

The New Sheridan Club

Newsletter

XXVII • January 2009

PLUS:

The Kredit Krunch
Kabaret in pictures

The Film Night
goes Stateside

The secret of
kola tonic

Treharrock Revisited

Pint of sherry, anyone?





The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of the Wheatsheaf pub 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 here and, legend has it, he was known to flash at women in here 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 here, as did Aleister Crowley, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Katherine Mansfield.

The Editor Writes

As the celestial workings of God's pocket watch roll indefatigably into 2009, we bring you a shiny new Newsletter that you can roll up and use to swat away drunken well-wishers on New Year's Eve. In fact we are mostly reflecting on the orgiastic events of December in this issue, though there is much to look forward to in January, including the second in our new series of Film Nights. Details are on page 18.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind Members that you are all free—nay, positively encouraged—to contribute anything you wish to this Newsletter. It is intended as a reflection of the activities and interests of the Club and its Members, so don't be shy. The more arcane and trivial the better.

The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 7th January in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 8pm until 11pm. Our guest speaker will be the long-lost Des Esseintes who will lecture us on the land of India—a more fascinating version of which he feels he has discovered from England than had he been there longer in person. "Like my namesake's refusal to go to England having supped English food and having decided that England itself

could only be a disappointment, my India is better savoured in Colchester than Calcutta," he says. How intriguing.

The Last Meeting

At our December meeting, Mr Niall Spooner-Harvey delivered his *History of Ashes Cricket*, a race through 130 years of leather on willow. I think his main thesis was that it all went downhill when the players stopped sporting moustaches, though Niall was forced to bend the rules for Mike Brearley, about whom no evil can be spoken—even though he is the one who wants a more relaxed dress code at Lord's.

We also heard how Ted Dexter went on to write cricket-themed crime novels and it transpired that Ian the Padre, present in the audience, was the nephew of bowler Brian Statham (Lancashire and England), requiring Niall to demand an autograph at once.

There was also a certain amount of hat-sharing going on: I had a grey homburg that I had bought on eBay by mistake (owing to absent-mindedness about my own hat size I managed to purchase a tifter five sizes too big for me) and was sniffing around for a buyer. Various coves tried it on and contemplated their reflections, but it eventually went to Harold Hereward Graves on whom I think it did indeed look best. The New Sheridan Club is indeed a many-splendoured thing.



A surprisingly clean-shaven collection of notable characters, considering Niall's moustache-led theories



Niall unleashes his oratory



The first Australian touring team



All are rapt, apart from Torquil, who seems to have nodded off



(l-r) Mrs H., Ian the Padre, Fruity Hatfield-Peverel



The immortal W.G.



(l-r) Robert Beckwith, Essex and Bunty, all sporting fine Club ties



(Left) Fruity bends Chris Choy's ear while Chris tries to decide about that hat; (right) Bunty listens to Miss Minna with mounting horror; (far right) Parson Woodforde cuts a dash as usual





The Kredit Krunch Kabaret

THE CLUB'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, on 6th December, had a Weimar theme this year, in a nod to the nation's unfortunate fiscal situation. The setting was the Punch Tavern on Fleet Street (renamed the Putsch Tavern for the occasion), a rather beautiful gin palace filled with mirrors and



(Left) Actuaris, in Dr Strangelove guise; (below) as the guests arrive, (l-r) Gabriel Blaze, the Curé Michael Silver and Michael Cassidy find ringside seats from which to observe the mayhem; (above right) Mr Hartley grapples with the vintage-syle microphone and the, frankly rather

underpowered, in-house public address system, with Eugenie Rhodes in the forground; (right) Miss Kate Saunders, saviour of Tibet and friend of Richard Gere, with her crazy chums



Ingrid and Napster-Skype



(Above) the venue boasts a rather impressive entrance hall; (top) the bar, too, sports joyous mouldings along a Punch and Judy theme; (right) the Earl of Essex insisted I snapped him for the nanosecond in which he managed to keep his monocle in place



Oliver Lane and Miss Ruth Laceby-Common

ornate mouldings. Sadly one of our main attractions, German comedian Henning Wehn, had to pull out at the last minute owing to a hernia operation. (I suppose if you're a comedian and you're going to blow out a gig, then a hernia is a suitably comic reason for doing it.) But we were still blessed by cabaret singer Maria Trevis and pint-sized Hibernian burlesque dancer Miss Dolly Tartan. The fun included two silly games—Shoot the Top Hat Off the Plutocrat and Blind Man's Dada Painting—and our famous Grand Raffle. Here is the story in pictures...



Eugenie busily sketches Marmaduke Dando and party



Misses Tammy Nicholls and Willow Tomkins



(Above) Actuarious' Memsahib (top) the hat stand is soon overwhelmed; (far left) cabaret singer Maria Trevis crooned and flirted

The first game, in which Oliver Lane kindly plays the role of the Plutocrat. The object was to shoot the top hat off his head using the foam-dart-firing gun. (The Grosz-style mask was simply to protect his face from injury.) In case you're wondering, the NSC armbands were issued to Committee Members, including Oliver, who was deputised for the evening



(Left) Dolly Tartan delivers the first of the performances, a classic fan dance; (above) Merrick from the Vampyre crew, with some highly decorated acquaintances; (centre) I, too, managed to get my monocle to stay in long enough to take a photograph; (above that) Chris Choy gets all Dada on it



(Top right) Ardbraccan seems to be taking it all rather seriously; (above middle) Catherine Baxter seeks gun-slinging advice from Ray Frensham (and note that for Ardbraccan the red mist has clearly already descended); (middle right) not sure of this lady's name but she plays accordion in Marmaduke Dando's band





This is (almost) how the image is supposed to look



And this is a typical game result



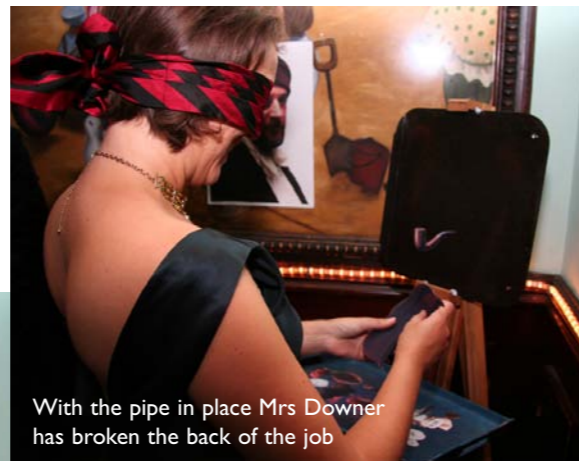
Mrs H. gets stuck in, selecting components from the tray in front of her



(Above and right) Dolly Tartan's final act, a Cabaret-themed burlesque



(Left) this lady approaches the task with methodical calm; (right) Seonaid takes things a little too easy and rushes to get anything on the board at all; (below) beneath the blindfold it's Matthew Howard



With the pipe in place Mrs Downer has broken the back of the job



Mrs Palmer-Lewis with her prize-winning creation

In the second of our games, Blind Man's Dada Painting, a picture of our glorious Chairman, Torquil Arbuthnot, was printed on to magnetic paper and cut up. Contestants were blindfolded and challenged to reconstruct the image by touch alone, in just 60 seconds. To make matters harder, some spurious Dada images were thrown into the melting pot too. The judges were looking for accuracy, or perhaps creativity, who knows..?

More at www.flickr.com/sheridanclub



Raffle time! Just some of the prizes we handed out, including a Chap calendar, a pickelhaube, and a matched pair of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Mein Kampf*



(Below left) Marmaduke wins the Beer Hall Putsch Kit (brown shirt, pistol, can of beer and map of Munich); (below centre) Andy wins the star prize of a louche fedora from Lock's; (below) Ze from Old Hat bids us all farewell...



Thanks to Isabel and Miss Minna for additional photos!



Treharrock Revisited

THE SHERIDAN CHRISTMAS HOUSE is an institution now in its fourth year. The idea is that a bunch of us hire a big country house for a week, where we take it in turns to do the cooking and otherwise spend our days loafing about, going for long walks, perhaps doing some riding (there usually seem to be facilities near by) or motoring to some local attraction for a spot of sight-seeing. Basically we pretend we're the idle rich from a hundred years ago.



One day is designated as “Christmas Day”—complete with traditional meal, stockings and “secret Santa” gift-giving. In the evenings we dress for dinner: black tie, except for Christmas Day, which is naturally white tie.

In the past we have stayed at Eskmeal in Cumbria and Stonebarrow in Dorset. This time we returned to last year's haunt, Treharrock Manor near Port Isaac in Cornwall, on the grounds that it was hard to improve on the place: plenty of space in handsome premises, extensive grounds, yet handily close to shops for all the comestibles you realise you've forgotten. Evidently built in 1815 (that's what's carved on a block in the wall of the cellar) the place boasts about a dozen bedrooms, three reception rooms plus a dining room, huge kitchen with Aga and conventional cooker, endless laundries, sculleries and other obscure chambers, with some

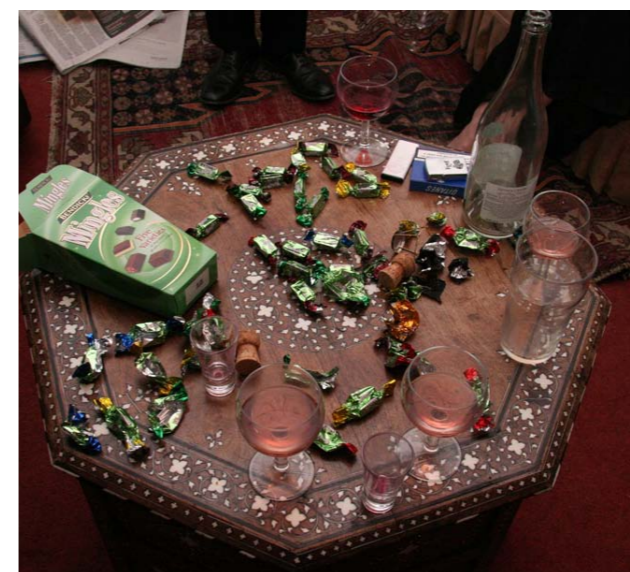


working fireplaces—and you can smoke there too, which is pretty rare in these places.

One day, when the Club is finally endowed by a wealthy mystery benefactor, I imagine we shall purchase this place and set it up as a Home for Distressed Fops.



(Top) Mrs H. admires the view from the house; (above) the dinner gong gets a Chappist makeover; (below) sweets and alcohol pretty much sum the week up; (top right) a shooting party opens up with air rifles at beer cans, plastic bottles and an old football; (above right) a view over Chris Choy's shoulder as he hits his mark; (right) Robert was one of three Sheridanites to give the pianoforte a workout; (bottom right) Fruity's gramophone—not a wind-up (though there was one present) but, crucially, it does play 78s; (opposite page) the house exterior, including the old millstone that also served for target practice, and the capacious entrance hall

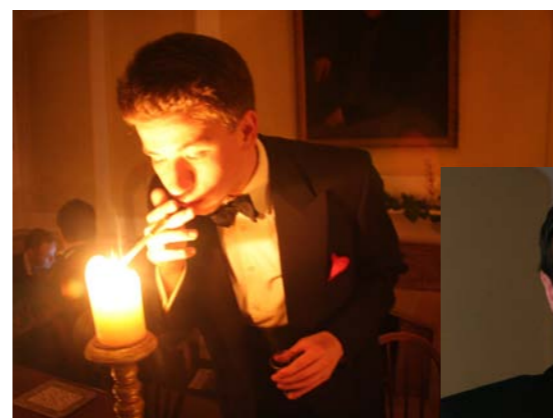




(Below) Dinners were taken by candlelight in the dining room while (left) the revelry afterwards was focused on the drawing room; (bottom left) Fruity and Isabel compare cigarette rolling techniques; (bottom right) Oliver (l) and Senior Sub spent at least one evening actually drinking pints of sherry; (right) Catherine develops a ruse to stay with the gentleman after the ladies retire; (far right) in case you've ever wondered, this is what I look like with Laurence's glasses on



(Above) No, they haven't nodded off, nor is this shame—it's actually a game called Mafia which involves half the room closing their eyes at various points; (below) dinner one night came courtesy of the local chippy



(Above) Isn't alcohol a wonderful thing?



(Above) Oliver Lane lights a fag dramatically; (right) Compton-Basset strikes an attitude with a port glass





It has to be admitted that on a couple of occasions the evening degenerated into dancing, varying from the decorous to the frankly rather wild



(right) Many thanks to Laurence and Catherine for providing and decorating this splendid tree; (below) on "Christsmas Day" Compton-Basset plays Sherry Monitor; (right) the present unwrapping begins



(Below) Catherine brings a new meaning to "table dancing"



(Right) The table is laid for Christmas Dinner; (below) Fruity kindly supplied these disturbing candles, frankly resembling blow-up dolls; (below right) Niall Spooner-Harvey looks entirely at ease in his party hat



(Above) the hookah was a gift from Laurence to Fruity; (right) port, cigars and weighty conversation. Well, port and cigars





Yes, we did leave the house sometimes. (Top left) Port Isaac, the nearest village; (top right) the sunken church of St Enedoc, near Rock, site of the grave of Sir John Betjeman; (above and above right) on Rock beach Fruity and Isabel construct a castle, allegedly modelled on Krak des Chevaliers; (right) Fruity finds something on the beach to poke with his stick

(Top right) Sheridanites struggle the final furlong across the beach back to the cars; (top left) this is actually a different beach, a slaty inlet by a village named Trebarwith; (above) on the final evening the merry band reflect over a cigar on just what we've learned; (above right) Niall once again concocts a special song for the occasion, accompanied here by the versatile Chris on ukulele (Chris also gave us a recital after dinner of a number of his favourite songs); (right) Sub as he would probably choose to spend the rest of his life

I would like to thank Maud Peasgood-Nonsuch for organising the whole week. I think Ensign Polyethyl has volunteered to sort out next year's jaunt, so if you'd like to be involved please contact her.





Out of the Ordinary

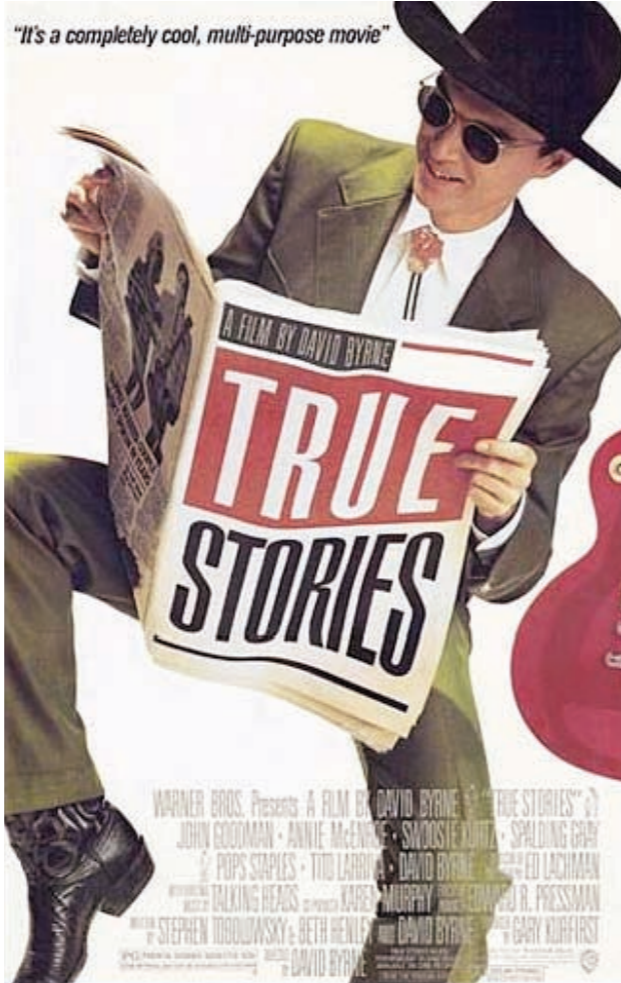
THURSDAY 15TH JANUARY sees the second of our new run of Club Film Nights in the upstairs Geography Room of the William IV public house, 7 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7QE (Old Street underground station).

Appropriately enough, given the imminence of the US President Elect's assumption of full power on the 20th, American Member Miss Isabel von Appel will present a bill of Americana, the main feature of which will be *True Stories*, the odd film by David Byrne of the art pop band Talking Heads.

Byrne, playing an unnamed, cowboy-hat-wearing stranger, visits a typical (and fictional) Texas town, on the eve of the town's celebration



of the state's sesquicentennial. He observes the citizens as they prepare for the "Celebration of Special-ness", sponsored by the Varicorp Corporation. "The film perfectly captures, in my opinion, the wonderful eccentricity of average people in an average American town," says Ms von Appel, "and also examines the rise of shopping malls and the information economy that caused the decay of traditional town high streets. The film also stars John Goodman, with a cameo from Spalding Gray.



The main feature will be accompanied by a programme of appropriate shorts.

We have the place from 6pm until midnight, so there should be no unseemly rush to leave. In addition to its physical charms (see pictures below) the venue also serves good quality food. Entrance to the event is free but you'll need some shekels to pay for food and drink.



The Cocktail Cabinet:

Wherein Club Members confront the recipes blowing through the jasmine or their minds

Clayton's Special Cocktail

Clayton Hartley

Well, how could I resist? I stumbled across this one in *The Savoy Cocktail Book* (1930), which I think I mentioned last month. The recipe appears simply thus:

1/2 Bacardi Rum
1/4 Kola Tonic
1/4 Sirop-de-Citron
Shake well and strain into cocktail glass.

We all know what Bacardi is, but what exactly is Kola Tonic? Just an antiquated name for Coca Cola? Yes and no. There is a still, concentrated drink called "Kola Tonic" from the brand "Rose's" in South Africa, which is not too surprising considering that the kola nut is African in origin. (This drink is also very high in caffeine, I gather.) But then I discovered a "Kola Tonic" made under the brand "Clayton's". This must surely be the stuff intended by the original recipe.

Apparently originally blended by the Clayton brothers in Battersea in 1880, the drink is now made, for the panting worldwide market, exclusively in Barbados. It is non-fizzy, non-alcoholic and intended, by and large, to be drunk diluted. I gather that in the 1970s and 1980s it was heavily marketed in Australia and New Zealand as a non-alcoholic choice in the pub, "the drink you have when you're not having a drink".



What does it taste like? It tastes like...what you imagine Coca Cola was probably intended to taste like. One sniff of the bottle and it obviously smells of Coke, but there is a more pronounced lime element and also a hint of creosote, but in a good way, flavours that aren't alien to Coca Cola but were always submerged by the synthetic nature of the globally marketed drink.

Gomme syrup is a standard cocktail ingredient, though I hadn't encountered a lemon syrup before. Monin make a wide range of flavoured syrups, apparently including a lemon one, but I was unable to find an example, so I made my own. There are plenty of syrup recipes out there: I took one from *Shaken Not Stirred* (1999), a book written by my brother-in-law, Paul Effeny: it specifies 450 grammes of sugar dissolved in 300ml of hot water, then another 300ml of cold water added. In the past I have found that, despite the high sugar content, this stuff does not last, even in the fridge: interesting moulds find their way in. So I reduced all the ingredients to a tenth of that specified. Then I added the grated zest of one lemon and left it for an hour before straining it.

The resulting cocktail tastes, I admit, a lot like a Bacardi and coke—yet somehow more alive, more fruity and zesty. Given that it is 25% syrup, I predicted it would be very sweet, but it is no sweeter than a regular Bacardi and coke. (It may be that commercial sirop de limon is less sweet.) Certainly neat Clayton's Kola Tonic is actually rather bitter, making it a more versatile cocktail ingredient than Coca Cola.

Clayton's Cola Tonic is available from selected Waitrose branches and online from ocado.com and thewhiskyexchange.com. Rose's can be had from thesavanna.co.uk.





CLUB NOTES

Club Tie Receives Unusual Promotion

OUR GLORIOUS CHAIRMAN, Torquil Arbuthnot, who clearly reads widely and indiscriminately in the service of the Club, has drawn my attention to the unexpected appearance of what can only be the Club's magnificent tie adorning the otherwise scantily clad form of Ms Jennifer Aniston on the cover of the US edition of GQ (the gentleman's quarterly that is, unlike *The*

Chap, neither quarterly nor for gentlemen; actually *The Chap* is now bimonthly, but my point still stands).

I have yet to be contacted directly by Ms Aniston expressing her regard for the Club, but I think the message is clear—she holds our organisation and its values so dear that, should she be held up by bandits and robbed even of the clothes in which she stands up, the very last garment she could bear to part with would be her NSC tie.



(I admit that a cursory poke through the Club archives with a stick does not actually turn up any record of her being a Member of the Club, but I'm sure that is just down to an administrative glitch, for which I shall thrash Scarheart mercilessly.)

Club Members who might like to emulate Ms Aniston in this, if perhaps in no other, way, may purchase our splendid neckwear for the trifling sum of £15. It is 100% silk, in the Club colours of black, red and silver, with a repeating NSC logo cunningly inserted as a "shadow weave" along the black stripe.

If you would like such a garment just send a cheque (made out to "S. Hartley") for £15, adding £1 for delivery or £2 if you live overseas, to 16 Kemsing Road, London SE10 0LL. Alternatively there are PayPal facilities, or you can simply accost Mr Hartley at a Club Event, shake your fist at him and gesture crudely at your throat. He will get the message and usually carries a range of stock inside his coat.



New Members

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to welcome the following coves and covettes into the Club, all of whom have joined since last month: Claudia Lovelace Hyland Blaze, Christopher Choy, Lord Finsbury Windermere Compton-Basset, William Dryburgh-Smith, Leander Jameson, Dr Simon Johnson, Owain Glyn Jones, Stuka Junker, Michael Obefni Martins III, Helmut Featherstonehaugh Maus, Kiloran McSporrán, Lisa Miyashiya, Eleanor Moore, David J. Pile, Gary Sui and Miss Dolly Tartan.

Forthcoming Events

FOR THE LATEST developments, see the Events page at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk.

Nosey Joe's

Saturday 3rd January
Doors 7.30pm, bar till 11.30, dancing till 12am
The Royston Club, 85 Royston Road, Penge London SE20 7QW
Admission: £12 available in advance from Caron and Steve on 02082654020, or £10 on the door

A 52nd Street Jump joint, this is a club night presenting an eclectic mix of music from the 1930s to the 1950s from DJ Dr Swing plus live music, this time from The Jiveaholics.

The Black Cotton Club

Friday 9th January
10pm–3am
Volupte, 7–9 Norwich Street, London EC4 1EJ
Admission: £10 before 11pm, £12
Dress: "Ravishing and Refined Robes". I don't think that means you literally have to wear biblical robes, as that would be a shade out of keeping with the Jazz Age theme.

Courtesy of the people behind the Lady Luck Club, this night focuses on music from the 1920s to the 1940s, specifically, "Hot house swing, gypsy jazz, race rhythms, bebop, rhumba, mento, Charleston jump, western swing, Valentino vibes and pumping boogie". There are live acts too, this



time featuring Wayne Hopkins: in addition to the Lady Luck site (www.ladyluckclub.co.uk), check www.myspace.com/blackcottonclub too.

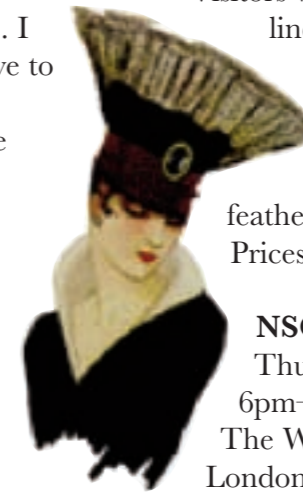
Vintage Fashion, Textiles and Accessories Fair

Sunday 11th January
8am–5pm
Hammersmith Town Hall, 380 Kensington High Street, London W14
Admission: £5 (£10 before 10am).

Over a hundred leading vintage fashion clothing dealers, from all over the UK and abroad, will offer wares from 1800 to 1980. Visitors will also find an array of handbags, linen, lace, embroidery, shoes, hats, gowns, chiffons, beaded dresses, textiles, needle work, necklaces, gloves, trimmings, fashion magazines, costume jewellery, feathers boas, compacts, combs, fans, etc. Prices seem to be pretty reasonable.

NSC Film Night

Thursday 15th January
6pm–12am
The William IV, 7 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7QE. See page 18 for details.





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FOR THE LATEST information on what the Club is up to, who has been arrested, etc., have a squizz at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk. For more photos of Club events go to www.flickr.com/sheridanclub. Those of a more technological bent can also help spread the word by befriending us electrically at www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub or indeed www.facebook.com.