

**Adie Hess on her love affair with the most delicate of instruments**



*Buffoon playing a lute  
(ca 1623-1624)  
Frans Hals  
Musée du Louvre  
Paris  
France*

# The Lutenist Life

## **A passionate nomad**

Torquil Arbuthnot on the wanderlust of feisty writer and explorer Freya Stark

## **Westminster particular**

Get to know broolly-and-bowler poster boy Freddie Munday

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • No. 184 • FEBRUARY 2022**

# DESIGN!





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 2nd February** in the upstairs room of the Wheatsheaf pub at 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB.

Mark Christopher will talk to us on *Devon: Historical Facts and Fascinating Stories*. “A whistle-stop tour of people, places and things,” he explains. “Topics include an unusual tram electrification system and whether Devon ever had its own language. With over 40,000 years to draw on, Devon is rich in history of all descriptions.”

As usual we will be attempting to livestream the talk (very much at the mercy of the pub’s wifi connection). The link to watch that is <https://youtu.be/FU6we3sNV6E>.

There is also a Facebook event at <https://www.facebook.com/events/920380021996164>.

### The Last Meeting

With the nation still cringing under the iron jackboot of Covid-19, our January meeting was thinly populated—just ten people at its peak. (I was the only Committee member in attendance, the others absent either with Covid or in fear of it.) But there was a good spirit, the landlord was

grateful for having anyone in at all, and the talk from Adrienne Hess was splendid. A lifelong lutenist, she took us through the evolution and defining characteristics of the lute in its different forms, emphasising how much it was NOT like the guitar and how one should NOT consider Sting’s dabblings with the instrument as in any way representative of lute music. It does seem that lutes are fragile, awkward to play and prone



The Seaton Electric Tramway, one of the wonders of Devon

to going out of tune, owing to the rudimentary tuning system, but apparently this is all part of the experience. You can see a video of Adie’s talk on the Club YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/se1azSbfHc8>.

An essay version begins on page 4.





(Top) Lord Hare and Luigi Sbaffi devour the latest issue of *Resign!*; (above and right) Adie outlines the delights and sorrows of playing the lute, to a small but attentive audience; (below) Baron Von Rukavina with Barbara; (below right, l-r) Luca Jellinek, Andrew Fish and Lord Hare





# A Brief Introduction to the Lute

*Now divine aire, now is his soule ravisht, is it not strange that sheepes guts should hale soules out of mens bodies?*

—William Shakespeare,  
*Much Ado about Nothing*

By Adrienne Hess  
and Chris Goodwin

**S**HAKESPEARE WAS ONLY one of many writers of his day who attributed to the lute the power to transport the listener into a kind of ecstasy; for throughout the Renaissance the lute's ravishing tone made it the most esteemed and admired of all musical instruments. The fame of the greatest players spread through all Europe, and the doors of royal courts and palaces were open to them (a number were consequently employed as spies) while instruments by the most famous makers could fetch astronomical sums.

The origins of the lute, however, lay outside Europe. The instrument derives its name, as well as its distinctive shape, from the Arabic *'ud*, an instrument which is very much at the heart of Arabic musical life to this day. *Al 'ud* means “the wooden one”, a name perhaps coined to



Angel with Lute, Looking Down, c. 1480,  
Melozzo da Forlì, fresco fragment, Rome

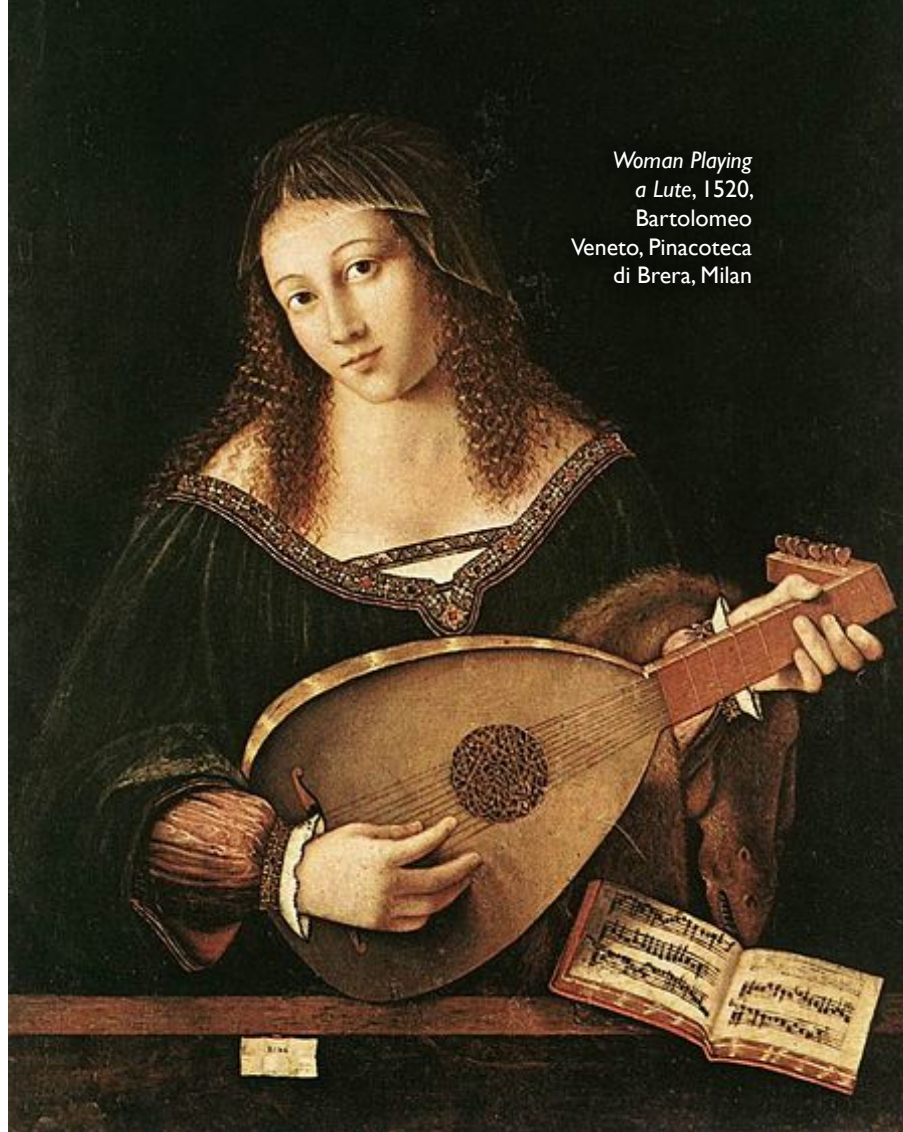


distinguish the *‘ud* from instruments made from gourds or with parchment soundboards. It came to Europe in the Middle Ages, perhaps brought back from the Crusades, or via Moorish Spain, or Sicily, where the 13th-century King Manfred von Hohenstaufen was a keen player.

Throughout the Medieval period the lute, which then had only five “courses” or pairs of strings, was played with a quill plectrum—again like the *‘ud*. Playing with a plectrum limits the kind of solo music that can be performed, and so the lute was often played in consort with other instruments, perhaps improvising over a drone or ground, playing dance tunes, or being used to accompany song.

The lute really came into its own in the late 15th century when it was realised that it could be played with fingertips instead of a quill. This meant that music properly composed in parts could now be played on the instrument. With the addition of a sixth (bass) course, the development of a more elegant, elongated body shape, and the invention of a system of tablature for notating its music, the lute attained a new classical perfection, and the stage was set for a musical craze that was to last over 150 years.

It is not hard to see the appeal of the



Woman Playing  
a Lute, 1520,  
Bartolomeo  
Veneto, Pinacoteca  
di Brera, Milan

instrument. Light and portable, a harmonising instrument far cheaper and easier to maintain than keyboards, it was (and is) enormously versatile; it was used to play dance music, popular tunes, arrangements of vocal music and song accompaniments, and soon generated

a solo repertoire of its own, in the form of preludes, *passemazzi* (a sort of Renaissance twelve-bar blues) and the most refined and expressive fantasias. It was seen as the heir of the ancient Roman *cithara* or *lira*, which gave it a further boost in an age obsessed with Classical literature. Above all, it was the lute’s ravishing sound that made it so admired. While the essential design of the instrument (six pairs of strings tuned in fourths, with a third in the middle) is similar to that of the modern guitar, the sound is very different: low-tension gut-stringing and the peculiar resonance of its pear-shaped body give the sound of the lute a delicacy and richness which cannot

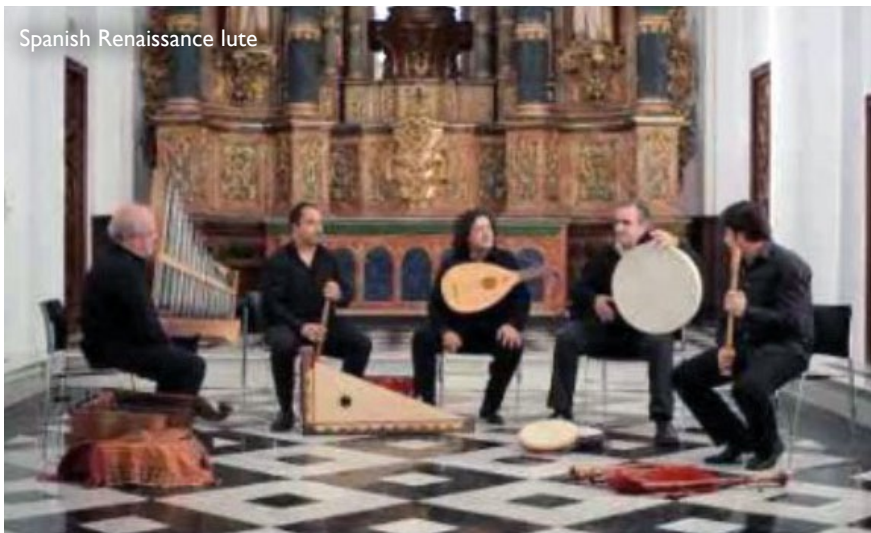


Self-Portrait as a Lute Player  
(1615–17), Artemisia  
Gentileschi, Wadsworth  
Atheneum Art Museum,  
Hartford, Connecticut





smaller instrument of either 11, 12 or 13 pairs of strings tended to be favoured; the first seven pairs could be stopped with the left hand, and the rest of the strings were played “open” like harp strings. Overwound strings, invented in the mid-17th century, could be made to produce a very low pitched note with only a short string length, which meant that it was possible to go back to the older, more manageable size of instrument, while still having a large number of bass strings.



By the end of the 17th century though, the days of the lute were clearly numbered. The rise of the orchestra, opera and the commercial concert hall put a quiet instrument like the lute at a huge disadvantage; it simply couldn't be heard in a big noisy room. Rising living standards meant that more and more people could afford keyboards, which were easier to play, had a wider octave range and could realise more

be matched by its brash modern cousin. In a sense it is an instrument closer to nature than the modern guitar.

At the end of the 16th century experiments and innovations began to be made. A seventh pair of bass strings was added, then an eighth, then a ninth, eventually getting up to 14 pairs; the intention being partly to increase the range of the instrument, partly to be able to play in a low register when accompanying male singers. To cope with the extra strings a second, longer neck and pegbox might be added. New tuning schemes were devised. From all these experiments a variety of new instruments were evolved, designated today as “Baroque” lutes. The biggest, the “Roman” theorbo or *chitarrone*, was a loud bass instrument, used mainly for accompaniment, with a long second neck which made it up to six feet long. In France a

complex harmonies than the lute. Classical literature was taken a little less seriously than before, so the lute's associations with the *cithara* and *lira* of ancient Rome counted for less. In 1727 the French author Titon du Tillet wrote that “the difficulty of playing it well, as well as its little use in concerts, have almost made it disappear. I do not think one could find in Paris more than three or four venerable old gentlemen who are still playing the lute”. Many amateur musicians now favoured the five-course “baroque” guitar, which was far easier to play than the lute, being mainly used for strumming lively Spanish dances. By about 1750 the instrument was more or less dead, though one or two offshoots, such as the German *mandora* persisted.

The lute and its repertoire were never quite forgotten, however, and from the end of the



19th century a revival began. In England, the early music pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch started to make and play lutes, while in Germany lutes (lute-guitar hybrids, really) were widely played by the Wandervogel hiking clubs, attracted by the instrument's associations with pre-industrial, pre-bourgeois past. The early music craze of the 1970s, and the recordings of Julian Bream benefitted the lute greatly, and happily standards of both making and playing are now pretty high.

Over its long history a truly enormous repertoire was created for the instrument. American scholar Arthur Ness has estimated that 25,000 pieces survive for the Renaissance lute, and probably as many for the Baroque instruments—and that is only the music specially notated in lute tablature, not counting music from the Medieval and Baroque eras which is written in normal staff notation. Indeed

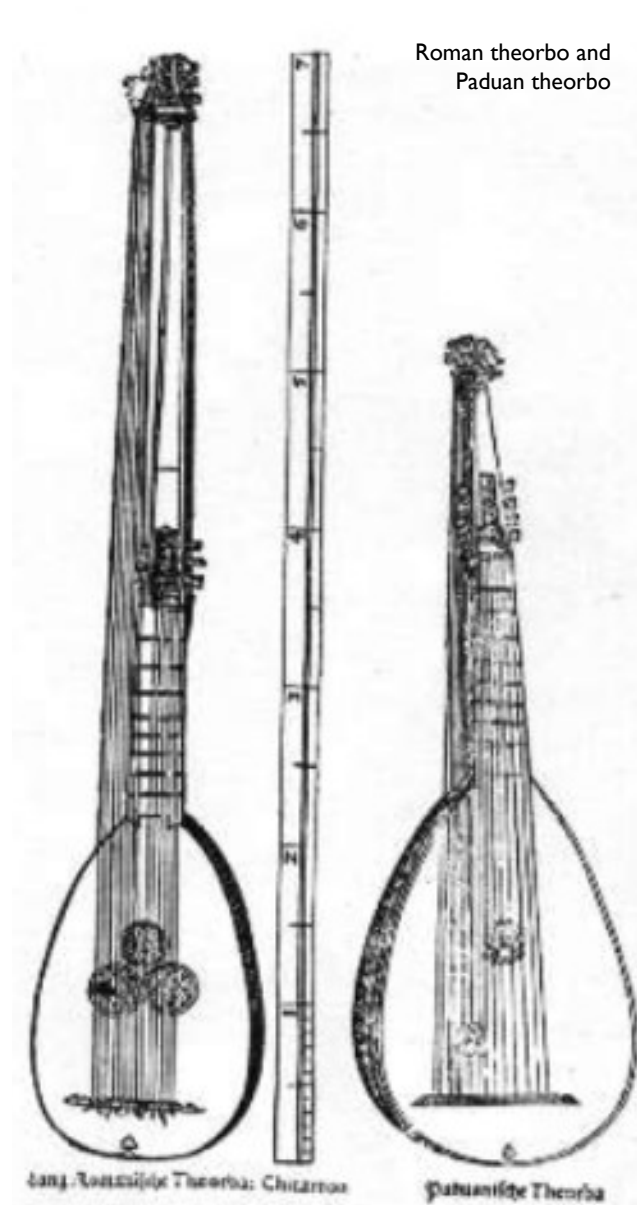
three quarters of lutenists today are ex-guitarists who have been seduced by the amazing riches of this repertoire.

The lute witnessed not one but a succession of Golden Ages of composition. The first of these was in Renaissance Italy, where the greatest player, Francesco da Milano (1497–1543) shared with Michelangelo the nickname *il Divino*, “the divinely-inspired”. When he played, it was said, all thoughts turned to heaven. The music of Francesco and his contemporaries aspires to grace, elegance, and a certain stylish playfulness; similar in spirit perhaps to the early Italian Renaissance paintings of Botticelli and his contemporaries where everyone seems to be dancing.

Spain in the mid-16th century produced a school of fine composers, playing the *vihuela* (a lute with a guitar shaped body), the (rather



Lute and theorbo



Roman theorbo and Paduan theorbo

lang. Antiquisijje Theorba: Chitaron

Paduanisijje Theorba





*Buffoon playing a lute, c. 1623–4, Frans Hals, Musée du Louvre*



*The Ambassadors, 1533, Hans Holbein the Younger, National Gallery, London*



*Still life with musical instruments, books and sculpture, c. 1650, Evaristo Baschenis, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam*

serious) compositions for which are well-known to guitarists today.

The next high point came in Elizabethan England, with the sweet-melancholy songs and fantasies of John Dowland and his contemporaries. The Baroque lute produced two major schools of composition—in mid-17th-century France where the Gaultiers, Dufault, de Visée and others created a stately and self-assured style of music; and in early 18th-century

Germany, where Bach wrote for the lute, and the last great lutenist, Sylvius Leopold Weiss, wrote suites of preludes and dances in a beautiful arpeggiated style.

The lute is rich not only in repertoire but in symbolism. Its refined sound has given it courtly associations in East and West: for Arabs the lute was *amir al-'alat*, the sultan of instruments. In the hands of angels it symbolised the beauties of heaven; it was further used as a symbol of harmony, while a lute with a broken string (as in Holbein's famous painting *The Ambassadors*) stood for discord. From ancient times it has symbolised youth and love. Ancient Mesopotamian seals show maidens playing long-necked lutes in the cult of Ishtar, goddess of love and destruction, foreshadowing countless images of the lute in love scenes in Renaissance painting. What could be more romantic than a man singing to the lute outside a lady's window?

Conversely, it could be an emblem of lust or lasciviousness: in the hands of an older man it symbolised scandal and degeneracy. If the lute's sensuous and delicate tones evoked the pleasures of love, the fleeting nature of its sound, and the physical fragility of the instrument made it a fitting emblem of transience and death: it is



often included, sometimes alongside a skull, in Dutch still life paintings of the *vanitas* variety, illustrating the vanity of worldly existence.

Where can you hear lute music today? The CD presses of the recording companies seem to be churning out lute music CDs at the moment, most of them of a good standard. Three well-known players, Paul O’Dette, Jacob Lindberg, and Nigel North, have recently recorded the complete works of John Dowland, and there have been half a dozen recent releases of the music of Sylvius Leopold Weiss. A recent poll in *Lute News* magazine showed readers’ top five lute recordings to be: *Fantasia de mon triste*, Chris Wilson (Metronome); *Music from the Royal Courts of Europe*, Julian Bream (RCA), *John Dowland, complete works*, Paul O’Dette (Harmonia Mundi); *Rosa*, Chris Wilson (Virgin Veritas) and *Bach Suites*, Nigel North (Linn).

Discovering the music of the lute is an Alice-through-the-keyhole experience: what appears to be a very small world of sound grows ever larger until one realises

*The Duet*, c.1628, Hendrick ter Brugghen, Musée du Louvre, Paris



that as many different moods are expressed in the lute repertoire as in the classical orchestra repertoire, or in the worlds of jazz or folk music. So it’s worth listening to something from each of the “Golden Ages” sketched out above. That said, one should not really judge the lute from recordings. Recording equipment has not yet been invented which can capture the magic of a live performance of lute music, with all its subtleties of tone, so it is worth going to hear one of the top performing artists if you have the chance. It changed my life; it could change yours...

*Chris Goodwin is Secretary of the Lute Society*



Scene from the Jim Jarmusch film *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), starring Tilda Swinton and Tom Hiddleston, and heavily featuring lute music by Jozef van Wissem



Do not judge lute music by the inauthentic stylings of Sting



# COCKTAIL CRAWL

## Luca Jellinek plays Pied Piper around the watering holes of the West End



Our cocktail explorers in the Delaunay

IT HAD BEEN a while since my Wonderland City website had organised an event for like-minded sophisticates and the often dreary month of January, with its ill-advised resolutions and post-festive tone, loomed darkly. We therefore decided to hold a “cocktail crawl” and chose as the location an area that has never been short of distinguished watering holes, Covent Garden and the nearby Strand. The season, as well

as lingering effects of the “the nasty ‘Flu” meant a lack of riotous crowds, though the establishments we visited were pleasantly lively.

We began at the bar of **The Delaunay**, one of the stable of Corbin & King establishments, situated in the opulently Edwardian setting of the Aldwych. Our visit proved very topical, as news had just broken of a tussle between the founders of the C&K mini-empire of elegant restaurants and brasseries and their main financial backers.

We are happy to report that on the evening (a Thursday), both the main dining room and the bar area we patronised were well attended (though not manic), the service was attentive and friendly and the drinks up to the usual Corbin & King standards. A further advantage there is pricing that while still clearly “of London” is advantageous in comparison with



Luigi and Barbara





The Delaunay, looking through the bar to the restaurant

any other joint of similar style.

Photos taken with various “field telephones” do not do the décor of The Delaunay nor the comity of our gathering justice. It was a very satisfying start to the evening and it was with some regret that we tore ourselves away from there. Alas, a crawl is not a crawl if you don’t change venues.

The next stop was **NoMad London**, a hotel which has famously been carved out of the former Bow Street Magistrates Court, across the street from the Opera House. For a variety of logistical reasons, two of the



Our gang descend upon the Atrium Bar



The Atrium Bar at NoMad London





A quick  
cigar break  
before  
entering  
the Savoy

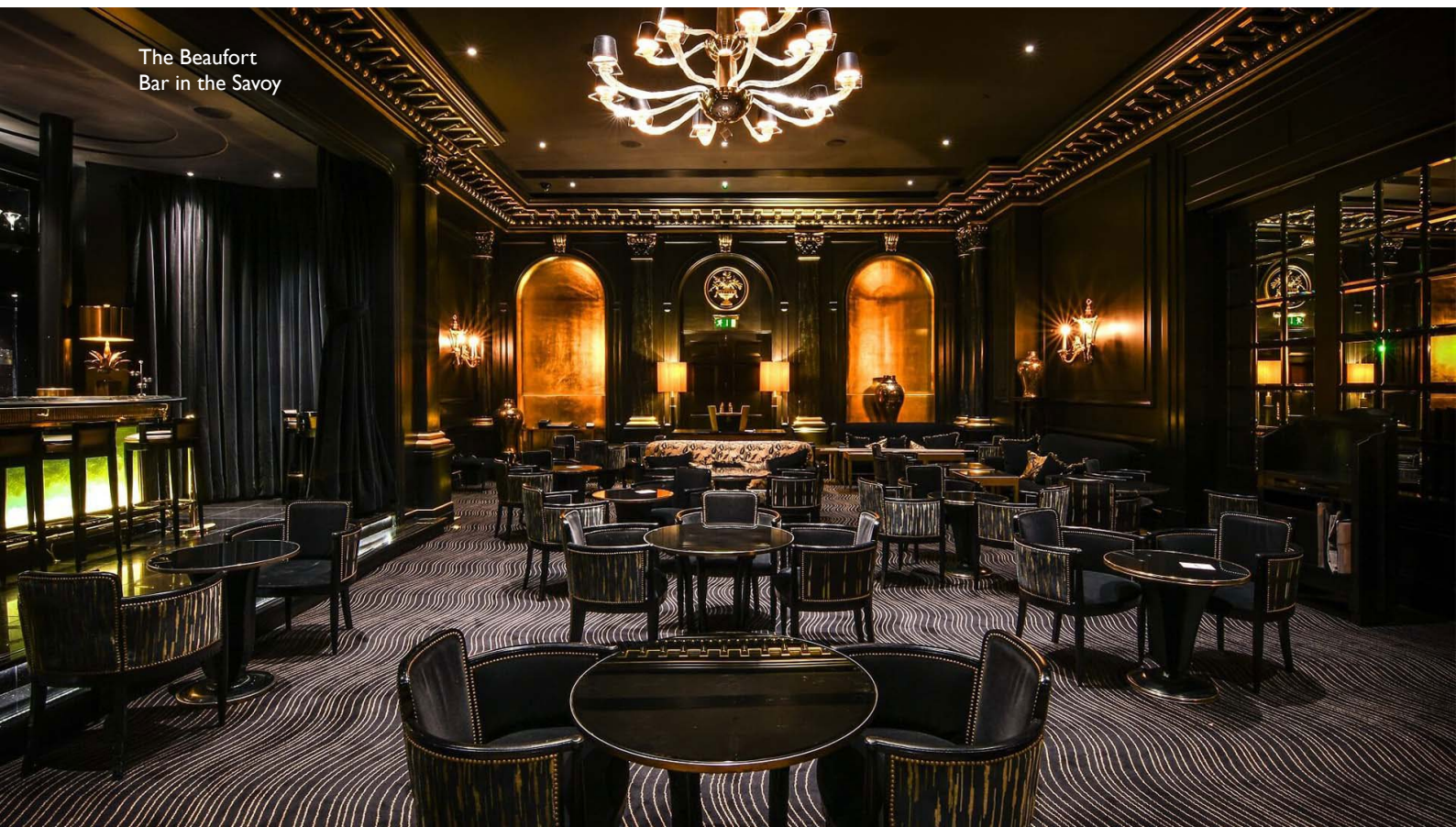
crowd were something of contrast to our traditionally elegant group but we were welcomed very warmly by the bar staff who put on quite a performance of mixology. We look forward to trying out some of the other, arguably more historically flavoured spaces at the Nomad as the season progresses.

Our intended third and final stop proved a brief disappointment, regrettably. We had planned to bring a bit of sartorial dash to the Upstairs Bar at Rules. Unfortunately, despite the place being sepulchral quiet, an inflexible policy against groups of more than six diverted our attention elsewhere. I trust the pictures that have accompanied this article so far will convince readers that it was not a rambunctious, L-plate-sporting hen night party nor a coachload of gawping, Lycra-clad tourists we were trying to shoehorn into London's oldest restaurant. Rather, a collection of people-about-town who would add to the lustre of any place. It was not to be.

three theatrically decorated bars were closed, with the action concentrated in the Atrium Bar.

Like the rest of the Nomad, this is a very well-presented space, with a strong retro feel. The music and the fashionable, relatively young

To the rescue, then, came the ever-reliable, splendidly maintained Savoy, just a couple of blocks away. The Beaufort Bar there remains a beacon of glamour resplendent even in a city, like London, that boasts so many elegant spots.



The Beaufort  
Bar in the Savoy





Getting comfortable  
in the Beaufort Bar



In the Beaufort Bar

Here, too, the people running the bar proved smilingly efficient and helpful. We have the impression that the enforced separation of the past two years has given those who dedicate their labour to hospitality a warmth and keenness that surpasses that of less challenging times earlier in this century.

As an aside, it is sometimes difficult to put in writing just how spruce the Savoy is. It's as if they rebuilt it every second year, with none of the clash of raw newness but also no evident sign of ageing and carefully considered innovation (the Beaufort Bar, after all, is less than ten years old). Like one of those enviable people who don't lose their looks as they age.

Overall, then, a very successful jaunt and one we plan to reproduce in months to come. It should be said that, as in previous larks of this sort, the participants were drawn heavily from the New Sheridan Club

but we assure our readers that all our initiatives are undertaken in the spirit of utmost inclusivity. Our only requirement is that one makes an effort to be elegant and polite. We think you will agree, all attendees cut quite a dash.

For news of upcoming events, please check out my calendar, subscribe to the email updates and follow the Instagram account @wonderland\_ct.



In the lobby of  
the Savoy Hotel



# 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.*



## Freddie Munday

**Name or preferred name?**

Freddie Munday.

**Where do you hail from?**

I was christened with it.

**Where do you hail from?**

London born and bred, although the ancestral home has mysteriously upped sticks to the West Country, so I desperately need to develop my taste for cider.

**Favourite cocktail?**

Tanqueray export and Schweppes slimline; no need for botanicals in my gin.

**Most Chappist skill?**

Dab hand at knots which came from a time when I routinely had to wear both a bow tie and a stock. Separately, obviously.

**Most Chappist possession?**

The bowler hat I wear regularly to work. I have a range of hats—this one is not the dearest but it does get the most use.

**Personal Motto?**

*Non Angelus sed Anglus* is the family motto. [*“Not an angel, but English.”* —Ed]

**Favourite quotes?**

*Imperium oceano, famam qui terminet astris.*  
(A very poetic way to suck up to one's patron.)  
[*Something like “An empire of the ocean whose fame stretches to the stars”?* —Ed]

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



I nearly drowned in the wreck of a tug in the Suez canal. The ship had sunk some time before.

**How long have you been involved with the NSC?**

Joined at the summer party back in '08, when Mr B. was playing *Straight out of Surrey*.

**How did you hear about the Club to begin with?**

At the Chap Olympiad a few weeks before.

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

Florence. Start your first day at Santa Maria della Montanga, collect your first fake David and look north over the city. End your last day on the Cupola of the Duomo where the statue was meant to be and look back south to see how far you've come. Fill the time in between with art, huge steaks, gelato from a delightful place called Vivoli and preferably with love. Make sure you have a four turtle day, Donatello is the hardest to collect but he did the pulpits in San Lorenzo so branch out from there.



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

- The 1st Duke of Wellington for his small talk.
- Gaius Petronius Arbiter for his perspective on how dinner parties have changed since the days of Trimalchio.
- Olenna Tyrell to bitch.

**Favourite Member of the Glorious Committee?**

Artemis Scarheart, of course.

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

No. But if I did it would probably be on heraldry, which is a bit of a specialist subject.

*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.*

**News in pictures: Thursday  
January 9, 2020**



A broly and a bowler hat have long been de rigueur for an Englishman taking a stroll in Westminster. The pushchair is surely a welcome addition

SWNS

Thursday January 09 2020, 12.01am, The Times



# FREYA STARK

By Torquil Arbuthnot

**F**REYA STARK WAS thought to have been born in a studio on rue Denfert Rochereau, Paris, on 31st January 1893, but some evidence suggests she may in fact have been born as much as one year earlier. Her parents were first cousins. During her childhood she moved frequently while her father renovated houses in Devon and when they rented summer lodgings at Asolo in Italy. From 1903, while her mother settled with the daughters at Dronero in Italy, her father remained in Devon although he later emigrated to Canada as a settler in 1911.

Stark had no formal education as a child, but as she moved about with her parents she learned French, German and Italian. At Dronero her mother invested in and managed a silk factory. In 1905 at this factory Freya Stark managed to get her hair and eyelids caught in the machinery. She was partly scalped, and her injuries required skin grafts and left her disfigured. In the 1930s she had plastic surgery to remove scars. An obituarist said of this incident, “In later years she often sought the maternal solicitude she had experienced after her accident in periods of bedridden hypochondria, and she befriended many older



**“Surely, of all the wonders of the world, the horizon is the greatest.” – Freya Stark**

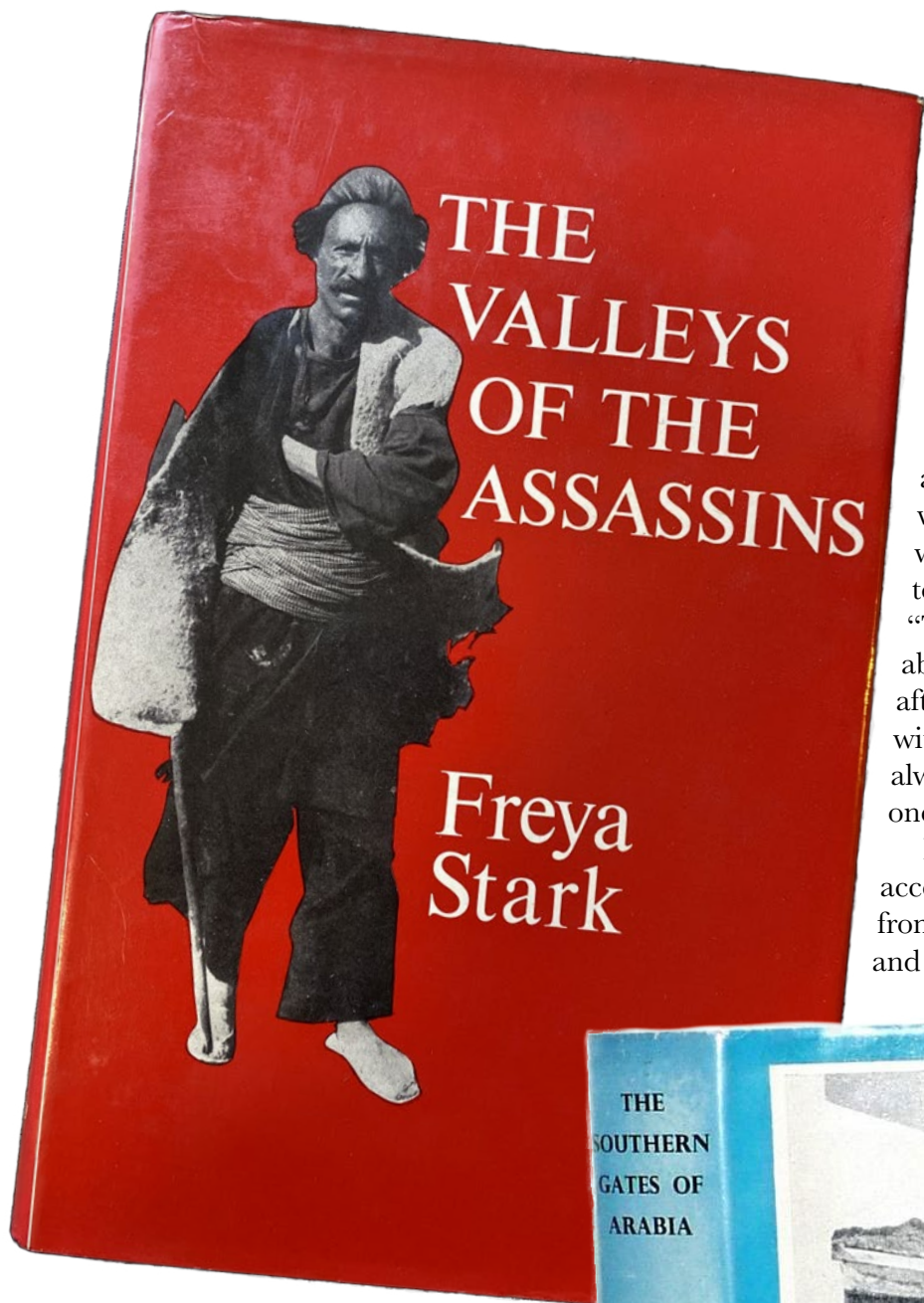
men as surrogates for her absent father.” She studied history at Bedford College, University of London between 1911 and 1914. Family friends introduced her to William Paton Ker, a professor of English, who took her mountaineering in the Alps in 1913, triggering her lifelong interest in mountains. During the First World War she trained at Bologna to become a nurse, and was briefly engaged to an Italian doctor, who broke off the engagement to marry an old flame in 1916. On Ker’s recommendation she joined George Trevelyan’s ambulance unit in Italy as a nurse in 1917. In 1923 she trekked through Europe with Venetia Buddicom, a railway heiress. The climax of her climbing life came in 1924, when she became the second woman to climb the east face of Monte Rosa. While convalescing from an ulcer she took Arabic lessons to become a governess in the Middle East, and was baptized Presbyterian to facilitate contacts with missionaries. In 1926 Herbert Young, a friend of her parents, offered to leave his Asolo home to her if she would live there, and with her mother she moved to Young’s home, which became known as Casa Freia.

men as surrogates for her absent father.”

She studied history at Bedford College, University of London between 1911 and 1914. Family friends introduced her to William Paton Ker, a professor of English, who took her mountaineering in the Alps in 1913, triggering her lifelong interest in mountains. During the First World War she trained at Bologna to become a nurse, and was briefly engaged to an Italian doctor, who broke off the engagement to marry an old flame in 1916. On Ker’s recommendation she joined George Trevelyan’s ambulance unit in Italy as a nurse in 1917.

In 1923 she trekked through Europe with



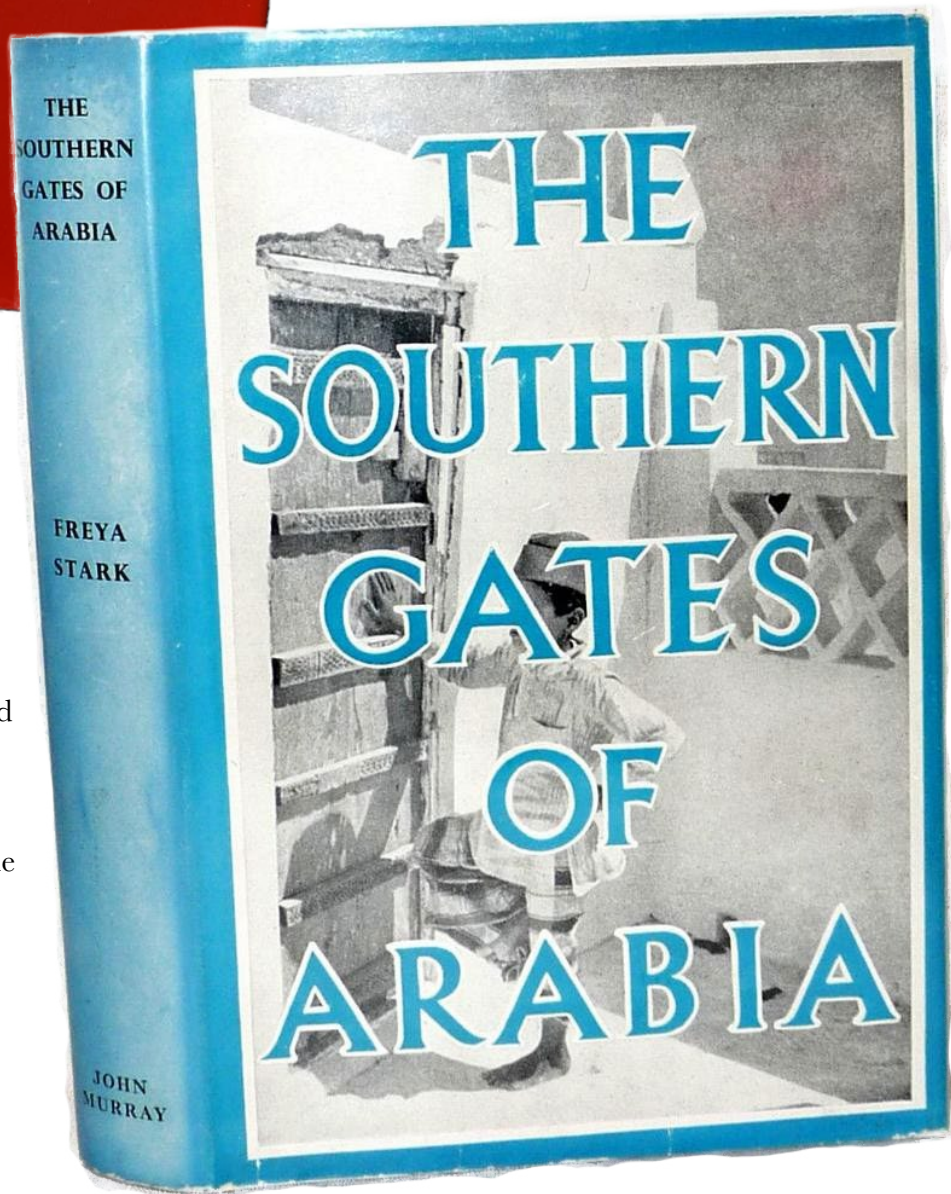


update their maps. She worked as a journalist in Baghdad and fell in love with Captain Vyvyan Holt, a diplomat, who rebuffed her affections but advanced her career. He gave her intelligence briefings about the Kurdistan uprising that she later published in *The Times*.

Many of her trips were to remote areas in Turkey and the Middle East where few Europeans, particularly women, had travelled before. Stark took full advantage of her gender. "The great and almost only comfort about being a woman", she observed after one of many crass encounters with male officialdom, "is that one can always pretend to be more stupid than one is and no one is surprised."

In 1933 Stark returned to London to accolade, was awarded the Back grant from the Royal Geographical Society and was the first woman to receive the

In 1927 Stark lived in Lebanon for several months and travelled through Syria with Buddicom. Her father had provided her with some money, and she visited him twice in Canada before she became his sole heir in 1931. She planned a journey to northern Persia after reading about the region at the British Museum. In 1929 she moved to Baghdad where, according to a biographer, "she went slumming in Arab clothing and was snubbed by the priggish British expatriates". She gained official British acceptance after her adventurous journeys to Lurestan and the Alamut district of Mazandaran, as the War Office used her observations to quietly





Burton medal of the Royal Asiatic Society. Her account of her journeys, *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1934), was an immediate success, and praised for its elegant prose, lively wit and observations of people. In 1935 she went to Hadhramaut, southern Arabia, in search of an ancient trade route. After she became ill the RAF airlifted her to a hospital in Aden, and she had a brief romance with a trading magnate. Her account of this sojourn, *The Southern Gates of Arabia* (1936), was awarded the Mungo Park medal by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and is often considered a classic of travel writing. The success of her books meant that Stark now had the resources to indulge a taste for haute couture and flamboyant hats.

An obituarist said of Stark's travels: "Her explorations were less significant and her

excursions into archaeology less professional than those of Gertrude Bell, her distinguished female predecessor in Arabia and Iraq. But as an ethnographer she was brilliant. She was able to experience and communicate the real life of the people—the poverty, the disease, the chronic insecurity engendered by feuding clans—in a way that escaped the somewhat arrogant, upper-class Bell, who ate alone in her tent."

During the Second World War she worked for the British Ministry of Information in Aden, Baghdad and Cairo, where she founded the anti-Nazi Brotherhood of Freedom. This was a network of Allied sympathisers aimed at convincing the Egyptian people that they were better off with the British devil they knew than with the Axis monster they did not. Her basic premise was that the people would prefer to

be actively engaged in the Allied cause than to be passive recipients of official information, much of it inaccurate. General Archibald Wavell (then in charge of Middle East Command), who encouraged her, thought the Brotherhood played an essential part in guaranteeing internal security.

Sir Miles Lampson, the British High Commissioner, was less supportive, fearing its commitment to democracy could backfire against British interests. The British government, however, considered Stark's efforts sufficiently impressive to send her towards the end of the war to the United States to counter Zionist propaganda against the British government in Palestine. In the



Portrait of Freya Stark by Herbert Arnould Olivier, 1923



Photographed in 1957



light of the revelations emerging from Eastern Europe her task was a hopeless one, though she performed it with characteristic panache and good humour. (After Wavell invited her to India in 1943 she returned from Delhi to Tehran in a government car that she subsequently sold for her own profit.)

She married Stewart Perowne, a diplomatic colleague, in 1947. After accompanying him to a posting in Barbados she returned to Asolo in April 1948. They reunited in 1950, when he was appointed to Benghazi (Libya), but he retired in 1951 and they separated in 1952. Perowne was a homosexual, and in many ways it was a marriage of convenience for them both.

Freya Stark's post-war travels were mainly in Turkey, though she would visit Afghanistan, Central Asia, China and the Himalayas before, well into her eighties, she finally put her feet up

in Asolo, the Renaissance hill-town above the Venetian plain that had been her home for most of her life.

Stark's other books include *Letters from Syria* (1942), *Alexander's Path* (1958), *The Minaret of Djam* (1970), several volumes of collected letters, and four volumes of memoirs. She was made Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1972.

A biographer writes that, "Her politics were high tory; she always believed fervently in empire and remained hostile to nationalist movements, despite her empathy with many of the people she met on her travels." An obituarist said of her that "... her strong personality polarised acquaintances into those who admired her as a charming eccentric, observant traveller, and prose stylist and others who considered her a vain, imperious mountebank."





## CLUB NOTES

### Club Tie Corner

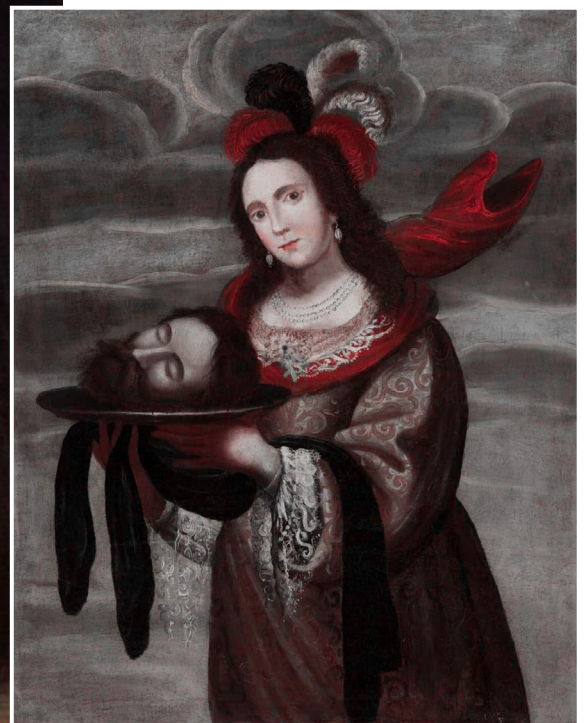
A COUPLE OF RELATIVELY CONVINCING ones to start with (clockwise from right): Barry Newman, as 1970s television lawyer Petrocelli, as spotted by Torquil; a flash of tie a few minutes into an episode of *The Avengers*, submitted by David Alton, who adds, "Not too surprised to see that Anthony Valentine was a Club member. He was also gentleman cracksman A.J. Raffles, which confirms his place in the pantheon of greats." Prince Otto von Bayern, later King Othon of Greece, from Col. Cyrus Choke, "Crowned 1832, deposed by a people ungrateful for his imposition of order and discipline, sent packing back to Bavaria in 1862." We can generously think of this as a stock and therefore neckwear; spotted by Luigi Sbaffi in the *Evening Standard* on 24th January. Facing page, clockwise from the top: two views of Freddie Mercury wearing a sort of NSC bracelet, spotted simultaneously by Adrian Prooth and Actuarious; a boffin in NSC knitwear, being interviewed by a loathesome spotted reptile, from Mark Christopher; a glimpse of Club affiliation on BBC *Politics Live*; some madder silk that Will Smith thought might make a jazzy Club Tie; Shirley Temple models an NSC coat in *The Story of Seabiscuit* (1949), spotted by Pauline Eyre.



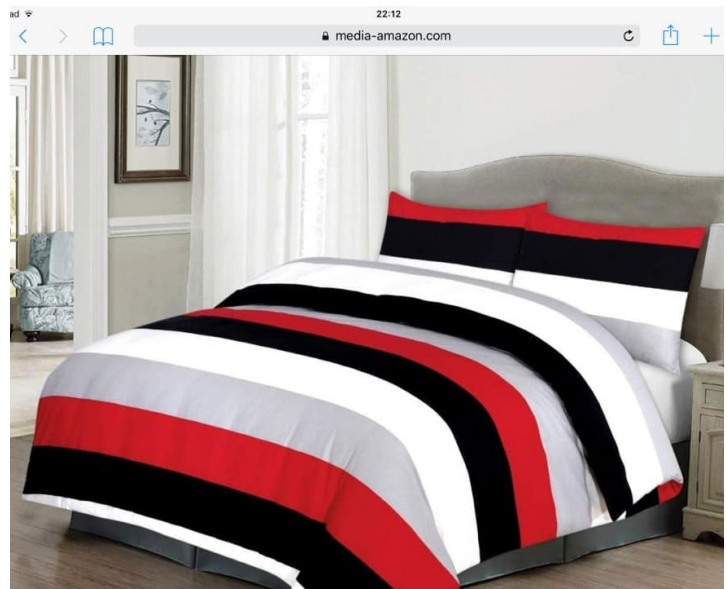








(Clockwise from top left) Col. Choke noticed that Poirot is travelling in the Committee's private rail carriage; Ivan Debono has hunted down the Club peacock after it escaped *again*; Col. Choke's suspicions about Salome turn out to be true; "and so to bed", sighs David Alton; Col. Choke asserts that this is "the formidable Madam Escobar de Alacante, who manages the Glorious Committee's 'investments' in Spain and in Cuerta and Melilla in North Africa." Facing page, clockwise from top left: the Club monkey, retrieved, this time, by Ensign Polyethyl; Col. Choke claims to have taken this picture in the Committee's store room, but we can assure you it is an apartment building in Khujand, Tajikistan; Debono sees evidence of the Club's antiquity in this vessel from Europe's oldest city, Knossos, centre of the Minoan civilisation; a Club Brogue, created by Girotti and sadly let down by that crepe sole; Col. Choke is convinced *Prostitution* (1919), starring Anita Berber as an ingénue lured into the white slave trade, is a thinly veiled documentary on the Committee's activities in Berlin.











## Forthcoming Events



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

FOR THE LATEST developments, see the Events page at [www.newsheridanclub.co.uk](http://www.newsheridanclub.co.uk) plus our Facebook page.

**🚫 NSC Club Night**  
Wednesday 2nd February  
7pm–11pm

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

See page 2. Mark Christopher will talk to us on *Devon: Historical Facts and Fascinating Stories*. “A whistle-stop tour of people, places and things,” he explains. “Topics include an unusual tram electrification system and whether Devon ever had its own language. With over 40,000 years to draw on, Devon is rich in history of all descriptions.”

As usual we will be attempting to livestream the talk (very much at the mercy of the pub’s wifi

connection). The link to watch that is <https://youtu.be/FU6we3sNV6E>.

There is also a Facebook event at <https://www.facebook.com/events/920380021996164>.

### **The Candlelight Club’s St Valentine’s Day Massacre**

Friday 11th and Saturday 12th February  
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 London’s award-winning immersive 1920s-themed speakeasy party, with live jazz, cabaret and cocktails in a secret venue filled with candles, where everyone dresses the part.

What more romantic way is there to celebrate St Valentine’s Day than an evening of Charleston-dancing, cocktail-sipping and general 1920s glamour?

Of course, to Prohibition folk it was also the day when, in 1929, Al Capone’s men mowed down six members of Chicago’s North Side Gang—the infamous St Valentine’s Day Massacre. So watch us shoehorn romance and mobster slayings into one party theme—think guys and dolls, gangsters and molls, Guns n’ Roses.



Love and bullets combine at the Candlelight Club’s St Valentine’s Day Massacre



Live music will come from cheeky jazz Cupid Jack Calloway and his Parlophonians, raising the rafters with a hurricane of swing to get your feet moving on the dance floor. Hosting will be the Lord of Cabaret misrule, Champagne Charlie, with a slap, a tickle and a saucy song. When the band aren't playing DJs the Bee's Knees will be spinning vintage vinyl into the night. There will also be a pop-up vintage jewellery store, a fortune teller and a roaming photographer.

You can pre-order a three-course dinner (which includes a table reservation all night) or reserve a table with Champagne but without the dinner. In addition to the main cocktail bar, our rum, absinthe and cigar bar will be selling genuine Havana cigars to smoke in our private garden. Ticket-holders receive an email two days before revealing the secret location.

Note that our party is not just for spooning couples—as at all our events, we welcome groups of friends, swing dance fans, vintage dandies, lone wolves and conga-dancing party people.

“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*

### **Bishopsgate Swing**

Sunday 13th February  
7–10.30pm

Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate,  
London EC2M 4QD  
Admission: £12

Monthly swing dance night in partnership with Swing Patrol, this time featuring live

ENCOMIUM: *An evening of unusual dialogue presents...*

## **Polite Society or Me First:** Do we need good manners and etiquette?



**Feb 18**  
**8:00pm**

## **Join Jason & Mark**

For the second of our Encomium's where we discuss if good manners and etiquette in personal relationships, business and society mean anything

EVENT 02

FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY AT 8PM  
£10 ENTRY

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

**BOOK TICKETS HERE:**

**ENCOMIUM**

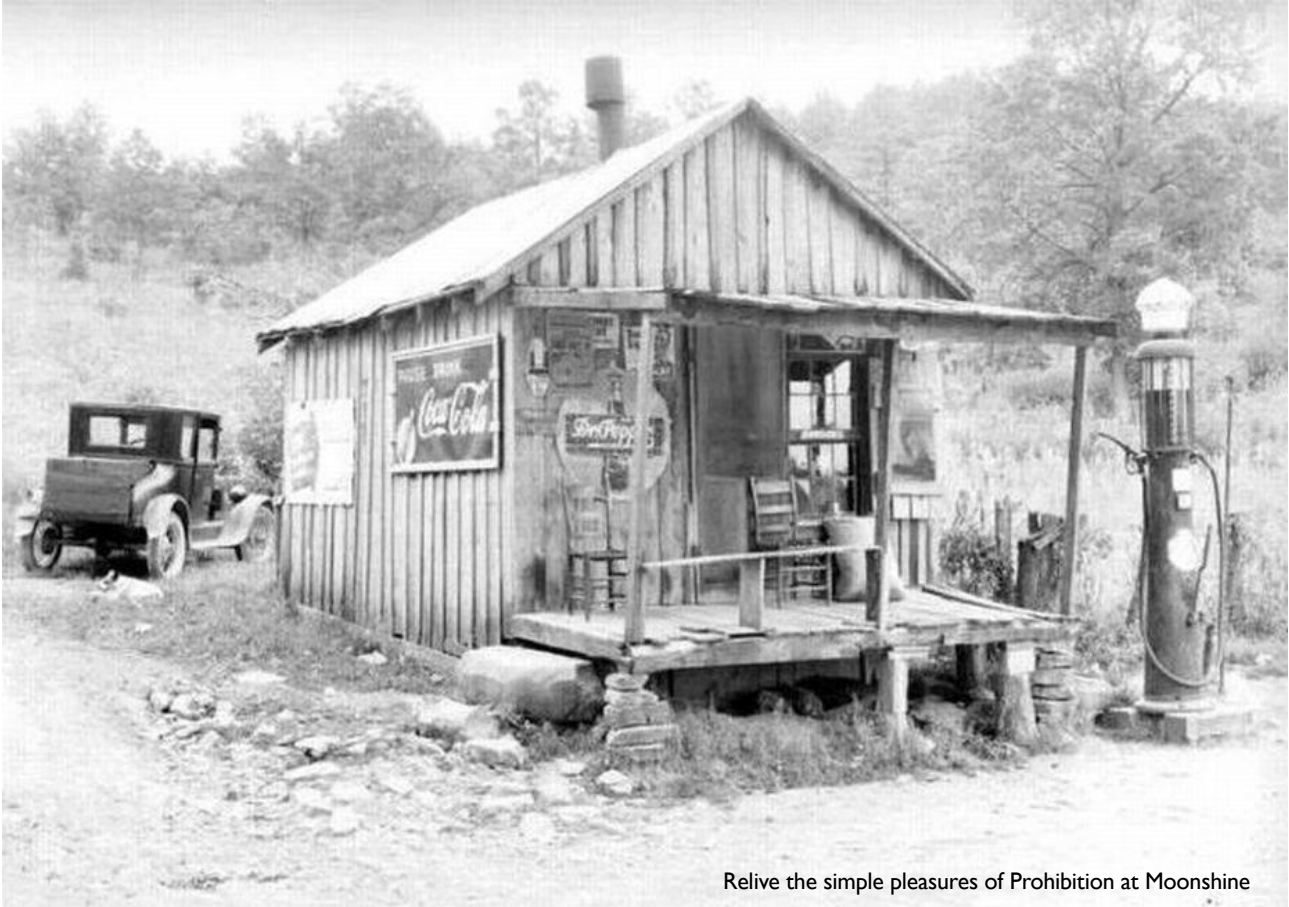
music from Mississippi Swing. Tickets £12/9 in advance from £12/9 in advance, from [www.bishopsgate.org.uk/whats-on/activity/bishopsgate-swing](http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/whats-on/activity/bishopsgate-swing) or £17 on the door. It sounds as if they are still being pretty cautious re. Covid, so read the T&Cs on the website.

### **The Victorian Funeral**

Tuesday 15th February  
7pm  
Online

Admission: £5 from [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-victorian-funeral-tickets-232167297637](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-victorian-funeral-tickets-232167297637)





Relive the simple pleasures of Prohibition at Moonshine

An online talk by Dr Julian Litten, presented by Highgate Cemetery. So many people believe that Victorian funerals were a multitude of sable plumes and a cavalcade of horse-drawn vehicles when, in actuality, the majority were very simple affairs. This talk, by the funerary historian Dr Julian Litten, will explain how that myth came to be and what the real Victorian funeral involved.

### **NSC Virtual Pub Quiz**

Wednesday 16th February

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). Your genial host this time (see graphic opposite) is Baron Solf.

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 821 3052 6085 and the passcode is 873674.) 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.

### **Encomium: Polite Society or Me First—Do We Need Good Manners and Etiquette?**

Friday 18th February

8–9.30pm

The Tea House Theatre, 39 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL

Admission: £10 from Eventbrite

Join NSC Members Jason and Mark for another “in conversation” in which each will take an opposing position and examine if good manners, etiquette and standards in relationships, business and society mean anything anymore.

### **Moonshine: Ali Affleck and the Gin Mill Genies**

Sunday 20th February

2–5pm

English Folk Dance and Song Society, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY

Admission: £15 from [hot-jazz-rag.sumup.link/product/moonshine-20-feb](https://hot-jazz-rag.sumup.link/product/moonshine-20-feb)

Prohibition-era music for social dancing presented by Hot Jazz Rag. Ideal for Balboa, Lindy Hop and Solo Jazz. Includes a taster dance class. Drinks and snacks available from



the bar. Proof of same-day negative lateral flow test essential. Tickets in advance only.

### **The Candlelight Club: New Orleans Mardi Gras**

Saturday 26th February

7pm–12am

A secret location in central London

Admission: £25 in advance

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

Special event from the Candlelight Club (see above). As Mardi Gras reaches its fever pitch in New Orleans, we bring a little of the Big Easy to our secret speakeasy. NOLA has been celebrating Mardi Gras with parades, music and parties since the mid-19th century, a tradition that didn't stop for Prohibition and carries on solidly to this day. We'll be marking this with an evening of live New Orleans jazz from the Candid Jug Orange Band and indigenous cocktails from a city with a strong drinking tradition. *Laissez les bon temps roulez!*



Get a taste of the Big Easy—right as Mardi Gras reaches a fever pitch in New Orleans—at the Candlelight Club

### **Walthamstow Flea Market**

Sunday 27th February

11am–5pm

Truman's Social Club, 1 Priestley Way, London E17 6AL

Admission: £1

Leaf through over 60 stalls of vintage and independent botanical traders (strange mix, but there it is). Expect furniture, reclaimed industrial fixtures, salvaged electricals/lighting, vintage clothes, “kitschenalia”, curiosities and collectables—plus cacti, succulents and house plants. More at [hackneyfleamarket.com](http://hackneyfleamarket.com).



Browse the bric-a-brac at the Walthamstow Flea Market



One of the Delaunay's  
sumptuous Champagne  
glasses, photographed  
during Luca Jellinek's  
Cocktail Crawl: see  
pages 10–13

