

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF VAUXHALL

You're invited on a
Victorian sci-fi
Christmas
adventure

On the contrary

Luca Jellinek debunks three
(unrelated) 'truths' they taught
you at school

Funny peculiar

Torquil Arbuthnot on the strange
delights of writer Ronald Firbank

Trim up north

What makes whiskered Edinburgh
dandy Niall McGuinness tick?

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • No. 182 • DECEMBER 2021

RESIGN!



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 December** in the upstairs room of the Wheatsheaf pub at 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB.

This month our speaker will be Sam Marde Mehdiabad, on *Ancient Greek Music and Other Stuff*. "The music of ancient Greece is something of a niche topic even within the classicists' obscure



and slightly musty halls," Sam concedes. "This is likely because the few melodies which remain to us often seem to belie the aesthetic expectations of those who study other areas of ancient Greek artistic expression. Yet this stylistic disjunction is not inevitable; nor does it justify ignoring a creative genre which arguably more than any other distills the emotion of the people who composed, performed, and heard it.

"Come along, then, to the Wheatsheaf, and

hear ancient Greece weep, mourn, and pray; as your very own SSMM ruins the immersion of the experience by meanwhile attempting to resolve a scholarly debate you are too sensible either to know or care about, by tediously comparing the underlying theory to that of... other stuff."

Once again we will be attempting to live-stream the talk from the pub for the benefit of those who can't make it in person as well as recording the video to upload later. The YouTube link to watch live is <https://youtu.be/GRE1IL7E83Q>

There is a Facebook event for this meeting at <https://www.facebook.com/events/431768601795797>.

The Last Meeting

At our November meeting our speaker was Luca Jellinek, attempting to correct three (unrelated) fallacies that are inculcated into us in conventional education. Specifically, he argues that (a) the Dark Ages really *were* pretty dark; (b) beauty is *not* in the eye of the beholder; and (c) correlation and causation are actually pretty closely linked. You can see a video of the talk at <https://youtu.be/vqaocxFFULg> but be warned, the last section involves some full-on statistical formulae. Welcome also to new member Stephen Barber and potential new member Mahid. Torquil also delivered a short eulogy for founding member Fruity Hatfield-Peverel, who sadly died last week.

An essay version begins on page 4.



(Clockwise from to left) Torquil kicks things off; Luca hits the ground running; aesthetic theory; Luigi in Smoker's Alley; (l-r) Matthew Howard, Giles Culpepper; Mark Christopher; some light reading; Stewart and Sophia Wyeth arrive; visitor Mahid; Stephen Barber (l) with the Earl of Essex; a phalanx of Sheridan ladies



More photos on Flickr at <https://bit.ly/315zZcm>

Three Outrageous Notions You Were Warned About in School

OR

Defending the Indefensible

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES said that education was “the inculcation of the incomprehensible into the indifferent by the incompetent”. Keynes was always good for a clever quip but in reality it is difficult for any society to engage in constructive debate unless it shares a broad set of generally accepted “facts”. However, while such orthodoxy is necessary, some nuances are lost in the process, especially if the prevailing narrative has been articulated as a repudiation of the preceding set of verities.

On that semi-profound note, I recently entertained fellow NSC members with the preposterous overreach of addressing three major philosophical-intellectual questions that have been debated by much more erudite and intelligent people than myself over the centuries. I proposed to do so over the course of 45 minutes; for the sake of completeness, you understand. So please don't take this too

By Luca Jellinek

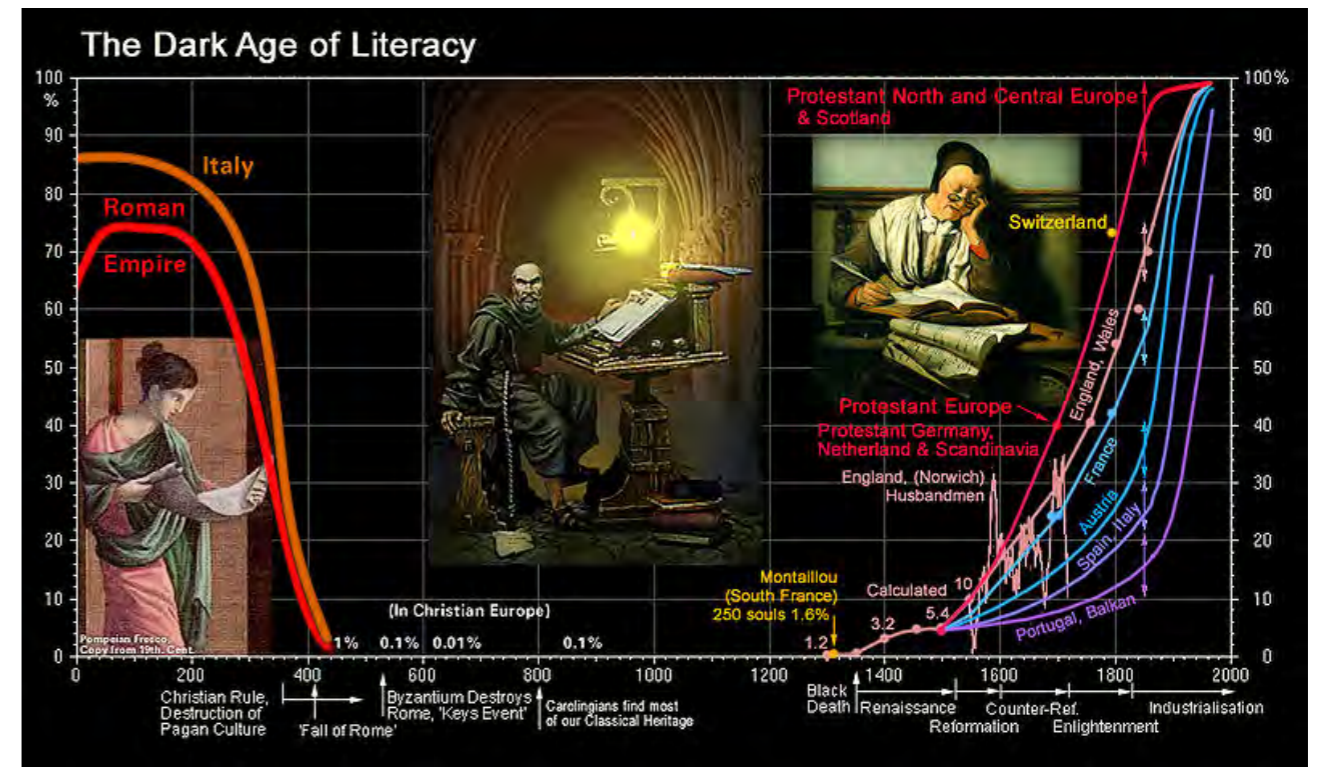
seriously...

In ascending order of obscurity, I challenged three standard items of contemporary formal education, proposing instead some outrageous notions.

1. Modern historiography eschews terms like “barbarian invasions” and “Dark Ages”—I argue that the period 500–1200 CE was, in fact, quite hellish.

2. Philosophers mostly agree that the quality and experience of beauty are far too subjective and slippery to define in any clear manner—I propose that advances in neuropsychology and cognitive science provide a sound basis for a more objective treatment of aesthetics.

3. The accepted mantra is that “correlation is not causation”—while this is true, in the reductive sense, I argue that correlation is a

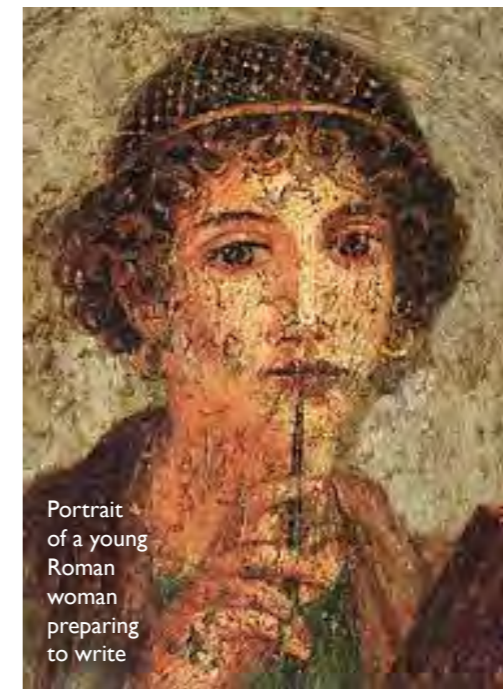


very big part of establishing causation, especially in light causal inference theory.

The Dark Ages

The second wave of revisionist, relativist historiography which swept academia in the mid-20th century was so inimical towards Western cultural foundation narratives, scientific positivism and declinism that it ended up questioning some fairly solid facts. Thus, the progressive disintegration of the Euro-Mediterranean Roman sphere and its aftermath was no longer to be presented as a historical catastrophe but rather a neutral change in circumstances. The “barbarian invasions” re-interpreted as the “post-classical (European) movement of peoples”.

I suggest that some metrics might help dispel that claim. First of all, the prevalence of “hard” and “soft” technologies which enrich us materially and culturally (and which none of the revisionist historians would seek to deny themselves). Secondly, and largely as a result of the first, some measures of social cohesion and



liveability.

Before the fall of the (Western) Roman Empire, advanced civil engineering, figurative arts, media, communications, long-distance transport, advanced glassmaking and pottery, textiles, medicine and countless other hard technologies were commonplace across a very large area (including neighbouring and client states). Similarly, “soft” technologies in government, commerce, performance arts, law, science, finance, specialisation of labour

and media had attained very advanced levels. Through much of Western Europe and North Africa, these advances essentially were erased for hundreds of years, surviving very sporadically. Even less affected dominions such as the Eastern Roman Empire and the Near East suffered a significant drop in standards of living and culture, relative to the Classical Age. There is strong material and documentary evidence to that effect, however indirect in nature (for instance, transnational trade frequency might be inferred by the prevalence of shipwrecks).



Productive, mercantile and legal “technology” began to improve significantly from 1100s onward (agricultural and technological “revolution” in the 1200s–1300s)

Should anyone doubt the very real awfulness of this massive de-civilisation process, it is worth considering the impact it had on social metrics. The high level of literacy achieved in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE plummeted to nearly zero by 600 CE and only returned to Classical Age levels, in Europe, in the 19th century. The famous Roman portrait of a young woman preparing to write would become as alien to our culture as the idea of a steam engine, for several centuries. The feudal society that emerged from the eventual settlement of bands of marauding warriors over much of Europe was arguably one of the least socially mobile in history, due in no small part to the lack of job specialisation and diversity, typical avenues for social mobility on the basis of education or intelligence. Other than the Catholic church, almost no significant institution or social structure envisaged much possibility of meritocratic advancement. It was akin to a strict caste system.

Interpersonal violence, including but not limited to crime, is generally believed to have been much higher than even in the relatively violent Classical Age. Leaving cultural assumptions aside, the Dark Ages were characterised by low population density and a very diffuse form of the state’s monopoly

of force. The enforcement of law was more informal and more capricious. The very high murder rates associated with the middle ages only began to fall gradually after the 1200s–1300s, bettering those of the Classical Age only by the 18th century. (There is some debate about this, some think earlier).

Worse than interpersonal violence (per capita rates), was the endemic “official”, inter-community violence of warfare, seen as something of a way of life by the entire stratum of the governing elite for roughly 700 years. A few major battles and a handful of assassinations could gain you control of much of the “known world”, before the system’s collapse. That dynamic was multiplied hundreds-fold as Europe became a jigsaw puzzle of bickering potentates.

Indeed, I would argue that the peculiarly lethal tradition of European warfighting and expansionism which lasted into the 20th century, is partly rooted in the Dark Ages. For nearly a millennium, to be fitted to rule meant being a hard man, on horseback, must have own weapons, learning not required.

In the later Middle Ages, thanks to considerable though gradual autonomous progress, contact with the Byzantine and Levantine cultures and the evolving influence of humanism, Europe eventually climbed out of the Dark Ages. Though some people still question this.

On beauty

Readers will be familiar with the concept of System 1 thinking (instinctual, effortless, quick but a bit slapdash) and System 2 thinking (rational, deliberate but effortful and often short-circuited by System 1). In those terms, the ancients generally adhered to a very System 2 concept of beauty. They viewed it as something that existed in and of itself and that followed quite fixed rules of regularity, proportion and rhythm (both visual and aural beauty). Because of humans’ imperfect sensory perception of reality, actual manifestation and implementation of beauty would vary but an underlying “true” or “ideal” beauty was there for us to discover. The analytical philosophical revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries posed an insuperable phenomenological challenge to that certainty. In other words, there were too many exceptions



Francis Hutcheson

to the Great Theory of Beauty and far too little clarity about precise definitions of the terms of discussion. As a result, the perception of beauty was confined (most influentially, by Kant) to the realm of emotional response and therefore based on subjectivity (personality) and culturally relativistic (contingent) “taste”. The Pre-Platonists had simply overreached, in their strict definition of beauty.

Interestingly, even back then, some philosophers suggested a more nuanced analysis. Among these was Francis Hutcheson, a perhaps underappreciated but towering exponent of the Scottish Enlightenment, In his *Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony and Design* he essentially agreed with the emerging analytical questioning of unchanging, universal and rigid tenets of beauty. However, he did observe that in more general terms some pattern was observable in what was considered beautiful in different times and places and that this could be summarised as “uniformity within variety” (i.e. a balance between discovery and familiarity, order and excitement).

In practical terms, Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* made aesthetics a neglected sub-topic for serious philosophers and therefore it fell to “practitioners”, in the form of actual artists and, more dubiously, public intellectuals to define it. This led inexorably to Romanticist drift, then to arbitrariness, then to abstractism and finally to avant-gardism and conceptualism. Early in that process, mainstream art declared itself to be no longer preoccupied with “notions” of beauty at all.

I suggest that to revive the ability to discuss aesthetics usefully and intelligently, a synthesis of Classical and Analytical aesthetic traditions is necessary. Satisfyingly, what we now understand about human consciousness might point the way forward.

The Classical Great Theory of Beauty was rooted in Classical philosophers’ supreme dedication to the ideal of System 2 thinking, to the point of refusing to allow any role for System 1 (at least in an intelligent, virtuous person). Such exclusivist thinking resulted, I humbly submit, in a great deal of confabulation (creating *ex-post* clever arguments for *ex-ante* opinions) not to mention aesthetic affect (liking what you know without realising that this is why you like it), coherence bias, confirmation bias, etc.

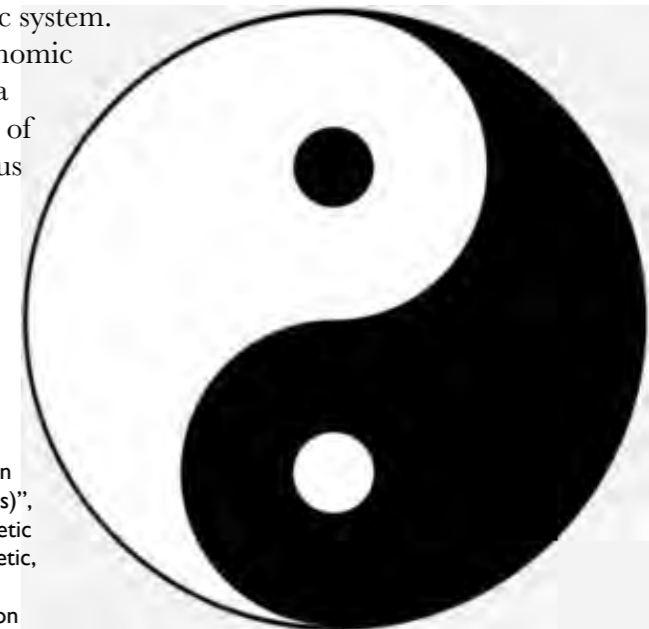
Equally, the Romantic Aesthetic Theory of Beauty confuses the influence and power of System 1 thinking with the idea that if this is how it works then why mess with it. But unchallenged intuition is very dangerous, lazy thinking. It is massively skewed by available heuristics, conflation and ideological affect.

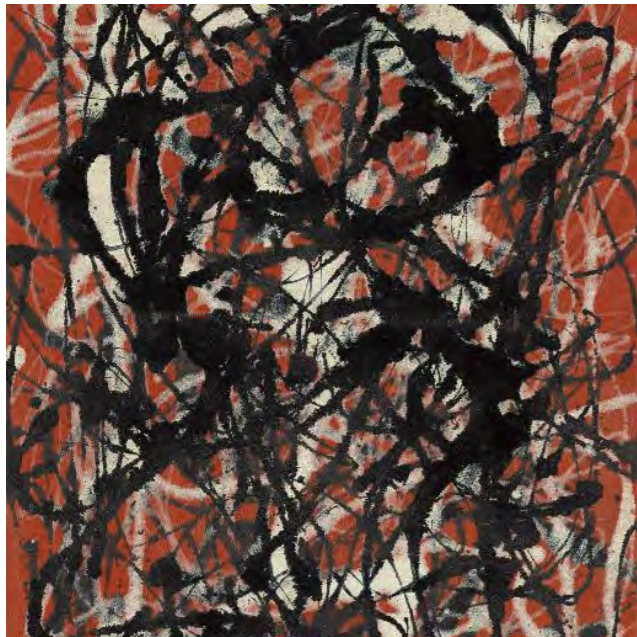
Accepting that both Systems co-exist might result in a view that there are some repeatable, general categories or rules of beauty albeit largely hidden under a mass of personal experience and even random personality traits. As Hutcheson would have it: “uniformity within variety”.

Another, related, neuropsychological approach to aesthetics that is gaining traction is that relating aesthetic experience to two major facets of our autonomic system.

The autonomic system is a basic part of the nervous

My favourite visual characterisation: Yin and Yang, duality and balance, “uniformity (order) within variety (chaos)”, parasympathetic and sympathetic, tradition and transformation





Murillo, Monet: emotion mediated by recognition, delight; Pollock, Rothko: passivity challenged

system which regulates many unconscious functions (heartbeat, breathing, etc.). It also includes the sympathetic system's instant reactions (generally of a defensive nature) and the parasympathetic system's pattern recognition and flow-focus maintenance.

Both systems are a basic, integral part of our cognition, evolving long before we developed speech and other higher-order cognitive faculties. Both systems require some stimulation (in the case of the sympathetic system, especially if one leads a relatively safe life).

So, the sympathetic system reacts positively to a (manageable) amount of surprise, discordant information and unpredictability. The degree of such "chaos" stimulus that is pleasing to an individual is probably linked to long-term personality traits ("openness", in psych speak) and, I would argue, developmental factors such

as anomie-autonomy balance. Synthetic system stimuli are a bit like "jump scares" in a thriller; most people need just a bit.

Meanwhile, the parasympathetic system is constantly trying to allow us to buzz along productively and peacefully and it therefore "likes" to experience perceptible, legible patterns, sensory guidelines, recognition, tranquillity.

On the basis of all these considerations, I conclude that while beauty is a complex phenomenon, it is also one rooted in our evolutionary psychology, at a basic biological level. As such, the degree to which it is culturally contingent is relatively superficial (and indeed a reason why much artistic output can be appreciated across cultures and time). Furthermore, the main role of beauty is to inform us in a way that is emotionally and

sensorily reassuring and delightful. That sense of psychic repose requires the spice of non-calming, even unsettling input and both can be combined in a single piece of art, but they are not the same thing. They are quite possibly opposites. And they are not very subjective.

Correlation and causation

We are all taught that just because two phenomena are correlated, it does not follow that one causes the other. That is perfectly true, of course, even in cases when one phenomenon tends to reliably occur before the other. In any such case, there could be a third, unobserved (by us) cause that is affecting both manifest phenomena; the correlation is said to be "spurious".

Regrettably, most people (and teachers) begin with this correct observation and then go on to do one of two things, both unhelpful. They either immediately ignore what they've just said and routinely invest dubious correlations with causal meaning or they simply give up and stop considering causal chains at all.

Neither approach is necessary or justified and the growing field of Causal Inference has a lot to say about why that is. The search for reliable quantifiable causal tests was boosted by Artificial Intelligence scientists from the 1990s onward. I don't mean the low-quality data-mining that is fashionably referred to as AI or "data science"

these days. I mean actual, honest-to-goodness AI where a complex algorithmic system is able to learn and to apply judgement. It became very quickly apparent that, unlike low-dimensional pattern recognition, most judgement calls require more than the application of a set of rules (heuristics). Reality is simply too complex for a rules-based decision tree, no matter how quickly parsed and exhaustive, to permit full interpretation of observed reality. What is needed is the ability to generate causal and counterfactual hypotheses.

Among (rational) humans, the way practical causation tends to be established is by scientific experiment. I say practical causation because on certain levels of philosophical/scientific uncertainty, this sort of exercise would be futile. But for practical purposes, say if we want to test a chemical reagent's effect, the experimental method holds true. From a data-

Beauty is complex but *mostly* reassures and delights us. We need to be **unsettled** sometimes, but it is *not the same thing*



Sorolla



Picasso

generating standpoint, the main difference between a properly controlled experiment and observational statistics is the possibility of intervention. That is, of artificial, agent-based alteration of circumstances (as opposed to the naturally occurring set of pat events).

In some lucky cases, of course, purely observational data is sufficient to suggest causation (or deny it). Two probability sets that show little correlations, for instance, logically cannot stem from phenomena that are causally related. Perhaps more usefully, unconditional (variable X vs. variable Y) and conditional (variable X vs. variable Y, taking variable Z into account) correlation patterns can sometimes allow us to infer causality (within that set of variables). We spoke of the example of a “collider” or “v-structure”, to use Causal Inference terms. That is the case occurring when two variables are unconditionally independent (they are not significantly correlated to each other), but they are both, separately, correlated to a third variable. IF, controlling for that third variable, the two original ones become correlated (conditionally dependent), there is a strong logical case for the two original variables to be causal towards the third variable.

In many complex cases, however, we cannot infer causality chains simply through this sort of procedure (v-structure discovery). We need to experiment, to intervene. Easier said than done, in many cases, however. Outside of physical and (ethics permitting) biological sciences, “intervention” is typically not allowed or even possible. I cannot, as an economist, make the market crash, while all other variables remain constant, to test my hypothesis; nor can I change legislation back and forth like a light switch. How can we reproduce the epistemically robust empiricism of the scientific method when looking at data sets where real-life intervention is not possible?

It turns out that some clever clogs have utilised a set of well-established Bayesian rules of product decomposition and total probability to extract intervention-like data from observed data. As everyone present will recall, I provided a simple example of the calculation, reproduced below.

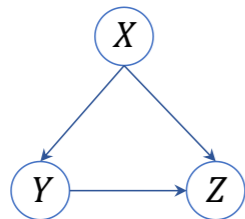
By this point, most listeners were almost as confused as I typically am and we adjourned for drinks!

For a less flippant, superficial and semi-informed treatment of these topics, I will be happy to provide sources on request!



Intervention vs. ‘controlling for’

- **Intervening**, setting the value of Y to y, is not the same as controlling for the value of Y being y. In other words, given the dependencies in this DAG:



although

$$P(Z | do(Y = y), X) = P(Z | y, X)$$

$$P(Y = y | X) \neq P(do(Y = y) | X) = 1$$

- **Controlling for Y = y** merely means looking at the probability distribution of Z in the subset of observations where Y took the value y.
- **Intervening** on a variable changes the nature of the causality flow because, in that case, its value is fixed while other non-descendant variables are free to behave as they would normally.

TO MARK THE forthcoming 150th

anniversary of the publication of Jules Verne’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the New Sheridan Club’s Christmas this year party will be a Victorian sci-fi adventure. So the dress code is broadly Victorian, possibly Steampunk, arguably including all the continents of the Earth (or other planets) where adventures might take place and the natives subjugated.

Games will include steering a balloon around the world in 80 seconds before landing it on the Reform Club; guiding a pterodactyl to seize hapless adventurers from the plateau of

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF VAUXHALL

Saturday 4th December

7pm–12am

The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk,
London SE11 5HL (020 7207 4585)

Admission: Free to NSC Members, £5 to guests (refundable if they join the Club during the evening).

Dress: Victorian, Steampunk, adventurer, exotic submariner, intrepid heiress, dilettante boffin, mysterious foreigner, faithful sidekick, mad scientist playing God...

a subterranean lost world; or designing your own enticing cover artwork for an imaginary Jules Verne re-release.

Because it’s Christmas we’ll also have the traditional Lucky Dip: thrust your hand into a dustbin full of waste paper and pull out some tat. Even M. Verne could not have imagined that the future would involve such delights.

Highlight of the evening will, as ever, be the Grand Raffle. Prizes will of course include works by Monsieur Verne himself, plus a chemistry lab, a steampunk walking

stick, gadgetry, a deadly squid and lashings of cogs and gears. Doubtless some brass goggles.

RONALD FIRBANK

By Torquil Arbuthnot

ARTHUR ANNESLEY FIRBANK (he adopted the “Ronald” later) was born in 1886 in Mayfair, the second of the three sons and the four children of Sir Joseph Thomas Firbank, a Unionist MP for East Hull, knighted by Edward VII. His grandfather was a Durham miner who made his fortune as a railway contractor.

Firbank spent the first ten years of his life at his family’s home in Chislehurst, Kent—a village whose connections with the exiled French empress Eugénie may have initiated his enduring fascination with both royalty and Catholicism. In May 1900 he was sent to Uppingham School where, because of ill health, he stayed only two terms. Over the next five years he had a succession of private tutors in England, France and Spain.

His first book, containing two stories, ‘Odette d’Antrevernes’ and ‘A Study in Temperament’, was published in 1905. It shows very clearly the influence of Oscar Wilde and Wilde’s influence, as stylist, aesthete, and homosexual martyr, can be seen throughout Firbank’s oeuvre. The following summer he worked on his first novel, *The Artificial Princess* (published posthumously

“The world is disgracefully managed, one hardly knows to whom to complain.”
— *Vainglory*



Firbank circa 1917

in 1934). In this novel he experimented with the techniques of elliptical narrative and baroque construction, and the manner, at once satirical and lyric, concentrated and fragmentary, that were to characterise his later work.

In October 1906 Firbank went to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and left in March 1909, having taken no examinations. In 1907 he had been received into the Roman Catholic church. In October 1909 he went to Rome, where he hoped, but failed, to join the Guardia Nobile (the Papal Guard), and he remained in Italy until October 1910, when his father died and he assumed control of the family’s finances. Over the following four years he pursued a nomadic way of life, mainly in southern Europe and north Africa, which (with the exception

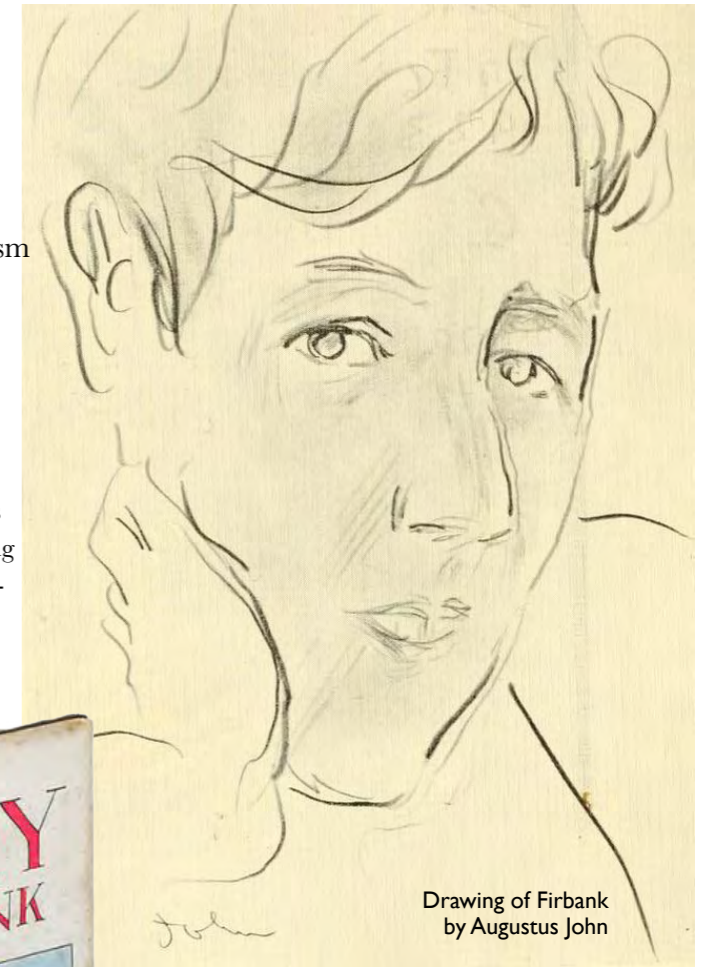
of the war years) he was to maintain until he died. When in London he was to be seen at the theatre, the Ballets Russes, the Café Royal, and at the bohemian restaurant La Tour Eiffel. He was known for the refined dandyism of his appearance, “the flutterings and oscillations of his bearing”, his heavy drinking, and his extreme shyness. He was vain of his looks and used portrait drawings by Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, and Charles Shannon as frontispieces or on the jackets of his later books.

With the appearance of his novel *Vainglory*

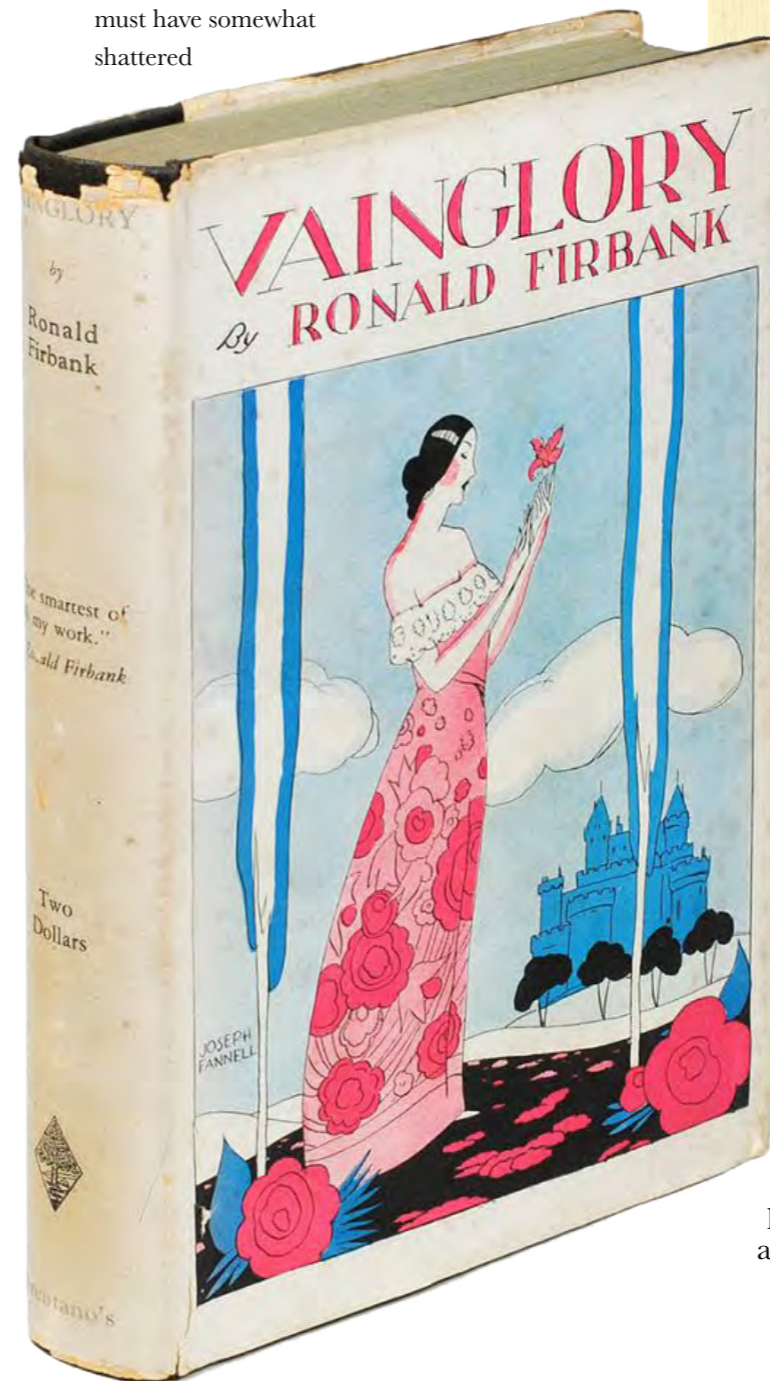
in 1915 he styled himself Ronald Firbank for the first time, signalling the emergence of the mature writer. Like all his books until *Sorrow in Sunlight* (1924), it was published at his own expense and to negligible acclaim. It is an unorthodox social comedy set in an English cathedral town, and its experimental modernism proved baffling to the critics.

He was judged medically unfit to serve in the armed forces. Osbert Sitwell said of this incident in Firbank’s life:

It was obvious as well, even at first sight, that Firbank’s health was far from strong. But this delicacy at least was possessed of one advantage; it prevented him from being forced to waste time in the Army. The constant callings-up and medical examinations had, though, further shattered his health, just as he in his turn must have somewhat shattered



Drawing of Firbank by Augustus John



the health of the various military authorities with whom he came in contact. He told us, for example, that when, after a dozen or so examinations, the War Office finally rejected him as totally unfit for service (which anyone else could have told at a single glance), and then, in its usual muddled way, immediately called him up again, he replied through his lawyer with the threat of a suit for libel. The War Office, at a time when it governed the world, was so startled by this simple piece of individual initiative that it at once sent back to him a humble apology.

During the war, to escape the danger of bombing, he moved to rooms on The High in Oxford in November 1915 and remained there until September 1919. This was a period of intense isolation, in which he sank into nervous apprehensiveness and paranoia. But it was also a period of considerable creativity, in which he wrote his novels *Inclinations* (1916), *Caprice* (1917), and *Valmouth* (1919).

He remained dedicated to his art despite personal loneliness and critical indifference, and it was only after his death that he emerged



From a drawing by Augustus John
MR. A. RONALD FIRBANK

Whose first book, "Vainglory," shortly to be published by Grant Richards, is awaited with much interest by his many friends. Mr. Firbank is the only surviving son of the late Sir Thomas Firbank, who for many years represented East Hull in Parliament, and at his death in 1910 succeeded to the St. Julian's Estate, Monmouthshire, which is yearly developing into a very valuable building property. Mr. Firbank, who is very artistic, has travelled much, and was chiefly educated abroad and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he came under the influence of the late Monsignor Benson and joined the Church of Rome

After this Firbank resumed his peripatetic lifestyle, and the setting many of his books in fantastic versions of foreign places such as Vienna, Havana and Seville. His north African tale *Santal* appeared in 1921, and *The Flower Beneath the Foot*, the first of the three major novels of his last years, in 1923. His next novel, *Sorrow in Sunlight* (1924), was published first with considerable success in New York and then in London.

American editions of *The Flower beneath the Foot* and *Vainglory* followed, but his American publisher declined *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* (1926) on religious and moral grounds: Firbank's work after the death of his mother in March 1924 showed a new candour in its treatment of homosexuality. He was working on a novel set in New York, *The New Rythum* (fragments published in 1962), when he died at the Hotel Quirinale in Rome in May 1926. He was mistakenly buried in the protestant cemetery in Testaccio in Rome, and after the Vatican was informed reinterred in the Campo Verano in that city in September.

There are numerous accounts of Firbank's personal eccentricity, such as presenting the Marchesa Casati

with a bunch of lilies and suggesting that they embark immediately for America; sending his cab driver to smooth the way before his first meeting with Augustus John; and his unlikely participation in sports. While at Cambridge, Oscar Wilde's son Vyvyan Holland recalls seeing the effete Firbank incongruously dressed "in the costume of sport". Confounded, Holland enquired what he had been doing, and learning that he had apparently been playing football, further enquired whether it was rugby or soccer. "Oh," replied Firbank, "I don't remember."

Siegfried Sassoon remembers encountering Firbank:

One afternoon in February they took me to see Ronald Firbank, who was living in a house opposite All Souls. None of us had met him before, but his impressionist



Portrait of Firbank by Charles Hiefling

novels had led us to expect a somewhat peculiar person, so we weren't surprised when he received us in a closely-curtained room lighted by numerous candles and filled with a profusion of exotic flowers. A large table was elaborately set out with a banquet of rich confectionery and hothouse fruits. Firbank, whose appearance was as orchidaceous as his fictional fantasies, behaved so strangely that all attempts at ordinary conversation became almost farcical. His murmured remarks were almost inaudible, and he was too nervous to sit still for more than half a minute at a time. The only coherent information he gave me was when I heavily inquired where his wonderful fruit came from. "Blenheim," he exclaimed with a hysterical giggle, and then darted away to put a picture-frame straight, leaving me wondering how peaches were grown at Blenheim in mid-winter. The Sitwells were more successful in mitigating his helpless

discomposure, but even Osbert's suavely reassuring manner failed to elicit anything except the disconnected utterances which were his method of evading direct explanations... A few days later I invited him to tea, for I was curious to observe how he shaped by daylight and away from his "highly stylised" surroundings. Rather to my surprise he accepted. Anxious to entertain him appropriately, I bought a monumental bunch of grapes, and a glutinous chocolate cake. Powdered, ninetyish, and insuperably shy, he sat with eyes averted from me and my well-meaning repast. His most rational response to my attempts at drawing him out about literature and art was, "I adore italics, don't you?" His cup of tea remained untasted, and he quailed when I drew his attention to my large and cosy pile of crumpets. As a gesture of politeness he slowly absorbed a single grape.



as a vital influence on writers of the next generation such as Evelyn Waugh, W.H. Auden, and Anthony Powell, who admired the unprecedented economy, *Alice in Wonderland* type fantasy, and absurdist comedy of manners which coexist in his work. E.M. Forster was also an admirer, saying of Firbank's work, "On we read, confusing the characters with the incidents and neglecting the outcome, but tickled by the images and the turns of the talk. It is frivolous stuff, and how rare, how precious is frivolity! How few writers can prostitute all their powers!"

Firbank had no close emotional attachments, save with his mother; but in 1919 he seems to have become infatuated with the Hon. Evan Morgan, who rebuffed him by refusing the dedication of his only play, *The Princess Zoubaroff*, days before its publication in 1920.

The Annual NSC Pub Crawl

By Ian White

THIS YEAR'S PUB CRAWL took place with the shadow prospect of Covid still hanging over us and I was keen to avoid public transport. So we ended up with a journey entirely on foot between places of refreshment. Moreover, as a change from previous crawls of purely historical public houses, we took in two distinctly modern premises.

We started with the new—a microbrewery in Blackheath, ZeroDegrees, part of a chain around the country. It was a pleasant bright place to start off with a few beers brewed on the premises. A short stroll took us around the edge of the heath to the Princess of Wales, only to find it pretty much full! Obviously, a popular place for people in Blackheath who have little to do apart from going to the pub mid-afternoon!

It was also a bit strange to encounter somewhere still requiring advance table bookings, but with some diplomacy we managed to negotiate a table for an hour. The table promptly filled with hats and canes.

As dusk was falling we sauntered across Blackheath and into Greenwich Park, pausing on the high ground by the Observatory and the statue of General Wolfe to sample the glorious view of London below us.

The Plume of Feathers lies at the bottom of the hill down a small road just outside the park. Back when we had a NSC cricket match in the park each summer, this was where we always repaired after the final over. On this occasion



Barflies assemble!
Members pose by the water gate of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich



The majestic view from the Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park; (above) Blackheath's Princess of Wales pub, inside and out



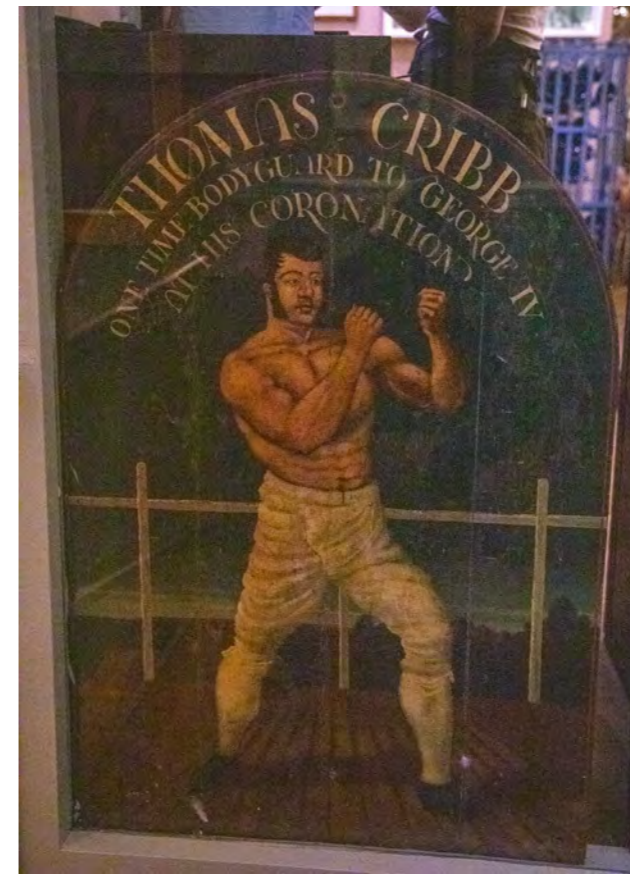
they accommodated us on a group of tables in the back room. Good to get ales from a local south-east London producer, the Bexley Brewery in Erith.

A very short walk brought us to the splendid Trafalgar Tavern on the Thames. It was also very busy pub but as we arrived a large table started to vacate so we tried to grab it—only to be informed that area was being cleared to make way for a band! The pub has many rooms (including a number of function rooms upstairs), with the ground floor divided into a large public bar and a separate dining room, which was rather sparsely populated because it was “reserved for diners”. Again, with a bit of pleading and promises of good behaviour, we secured a large table, agreeing we would purchase food. Which by then



Members enter the Plume of Feathers pub and (below) take over the back room





Facing page: The gang settle in at a large table in the Trafalgar Tavern, which is stuffed with paintings, sculptures, old signs, clocks, sextants and other vintage gear—all from the collection of the late Dick Moy, an antiques baron who owned several establishments in Greenwich

This page: (top left) The Trafalgar has a downstairs bar named after famous pugilist Thomas Cribb; (top right) Luigi squares off against Lord Nelson; (left) our final pub was the distinctly modern Sail Loft, where we were exiled to the outside—though it does look as if we are taking the air on the deck of an ocean liner.

was a logical time to sustain ourselves.

The final leg was a ten-minute walk along the riverside to a brand new establishment overlooking the river, the Sail Loft. Again we were asked, “Do you have a reservation?” Er, no. There was a covered section outside that sufficed our needs, especially those who enjoyed the pleasures of tobacco. After a while we were invited in by the staff—as there was a no-show—for final drinks before retiring home.

It was something quite different this year, with the pandemic lingering and so many pubs requiring reservations (poor form on the part of those who make reservations and then do not turn up or have the courtesy to contact the pub to cancel.) However, the club drew on its resources and managed to have an excellent day out.

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.



Niall McGuinness

Name or preferred name?

Niall J.P. McGuinness

Where do you hail from?

Dublin—but currently living in the Athens of the

North (Edinburgh). I enclose for your perusal a shot from my study window of Calton Hill.

Favourite cocktail?

I prefer beer and wine. Friday evenings will find me in my local with a couple of pints of Guinness.

Most Chappist skill?

Ability to bend wire (I'm an orthodontist).

Most Chappist possession?

Two: one is a 19th-century map of the East Coast of Ireland, picked up for a tenner in a bookshop in Cornwall in the late 1980s, the other is a pocket watch from the early 20th century.

Personal Motto?

I'm not dead yet. When does the party begin?

Favourite quotes?

Jonathan Swift on himself: "He gave what little wealth he had, to build a house for fools and mad; and show'd, in one satiric touch, no nation needed

it as much!" (Swift's legacy helped to found St Patrick's Hospital, the first psychiatric hospital to treat patients humanely.)

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

I was persuaded to model for Stewart Christie (tailors) of Edinburgh a few years ago. I went in one day and they were so taken with my tweeds they

asked me to model some of theirs. I had a full Norfolk jacket outfit made up afterwards that took about 9 months to make.

How long have you been involved with the NSC?

Ten years, according to information received.

How did you hear about the Club to begin with?

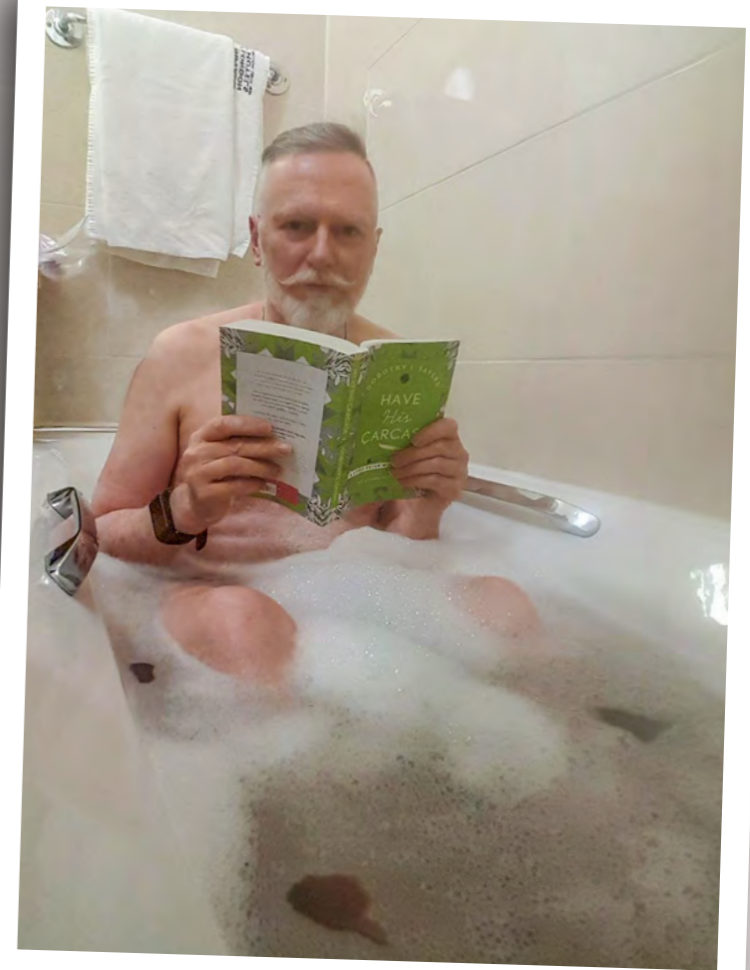
Through the wonders of the world wide web when I was looking for some decent tweed.

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

Get your facial hair done by Trumper's barbers of Duke of York Street, St James's—you can see the results.

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

- Edith Sitwell, poet and wit—she was adept at giving a good verbal slap to impertinent guests.
- Leonardo Da Vinci—I would be fascinated to hear his speculations on physics and anatomy.
- Isaac Newton—not just to hear how he developed his theories of gravitation and optics, but why spent so much of his subsequent life trying to turn base metals into gold, and divining the date of the Apocalypse.



Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?

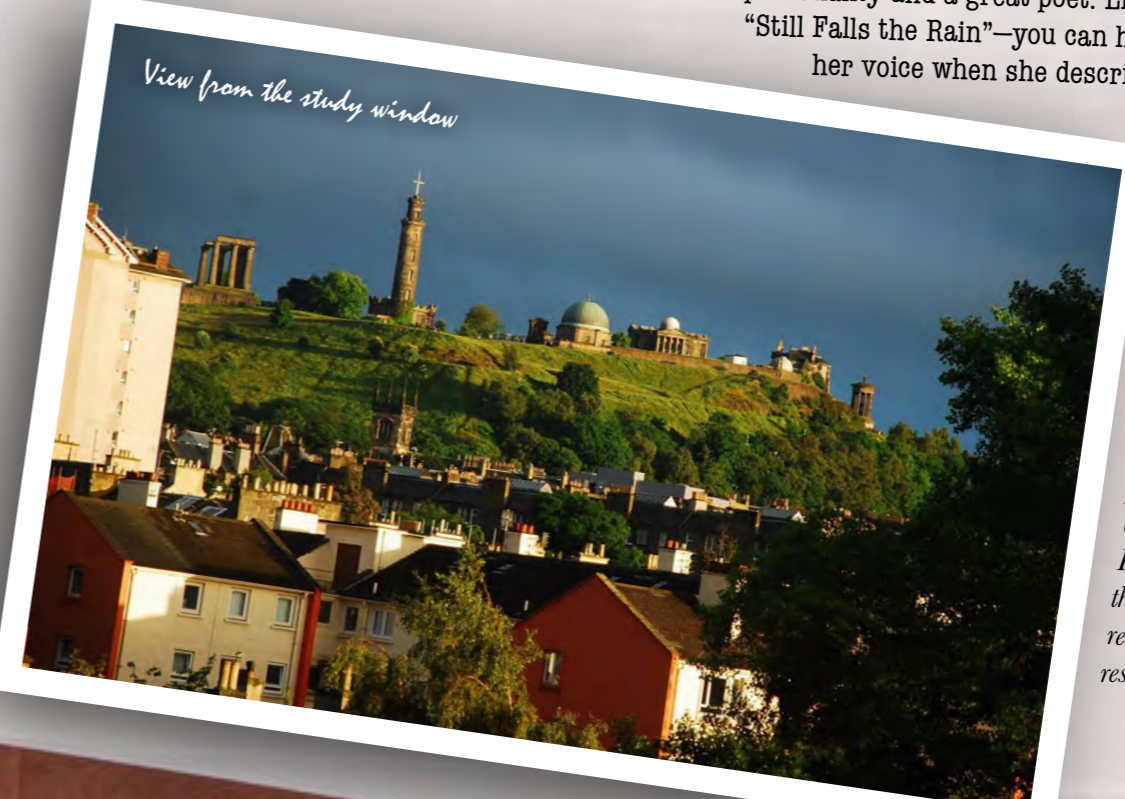
Answer: Artemis Scarheart.

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

If invited, I would like to give a talk on Edith Sitwell, now rather neglected but a remarkable personality and a great poet. Listen to her reciting "Still Falls the Rain"—you can hear the anger in her voice when she describes "the blind and weeping bear"

forced to dance for the entertainment of the crowd by its cruel owner.

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.



The Society of Salome's *Stroll in Style*

By Olga Piotrowna

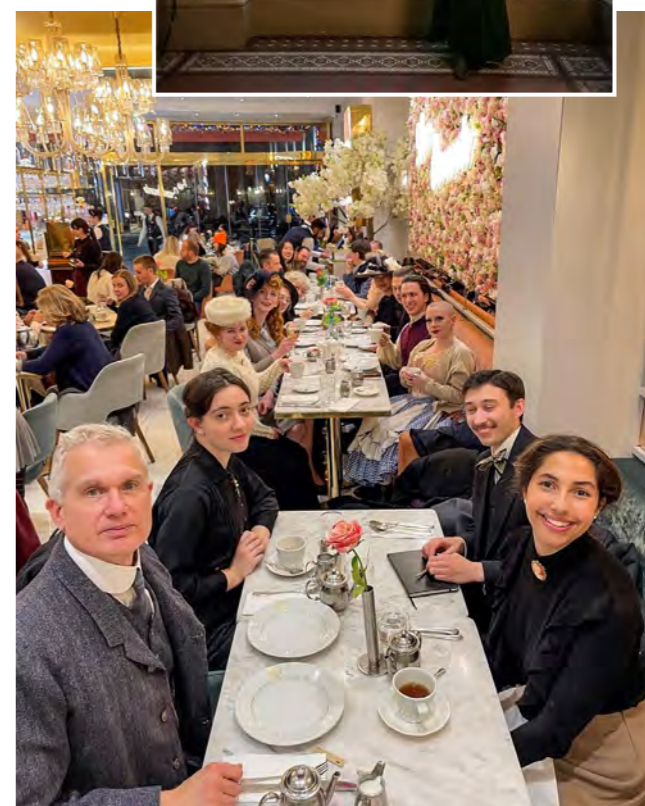
LAST SATURDAY THE Society of Salome met at Kensington Gardens for an autumnal "Stroll in Style". Despite the windy, chilly weather and a stubborn drizzle, participants bravely strolled around the Albert Memorial and Kensington Palace, dressed in their warmest finery.

Afterwards, they paid a visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum for an opportunity to admire the beauty and style of garments displayed in the fashion exhibition (which, to many, may have looked like window shopping, given that

the participants' clothes blended in well with the museum display). Afternoon tea at Kensington's Caffè Concerto proved to be the perfect finale to the afternoon, allowing guests to warm up after the walk and to enjoy a selection of fine teas and fresh pastries. The event gathered a large group of enthusiasts of turn-of-the-century fashion and culture.

The Society of Salome plans to continue hosting similar get-togethers in the future, the details of which will be posted on their Facebook page and Instagram.







CLUB NOTES

New Members

A WHOPPING SIX new Members this time—word must be getting out. Iain White describes himself as a Celtic Cad with special expertise in coddiwompling (I had to look it up), and he has already embraced Club life by attending the Pub Crawl (see photos on pages 16–19).

Laura Foley comes to us via the Society of Salome (see pages 22–25). She is a dancer and enjoys an After Eight Martini. Ewan Carmichael is a no-nonsense military chap whose favourite cocktail is “beer” and whose skills include sabrage and toxophilly—all the violent ones, basically.

Not pictured are also David Robertson, a shadowy figure who has yet to submit his details (though if he is who I think he is then he has actually been lurking at Club meetings for some time, choosing his moment); plus two gentlemen from Penmaenmawr in Conwy, Gwyn Hughes and the appropriately name Michael Sheridan, an upholsterer who likes a cocktail called a Blue Mist (apparently a rum-based beverage with orange juice, blue curaçao and cream—sounds fruity but dangerously rich).

A hearty welcome to all six of them. I hope this is the beginning of a trend towards new members joining in greater numbers, after a period of



Laura Foley

relatively low “churn”. Possibly it’s a post-lockdown thing (not wanting to jinx things) or perhaps due to a wider reach for the new website.



Ewan Carmichael



Iain White

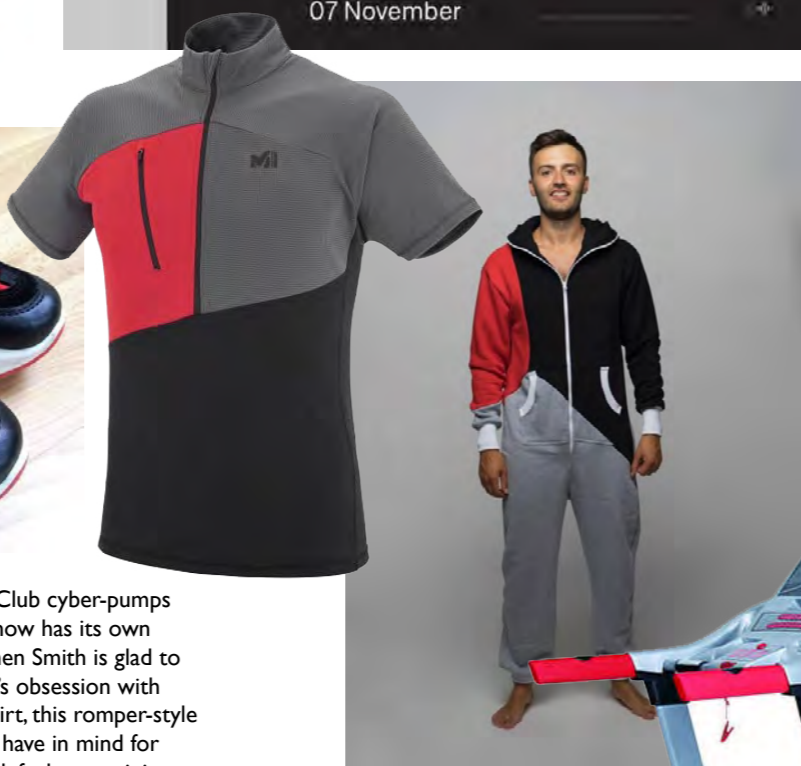
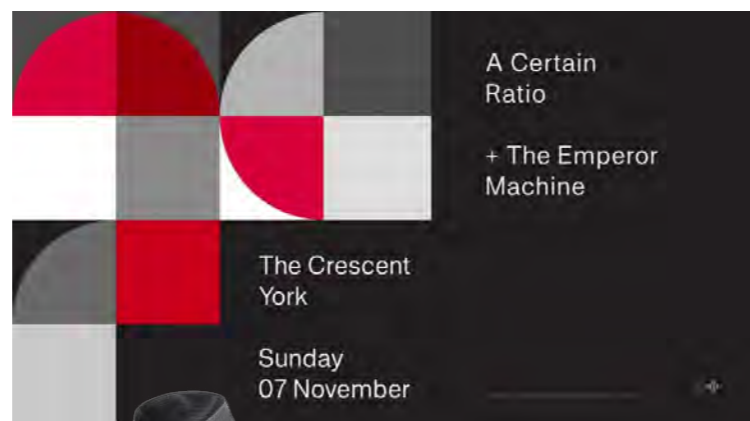
Club Tie Corner

IT’S TIME FOR our monthly round-up of secret celebrity endorsements and conspiracy theories about Committee involvement in shaping the course of history. This page, clockwise from right: Mark Christopher clocked that Det. Richard “Dick” Stensland is wearing a Club tie in *L.A. Confidential* (1997); Norman Collins, Somme veteran, gentleman, who served as an officer in a Highland regiment, as seen on BBC Four’s *WWI: The Last Tommies* and spotted by Craigoh; Danny Boswell is unsurprised that the Artful Dodger is a junior Member; Micheál Rhys takes an entirely reasonable leap of faith with this blazer from Series 1, Episode 7 of *The Saint*; the Earl of Essex notes, with an audible curl of the lip, that sales director Paul Fox of classic car dealership Woodham Mortimer is masquerading as a Member; David Pittard couldn’t help noticing that gameshow host and bull wrangler Jim Bowen of *Bullseye* was a sound fellow underneath it all.





Facing page: time once more to visit the Glorious Committee's burgeoning gallery of appropriated art. Clockwise from top left: *Ritratto di principessa sheridanense*, painted by Pisanello and looted by Ivan Debono, who is also responsible for the picture of a woman with the Club Chicken; Col. Choke offers the next two: "Mrs Bremerton some time around 1683 whose exact function was somewhat vague, but allegedly involved the collection of monies owed to the Committee. Charged for poisoning three times. Never convicted. And Mrs Ashton of Derby who, in the 1730s, kept the club's accounts, caught with her usual doubtful expression when a member of the Committee tried to submit dinner receipts for "official business". Now in full flow, the Colonel also offers us "the portrait of Miss Agnes Makejoy, the Club's social director in the mid-17th century, which lends credence to the theory that the original French Tickler was of English invention, constructed of feathers, and likely commissioned by the Glorious Committee". The Colonel knows what he likes, and opines of these next works, "A regrettable example of the Glorious Committee's foray into the contemporary art world. Taken at the artist's presentation of his work to Our Leaders. He has not been heard of since." Finally, Debono rejoins with this action-packed illumination: "The Chairman's Joust was a grand tournament held in 1515 on the site presently occupied by the Wheatsheaf pub. It lasted seven days, and included mounted and foot combat, mêlées, jousts of peace and jousts of war, accompanied by flowing wine and lavish banquets. The Committee commissioned a magnificent illuminated manuscript to celebrate the exploits of the Club Champion. This is a folio from the preliminary drawings for the manuscript." This page, clockwise from top left: Club pugilists as captured by Dame Laura Knight and spotted by Debono; another example of the Club influence on the Bauhaus, 1923, from Col. Choke, who also comments, "The Sheridanite influence on the Navajo tribe is well documented in these pages. The guns and whisky offered by the Glorious Committee's traders in exchange for rugs like these is less well known but apparently very lucrative." Hilberian new Member Ewan Carmichael has already discovered evidence of a Club tartan; Stephen Smith thinks he has found the perfect mouser for the Clubhouse.



This page, clockwise from top left: extraordinary Club cyber-pumps spotted by Mrs H on the underground; the Club now has its own weather forecast, courtesy of Stuart Turner; Stephen Smith is glad to see the Club's house band on tour again; Debono's obsession with sportswear (shudder) brings us this high-tech T-shirt, this romper-style sweatsuit, as well as this treadmill—what does he have in mind for us? It's obviously catching, as Frances Mitchell has left these training shoes prominently out; seemingly also interested in club culture (the other kind), Debono has also started a Club record label. Facing page, clockwise from top left: this car has been cunningly camouflaged by Actuarius to be almost invisible in a room full of Club Members; Oliver Lane is some sort of farmer these days and only has eyes for practical working vehicles; ever conscious of the Committee's needs, Debono has donated both this sturdy tug for exporting the Committee's personal nuclear waste, as well as this high-speed private train, ideal for evading creditors; I think this is one of the tools he uses for refinishing his finds. Finally Colonel Choke gives us all pause for thought with this meditation on how much tougher life was in Weimar Germany. Keep it light, chaps.



Forthcoming Events



BOTH OFFICIAL NSC JAUNTS (NSC) 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.

NSC Club Night

Wednesday 1st December

7pm–11pm

The upstairs room at the Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB

Admission: Free

See page 2. Sam Marde Mehdiabad will sooth our souls and challenge our minds with a talk on *Ancient Greek Music and Other Stuff*.

Once again we will be attempting to live-stream the talk from the pub for the benefit of those who can't make it in person—as ever at the mercy of the Wheatsheaf's wife—as well as recording the video to upload later. The YouTube link to watch live is <https://youtu.be/GRE1IL7E83Q>.

Benoit Viellefon Live

Thursday, 2nd December

8.30–10.30pm

Le Petit Balcon, 26 Robertson Street, Hastings, West Sussex TN34 1HL

Admission: £5 (call 01424 721687 to book)

Gallic swing maestro Benoit (a regular at the Candlelight Club) whoops it up in Hastings.

NSC Christmas Party: Journey to the Centre of Vauxhall

Saturday 4th December

7pm–12am

The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL

Admission: Free to Members, £5 to guests (refundable if they join up on the night)

To mark the forthcoming 150th anniversary of the publication of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, this party will be a Victorian sci-fi Christmas adventure. See page 11 for details.

Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair Christmas Special

Sunday 5th December

11am–5pm

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

Admission: £5 (£3 for students) from Eventbrite

The Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair returns to Covent Garden at the Freemasons Hall with more than 50 dealers in vintage fashion, accessories, trimmings and textiles from the 1900s onwards, alongside designer labels from Biba, Ossie Clark and Dior to YSL, Chanel and more.

There will be an on-the-spot alterations team to help make purchases fit or you can bring items you already own to be revamped. There will also be food and refreshments served all day in Freemasons Hall cafe.

There will be Health & Safety measures in place on the day and, owing to restrictions on numbers, you may be asked to wait before entering. For this reason it may be a good idea to buy your ticket in advance.



Catch Marlene Dietrich in *Dishonored* at the Cinema Museum

Benny's Festive Package

Sunday 5th December

7–11pm

Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, 42 Pollard Row, London E2 6NB

Admission: £8 from www.designmynight.com

If cabaret is your thing, check out this festive bill presented in aid of Cabaret vs Cancer, featuring Paulus, Dusty Limits, Evelyn Carnate, Bettis Bon Bon, Jo Foley, Stormhooper and more.

Barrelhouse Hot Jazz Jam

Sundays 5th, 12th and 19th

December

8.30–11.30pm

The Barrelhouse, 33 Gordon Road, Bristol, BS8 1AW

Admission: Free

Seeing out your weekend and seeing in the coming week with a Sunday night dose of hot jazz and cocktails. Preemptively cast aside those Monday blues with the aid of the Barrelhouse's weekly Hot Jazz Jam, hosted by Jack Calloway and selected members of the Parlophonians Orchestra. Bring your instruments, bring your dance partners and be sure to cool yourself off with the infamous Jack Calloway cocktail...

Mildmay Jazz Club

Tuesdays 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th December 8pm–12am

Mildmay Working Men's Club, 34 Newington Green, London N16 8QL

Admission: £10 or £20 with lesson from www.designmynight.com; £15 on the door

Weekly jazz night, featuring a swing dance lesson plus dancing to a live band. All are welcome and the drinks are cheap but if you want to learn to dance there is an introductory



Join Elise Roth and her band for the Candlelight Club's Christmas Party



swing dance lesson for total beginners at 8pm—no need to bring a partner—followed by social dancing from 8.30pm. Band sets at 9pm, 10pm and 11pm.

Marlene Dietrich in Dishonored (1931)

Saturday 11th December

6.30–9.30pm

The Cinema Museum, 2 Dugard Way, London SE11 4TH

Admission £9.45 from Eventbrite

Worth it just to see the Cinema Museum itself—a dusty mountain of film equipment, movie theatre decor and cinema ephemera

from the Golden Age of film, housed in an old workhouse where Charlie Chaplin spent some time—this screening is part of the Museum’s Women & Cocaine season. (“My father warned me about men and booze, but he never mentioned a word about women and cocaine.” —Tallulah Bankhead.) In *Dishonored*, Dietrich plays Marie Kolverer, a street walker who becomes a secret agent in order to spy on the Russians. Her assignment is to expose two suspected infiltrators by flirting with them; unsurprisingly both men become infatuated with her. The screening will be preceded by an introduction and followed by a raffle!

The Candlelight Club’s Christmas Party
Friday 10th and Saturday 11th December
7pm–12am

A secret location in central London
Admission: £25 in advance
Dress: Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, Peaky Blinders, decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

The Candlelight Club is a clandestine pop-up 1920s speakeasy, in a secret London venue lit by candles. Each event offers a one-off cocktail menu with special themes, plus live period jazz bands and vintage vinylism for your dancing pleasure. Ticket holders get an email two days before revealing the location.

Like a lot of folk in the 1920s, they’re not about to let Prohibition spoil Christmas! So they’ll be celebrating the season of goodwill by candlelight at a secret tinsel-toned party where the jingling of sleigh bells will mingle with the clinking of cocktail glasses, where for one night the cop and the gangster will lay down their Tommy guns and share a toast.

Live music will come from New England songbird Elise Roth and her band. Elise managed to arrive in Blighty just in time for lockdown, but has nevertheless been cutting a musical swathe through the vintage scene.

Hosting as ever will be the Lord of Cabaret Misrule, Champagne Charlie, and when the band aren’t playing there will be vintage DJing from the Bee’s Knees, plus cocktails akimbo and an elegant crowd in their finest 1920s schmutter, raring to kick back and cut a rug.

In the basement tarot reader Lucius will be on hand to share what 2022 holds for you, or

you can peruse the sparkly wares in Michelle’s vintage jewellery shop. Why not enjoy the private courtyard garden, where you can puff on a quality smoke from the Rum, Absinthe & Cigar Bar?

“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*

NSC Virtual Pub Quiz

Wednesday 15th December

7.45pm

Online via Zoom

Admission: Free

Despite the return to monthly corporeal meetings at the Wheatsheaf, there is still an interest in the virtual pub quizzes held during lockdown, so for now we will continue them on a monthly basis, on the third Wednesday of the month (balancing our Club Nights which are on the first Wednesday).

You’ll need the (free) Zoom app installed, which should launch automatically when you click on the meeting’s weblink. (You can go directly via Zoom: the meeting ID is 850 2761 8581 0711 and the passcode is 933579.) The quiz starts at 8pm, though the meeting convenes about 15 minutes earlier to allow people to register their teams if they haven’t already done so. The quiz will have six rounds with an interval, and each team can play their joker on one round in advance, which doubles the points they receive for that round.

Some Like It Swing

Friday 17th December

7.30–11.30pm

Genesis Cinema, 93–95 Mile End Road, London E1 4UJ

Admission: £5 for the lesson (prebooking recommended from [genesiscinema.co.uk](https://www.genesiscinema.co.uk)); social dance is free

Dress: 1940s

Genesis Cinema and SwingdanceUK invite you to a monthly swing dancing night where you can learn the steps at the beginners class, enjoy some cocktails and Lindy Hop till you drop:

7.30pm: Beginners Lindy Hop class with Simon and Anna (£5)

8.30pm: Dancing with resident DJ Mr Kicks (free); all welcome.



The NSC Christmas Moot

Tuesday, 21st December

6–11pm

The Rising Sun, 38 Cloth Fair, London EC1A 7JQ

Admission: Free, but bring money for beer

The time has come for the Club’s just-before-Christmas final gathering, traditionally the annual opportunity to find out if Lord Mendrick is still alive. Although some maintain

this meeting is always on a Friday, others (specifically Matthew Howard) feverishly deny this, and on this occasion we’ve gone for a Tuesday in order to accommodate some who couldn’t otherwise make it.

The venue is the picturesque Rising Sun on Cloth Fair, just off Smithfield meat market. If there are enough of us they will probably let us have private use of the upstairs bar. Food is served until 8.30pm for those wishing to line their stomachs.

Bishopsgate Swing Christmas Ball

Saturday 18th December

7pm–2am

Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QD

Admission: £20

Christmas special from this regular swing dance night in partnership with Swing Patrol (sometimes they have live music, though I’m not sure about this one). Prebooked tickets only, from <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/whats-on/activity/211218-bishopsgate-swing-christmas-ball>. It sounds as if they are still being pretty cautious re. Covid, so read the T&Cs on the website.

The Candlelight Club’s New Year’s Eve Party

Friday 31st December

7pm–2am

A secret location in central London

Admission: £60 in advance

Dress: Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, Peaky Blinders, decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

The Candlelight Club is a clandestine pop-up 1920s speakeasy, in a secret London venue lit by candles—see above. In addition to the Christmas bash they’re also having a NYE knees-up with live entertainment from Champagne Charlie and his band the Bubby Boys, accompanying dance troupe the Gatsby Girls, plus DJing from the Bee’s Knees, tarot reading from Lucius, a pop-up vintage jewellery store—plus, of course, the countdown to midnight. See www.thecandlelightclub.com/events/new-years-eve-2021 for more details.

Plenty of old-school
eye-candy in Greenwich's
Trafalgar Tavern, glimpsed
on our annual pub crawl
(see pages 16–19)



WATNEY'S
PALE ALE
AND
REID'S
STOUT

The image shows a highly decorative glass door or window. The text is rendered in a classic, ornate serif font with a gold or brass-like finish. The letters are set against a background of intricate, etched floral and vine patterns. The overall aesthetic is traditional and elegant, characteristic of a historic pub. The lighting is warm, suggesting an indoor setting at night.

WARNING