

# GETTING HIS HANDS DIRTY

Our man in Christchurch mucks in with the earthquake relief—in his vintage WWII jeep

PLUS:

## Gown By Law

Charles “Gok” Tsua’s rules for making academic dress work for your body type

## Inscrutable Brew

The Club is initiated into the secrets of the Chinese Tea Masters

**Oh, what a lovely score!**

Club Members give Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Princess Ida* an Imperialist makeover

The New Sheridan Club

---

# Newsletter

---

LIII • March 2011



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 Editor Writes

This issue has turned into a special edition seemingly dedicated to one of our Members. I speak not of the noble Dr Leavingson—currently in cometh-the-hour-cometh-the-man mode in Christchurch (see page 14)—but of Charles Henry Wolfenbloode (Charles Tsua to his mother). Not only is his detailed examination of academical dress to be found on pages 4–12, but on page 23 he invites you to buy a special NSC scarf that he has procured and on page 18 he wishes you a happy Chinese New Year. He even appears tasting tea on page 13.

But sadly the Members most in our thoughts right now are Andrew Downer, who has died at a very young age from cancer, and his widow Rachel. See page 19.

### The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 2nd March in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 8pm until 11pm. Mrs Maria Hackemann will widen our eyes with *What Did You Do In the War, Grandmother?*—one young woman's experiences in the Women's Air Force during the War and her life in early post-war Civil Aviation, retold by her granddaughter from journals and old photograph albums.

### The Last Meeting

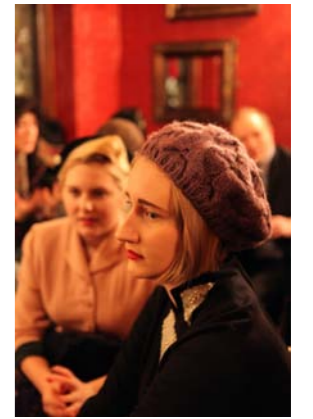
To a packed house (probably the second biggest

turn-out after Miss Minna's famous talk on stylish vampires, to which all the vampires in London pitched up), Sara Bridgman-Smith entertained us with a thought-provoking look at the strong women behind three famous men: Isabel Burton (wife of the eccentric Victorian explorer Sir Richard Burton), Joy Davidman-Lewis (wife of brain-box God-botherer C. S. Lewis) and Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of FDR.

Isabel came across as passionate and romantic—she announced to a friend that she would marry Burton the first time she laid eyes on him, and waited years till they could be together—but also highly practical and dedicated to becoming the sort of plucky, gritty wife a Victorian adventurer needed, even learning to handle a sword because she thought it would be useful.

Joy was a perfect wife for Lewis simply by being easily his intellectual equal—in a childhood IQ test she had effectively measured off the scale, and to make the couple's idle games of Scrabble more of a challenge they would allow words from any language.

In practice we didn't really learn anything about Eleanor, as Sara admitted she hadn't been able to find much useful gen—it seems “she and FDR just weren't that romantic, though his live-in mistress may have spoiled the mood a bit”. Instead she offered a hefty tome on the subject of Eleanor—as a prize to the person most closely guessing how many pages it had.



(Above l-r) Luke Wenban beneath the portrait of our Chairman, who delivered his opening remarks to the obvious delight of this young lady; (left) Sara with the Burtons' wedding portrait

(Above) Ruth and Fruity pore over the NSC Newsletter; (below) quite a throng! (below right) Sara's attentive audience



(Below left to right) Fleur enjoying one of C-B's long anecdotes; this chap is clearly a more lively anecdotist; Giles Culpepper cares nothing for anecdotes and just wants a drink



(Below l-r) Mr Beckwith; Mr Bridgman-Smith; pipe-smokers' alley; pint-drinkers' corner



# An introduction to academical dress

AN ESSAY VERSION OF  
THE LECTURE DELIVERED  
AT OUR JANUARY  
MEETING

By Charles Henry  
Wolfenblode,  
Duke of Tipa

WHENEVER ONE THINKS  
of universities, there will  
always be a point when  
one thinks of academical  
dress (or “AD” for short).  
Indeed, one cannot think of  
going to university without  
the graduation ceremony  
and dressing up in cap and  
gown. Some say that this is  
just pomp and ceremony.

But those robes have a long  
history and their design has important symbolic  
significance. Academic dress is one of the main  
traditions uniting all universities in the world.

## History of Academic Dress

Academicals have their foundation in the  
everyday clerical dress of the universities of  
medieval Europe, typically a toga and a cloak.



Oxford BA gown,  
1647

There was no central heating  
at the time so long garments  
would keep the body warm.

Eventually, the dress of the  
clerics began to differ from  
that of ordinary people. With  
each passing century, aspects  
of lay fashion were fossilised  
into academic dress and  
remain little changed today.  
Only certain fabrics and the  
size and length of items have  
evolved to fit in with current  
climates. For example, the  
gowns once reached to the  
floor but became shorter for  
practical reasons; by the 1960s  
they were knee-length but  
have since lengthened to the  
mid-calf.

The British model of  
academical dress influenced other countries.  
Former colonies mirrored British practice but  
diverged after independence, many taking on  
local fashions and customs. Later some decided  
to adopt the Anglo-American design.

A basic set of academicals consists of three  
items: the gown, the hood and the cap. There is  
also the habit, only retained in Britain.

## The gown

The gown is descended from long togas.  
Academicals originally wore a *subtunica*, with  
the *supertunica* (the gown proper) over the top.  
Initially, it was closed at the front to keep the  
cold out and maintain a degree of solemnity.  
The sleeves were originally close fitting, but  
during the early sixteenth century began to  
widen, eventually becoming the deep sleeve of  
the BA and doctoral gowns that we know today.  
The front also began to open up and by the  
1600s the gown had a fully open front. This may  
be for practical reasons as well as to show off  
what one wore underneath.

There are many different cuts of BA gown  
used in the UK today. The Oxford BA has the  
sleeve point reaching down to the hem and  
sometimes has a loop at the wrist to control this  
sleeve. A so-called “basic bachelor’s gown” is



London BA sleeve

the same as the Oxford gown but with shorter  
sleeves. If you open up the forearm seam to  
around an inch from the wrist  
it becomes a Cambridge BA  
gown—the wearer can put  
his arms through these slits to  
make dining easier. Cambridge  
gowns have “strings” or ribbons  
attached to the inside of the  
gown to indicate one holds a  
Cambridge BA or MA degree.

Other institutions distinguish  
themselves in the details: if  
you round off the point of the  
Cambridge sleeve it becomes a  
Reading BA. London uses the  
Oxford pattern but the wrist  
is pleated and held up with a  
cord and button. For Wales,  
the forearm seam is open at the  
wrist for a few inches, the point  
folded back up and held with  
two buttons, and with a four-  
inch line of braid running up the seam and also  
held back with a button. It is said that the sleeve  
decoration is meant to resemble the Prince of  
Wales’s feather.

The MA gown sleeves are mainly influenced  
by the lay fashions of the Tudor period. Around  
the thirteenth century there was a tendency to  
cut a slit in the sleeve to allow the arm to pass  
through, leaving the sleeve dangling (as with  
the Cambridge BA gown), to free the arm for  
practical purposes; musicians and physicians  
needed room to move. The sleeve got longer  
until it reached the hem with a defined cuff. By  
the 1670s the cuff was sewn shut. The sleeves  
are sometimes called “Tudor bag sleeves”  
or “false panel sleeves”. Later on, the sleeve  
bottoms (known as the “boot”) had a crescent

cut on one edge and this is what the modern  
MA gown is based on today.

The Oxford gown has a defined crescent cut  
at the boot. Round off the top point of the cut  
and we get the Cambridge MA sleeve. Round  
the bottom point off as well and you get the  
London MA sleeve. The other cuts are based on  
these patterns or run on a similar theme. Some  
universities add additional decorations such as a  
cord and button on the yoke of the gown (done  
on an Oxford MA this makes a Durham MA;  
on a Cantab MA, a Liverpool gown.) Most use  
one of these gowns unmodified.

American MA gowns are worth noting in  
that they are badly cut. Aside  
from the inferior fabric used,  
in recent decades the sleeve  
has been modified so that the  
slit is at the wrist, rather than  
the elbow. The reason for this  
is to cover the arm as many a  
Colonial would not be wearing  
a proper jacket. This creates a  
rather odd look. With British  
MA sleeves, if you raise your  
forearm, the sleeve lies flat  
against the gown while if you  
do it for a Colonial sleeve the  
end dangles from the wrist  
like a limp fish. It seems the  
robemakers over there have  
forgotten why the sleeve was cut  
like that in the first place.



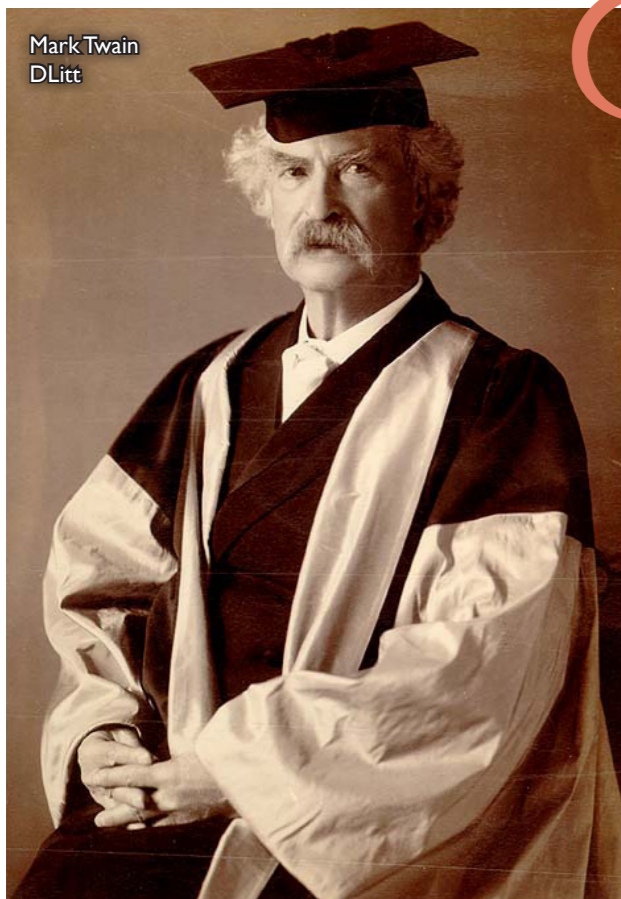
Oxford MA,  
1770

There are two main styles of  
doctoral gown in current use.

Oxford’s has bell-shaped sleeves. Traditionally  
the facings are silk, as are the sleeves from inside  
the cuff to outside near the shoulders. Another  
style has only the cuffs and the facings of silk.

The Cambridge doctor’s gown has a long  
and wide sleeve like the BA gown. The facings  
are silk but the sleeves are lined in it. The wrist  
of the sleeve is turn back and held up with a  
cord and button. (A note on the sleeve ends:  
Cambridge has it rounded off but London has it  
pointed. Although all other universities use the  
London sleeve, the pattern is usually referred to  
as Cambridge doctor’s pattern.)

Most doctoral gowns are made of scarlet  
cloth but can be other colours. Black BA/MA  
gowns are mostly made of a material called  
Russell Cord, a hard-wearing cotton and wool



Mark Twain  
DLitt



US MA gown

blend. Some universities allow silk; this is the same grosgrain or corded type used for the black shell of hoods.

The other doctoral gown of note is the Cambridge MusD (Doctor of Music). The sleeve appears

a hybrid between the Oxford and Cambridge patterns, but in fact is the preserved ancient cut of doctoral gowns. At Oxford, the sleeve lining crept upwards to where it is now while at Cambridge it got longer.

Doctors are accorded both a festal (as just described) and an undress gown. The former was worn for festive occasions such as scarlet and feast days, the latter worn every day, especially at the ancient universities. Undress gowns are black and are more or less the same as the MA gown, though some universities add distinguishing decoration. At Cambridge, “doctor’s lace” is used, trimmed differently depending on the degree.

Some universities, such as Leeds, use lace on gowns of lower degrees as well. Oxford’s “higher lay faculties gown”, which is cut differently with a flap collar, has gimp lace trimming on the collar and upper arms and gimp pentagons on the lower back, the sides and the bottom of the sleeves. The doctor’s undress (and the MCh—*Magister Chirurgiae* or Master of Surgery) version has an extra pentagon on the sides almost hidden under the sleeves.

Another gown which is now very rare is the Cambridge DD (Doctor of Divinity) undress gown. This had what was called “pudding” or

“Bishop’s” sleeves, bell-shaped but gathered at the wrist, like the sleeve of the American Doctoral gown. This gown, made of silk, is now rarely worn—Cantab DDs wear a silk MA gown instead. If it was made of “stuff” (non-silk) then it was actually a mourning gown, worn when mourning a personal friend or family member. Unsurprisingly, its use was much abused, with everyone wearing it just to masquerade as DDs! Eventually, the universities cracked down in the seventeenth century and anyone caught wearing one of these gowns at Convocation was denied his vote. The style died out soon after.

Undergraduate gowns are worn by students who have not graduated yet. Most universities have them, but many do not, as daily gown-wearing has all but died out. In the past, there use to be many classes of undergraduate based on rank (essentially, how you paid your fees). At the top was the nobleman who, at state occasions, wore a damask gown of blue, rose or

green trimmed with gold or silver lace, much like a Chancellor’s gown. Next came gentlemen or fellow-commoners. These paid their fees upfront in full or were well connected to the foundation of certain colleges. They wore a black silk gown with rows of braid and tuff in Oxford or a silk gown trimmed with gold or silver lace in Cambridge.

Then there were scholars, commoners and pensioners. Commoners at Oxford paid their own fees. They wore a flap-collar gown with two streamers at the sides, sometimes called “leading strings”. (The graduate gown of Oxford today is like this but shorter, with the modern commoner’s gown shorter still.) The lowest classes were sizars, servitors and battelors. These students did menial jobs for the university like polishing noblemen’s shoes or waiting tables in order to pay their fees (these terms still exist today). They wore the Commoner’s gown but without streamers. These gowns were sometimes

referred to as “curtains”.

During the twentieth century, these classes of undergraduate where mostly abolished, though some ranks still remain.

An undergraduate gown used at Scottish universities is worthy of mention. It is closed at the front, made in scarlet cloth with a velvet collar. It used to be worn in different ways depending on your undergraduate year, a practice sometimes called the “academic’s strip-tease”. Bejants (first years)



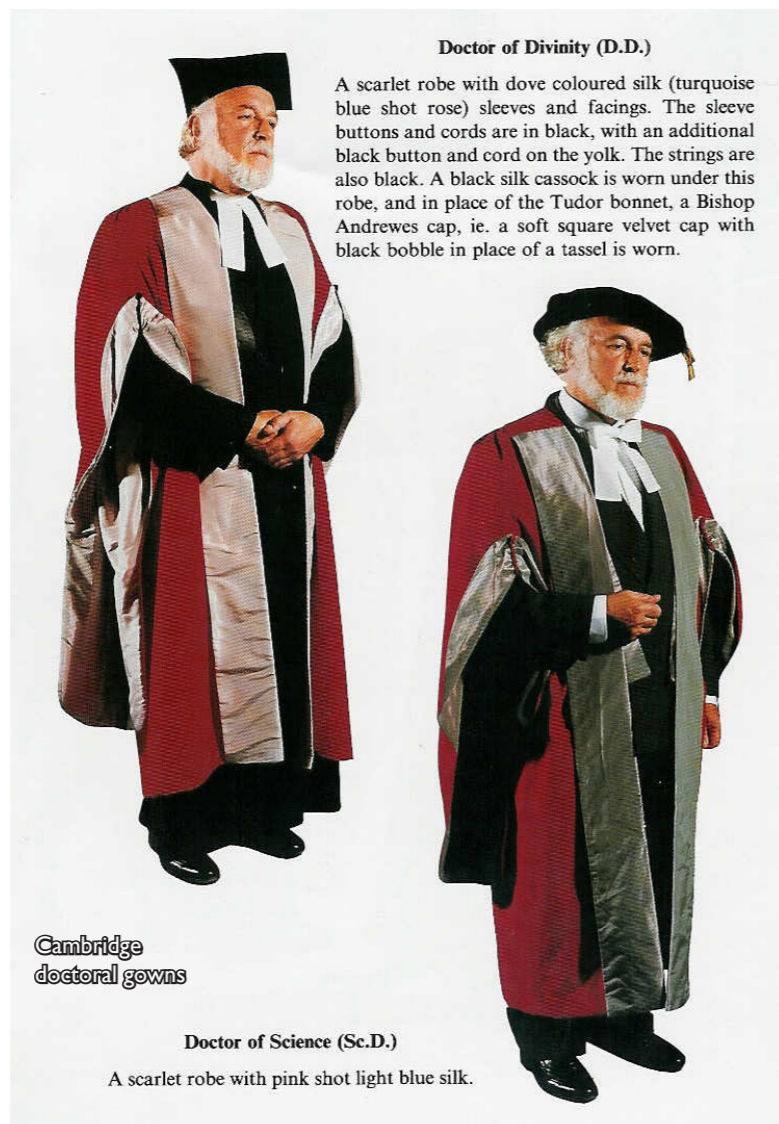
A nobleman's undergraduate gown

wore their gowns as you or I would, but as the student progressed the gown was worn more loosely, further back—Magistrands (fourth years) wore them hanging from their elbows.

### The hood

The hood is arguably the most important item of AD as it is the only clear indicator of what degree one holds and from which university. In the past it was functional, used to shield the head from the elements, but as the skull cap became popular, the hood moved back until it lay flat on the back and became merely decorative. The hoods today have a defined evolution with three basic shapes: simple-shape, full-shape and the so-called Aberdeen shape.

The simple-shape hood has a cowl and liripipe (a long tail) but no actual cape. The “Oxford”



Doctor of Divinity (D.D.)

A scarlet robe with dove coloured silk (turquoise blue shot rose) sleeves and facings. The sleeve buttons and cords are in black, with an additional black button and cord on the yolk. The strings are also black. A black silk cassock is worn under this robe, and in place of the Tudor bonnet, a Bishop Andrewes cap, ie. a soft square velvet cap with black bobble in place of a tassel is worn.

Cambridge doctoral gowns

Doctor of Science (Sc.D.)

A scarlet robe with pink shot light blue silk.



Oxford mourning gown



Medieval hood



Harvard hood

version is very common; the Oxford MA hood is usually this shape, black-lined crimson shot silk—that is, plum shot with orange. (It is sometimes incorrectly lined with flat crimson silk.) In Oxford, certain degrees can have their hoods made to this shape or the Burgon shape, which is named after the Dean Burgon, the only hood shape to take its name from a person. Whereas the liripipe of the Oxford is pointed outwards, on the Burgon it points inwards.

Today's Oxford hood is actually quite different from what it was several hundred years ago. In fact the Burgon is a reinvention of an earlier shape, as some felt the Oxford shape deviated too much from the original. The ancient version of the Oxford hood is preserved in the Edinburgh shape. Harvard uses this style too, lined in crimson, essentially the Oxford MA hood as it used to be. The Scottish universities abolished AD during the Reformation but reinstated it around the time of the foundation of Harvard and used that institution's shape for their hoods. Whilst the style was fossilised at

these places, the hood at Oxford continued to evolve into what it is today, the posterior section shortening to reveal less of the lining.

While the Oxford shape was evolving, there was an offshoot—the hood used by Wales's bachelors is close to Oxford but has a “fish tail” opening at the corner of the cowl. The academics of Wales are also noted for the use of beautiful shot silks. For decades, no one knew why these cloths were used, not even the University of Wales itself. However it has recently been unearthed that it was Lady Verney who suggested the use of shot silks so we owe one of the most handsome academics in the world to her.

The “full-shaped hood” has the addition of a cape. The most typical example is at Cambridge, though there are in fact two cuts of this hood, the Cambridge and the London. The London cut has a longer cape while on the Cambridge the cowl and cape are the same length. Like the Cambridge doctoral gown, the Cambridge cut can only be found in Cambridge.

Around the nineteenth century, London robemakers would make Cambridge hoods with rounded corners on the cape and eventually even Cambridge robemakers took to this. The university took notice and forbade the use of rounded corners to the cape. The Cambridge robemakers, seeing that they were stuck with a bunch of hoods with rounded corners decided to chop off the bottoms of existing hoods. This is probably one reason why the Cambridge hood has a shorter cape.

While Cambridge rationalised its hood, London university fossilised its own, hence the different shapes today. It is noteworthy that the whole idea of faculty colours was started by London.

Glasgow uses a full-shaped hood based on the Cambridge shape but larger. The Oxford doctor's hood is also larger than

Cambridge's and has a rounded cape and a square “slot” between the cape and the liripipe.

Durham has three different full-shape hood styles (plus the Oxford simple-shape used for masters).

The BA is very similar to the Oxford doctor's shape save it has a curve on the cape edge of the slot. The BCL

(Bachelor of Civil Law) is the most common shape, used for all the other bachelor degrees, and is like London but the cape is rounded. The Durham doctor's shape has the liripipe at a sharp angle and the cowl is more slanted.

The term “Aberdeen shape” covers pretty much all other hoods. They may have cowl and cape but no liripipe, or even just a cape. The Aberdeen hood is the oldest and most typical. Compared to traditional hoods it is larger and



Loggan Oxford hood...



...and Beaton's design for UEA

was trying to imitate the Oxford MA hood from Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrata*. The hood in those days was lined with ermine and worn inside out; in fact Oxford Proctors today still wear this ancient MA hood. It's odd because Beaton's initial aim was to

move away from tradition—yet here we have him trying to copy the effect of an ancient hood!

One final example is the Kent hood—which is more like a cape. Instead of a neckband, the front is closed with cord and buttons. In academical dress circles, it is affectionately known as the “toilet mat”.

### How to put hoods on correctly

Even robemakers themselves, who should know

better, often attach the hood's neckband far too low at the front. This causes the hood to slip over the shoulders like a shawl creating a clumsy and undignified look. They then pin the hood to the shoulders which adds to the untidiness. The correct method is to hook the neckband on the collar and under the tie as close to the neck as possible. This makes the hood less likely to slip over the shoulders.

It is best to avoid using the button loop: this is really meant to be for a cassock button because cassocks are heavy garments which could bear the weight of a hood. If you loop it on a shirt button, it will just pull the shirt up.

I advise women to avoid wearing open neck tops with a hood. Wear a shirt with a good collar and a tie such as a velvet ribbon like they do at Oxford. Alternatively wear a Victorian shirt

has a bigger cowl, and is popular with modern universities as it is easy to make and uses less material. If you square the bottom, it becomes a Dundee shape.



Oxford DD cap, 1647

The University of East Anglia hood is a strange example and was actually invented by Cecil Beaton. The shell is on the inside and the lining outside. Not only that, but the lining is installed in folds. A colleague thinks Beaton



Kent DCL

with a high collar, which would be perfect. If you must wear an open neck top then try this: get a long black ribbon and pull it across your back underneath the gown then tie the ends at the front on the hood's loop. This will look OK and keep the hood at the correct height.

### The cap

Probably one of the most distinctive forms of AD is the “mortarboard”, also known as the “square”, “trencher” or simply “cap”. It is the most recognisable item associated with the teaching profession. It was invented in Britain and exported throughout the world.

The *pileus quadratus* was a square item of

medieval headwear, evolving from the skull cap, *pileus rotundus*. At some point the square was worn over the skull cap and eventually they were sewn together. The original square was floppy so stiffening was added,



Sussex *pileus*

creating the Bishop Andrewes cap, prototype of the modern mortarboard. It is still worn by Cambridge DDs for their festal dress. It's like a soft mortarboard with a tump instead of a button and tassel. The modern version replaced it some time in the seventeenth century.

The most traditional form has a rigid skull. Folding ones save space and are cheaper though you cannot doff with them so easily. Outside the UK, there are squares with elasticised skulls and, in China, a form with shoe laces at the back to tighten! These, of course, look very undignified.

Please do not ever participate in cap throwing! Some think it as a tradition but it is not. It was invented at the US Naval Academy. Besides, why would you risk damaging your cap or losing it in a sea of hired ones? Don't do it!

Some institutions do not prescribe any headwear at all—or do but have forgotten the



Sovereign mourning cap

fact. The Open University prescribes squares but they are *not* to be worn at graduation. Vivienne Westwood, for her design of the new King's College London robes decided not to include caps. At Durham, only doctors are prescribed hats; an urban legend says that the men threw their hats in the river as protest at the admission of women, but this is a myth.

There is a mourning version of the square. Instead of a button or tassel, it has two wide ribbons drawn from corner to corner forming a cross. Where the ribbons intersect, a ribbon rosette is attached. This cap is for mourning friends or a family member. If you add nine ribbon bows called butterflies to the back of the skull you get a sovereign mourning cap, appropriate for mourning the monarch, a member of the royal family or the university chancellor. It is worn with the mourning gown (or a plain black BA or MA gown), mourning bands with a pleat down each band to “cast a shadow”, and no hood.

The Tudor bonnet, as its name suggests,



Beaton's “Dan Dare” cap for UEA

dates from Tudor times. It is mainly worn by doctors and officials such as bedells. At Cambridge it has a floppy brim, while everywhere else it is stiff. In Scotland, they wear the John Knox cap. This is also used at Durham and Newcastle but with a tump on top.

The last century saw the invention of some very weird hats. At Sussex doctors wear the *pileus*, modelled on the French pill box cap. It is velvet with a button on top. The *pileus* has recently been replaced by a bonnet for PhDs but higher doctors still wear it.

Finally, when Cecil Beaton designed AD for East Anglia he included two new caps for the graduates. The first one, for bachelors, is described as a “skull cap with an upturned brim”—but was known locally as the “Dan Dare” or the “Mickey Mouse” cap.

After years of campaigning, students were allowed to wear the square cap instead—except for women! Oxford had designed a special cap for women but gave them the choice of wearing this or the square. Fortunately UAE's discrimination was overturned and now women can wear the square. However, the Dan Dare is still prescribed to undergraduates—and since students don't wear gowns very often these days, call for



Beaton's “tricone” cap for UEA

change has not been forthcoming. However, you wouldn't be able to buy one, because Ede & Ravenscroft got rid of their stock (probably on a bonfire) years ago.

Masters did not escape, for Beaton prescribed for them a “tricone”. This took the form of the usual skull cap but the square on top is replaced by a triangular structure resembling an upside-down iron. This was very swiftly replaced by the square for the same reasons as the Dan Dare, but it is still worn by the Registrar and Secretary with the robes.

### The habit

Finally, we will quickly go over a rare item of AD that can only be found at Oxbridge: the academical habit. This item is very ancient

indeed but has barely survived into the modern age, probably because of its resemblance to ecclesiastical garb.

At Cambridge, the cope worn by the Vice-Chancellor or deputy when conferring degrees is called a *cappa clausa* with one slit. This is the same as the parliamentary robes for prelates in the House of Lords. It is essentially a very large hood with the cowl turned out to cover the shoulders and back. Initially, the slit was short but grew longer until it was completely open at the front. Initially, this was DDs' congregation dress but eventually became the de facto dress of Cambridge VCs. Those presenting candidates for higher doctorates also wear this habit. Other VCs outside Cambridge also wore this in the past but have abandoned it for black damask and silver lace.

At Oxford the Convocation habit is a *cappa clausa* with two slits, also called a *chimere*. Unlike the ecclesiastical



Cambridge cope



21



Oxford chimere

swear in its own police force by Act of Parliament. Cambridge still does, though Oxford abolished their Constables after a Town/Gown incident in 2002/2003. Oxford bulldogs wore black lounge suits with bowlers whilst Cambridge bulldogs wore top hats and a very long cloak—so long that it had to be carried underneath the arm (they are made shorter nowadays). They also carried weapons such as a halberd and a “butter measure”. This may sound sinister but no one knows how it was used...

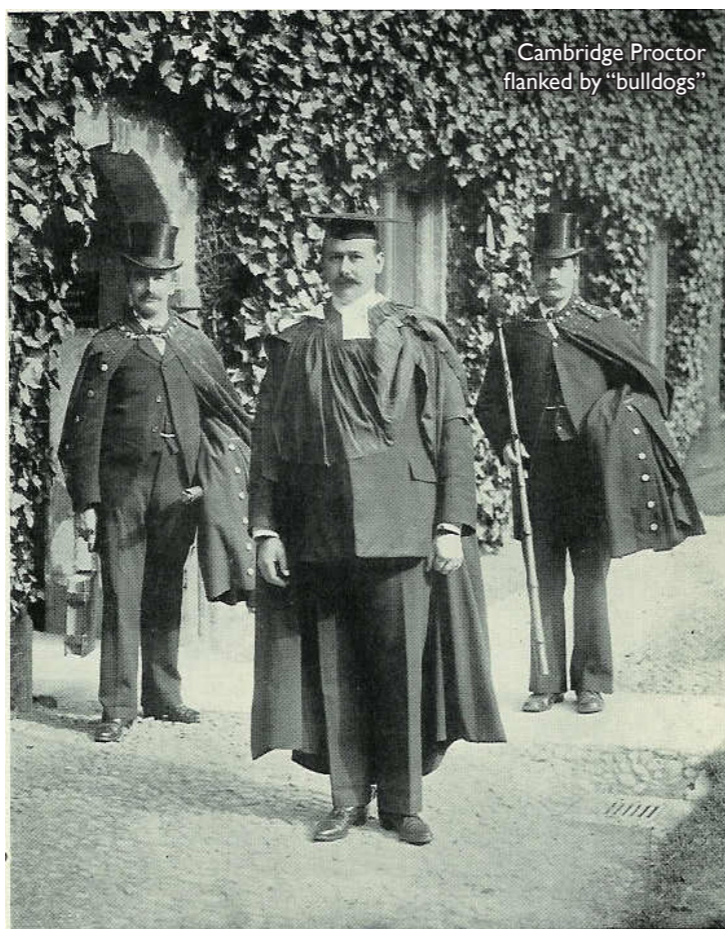
form, it is buttoned closed rather than tied with ribbon. The black gown sleeves are pulled through the two side-slits to free the arms. A hood is worn over it. The modern habit is part-lined with degree silk. It is worn by DPhils and higher doctors, save the DMus, during congregation. Technically, Durham doctors also wear this habit but the knowledge of their entitlement has all but disappeared. The Durham habit is still worn by the Chancellor and VC under their lace gowns, one version having sleeves—probably due to the confusion over what they are actually wearing: not a cassock but a habit!

The *cappa manicata* was a habit for Cambridge lay doctors up until the 1810s. It was like the Oxford habit but with two long, disused sleeves hanging from the sides. It was worn with a “congregation hood” over it. By 1847, we no longer see it, but instead a hybrid congregation and festal dress. The *cappa nigra* is essentially a short Oxford habit that was worn by MAs, but fell out of use after the Reformation.

We must mention one other special item that could be classed as a habit: the Cambridge Proctors’ ruff. This is worn for congregation over the gown and under the hood. Normally, the proctors wore their hoods “squared” when out patrolling with their “bulldogs”, University Constables—Oxbridge could

### Conclusion

Although branded as old-fashioned and out of touch with the modern world, the academical dress of the British Isles is still prominently used—because humans like to celebrate achievement and hard work in a special way, and because the dress is a connection with academics of the past who fought for their right to study and research freely. Robes of dignity are appropriate. To dispense with them would be to ignore our heritage and our freedom to engage with culture and history.



Cambridge Proctor flanked by “bulldogs”



## NSC Tea Tasting

### THE MYSTERIES OF CHINA TEA REVEALED

YOU MAY THINK you know what tea tastes like, but a squadron of Sheridanites encountered a surprising array of flavours on the afternoon of Saturday 5th February. The Canton Tea Co. deals exclusively in teas from China and Taiwan—although the British exported tea plants to India in an attempt to control production, they in fact found a native tea plant, *Camellia sinensis assamica*, already growing in Assam, so most Indian tea is from that rather than Chinese *Camellia sinensis sinensis*.

We learned that aficionados are particular about how their tea is made. Although there is no “tea ceremony” as in Japan, the tea is drunk from very small cups of a particular size and material (Yixing clay), and must be made with water of a specific temperature that varies depending on the type of tea. Puerh tea requires 98 degrees C, while delicate jasmine teas should actually be made with water at just 75 degrees. The Chinese have names for the stages of boiling—“shrimp eye” when tiny bubbles are beginning to form, “crab eye” as they get bigger, “fish eye”, “string of pearls” when bubbles are rising rapidly, “raging torrent” and finally “old man water”—because once it hits 100 degrees it is considered to be flat and over-boiled. Modern tea-addicts use thermostatic kettles. And it can’t be just any water, either—tea is best made with water from a spring in the same area where the tea was grown! Needless to say, milk is never added. Tea is not discarded after one use but is re-infused several times—up to 60 with some teas. The



Charles Tsua makes tasting notes



Jennifer explains some tea lore

Chinese sometimes discard the first infusion.

Our host was Jennifer Wood, co-owner of the company, but she doesn’t buy the tea herself. She was frank about the fact that as a foreigner, and a woman, she would never be able to buy the best teas—even if sellers agreed, the tea they actually delivered would be inferior. Instead the firm uses a local buyer who is apprenticed to a fifth-generation Tea Master.

The six teas we tasted began with fragrant Jasmine Pearls, leaves that have been rolled into balls that unfurl when water is added. Many commercial jasmine teas are simply sprayed with flavour but this is layered with jasmine petals to absorb the aroma. We then tried Silver Needle white tea, which to me had a hint of sage on the nose, then the Dragon Well green tea which had a toasty cereal note, Iron Buddha oolong, which tasted a bit like buttered iron, caramel-rich Bai Lin black tea and finally Xing Hai cooked loose puerh tea. Puerh is in vogue at the moment. It is aged to create subtle, exotic flavours. Ours was sold loose, but the best ones are compressed into

blocks or cakes from which chunks are cut with a special knife. Some puerh is cooked, some not, but stored properly it will continue to mature, like wine or cigars. Our sample had been ageing since 2005 and had a strange fishy aroma and extraordinarily deep, complex flavours. Puerh is allegedly good for your health.

Many thanks to Jennifer. To learn more about the company and the teas see the firm’s website. Note also that as NSC Members you get a 15% discount on your first purchase plus free P&P. Just use the code SHERIDAN at the check-out.



# A Good Man in a Crisis



OVERSEAS MEMBER DR LEAVINGSOON  
REPORTS FROM THE FRONTLINE IN  
CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

LAST WEEK CHRISTCHURCH, on New Zealand's southern island, was hit by an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale. It struck at lunchtime, when the city was at its busiest, and so far 155 dead have been confirmed, expected to rise to some 240, making it the worst disaster to hit the country since the Hawkes Bay earthquake of 1931 in which 256 people died.

The New Sheridan Club has a small but potent Membership in New Zealand (all both of them) and our own Dr Leavingsoon (aka Bernard Shapiro) has been doing extraordinary work to help those worst hit, piloting his Second World War Willys jeep around the region to ferry supplies and establish the worst-hit areas—and identify looters—and relay this information to the authorities. He has also been leading groups of student volunteers to help the clean-up and his reports reveal that simply surviving the quake itself is just the beginning: there are now 75,000 people without sewerage, food or fresh water. One of the biggest problems seems to have been liquefaction: the vibration of the quake allowed water to rise up through the area's sandy soil to create a muddy sludge that in some cases burst up through roads and floorboards rendering them unusable. This, mingled with sewage from ruptured pipework, has had to be shovelled and carted away and, as it dried, created a dust hazard.

I had a Facebook chat with Bernie and, as he typed, he was experiencing



aftershocks that were toppling shelves in his home. Here are some selections from his recent dispatches...

## SATURDAY

Last night a security guard, who is a Veteran of Iraq, and I took it upon ourselves to scout the areas close to the Avon River of Aranui and Western New Brighton.

What we saw broke our hearts.

Roads were like the surface of the moon, covered in sloppy grey liquefaction with sinkholes the size of cars and rippled, bulging mountains of tarmac rising a meter here and there. The houses were slumped, most brickwork ruined, and the remarkable thing was that reflecting off the weatherboards and the odd tree were figures huddling around fires, keeping each other's spirits up and watching the road for hope.

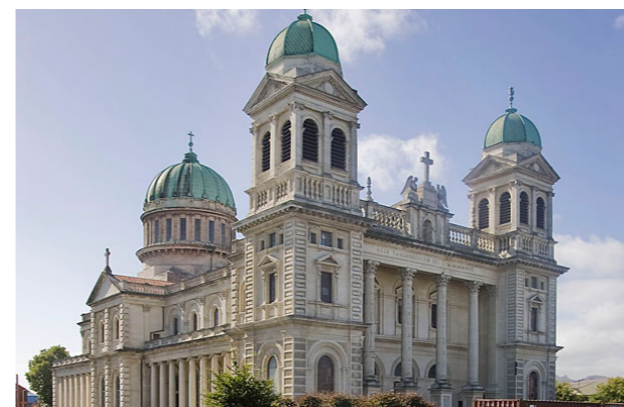
They'd not seen even a police car let alone the Civil Defence and in most cases we, a huge man in a security uniform and kevlar vest, and a balding man dressed in woolen battle-dress 70 years out of date and driving a vintage Jeep, were the first outsiders that they had seen.

No running water,



(Top) Christchurch Cathedral, before and after the quake; (below, top to bottom) Cashel Street mall, before and after; the Durham Street Methodist church, before and after; the Catholic cathedral on Barbadoes Street, before and after

(Opposite page, top) Bernard Shapiro, aka Dr Leavingsoon; (bottom) humour survives







(Clockwise from left) The city centre shortly after the quake; a poignant sign; student volunteers, plus a helpful Christchurch Symphony Orchestra violinist; that's not just mud on Bernie's jeep but sewage too; a welcome consignment of quality wheelbarrows arrives; \$200 just in—donations are urgently needed for fuel and supplies; wind-blown dust is now a hazard



little food, no electricity, broken homes, no sanitation, no portaloos; these people are angry, desperate and unable to move.

We couldn't bring them anything except news, promises—and hope.

I hope that in 24-48 hours tens of thousands of students will descend on them, bringing supplies, shovels, graders, diggers and food, to clean up their broken neighbourhood and retrieve what little self-respect these families had.

I must get the hell down to the University where this massive army of students are massed—18,000 yesterday and more today—and deliver the maps I've made of the most dangerous places in Christchurch, held by the Mongrel Mob [a criminal gang], where food is withheld from the population by bullies and terror. Normally we wouldn't dare enter, but we were met last night with close-huddling groups of eager, smiling, caring communities that CHCH would normally forget.

#### SUNDAY

Josh and I and a handful of stragglers stolen from the Student Army entered the mess that was Aranui.

Once there the team set to work—HARD—and I contacted Civil Defence, liaised with the Lieutenant of 2/1 Battalion who is the co-ordinator of the area for portaloos, discovered that there are babies in the area dreadfully dehydrated from a lack of formula, got diggers and graders into the area through detailed accounts of road surfaces, organised and distributed food to cut-off residents, found a break-in at 94 Aldershot St and called it in and led a team into Aldershot St to wade into the dust and liquefaction from 1000-1700hrs.

I then returned to argue the case for the students to enter the area, but they are frustratingly being led by Civil Defence, who appear to have little idea what is needed in that area. I have pleaded and begged for students and may get two buses of them there tomorrow, but it's not enough. Yet in 48 hrs, we should have 1,000 on the streets on both side of Aranui.

Not long to go.

Gods, but I feel pounded...

#### MONDAY

Today the good folks at UCSVA [Student volunteers] sent three buses to Aranui. Aldershot, Hampshire, Rowan, Eureka, Marlow, Portsmouth, Doreen, Rowses, Guernsey... So many streets... Ran distribution of people, food and water, sought and found a digger/tractor for Doreen and buzzed about helping team leaders and Ken get where and what they needed most.

Doreen St clogged with sewage and silt. I ran lunches, fruit and water to this group, got them the tractor from the Farmers also working in the area, and shuttled students to swell their numbers. The Students have received 200 more wheelbarrows—expensive ones—paid for by ANZ.

The Jeep is splattered with the sewage of Aranui and reeks to high heaven!

Bugged.

#### TUESDAY

had a tourbus come in from Kaikoura to Aranui with snap-happy disaster loopies on board—they were lucky to escape the wrath of locals. I've reported it to the press

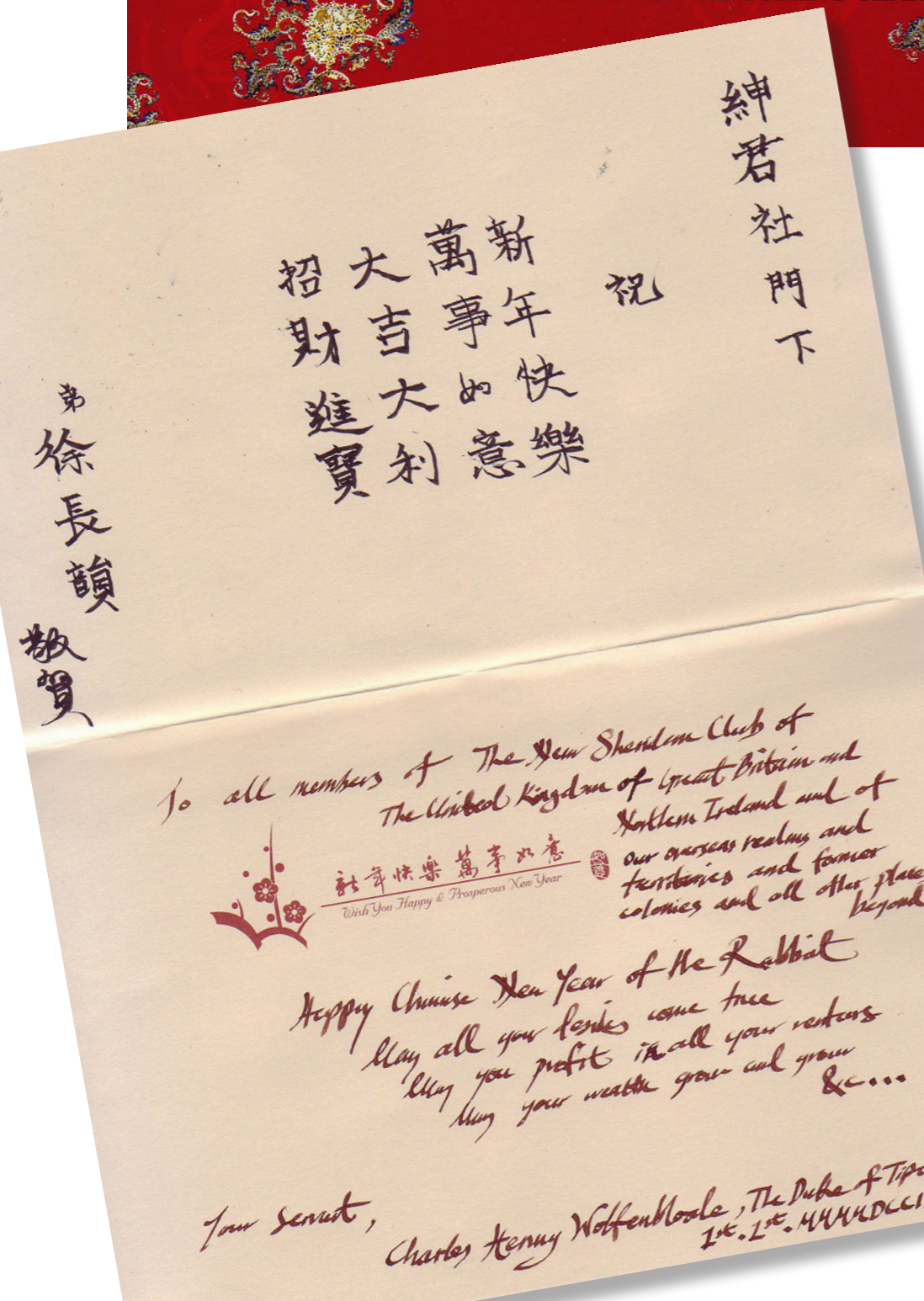
Observed the two minutes of silence with two bouncing, squealing happy children living life to the utmost—it seemed an apt vision of CHCH a week on.

Got my tetanus shot—going to get the hep shots tomorrow.

Our Past, Loved ones,  
Our Streets and Homes,  
In rubble and mortar dust.  
But  
From sewage, silt  
Hope rose, rebuilt  
As Strongest Spirits must.

*To find out how to make a donation to the UC Students Army see their Facebook page [http://www.facebook.com/StudentVolunteerArmy?sk=app\\_4949752878](http://www.facebook.com/StudentVolunteerArmy?sk=app_4949752878)*





### Felicitations!



GOOD LUCK WISHES FOR THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT

I RECEIVED THIS card from the redoubtable Charles Henry Wolfenbloode, wishing the whole New Sheridan Club a happy Chinese New Year, so I here attempt to share it with you. "May all your desires come true, may you profit from all your ventures, may your wealth grow and grow." Sounds good to me.



### OBITUARY

## Andrew Downer



KNOWN IN THE CLUB AS "NORTHUMBERLAND"

By Captain Coppice

ANDREW DOWNER became a member of the New Sheridan Club quite by accident. As part of the Club's tobacco-infused "Last Gasper" party marking the ending of indoor smoking in July 2007, a few members got together to sing some close-harmony smoking ditties. The problem was we didn't have a tenor. Luckily I knew of one who was a good cove and also had the excellent qualification of being a smoker too. Therefore Andy was arm-twisted into the New Sheridan Quartet, not before becoming a member, of course! But alas, he couldn't take part in the Last Gasper owing to ill health, so the Quartet performed at both a monthly meeting and the Christmas Party later that year.

By this time, Andy had struck up a relationship with our very own Miss Hartley from the Quartet, and they married in October the following year—arguably the first wholly NSC wedding.

Although Andy did not attend many NSC events, he was much liked by all who met him. His unfairly brief innings is a great loss to Rachel, the Club and all who knew him.



Andrew Downer, actor, producer, film crew agent, singer, musician, all-round good egg, born 26th May 1972, died 17th February 2011.



## The Cocktail Cabinet

Wherein Members view the world through the bottom of a glass

### Flower Power

by David Bridgman-Smith

With Spring in the air and Summer around the corner I thought that, for this month's Cocktail Cabinet, I thought I would look at elderflower drinks.

#### The Gin & Elderflower

Firstly let's look at an alternative to the Gin and Tonic called The Gin and Elderflower.

To make this drink add a double measure of gin to a tumbler, add ice and the two double measures of an elderflower soda, such as Bottlegreen.

The elderflower soda has a similar dryness to tonic water and is just as refreshing. A slice of lemon nicely compliments the fresh taste of the flower.

#### Elderflower Liqueur

Flavoured liqueurs are a popular way to enjoy the taste of elderflower. One well-established brand is St Germain (20% ABV) from Paris. A newer one is the Elderflower Liqueur from German bitters company The Bitter Truth (22% ABV). To acquaint myself with their individual properties I decided both to sip these on their own and also to mix them in an Elderflower Collins. The recipe for the latter was as follows:

30ml SW4 Gin  
20ml Elderflower Liqueur  
30ml Lemon Juice  
10ml Sugar Syrup



Add ingredients with ice to a glass, top up with soda water.

Neat:

*St Germain:* very rich and silky over the tongue. A complex flavour, with hints of anise mingled in with the elderflower; the downside is that this is quite sweet.

*Bitter Truth:* a nose akin to elderflower "Champagne": more bitter and dry than the St. Germain and a lot less sweet.

In an Elderflower Collins:

*St Germain:* The elderflower flavour was quite subtle; a fresh drink, but the flavours you would expect from the St Germain are easily lost. I upped the St Germain to 30ml and it certainly became more pronounced, making the drink a lot sweeter.

*Bitter Truth:* A very tasty drink: sharp and slightly bitter, but the dry elderflower confidently strides past the other flavours to provide you with a thoroughly delicious and refreshing cooler.



#### Elderflower Gin

There are a number of gins that include elderflower as a botanical, such as Chase, Hendrick's and Darnley's View, but there is only one London dry gin that uses it as its signature botanical—Knockeen Hills Elderflower Gin (47.3% ABV). I try this in a Gin Old Fashioned:

Gin Old Fashioned  
50cl elderflower gin



1 sugar lump  
2 dashes Angostura bitters  
2 tsp water

Place the sugar lump in an Old Fashioned glass and splash the bitters to it, then add the water and muddle until dissolved. Fill the glass with ice, add gin and stir, then strain into another Old Fashioned glass.

Mixed in exactly the same way as it's whiskey counterpart but substituting gin as the spirit base, this is fast becoming a favourite of mine and using this gin it is delicious. The sugar sweetens up the floral elements and stops the bitters from dominating the drink, Superb.

In conclusion, I'd recommend the Elderflower Gin & Tonic to anyone; it is delicious and incredibly refreshing. If you have a sweet tooth, I would suggest trying St. Germain, but if you find most liqueurs a little too sugary, may I offer The Bitter Truth as an alternative. As for the Elderflower Gin, it is rather fine and I certainly recommend trying a gin instead of a whiskey in your Old Fashioned.

For more musings on booze, see the NSC's **Institute for Alcoholic Experimentation**



## Old Town Come to Town

YOU MAY LIKE to know that Old Town, the Norfolk-based purveyors of vintage-styled, traditionally constructed, no-nonsense clothing are coming to London for one of their periodic visits, offering a rare and valuable chance to inspect their wares at close quarters. Their clothes are generally based on actual garments from the late Victorian era to the 1940s, and while they do not offer a



NSC Members Nicola Cowee and Todd Kedzlie model items from the Old Town range



made-to-measure service you can choose your fabric from their agreeably old-fashioned range (yes, you can have suits made from moleskin and serge). Ordinarily you must either visit them in Holt, or submit to mail order (though they will take garments back if you decide they don't suit), so this chance to try their styles on and fondle the cloths is not to be sniffed at.

The circus will be in town from Saturday 26th March to Monday 28th March. They don't specify the location—because they want you to make an appointment—but it is usually at a site near Spitalfields. To arrange to drop in, telephone 01263 710001 or email [old-town@btconnect.com](mailto:old-town@btconnect.com).

### CLUB NOTES

## New Members

AS THE SAP of spring starts to think about creeping up the old xylem,

Mr Tsua models the prototype NSC scarf



I would like to offer a dew-picked posy of good-natured salutations to the following lusty swains and fresh-faced maids, all of whom have tripped merrily down the primrose path of New Sheridan Club Membership in the last month: Miss Jean Power, Mr Herbert Grosvenor-Scruton, Mr John Butler and Miss Serena Fiddledeedee.

## Club Scarf Available

THE INDEFATIGABLE CHARLES TSUA (Charles Henry Wolfenbloode on his good days) has been in touch on the subject of a New Sheridan Club scarf. He has been in correspondence with Ryder and Amies who can supply such scarves individually for £33—but if we order ten or more this price drops significantly to £21.50 inclusive of delivery and VAT. I'm sure among all our Membership we can muster ten cold necks in need of stylish comfort.

If you're interested, drop me an email at [telegrams@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:telegrams@newsheridanclub.co.uk).

## Members Tread the Boards in G&S Rethink

WHILE RETURNING A BREN GUN I had borrowed for the Candlelight Club's St Valentine's Day Massacre last month, I discovered that the reason Oliver Lane needed it back urgently was that he is using it as a prop too—in the King's College London production of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Princess Ida*. Not only has Oliver sourced all the sets and costumes but he and Compton-Bassett are also singing in the chorus.

Originally performed in 1884, the story, based on the Tennyson poem *The Princess*, concerns a princess who founds a university for women and teaches that the fairer sex is superior. The prince to whom she was betrothed as a child sneaks in to try and claim his bride and a literal war of the sexes ensues. At the time the opera was intended to satirise women's lib and Darwinian evolutionary theory. By G&S standards it was not considered a great success and wasn't revived until 1919—which, interestingly, is when this new production is set. It runs from 9th–11th March at the Greenwood Theatre, London Bridge. See [www.kclgns.co.uk](http://www.kclgns.co.uk).





## 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).

### 🍷 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 3rd March  
8pm–11pm  
Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB  
Members: Free  
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)  
See page 2.

### Tricity Vogue's Naked Ukulele

Thursday 3rd March  
7.30pm–10.30pm  
Positively 4th Street, 119 Hampstead Road, London NW1 3EE  
Admission: £5 in advance (email [theredroom@tricityvogue.com](mailto:theredroom@tricityvogue.com) to reserve) or £6 on the door  
The uke-wielding siren Tricity Vogue is back in Positively 4th Street's cosy cabaret cellar for more naked ukulele, with her special guest, the nimble-fingered Mr Martin Wheatley of the Hula Bluebirds and the Arcadians. "Naked" as in no microphones and no PA, of course. That's not to say you won't get to know two of the ukulele scene's best-loved performers a whole lot more intimately than you ever have before...

### The Candlelight Club

Saturday 5th March  
7.30pm  
A secret central London location (venue will be revealed when you buy your ticket)  
Admission: £15 in advance  
Dress: 1920s dandies and swells, gangsters and molls, degenerate aristos and decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know

A clandestine pop-up cocktail bar, in a tucked-away, candlelit den with a 1920s speakeasy flavour. Each event offers a one-off bespoke cocktail menu and there are special themes and featured ingredients, masterminded by Will Sprunt, plus vintage DJing and live performances.

This time it's a Mardi Gras special. The New Orleans Mardi Gras (8th March this year) has been held annually since the eighteenth century, and is a wild festival of masks, costumes, parades, floats and hardcore partying. At our celebration of it, New Orleans jazz combo the Candid Jug Orange Band will keep your feet moving and our bar staff will keep the booze flowing, with a cocktail menu featuring New Orleans classics and some mind-blowing new creations. Burlesque star Vicky Butterfly will dazzle us with some carnivalesque routines and your ticket includes a sandwich buffet and the tender ministrations of our house DJ MC Fruity.

### Vintage Pop-Up Shop

Saturday 5th March  
12–5pm  
Paradise By Way Of Kensal Green, 19 Kilburn Lane London W10 4AE  
Admission: Free  
The Reading Room becomes a vintage shop for an afternoon, full of retro stuff handpicked by founded Hazel Holtham. Mind you the period covered is "1950s–1980s", so I don't know that I really approve. See [www.ragandbow.com](http://www.ragandbow.com) for more details.

### York Does Vintage

Saturday 5th March  
10am–4pm  
St William's College, York  
Admission: £1 to York children's charity SNAPPY

A day of vintage shopping with about 25 stalls of York and North Yorkshire vintage organisations, including Violet Wilde, which sells vintage-inspired lingerie, vintage fashion retailers Mad Elizabeth and Scarborough's Vintage Junkie, House of Avalon, Nancy's Vintage, and vintage accessories business Razorblade Mermaid. Artist Klare Lutwyche, who specialises in vintage-style patterns and flowers, will be personalising items for shoppers and vintage tea sets and cupcakes will be

provided by the Curiositea Shop with Revelation Booths providing photo booths for shoppers to save snaps of the event. See also the Facebook event.

King's Gilbert & Sullivan Society presents

### Princess Ida

Wednesday 9th–Friday 11th March  
7pm  
Greenwood Theatre, 55 Weston Street, London,  
Admission: £10 (£5 concs)  
Featuring our own Oliver Lane and Compton-Basset. See page 23.

### Blind Lemon Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 13th March  
10am–4pm  
George Hall, Brangwyn Hall, The Guildhall, Guildhall Road South, Swansea  
Admission: £4 (£3 concs)  
Vintage everything from Victoriana to the 1970s (shudder). More at [www.blindlemonvintage.co.uk](http://www.blindlemonvintage.co.uk).

### The Fitzrovia Radio Hour on Tour

Thursday 17th March  
7.30pm  
Theatre By the Lake, Lakeside, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5D  
Admission: £15/13/10

Fresh from a sell-out Edinburgh Festival run, The Fitzrovia Radio Hour recreates the unique spirit of 1940s radio plays, brilliantly evoking a dinner-jacketed age of casual imperialism and stiff upper lips. Fitzrovia mixes the chauvinist attitudes of 1940s Britain with sharp contemporary humour to produce a heady comic cocktail. Sound effects are created live: a Bakelite hairdryer imitates a blowtorch, a desk fan becomes an aeroplane, and different types of cabbage help to stage a fight scene.

### The Fitzrovia Radio Hour on Tour

Friday 18th March  
7.30pm  
Theatre Royal, St. Leonard's Place, York,

Yorkshire YO1 7HD  
Admission: £12 (£7 students and under 25s)  
See above.

### The Candlelight Club

Saturday 19th March  
See above. To celebrate Wyatt Earp's birthday we'll be looking at cocktails from the late Victorian era.

### The Savoy Ball

Saturday 19th March  
8.30pm–2am  
The Grand Hall, Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill London SW11 5TN  
Admission: £25

A swing and Lindy Hop danceathon, featuring the the five-piece Shirt Tail Stompers, the nine-piece King Candy and the Sugar Push, and the 15-piece Sticky Wicket. Ticket price also includes a free Swingland dance class. See [www.swingland.com/savoyball](http://www.swingland.com/savoyball).

### Old Town Come to Town

Saturday 26th–Monday 28th March  
A secret location in London  
See page 22.

### The Candlelight Club

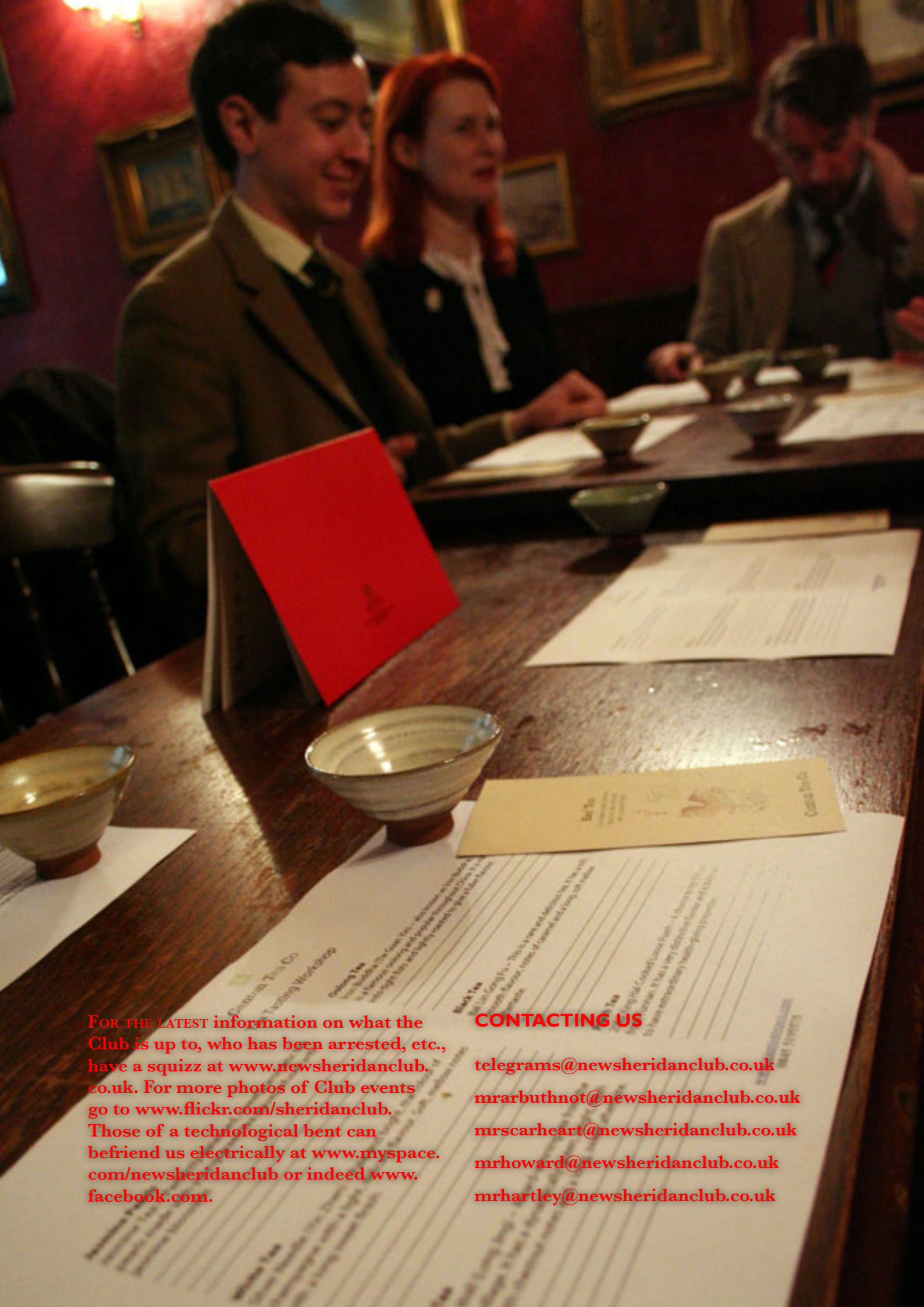
Saturday 26th March  
See above. This time we celebrate drinks from the era

when America's top barmen fled Prohibition—many coming to London.

### Bop City

Saturday 26th March  
8pm–1.30am  
Balls Brothers, 158 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4LN (Across from Liverpool Street Station)  
Admission £8 (£5 concs)  
The Quick! Quick! Club presents music from the late 1940s and 1950s—R&B, boppers, strollers, jump jive, boogie woogie, rockabilly, doo-wop, hillbilly, Hawaiian and Western swing. A 30-minute dance class from 8.15 (no partner needed, beginners welcome).





FOR THE LATEST information on what the Club is up to, who has been arrested, etc., have a squizz at [www.newsheridanclub.co.uk](http://www.newsheridanclub.co.uk). For more photos of Club events go to [www.flickr.com/sheridanclub](http://www.flickr.com/sheridanclub). Those of a technological bent can befriend us electrically at [www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub](http://www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub) or indeed [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

**CONTACTING US**

- [telegrams@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:telegrams@newsheridanclub.co.uk)
- [mrarbuthnot@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrarbuthnot@newsheridanclub.co.uk)
- [mrscarheart@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrscarheart@newsheridanclub.co.uk)
- [mrhoward@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrhoward@newsheridanclub.co.uk)
- [mrhartley@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrhartley@newsheridanclub.co.uk)