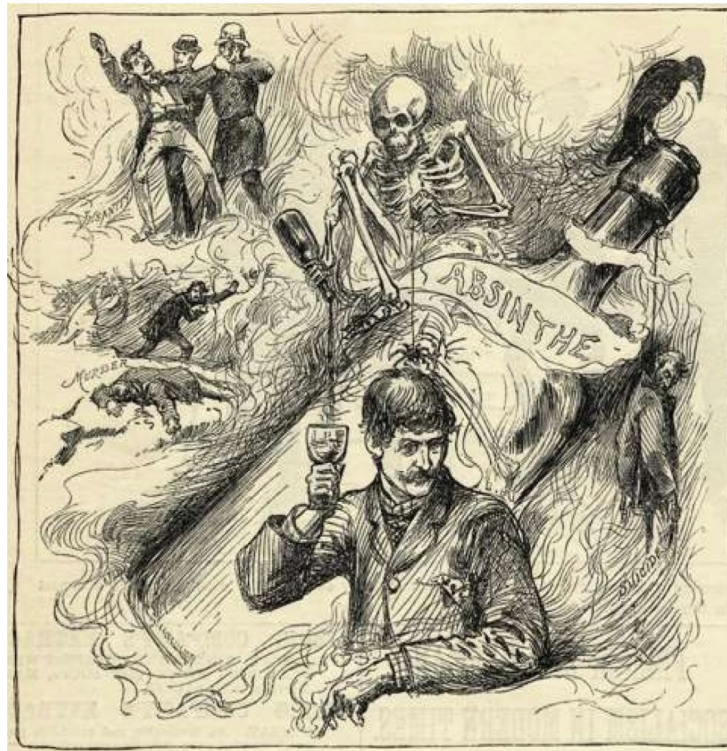
found a solution—the weevil comes from America and most native American vine varieties were found to be immune. Since the weevil only attacks the root of the vine, viniculturists grafted the traditional French varieties on to rootstock from American vines. However, during the



(Above) The Phylloxera vine weevil that hammered the wine industry, allowing absinthe to take over; (left and below) in turn the wine industry was happy to encourage the belief that absinthe led only to madness, criminality, social breakdown and death

period when phylloxera was running rampant, wine therefore became scarce and expensive—at precisely the time when absinthe was becoming cheaper. By the time the wine industry had solved the phylloxera problem, they found the country had switched heavily from drinking wine to drinking absinthe.

But grapes are grown all over France, while absinthe was only made on the border with Switzerland, where the wormwood



grows. The wine industry was a powerful lobby with a clear incentive to promote the idea that absinthe was, as one lobbyist described it, “death in a bottle”.

Authorities began to take positive action first in Switzerland. One day in August 1905 a labourer named Jean Lanfray drank two glasses of absinthe and promptly shot

LA FIN DE LA FÉE VERTE



SUPPRESSION DE L'ABSINTHE EN FRANCE

RAPPORT PRÉSENTÉ LE 7 JANVIER 1915 PAR

M. VIVIANI, président du Conseil; MILLY, ministre de l'Intérieur; RIDOT, ministre des Finances, et BRUNO, ministre de la Justice
 Décret signé le même jour par M. R. POINCARÉ, Président de la République Française

LOI votée à la Chambre le 16 Mars 1915 -- Rapporteur: M. SCHMIOT, député de St-Diz (Vosges)

Editeur Propriétaire: A. FROST, à Nancy (Meurthe)

his pregnant wife and two daughters. In fact Jean had drunk a little more than this: after two absinthes before work he had a crème de menthe, a Cognac, six glasses of wine at lunch and another glass of wine and a coffee with brandy in it; on getting home from work he drank a further litre of wine and a coffee with marc in it. But people were in no doubt that it was the absinthe that drove him to murder. A petition was raised and in due course the authorities responded by outlawing absinthe.

In France it took until 1915 for a ban to be issued. In the *La fin de la Fée Verte* poster on this page you can see scenes of warfare in the background—the First World War was in full swing and, noting that the German army seemed to drink nothing more harmful than lager, French authorities feared that a generation of French troops weakened by absinthe abuse would be no match for them.

Absinthe was quickly banned in most of Europe and elsewhere—though, as mentioned, never in the UK. Nor was it banned in Spain, where you've been able to buy it ever since, as Ernest Hemingway apparently did.

Another place it



(Left) This poster depicts the ban in France as a patriotic victory over the curse that could lead to defeat in the Great War; (above) absinthe was never banned in Britain: here we see Victor Berlemont in 1939 preparing absinthe in his Soho pub the York Minster (later the French House, popular with Sheridanites); (bottom) Hill's Absinth, which started the "Czech-sinthe" craze

was never banned was the Czech Republic. It was here, in the late 1990s, that I first came across "Hill's Absinth". I smuggled a bottle back to blighty and got ready for my first trip. I was to be disappointed. The stuff tasted slightly bitter and of not much else, and had no effect on me at all.

Absinthe was never banned in Bohemia because there had been no tradition of drinking it. When Radomil Hill, who had inherited his father's distilling business, decided to add absinthe to the product line-up he claimed the recipe was an old family one, but in fact he just made it up. He knew that absinthe was supposed to be green and bitter, and what he came up with was more in the tradition of bitter herbal spirits like Zwack Unicum and Gammel Dansk. As you can see, the colour is artificial. It was marketers for Hill's who came up with the fire ritual.

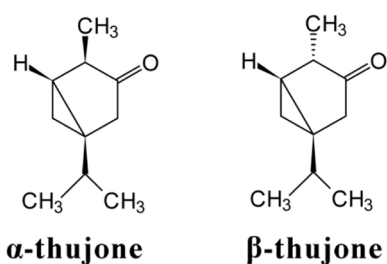
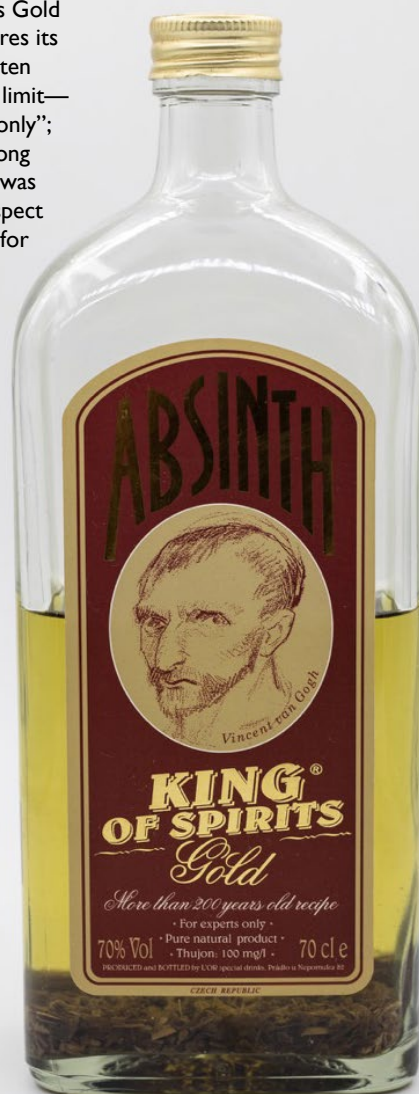
The man who imported Hill's into the UK was George Rowley, with whom I've had a few run-ins. After a while he realised



how fake Hill's was, so he got a contract distiller to make something more authentic, in consultation with Marie-Claude Delahaye, who runs an absinthe museum in Auvers-sur-Oise. Marie-Claude is actually teetotal, but they did come up with an anise-driven drink that was more along the lines of real absinthe, launched as La Fée. There is still some mystery about how it was made, with some claiming it was an "oil mix" of commercial flavourings, and George insisting it was not, although he couldn't deny the colour was fake. Eventually in 2013 he reformulated with a new product that was fully distilled from natural ingredients, and tasted much better for it. It is this product that was sent out to our NSC guinea pigs. Since then scores of new absinthes have launched in France, Switzerland, Germany, the US and elsewhere.

But how are these legal? The answer lies in the molecule thujone. This is present in wormwood and for as long as science has been applied to absinthe it was considered to be the active ingredient the thing that made it special. When absinthe was banned in the US the prohibition was specifically against drinks containing thujone. Thujone turns up in other foods, such as sage, so the EU didn't outlaw it completely, but had a limit of 10 mg per litre, so revival absinthes had to stay under this limit. A loophole exists for "bitters" (as in cocktail bitters) which are allowed to be up to 35 mg/l, so you'll see some absinthes calling themselves "bitters" so they can up the thujone level. Then there is King of Spirits Gold. It's a vile Czech absinthe with weeds

King of Spirits Gold proudly declares its thujone level ten times the EU limit—"for experts only"; (inset) for a long time thujone was the prime suspect in the search for absinthe's "special" powers; (bottom) George Rowley on the promotion trail





New Orleans's Old Absinthe House, circa 1903

floating in it but, where the regular King of Spirits has 10 mg/l of thujone, this monster has 100 mg/l—legal in the Czech Republic but not in the EU. I was one of those dumb enough to pay £100 for a bottle of this. What effect did I experience when I drank it? Only regret at losing £100.



New Orleanian Ted Breaux, a man instrumental in getting the ban overturned in the US; (bottom) Ted's "Jade" range of absinthes recreating historical products

People still believed that pre-ban absinthe contained vastly more thujone, which was the only explanation for the psychotropic effects that modern absinthe was not producing, and presumably the need to sweeten the pre-ban stuff with sugar. In the 1970s some scientists noted that thujone and THC, the active compound in cannabis, were both terpenoids with



a similar molecular structure, and that absinthe must therefore have a similar effect on the brain. In fact this was quickly debunked. Thujone's effects on the brain are now known to be quite different. It is a stimulant that interferes with GABA, the chemical that normally regulates the brain's function, leading ultimately to tremor, convulsions and death. But an average man would need about 500 mg of thujone to achieve "thujone intoxication", the equivalent of drinking 50 bottles of contemporary absinthe. Could the pre-ban stuff really have had so much more thujone in it?

This was a question that bothered Ted Breaux. A native New Orleanian, he often walked past a hostelry called the Old Absinthe House. In its heyday it had

vast stone absinthe fountains built into the bar, but by this stage it was just a regular watering hole. With its French connections, New Orleans had once been the home of absinthe in the US and Ted decided to find out more about the Green Fairy. He was an environmental scientist by trade, analysing water samples and the like to find out what was in them. Using mass spectrometry and gas chromatography and other Science Things, he could establish the chemical composition of a substance. Moreover, even though absinthe had been banned in the US in 1912, old bottles of the stuff dating from before the ban regularly turn up at auction, having been found in cellars during house clearances. Ted amassed quite a collection. Most importantly, he was able to subject these venerable samples to chemical analysis.

What he found, and which has subsequently been confirmed by other analysts, is that pre-ban absinthe typically contained only around 5–9 mg/l of thujone. I've read that the highest level measured to date is only about 20–30 mg/l. Moreover, it has since been established that

when given samples of liquids containing either 10 mg/l, or 100 mg/l or no thujone at all, human subjects can't tell the difference.

As mentioned, Ted himself went on to found his own absinthe brand. He makes his absinthes by hand in the Combier distillery in Saumur, using stills dating back to before the ban. With the exception of his product called “Nouvelles-Orleans”—his own recipe as a tribute to his home town—all of his absinthes are faithful recreations of specific pre-ban brands. So if you want to know what Oscar Wilde, Aleister Crowley and Toulouse-Lautrec were actually drinking, you can find out (assuming they were

drinking the good stuff).

Consequently the EU thujone limits were irrelevant to the production of authentic absinthe, as the permitted 10 mg/l is more than enough. Moreover it was realised that the 1988 directive on flavourings that included these limits specifically superseded all existing food legislation in member countries—including all the original laws that banned absinthe in the first place. France did respond to this by passing a new decree banning anything labelled as absinthe, but producers responded by labelling their products as “wormwood-based spirits”, and the ban was lifted again in 2011. Switzerland legalised it in 2000. In the US someone spotted that the original order



banning absinthe should have been signed by three cabinet ministers but bore the signature of only one, so quite possibly had never been legally valid. In any case, the authorities eventually ruled that anything with less than 10 mg/l of thujone counted as “thujone-free”, making most absinthes legal anyway.

So, if thujone has no effect on the drinker, what is absinthe's secret? Certainly the literature left by enthusiastic drinkers from the pre-ban era makes it clear that absinthe is not as other drinks and has a special effect on the drinker. Oscar Wilde once famously described the experience:

The jury remains out on whether absinthe has a special effect on the drinker. Try it for yourself: will you find the Green Fairy whispering sweet genius in your ear..?



After the first glass you see things as you wish they were. After the second you see things as they are not. Finally, you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world. ... Take a top hat! You think you see it as it really is. But you don't, because you associate it with other things and ideas. If you had never heard of one before, and suddenly saw it alone, you'd be frightened, or laugh. That is the effect that absinthe has, and that is why it drives men mad.

Aleister Crowley, the Great Beast himself, was a keen *absintheur* and describes how “a single glass seems to render the breathing freer, the spirit lighter, the heart more ardent, soul and mind alike more capable of executing the great task of doing that particular work in the world which the Father may have sent them to perform”.

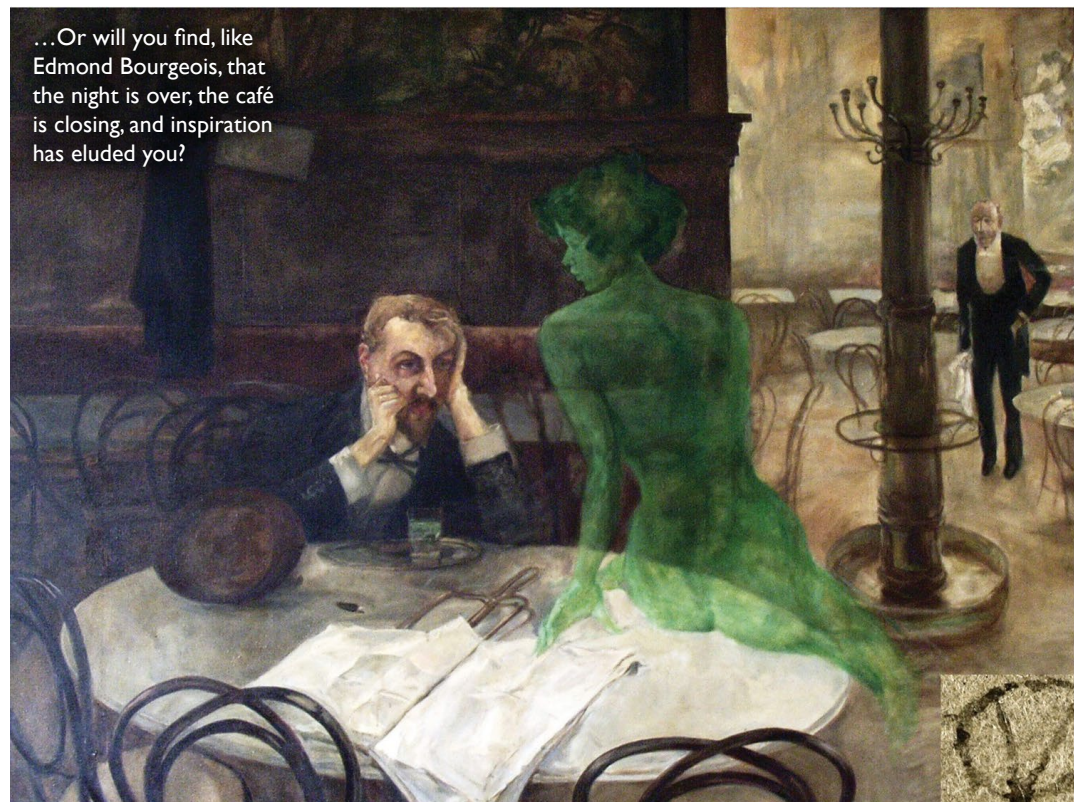
However, Crowley also writes: “What is there in absinthe that makes it a separate cult? The effects of its abuse are totally distinct from those of other stimulants. Even in ruin and in degradation it remains a thing apart: its victims wear a ghastly aureole all their own, and in their peculiar hell yet gloat with a sinister perversion of pride that they are not as other men.”

As you can see, Wilde and Crowley saw absinthe as both wondrous and terrifying. But you could argue that that also sums up the relationship that many a perceptive alcoholic has with any alcohol. And Crowley's second quote hints that what makes absinthe special is perhaps that its devotees want it to be. They want to think of it as the source of creativity and themselves as a cut above other drunks because absinthe is their drink of choice.

Personally I can't honestly say that I have ever felt any effect from absinthe other than from the alcohol. But plenty of people say they do, such as our own David T. Smith and Ted Breaux, who himself believes that, while

thujone has nothing to do with it, there is something in the combination of herbs that has a stimulant effect, combining with the sedative effective of the alcohol to produce a “lucid intoxication”. A literary speedball, if you will. The alcohol relaxes and opens the mind while the stimulant herbs focus it. If so, you can see how this might be seen as the tool of artists and poets.

I'll leave you with the advice contained in this poem by Edmond Bourgeois from the mid-19th century:



...Or will you find, like Edmond Bourgeois, that the night is over, the café is closing, and inspiration has eluded you?

Anxious and grieving, in the smoky enclosure
Of a café, I dream, and, dreaming, I write
Of the blue tints of the sun that I love
When I see its light in a glass of absinthe.

Then the mind scales the highest peaks
And the heart is full of hope and the scent of hyacinth,
I write and write, saying; absinthe is holy
And the green-eyed muse is forever sovereign.

But alas! A poet is still just a man.
With the first glass drunk, for better writing,
I wanted a second, and the writing slowed.

The tumultuous waves of thought dried up
And deserted, my brain became hollow:
It only needed one glass, and I drank two.

Does absinthe make the art grow fonder?

How did our artistic guinea pigs get on?

Part Deux

TO TRY AND add an element of scientific rigour to the absinthe presentation I asked for volunteers beforehand and sent each of them a 50ml measure of absinthe. I asked each of them to produce some sort of artwork, in any medium, in advance to use as a “control”.

Then I asked them to consume their absinthe

dose during the talk and, while still under the influence of it, produce a new artwork. The object of the exercise was to see if the second work showed signs of a new inspiration or creativity. Of course, there is no objective way to measure or grade inspiration or creativity, so I shall leave it to the opinions of you, the readers, to decide for yourselves.

Andrew Dobbie

Before



After



Frances Mitchell

Before

I woke up with a sore throat and pain in my head
And thought, it's Corona best stay in bed
I'll stay till October
When lockdown will be over
But went to a lecture on Absinthe instead.

After

"Let's see if Absinthe enhances the brain."
So said Clayton, when the drink's virtues he
tried to explain.
So I drank two glasses up quick,
And was immediately sick,
So in future, from Absinthe, I think, I'll abstain!

Birgit Gebhardt

Before



After



Ruth Blanco

Before

A lady from Clacton on sea
Felt frisky and sought company
But as lockdown took hold
Zoom dates left her cold
So she sighed, and chose celibacy.

After (1)

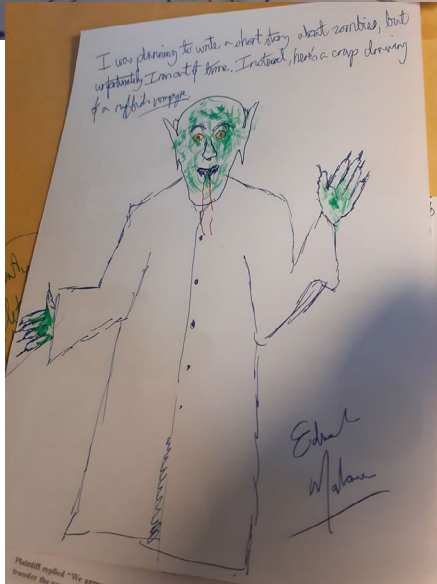
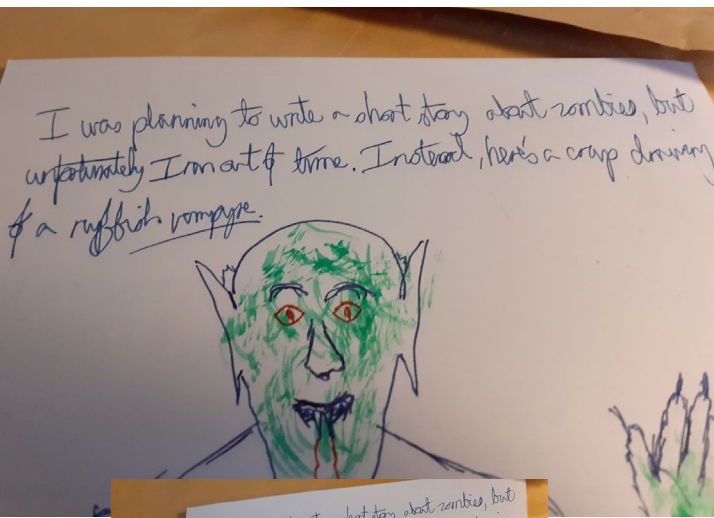
Dark green shades to
black
Leaves to shadows
Thoughts turn
melancholy
Night envelops

After (2)

A dreamer in Sussex drank late
Attempting a verse to create
But as darkness drew in
She gave a wry grin
And thought fuck it, who cares
if these things scan anyway

Ed Marlowe

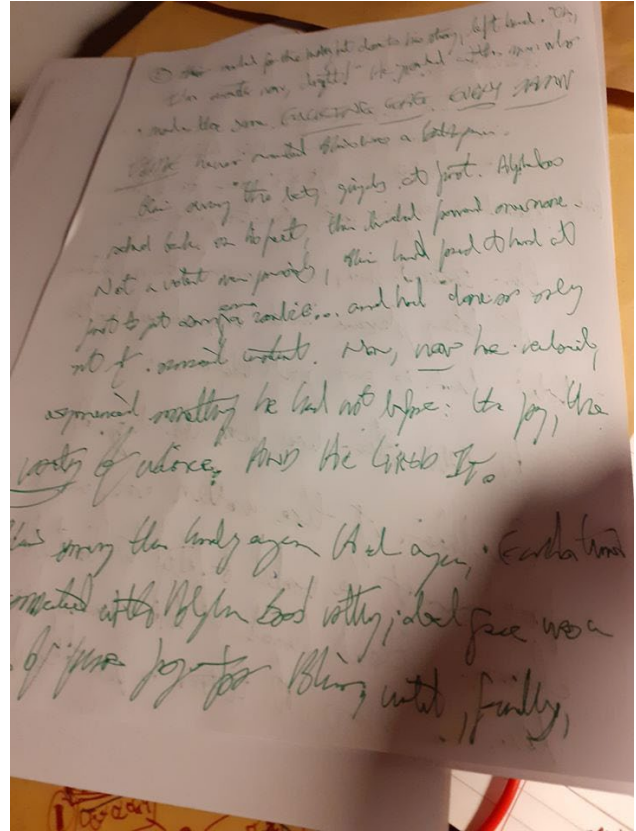
Before



Ed was planning to write a short story about a zombie as his "before" artwork but ran out of time, so instead supplied this "crap drawing of a rubbish vampire". However, right after the talk his supplied this "photographic evidence of the short zombie story I wrote immediately after consuming my absinthe". (You can see all five pages among the posts on the Facebook event.)

Ed also offered this feedback about the experience: "I consumed all my sample in a short space of time. No sense of drunkenness, though a pleasant sense of relaxation (much like a good pipe), and a marked upsurge in energy. No awareness of any ill effects this morning. I think apart from a cheeky whiskey a few weeks ago, that's the first alcohol I've had since lockdown."

After



Sue George

Before

Green is not a drinking colour
 I want to leave it for trees
 Grass shoots and leaves
 And when it comes to fairies
 Mine come
 In other shades

After

I want to eat olives
 but there are none
 instead, I am staring down the lens of a strange camera
 I want to type something new
 but there is nothing
 instead, my fingers are moving as they always do
 I want to live everywhere
 instead I am here, planted.
 Yesterday, today
 and tomorrow

David T. Smith

Before

Absinthe; green fairy,
Elixir of myst'ry,
I just end up louched.

After

[Nothing forthcoming. "I lack any inspiration, alas!" David explained.]

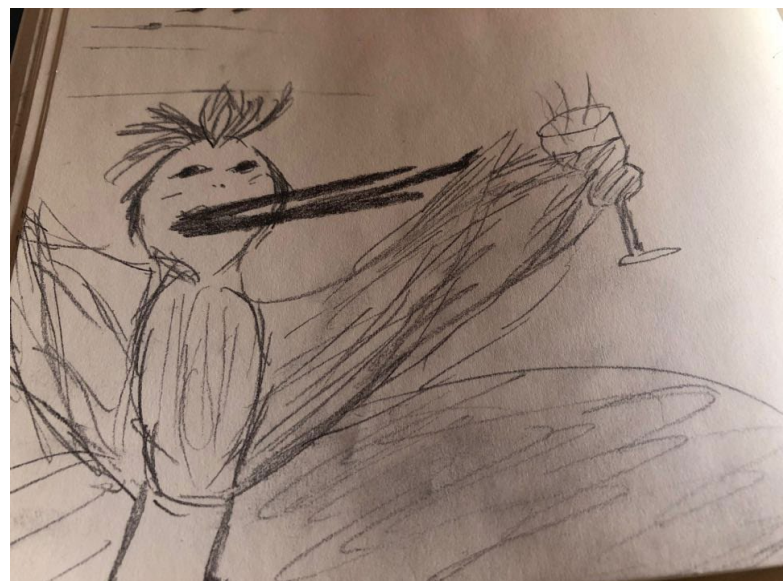
Priya Kalia

Before



Priya concedes that the after drawing is "a bit scary but that's what came out"

After



Lucy Hayward

Before

The art of absinthe
That green fairy in disguise
She drapes and entangles uncertainty
An opaque cover over drinkers eyes
The conflicts of Rimbaud and Verlaine
Chaotic unpredictability of Picasso's inspiration
Intrepid darkness explored by van Gogh
So many mysteries of Wildes' beautiful
 imagination
Baulelaire was sure to steal the show
By coining the phrase Let's get drunk
Be warned of that greeny hue
And do be wary
As you never know what may come of you
When you take a sip and meet that sprightly
 green fairy

After

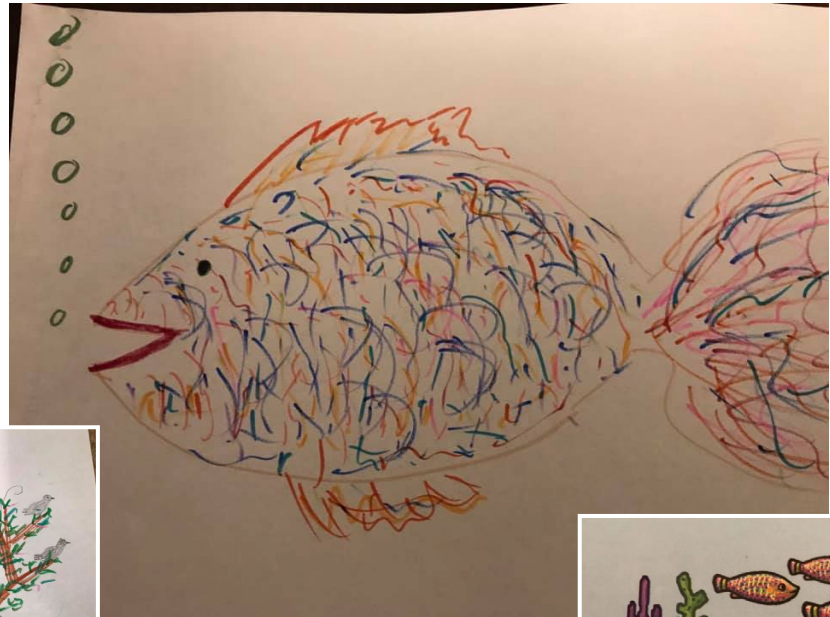
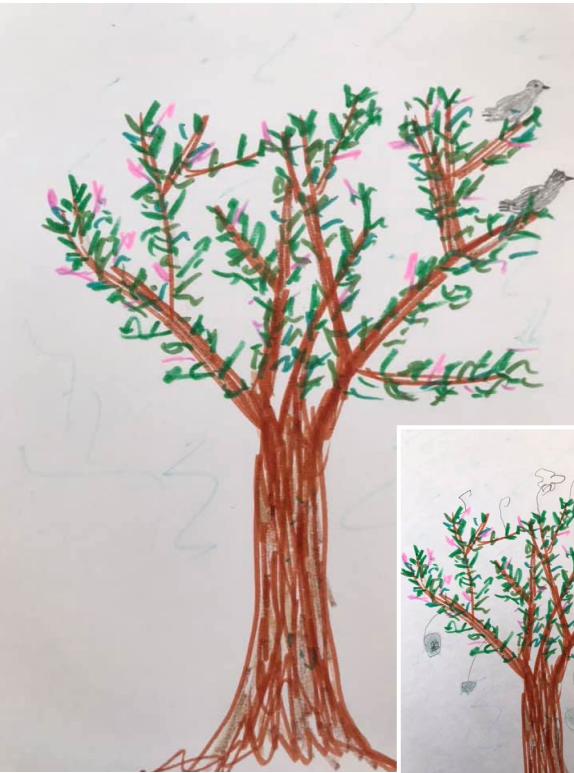
It's that recall
With that first glass of water in the morning
 light Holographic images
Previous drinkers
Wild unpredictability
They have all vanished
Nothing seems quite as good as it did with that
 first slug
My green fairy's wings have taken flight
And reality seems so much starker in daylight

["Found your talk really interesting but my house broke into chaos and I didn't have the link to the Zoom," Lucy adds. "Ended up having to calm my four-month-old to bed quite late and I didn't gain much inspiration from the absinthe. The after just popped into my head."]

Rachel Downer

Before

After



Rachel's "before" picture of a tree was subsequently modified by four-year-old Rowan (inset left). Her "after" picture was inspired by one of Rowan's books (inset right)

Before

James Rigby

The New Sheridan Club – A performance art poem by James Rigby, Aged 54½

After

Zoom

Oh Club Club,
New Sheridan Club,
Are you still a club, even though you have no
pub, Club?
We're locked down, locked up, locked in, locked
out, but we mustn't blub, Club
I hope you're still a thing because I paid my
annual sub, Club,
Online is fine, Club, but I miss the pub hubbub,
Club.
But let me get to the nub, Club
You're now a proud oak where once you were a
sapling shrub, or a mere stub, Club
But here's the rub, Club
Is this ode in line?
Because I shall not resign, Club
But out of the club you may wish to me drub, Club.
O Club, Club, New Sheridan Club.

Boom Boom Boom Boom
Zoom is in my Room
My room, your room, boom boom Zoom
I use Zoom to croon with a tune, on my
Banjolele, but not daily
But for whom is Zoom?
For the talkers and chatters, and the silent who
loom?
Can one make a maiden swoon, with Zoom?
Can a maiden make a man her groom, on
Zoom?
Whatever Zoom, you bring my friends to my
room.
And you're better than Microsoft Teams, and
Skype—they're just hype.
Zoom, you're a boon,
Boom Boom Boom

Luigi Sbaffi

Before

Ah Vulci Cara

Ah Vulci cara,
patria che adoro
ricca di campi
dalle messi d'oro.

Felice è il servo,
bella ogni dama,
il tuo nemico
ti teme e ti brama.

Sei cara a Turan,
sei patria di eroi,
solide mura
proteggono i tuoi.

E il fiume Armina,
chiaro e pescoso,
ti scorre accanto
senza riposo...

Pacha gaudente,
il porta fortuna,

Usil splendente
Tiur la Luna,

Gli dei tutti quanti
sorriscono a noi...
cara mia Vulci,
fucina di Eroi.

English translation:

My dear homeland Vulci
That I love many-fold
Your richness of pastures
woven from gold.

Blithe is the servant,
and comely each maid,
So yearned for by rivals,
but fearful to raid.

Beloved of Turan,
Your stout hearts invoke,
Your ramparts so sturdy,
Defending our folk

Armina's clear waters,

Bountiful, teeming,
Cross our dominion
Her streams never ceasing

And Pacha pokes fun,
Wine, frolic and cheer,
Look! there's Usil our Sun
And our nights glow with Tiur

For all of these gods,
smile down on our home
Carissima Vulci
where heroes are forged

After

My dear friends
I rise a glass
"alla salute" of beauty and
class,
For all of you it is this toast,
But especially for our host
To Mr. Clayton, who is fine!
And that he should never have
to resign!!

Before



Sarah Bowerman

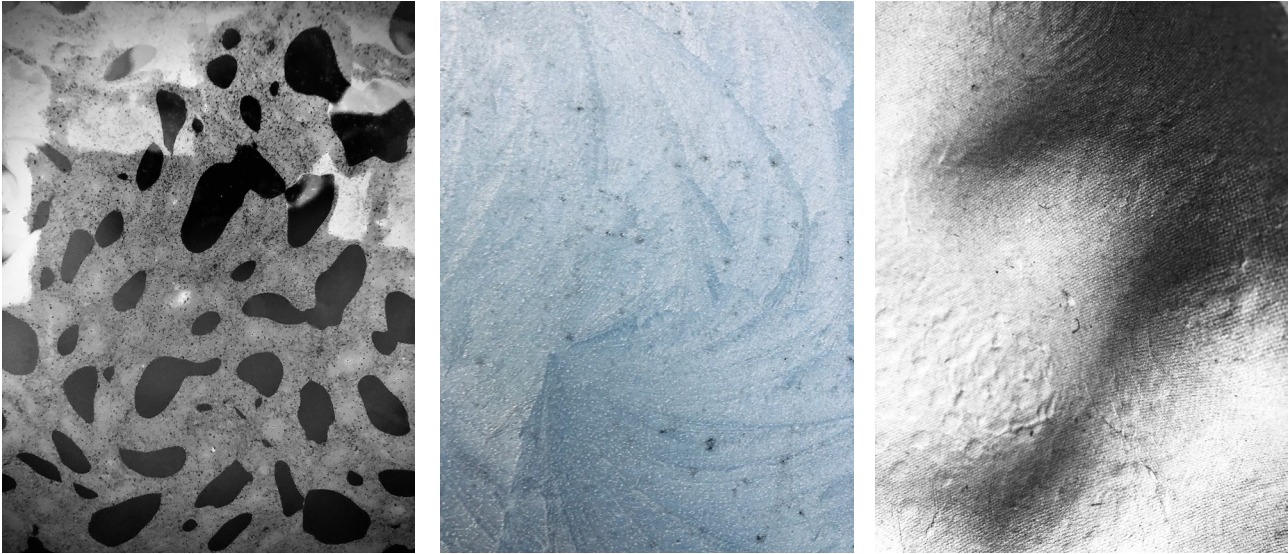
After



Sarah agreed with Ed that the experience was tobacco-like. "Snuff for me—snuff level of relaxation, but without the lack of concentration I would have, had I drunk enough gin or similar to get to that stage."

Stephen Myhill

Before



After



Kasia Boddy on the rise and fall of a particular neckcloth knot

The Belcher

Reproduced (entirely without permission) from the Cambridge University magazine *9 West Road: News from the Faculty of English*



Jem Belcher defeats Andrew Gamble on Wimbledon Common in 1802

“When you dressing, you dressing”
—Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*

“Clothes are powerful things,” observed George Orwell, as he donned his tramp’s costume of “a coat, once dark brown, a pair of black dungaree trousers, a scarf and a cloth cap” in *Down and Out in Paris and London*: “It gives one a very strange feeling to be wearing such clothes.”

The ability of clothes to evoke everything from status to mood is what makes them so useful to writers. What would Dickens’s Dolly Varden be without her “cherry-coloured ribbons”? Can we imagine a Jean Rhys heroine who doesn’t long for “a new black dress”? In short, as Jeeves tells Bertie Wooster, “there is no time, sir, at which ties do not matter”.

This was equally, or perhaps especially, true in Regency London, when “neckclothiana” was all the range and satirical poems were addressed to

Neckcloths, a fruitful and important theme,
Some God assist us, while we try our powers

Of inspiration; may we catch a gleam,
While we arrange Cravats synoptic’ly!

A particular favourite was named after the prize fighter Jem Belcher, widely considered to be “a monster, a perfect ruffian”. In his 1805 *Defence of Boxing*, and attack on “effeminacy”, William Cobbett offered a corrective. There was, Cobbett insisted, “scarcely a female Saint, perhaps, who would not, in her way to the conventicle, or even during the snuffing there to be heard, take a peep at him from beneath her hood. Can as much be said by any one of those noblemen and gentlemen who have been spending the best years of their lives in dancing by night and playing cricket by day?”

And yet for all that Belcher exposed himself “voluntarily to so much danger”, he remained (in Pierce Egan’s phrase) “genteel and remarkably placid in his behaviour”. Moreover, he was a full-fledged dandy, with a “prepossessing appearance”. Belcher’s immaculate dark clothes (much in the manner of Beau Brummell) were set off by a spotted neckcloth, usually tied in

Jem Belcher with his dog Trusty, painted by Benjamin Marshall c. 1803



“horse collar” or “mail coach” style, as described by the essay *Neckclothitania* (1818):

The Mail Coach or Waterfall, is made by tying it with a single knot, and then bringing one of the ends over, so as completely to hide the knot, and spreading it out, and turning it down in the waistcoat. The neck-cloth ought to be very large to make this Tie properly—It is worn by all stagecoachmen, guards, the swells of the fancy, and ruffians. To be quite the thing, there should be no starch, or at least very little in it—

The Horse Collar has become, from some unaccountable reason, very universal. I can only attribute it to the inability of its wearers to make any other. It is certainly the worst and most vulgar, and I should not have given it a place in these pages were it not for the purpose of cautioning my readers, from ever wearing it—it has the appearance of a great half-moon, or horse collar—I sincerely hope it will soon be dropped entirely *nam super omnes vitandum est*.

Soon every dandy sported a “belcher”; and it could even, on occasion, prove useful. After the Battle of Waterloo, Captain Gronow used his to stop up a musket-ball hole in his shako then filled it with water to give to the wounded.

But like all fashions, the belcher quickly lost its cachet—and that’s when writers of historical novels became interested. Bill Sikes, the dandyish villain of Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837–9), wears “a dirty belcher handkerchief round his neck, with the long frayed ends of which, he smeared the foam from the beer as he spoke”, while Dick Swiveller’s fantasy of life as a convict, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), involves a leg iron “restrained from chafing... [his] ankle by a twisted belcher handkerchief”. The eponymous hero of Thackeray’s *Barry Lyndon* (1844) complains that he can no longer tell the difference between “my lord and his groom” since “every man has the same coachmanlike look in his belcher and caped coat”. But that

was precisely the point. Jem Belcher had worn a scarf to look smart; his followers, by contrast, were cheerfully slumming.

Class cross-dressing did not appeal to Victorian tastes, except, for some, nostalgically.

As early as 1839, a writer in the



Trone d'Amour Tie.*

The *trone d'Amour* is the most austere after the Oriental Tie—It must be extremely well stiffened with starch.† It is formed by one single horizontal dent in the middle. Color, *Yeuw de fille en extase*.

Irish Tie.

This one resembles in some degree the Mathematical, with, however, this difference, that the horizontal indenture is placed *below* the point of junction formed by the collateral creases, instead of being above. The color, *Cerulean Blue*.

* So called from its resemblance to the Seat of Love.

† Starch is derived from the Teutonick word, “Stare” which means “stiff.”

Ball Room Tie.

The Ball Room Tie when well put on, is quite delicious—It unites the qualities of the Mathematical and Irish, having two collateral dents and two horizontal ones, the one above as in the former, the other below as in the latter—It has no knot, but is fastened as the Napoleon. This should never of course be made with colors, but with the purest and most brilliant *blanc d'innocence virginale*.

Horse Collar Tie.

The Horse Collar has become, from some unaccountable reason, very universal. I can only attribute it to the inability of its wearers to make any other. It is certainly the worst and most vulgar, and I

Quarterly Review was crediting the “new-born power of steam” for civilising, or standardising, behaviour and dress. Although the railway companies kept passengers in their separate class compartments, he noted, the train had become a place where the nation could “see without flattery, its own faults clearly reflected in its neighbour’s mirror”. The result, he thought, was an “immense improvement” in manners ranging from a decline in “hard-drinking” and “bull-baits” to the passing of the Belcher. It was no longer quite right for gentlemen “to dress, nod, spit and meet each other like stage-coachmen”. Or, indeed, like prize-fighters.

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.



Dave Hollander

Name or preferred name?

“Affability” Hollander.

Why that nickname or nom de plume?

It was generously bestowed on me by a couple of fine, upstanding members—probably because my real first name is a little pedestrian.

Where do you hail from?

I’ve lived in Peckham/East Dulwich for 18 years (before the bearded hipster throngs descended), but I grew up in Reading.

Favourite cocktail?

Always a difficult question, to which the answer changes regularly. Gin, rye whiskey and rum are my favourite base spirits and I tend to go for drinks that are punchy, complex and bitter or sour. In a decent bar: an Aviation, a Martinez or a Daiquiri (preferably with rhum agricole). At home: a Negroni or a Gimlet with lemon cordial.

The recipe for the cordial is as follows: finely slice 5 unwaxed lemons into a bowl, add 1kg golden caster sugar and 50g citric acid powder and pour over 600ml boiling water. Stir until sugar is dissolved and leave to steep for a couple of hours. When cool, strain through a muslin and pour into sterilised bottles.

To a shaker filled with ice, add 50ml gin (preferably Plymouth Navy Strength) and 15ml lemon cordial, then shake hard until very cold. Double strain into a coupe.

Most Chappist skill?

Being able to tie a bow tie without looking in the mirror—usually while running from a Tube station.

Most Chappist possession?

Probably my 1920s stiff-front dress shirt and large collection of detachable collars, most of which need boil-washing and starching, but I never quite get around to it.



Personal Motto?

Don't really have one, but "Nil desperandum" is a good place to start...

Favourite Quotes?

"There's one way to find out if a man is honest—ask him. If he says, 'Yes,' you know he is a crook."
—Groucho Marx (Also famous for saying: "Please accept my resignation. I don't care to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.")

"I like to have a martini,
Two at the very most.
After three I'm under the table,
after four I'm under my host." —Dorothy Parker

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

Most people know I spend a lot of time involved in theatre, but I also love languages—I speak French, Russian and (rusty) German. Now I'm trying to learn Japanese...

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

I've dabbled for more than a decade, but the precise details are lost in the mists of time... (a quick check of my electronic missives reveals I might have officially joined in 2009).

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

As an avid reader of *The Chap* for some time, I attended the Olympiad regularly from 2006. After a year or two, I became vaguely aware that many of the characters adorning that esteemed organ's pages were indeed attending the event rather than simply gin-induced apparitions. Moreover, there seemed to be a group of like-minded anarcho-dandies who socialised throughout the year. My interest was piqued, and when my friend Mr Anton Krause was invited to participate in a bartitsu

demonstration at an NSC summer party, I took the opportunity to attend.

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

Providing a selection of cocktails at a picnic is a matter of careful planning and logistics—aim to fit everything in a wheeled cabin bag. Freeze all spirits overnight beforehand, then decant into vacuum flasks to minimise the need for ice. Premix a half-and-half blend of sweet vermouth and Campari to cut down the number of bottles—you can use this to make a Negroni (add gin), Americano (add soda) or Sbagliato (add fizzy wine). A (gin) Martini and Manhattan are among other potent libations that work well premixed and frozen. Garnishes are a nice touch, but be wary of soft fruit, as it's likely to turn to mush. Unless you're an absolute stickler for glassware, it's worth investing in high-quality polycarbonate drinking vessels.

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

- Oscar Wilde—effortlessly witty and exuberantly attired, with an aphorism for every occasion and a wink for every waiter.
- Josephine Baker—superb performer and civil rights campaigner who led an extraordinary life. Certain to liven the mood with a jazzy postprandial singalong.
- Lord Peter Wimsey—suave, perceptive and likely to bring an exceptional bottle of wine. If anyone keels over while the petit fours are coming out, he's the man to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

I am advised that the correct answer is: *Artemis Scarheart*.

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

No—I'd probably do something rather thespy. Christopher Isherwood, Noel Coward or Terence Rattigan—something like that.

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.



cricket match in 2013



CLUB NOTES

New Member

IT IS, I HOPE, reassuring in this time of enforced isolation that likeminded Chaps and Chapettes can still reach out virtually, even to the other sides of the earth, to engage in badinage, lob *bons mots* and share enthusiasm for vintage clothes they cannot go out in. In this spirit allow me to introduce our latest member, Shawn M. Wade, all the way from Burnaby in British Columbia. Clearly a rounded individual, Shawn gives his interests as collecting stamps and coins, public speaking, and singing and dancing. When asked his favourite cocktail, he answered so enthusiastically that he ran out of space (this list includes the Mimosa and the Manhattan).

Riddled With Quizzlings

AS YOU WILL know from my sporadic emails on the subject, the Club's response to the lockdown has been not just to move our monthly talks online, but also to have weekly virtual pub quizzes via Zoom meeting software. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Members who have so far undertaken to



New Member Shawn M. Wade on the left. Someone get that poor woman some medals...

compose and administer these quizzes, providing not just a valuable workout for the brain, and an opportunity to learn new facts, some of which may actually be true, but also a regular social interaction with other Club types. It has been suggested that we carry on with these virtual get-togethers, even after lockdown is a thing of the past, as there are many Members who are not in a position to come into London on a weeknight for our traditional gatherings at the Wheatsheaf pub. For example, one of our regular quizzers, who has also taken his turn to be quizmaster, is Christopher Solf, who resides just outside Paris in the Eurozone. Thanks to Adrian Prooth for the screenshot below from the quiz he hosted two weeks ago.



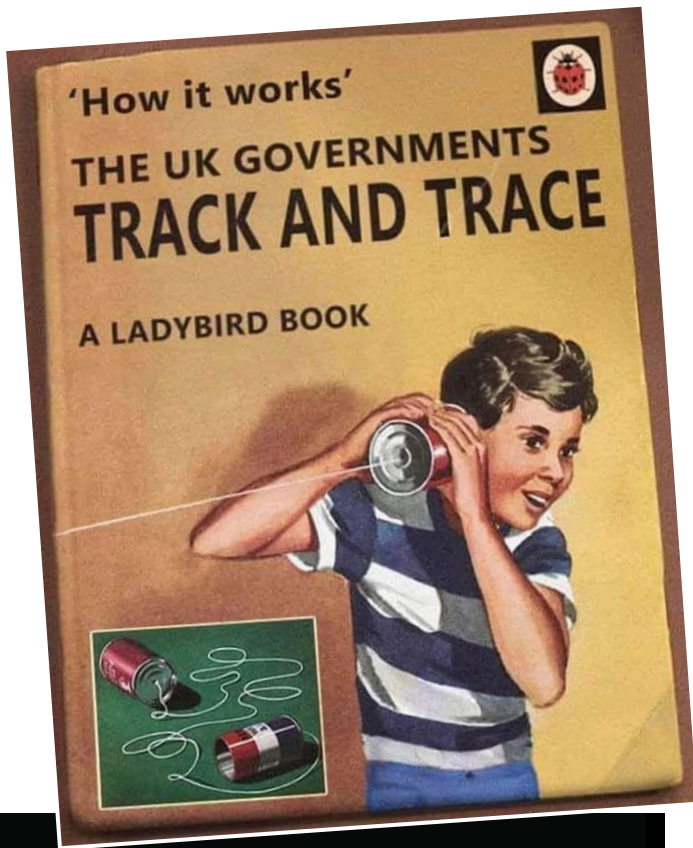
Club Tie Corner

THANK GOD FOR the internet, I say, without which Club members would not have been able to stay sane by combing the ether for proof of Club infiltration through time and space. Evidence of their sanity this month includes (this page, clockwise from right): Errol Flynn sporting a crypto-Club tie from Actuarius; a Club Power Ranger from Ivan Debono; the regular appearance of Basil Fawlty, this time from Frances Mitchell; Colonel Cyrus Choke has realised that Nicely Nicely Johnson in *Guys and Dolls* (1955) is wearing a rather fetching Club sports jacket; Frances further points out that the Major, another *Fawlty Towers* character, seems to take turns with Basil to wear the tie.



*Restoration by
Hollywood Pinups*





BBC



Hartington Plastic Folding Adirondack Chair

See more by by Three Posts

★★★★★ (524)

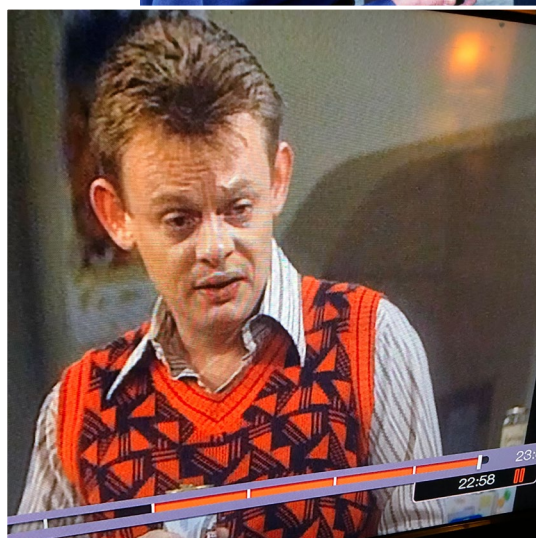
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Opposite page, clockwise from top left: “It’s good to see Mark Spitz was wearing a Club tie when he won seven gold medals at the 1972 Munich Olympics,” observes our Chairman Torquil; Stephen Myhill feels that Mike from *The Young Ones* is wearing a Club jumper; Mark Christopher noticed in the episode of *Breaking Bad* “Hermanos” Jesse Pinkman is sitting on a Club sofa-bed; in more furniture news, Michael Rhys Krög has found this Club chair;



Frances Mitchell noticed that photographer Ron Galella is clearly a member; “I see the Club’s Technical Committee got the contract for the transmitter,” observes Actuarius, “which explains a lot...” This page:



John Slocum sent in this picture (top right) of Hal Linden in *Barney Miller*—I’m not familiar with the show but a brief search (below and far right) suggests the cast hot-desked the neckwear;



finally, Mr Myhill submitted what he claims is Martin Clunes in a Club tank top. His resignation was promptly tendered and accepted.





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.

Still mostly online events, but physical happenings are taking off again too...

🎩 NSC Virtual Club Night

Wednesday 1st July
8pm BST

See page 2. In lieu of our normal monthly get-together, David Smith will tell us all about the Gin & Tonic, through the power of YouTube: **use the link <https://youtu.be/fXu0TzYzwXA>**.

For late-breaking news and legal disclaimers, see the Facebook event at <https://www.facebook.com/events/274657257084053>.

Virtual Pub Wednesdays: the Staying Inn

Wednesday 1st July
From 6pm (though many seem to start early)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1050636565330719>

The Club's own Stuart Turner's weekly virtual night in the pub has become a regular fixture in the lockdown calendar, but this event will apparently be the last in the run.

Marcel Lucont's Cabaret Domestique

Every Friday
9pm
Livestream

Admission: £7 for First Class (part of interactive Zoom "audience"); £5 economy (watching stream only) from Eventbrite

A virtual version of Marcel's renowned Cabaret Fantastique, hosted by Marcel and featuring a line-up of cabaret performers live in their own homes. This Friday, 3rd July, the

performers are comedian Anna Mann, magician Christian Lee, impressionist Jess Robinson and drag king Richard Energy. For more details see the Facebook event.

NSC Quiz Night

Wednesday 8th July and possibly subsequent Wednesdays
8pm
Online
Admission: Free

In what has become a lockdown weekly tradition, the latest of our NSC pub quizzes—run by Zoom virtual meeting software—will be courtesy of Tony Reid. More details to come: a Facebook event will be posted to the Club's Facebook page.

Acts Against God: A Short History of Blasphemy

Sunday 12th July
3–4.30pm

Online via Zoom—ticket-holders will be emailed a link

Admission: £5 from conwayhall.ticketsolve.com

David Nash, Professor of History at Oxford Brookes University, explores a phenomenon that spans human experience, from the ancient world right up to today's ferocious religious debates. Blasphemy is an act of individuals, but also a widespread and constant presence in cultural, political and religious life. Nash follows its story from ancient Greece, with the genesis of blasphemy's link with the state, on to blasphemy in the medieval world, in the Reformation and the Enlightenment—right up to the 21st century, with individuals and the state seeking to adopt blasphemy as the means to resist the secular and the globalisation of culture.

Innsmouth Jamboree 2020

Friday 17th–Sunday 19th July
Devil's Reef, Innsmouth, near Arkham, Massachusetts

Now in its 174th year, the annual jamboree, brought to you by the Esoteric Order of Dagon, offers a feast of entertainment and distinctive local cuisine, all served up with the inimitable charisma of the Innsmouth folk. Chief of your reasons to go, of course, is the headline performance from the Arkham Hillbilly: don't forget to check his Facebook page for

regular updates. You can hear him describing what to expect from the Jamboree in this video. And remember: *do NOT miss the last bus out of Innsmouth.*

London Vampires at Brompton Cemetery Open Day

Sunday 19th July
11am–10pm
Brompton Cemetery, Old Brompton Road, London SW10 9UG
Admission: Free?

If you're in need of a Gothic fix, the London Vampire group will be gathering for the Cemetery's annual open day, followed by drinks in a pub. I'm unclear as to whether this will still be taking place—the cemetery is open at the moment, and pubs will have reopened, but meetings of this size (even outdoors and with social distancing) may still be outlawed. But since when has that bothered a vampire?

Aubrey Beardsley Exhibition

27th July–20th September
10am–5pm
Tate Britain
Admission: £16: note that timed tickets must be pre-purchased

The Tate's exhibition on Beardsley was

scuppered by COVID-19, but the good news is that the show—the biggest exhibition of the controversial artist's work in 50 years—has been extended to 20th September, from when the galleries open on 27th July. Note that timed tickets must be purchased in advance. More



Let the Swing Ninjas introduce you to the majesty of jazz tuba

details at www.tate.org.uk. Aubrey Beardsley shocked and delighted late-Victorian London with his sinuous black and white drawings. He explored the erotic and the elegant, the humorous and grotesque, winning admirers around the world with his distinctive style. Spanning seven years, this exhibition will cover Beardsley's intense and prolific career as a draughtsman and illustrator, cut short by his untimely death from tuberculosis at the age of 25. Beardsley's charismatic persona played a part in the phenomenon that he and his art generated, so much so that the 1890s were dubbed the "Beardsley Period".

The Candlelight Club on Soundcloud

Owing to the restriction on numbers created by social-distancing regulations, the Candlelight Club is still mothballed and the event scheduled for 18th July will almost certainly not take place. But tracks are still being added to the online repository of live recordings at [soundcloud.com/the-candlelight-club](https://www.soundcloud.com/the-candlelight-club). In the last few days 14 new numbers have been uploaded from the Swing Ninjas' storming performance at the Candlelight Club party last November.



Our own David T. Smith (right), who will be delivering the July virtual talk on the subject of the Gin & Tonic, seen here with pioneering New Orleanian distiller Ted Breaux, who plays a key role in the story of absinthe told on pages 4–19