

The New Sheridan Club

Newsletter

LX • October 2011

5TH
BIRTHDAY
SPECIAL!*

The New Sheridan Club
2006–2011

Club admits its
first canine
members

WHO LET THE DOGS IN?

PLUS:

Art of Darkness

Part 2 of Scarheart's fearless
exploration of the horrors of
the Glastonbury Festival

In the Pink

David Bridgman-Smith
probes that naval
favourite the Pink Gin

What have molluscs ever done for us?

Mrs H. on the wonders
of mother-of-pearl

* N.B. There is nothing special about this issue.



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...

We were having such fun that we almost failed to notice that October is the fifth anniversary of the first ever meeting of the New Sheridan Club! Congratulations everyone and well done. I think we can feel that we have done good work in trying to bring back standards, in inspiring the young and encouraging the old that all is not lost. Needless to say, a whip-round to buy something nice for the Committee would be entirely appropriate...

The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 5th October in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm, when Miss Minna will talk to us about footie.

"Association football in the NSC I hear you gasp!" she writes. "To clarify, I would be talking about my great-grandfather Robert 'Bill' Whiteman's experiences. He was a professional footballer and in 1906 was transferred from Norwich City FC into frankly one of the most eccentric teams ever fielded by West Ham, but one that in 1911 produced one of the most famous 'giant-killing'

matches of the 20th century. I'll talk about the formation of the team, their invention of floodlit football, which relied heavily on whitewash and candlelight, the sad decline in sartorial standards of strip, why they really sing 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles' and the tragic postscript to this period—the club and the First World War. "Flat caps a go-go—not to mention 'Come on you Irons!'"



Flat caps a go-go: a nail-biting instant from the 1911 match between West Ham and Manchester United

The Last Meeting

Mrs H.'s much-awaited lecture, simply billed as "mollusc-related" turned out to be about mother-of-pearl. This precious substance has been used decoratively by mankind on all manner of things, from furniture to weaponry to musical instruments. Mr H. dutifully displayed his cufflinks and his removable collar-

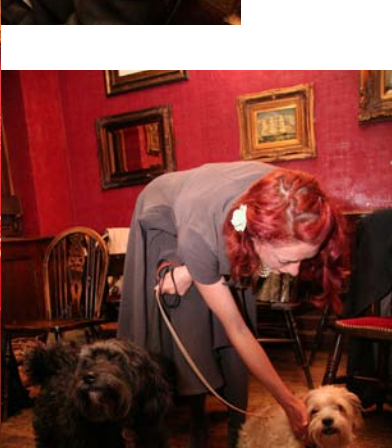
stiffeners, both made of the substance. Yet, mother-of-pearl is also of scientific interest in that its lightweight, yet very strong, lattice structure might be an ideal material for such things as aircraft components, if only our boffins could succeed in synthesising it. A written version of the talk begins on page 4.



(This row, l-r) Dave Hollander explains how to strangle a horse; Scarheart explains his invasion plans; Manfred for once wearing a tie; (second row, l-r) Mrs H. with a sample of her mother-of-pearl collection; Mrs H. succumbs to hysteria; a tasty slide of some buttons



(Left) After his latest far-flung assignment, RN tries to remember how to write; (right) Compton-Bassett (l) and Robert Beckwith chat up a redhead; (below, l-r) Fleur tries on a sample headscarf; Hartley shows how it can double as a do-rag; Pandora is glued to the latest NSC Newsletter; Ella arrives with a pair of hounds (we didn't actually admit them as full Members—just honorary.)



MOTHER OF PEARL

By Mrs H.

THIS TALK WAS long advertised as “mollusc-related”—and what could be more intimately related to a mollusc than mother-of-pearl? The smooth inner layer found in some marine and freshwater shells certainly makes the resident animal’s life more comfortable. Its shimmering iridescence also fascinates mankind and has done for centuries. What follows provides a rather shambolic survey of that history—what mother-of-pearl is and what we’ve done with it—before veering off into a very specific use of the material in the 18th century, involving gambling, Jane Austen and the mysterious East.

So, let’s look at some lovely things like these antique mother-of-pearl buttons (fig.1), or this desk set designed by Josef Hoffmann for the Wiener Werkstätte c.1910 (fig.2).



Fig. 1

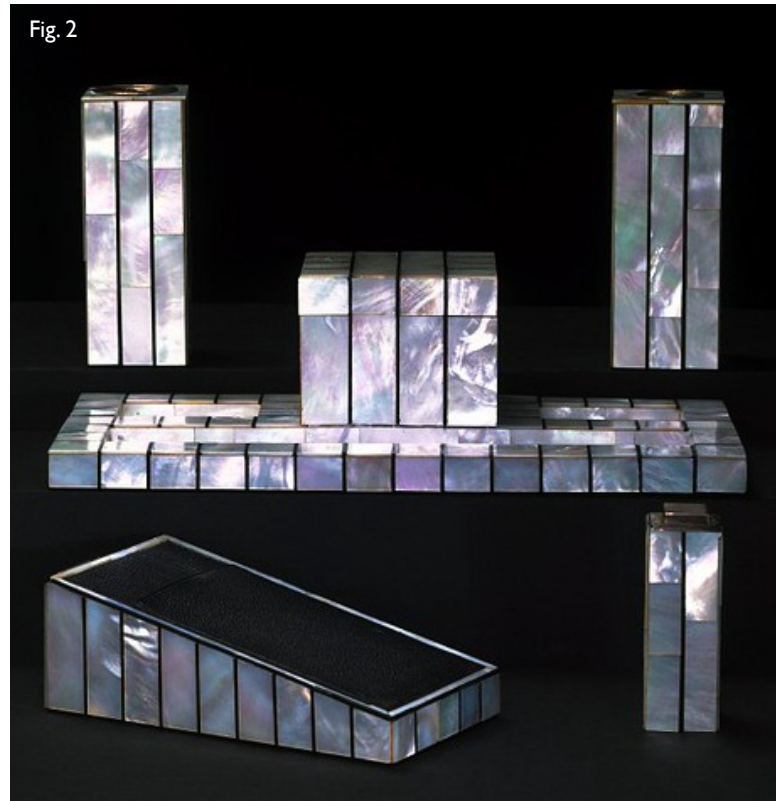


Fig. 2

As these images show, mother-of-pearl has been used to make works of exquisite craftsmanship, in fact, exploited for a vast number of decorative uses throughout history. This has been made possible by its natural properties—iridescence, and great strength despite its apparent fragility. So, what exactly is mother-of-pearl?

The science bit

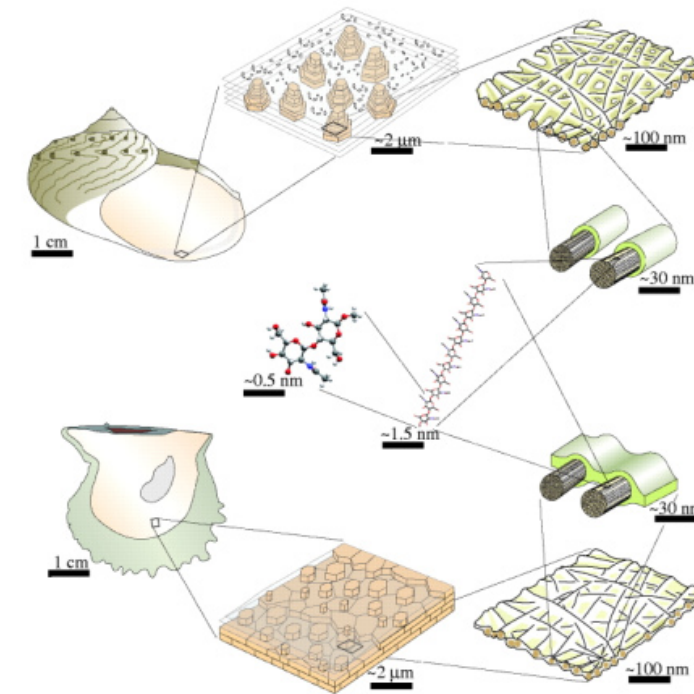
As you can clearly see here (fig.3), mother-of-pearl is a nanostructured hierarchically constructed biological composite of polysaccharides, proteins and mineral.

Basically, all molluscs can produce mother-of-pearl or nacre (from the Arabic *naqqarah*, for “shell”) but only some do so in quantities large

enough for us to recognise. The two classes of mollusc from which we get most of the material are gastropods (snails) and bivalves (clams), although honorable mention must go to nautilus, who have had to give up their shells for some of the most spectacular—and sometimes grotesque—mother-of-pearl artworks ever produced (see below).

The economical molluscan body plan comprises a head/sensory organs, a foot and the remaining essential bits and pieces in the visceral hump (which sounds like a very bad mood), all protected by another organ called the mantle that lines the hard shell. It’s the edge of the mantle that is important in the formation of mother-of-pearl. Into the tiny, liquid-filled space between it and the existing edge of the shell it secretes the necessary chemicals for mother-of-pearl “self-assembly”. Here, at certain concentrations, the polysaccharide chitin organises itself into liquid crystals to form a kind of lattice, positioned just above the last layer to have been laid down at the edge of the shell. This lattice holds in place plates of calcium carbonate in the form of aragonite. Additional proteins coat the lattice to stabilise it and, in gastropods at least, threads of a protein related to that found in silk also

Fig. 3 Hierarchical construction of nacre.



Cartwright J H , Checa A G J. R. Soc. Interface 2007;4:491-504

alien intrusions into the shell, smothering them (and perhaps eventually forming blister pearls or even the semi-precious round pearls we also prize). But it is a biologically expensive material to synthesise. The shell families that go furthest back in evolution have the best mother-of-pearl; later species eliminated it from their development and have a more porcellaneous inner shell.**

This composite substance, which is laid down in very thin layers, is 3,000 times stronger than its component parts, meaning that it far out-performs any manmade material devised so far. Recently, boffins have tried to come up with ways of synthesising it. For example, in 2008 a team at the US Department of Energy/Berkeley mimicked the way sea ice freezes to produce a layered scaffolding of aluminium oxide, the spaces filled with the polymer PMMA. While at the time this was

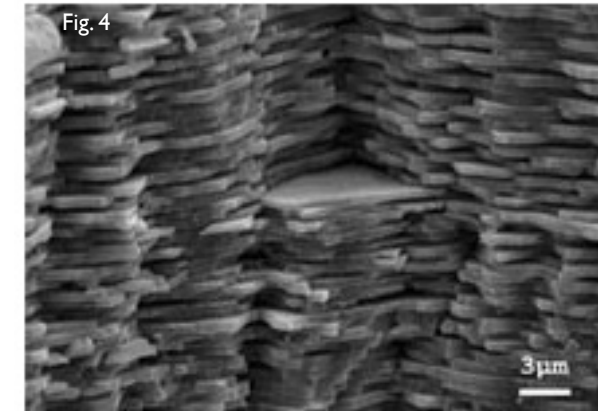


Fig. 4

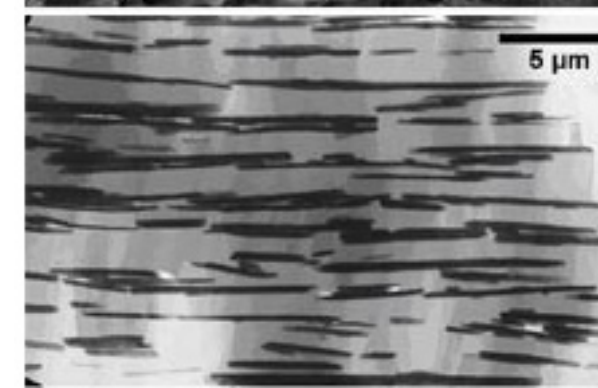




Fig. 5

possibly “the toughest ceramic ever produced”, it was still only 300 times stronger than its ingredients. Swiss scientists have since come up with an even more mind-blowingly elaborate way of producing simulated nacre—floating aluminium oxide platelets on the surface of water, lifting them off on to a glass plate, and layering them with a “biocompatible” polymer to form a film as strong as metal but light and stretchy. This may be even stronger than the Berkeley material but, as these photographs suggest (fig.4), it has some way to go before it



Fig. 6

can compete with the real thing (that’s natural mother-of-pearl at the top, the simulated stuff at the bottom).

Scientists hope that in future such a material can be used for things like jet engine fans and aircraft fuselages. But they don’t say anything about making it pretty.

A brief and chaotic cultural survey of mother-of-pearl

And it’s the iridescence—the result of the way the aragonite crystals scatter light—that has attracted almost every civilization to use mother-of-pearl in its religious icons, personal adornments, architecture, furniture, musical instruments, weaponry, and so on, from an art nouveau pendant to a dashing pair of cufflinks, from the walls of the Taj Mahal to the floor of Peggy Guggenheim’s palazzo in Venice, and from the doorway of a Maori meeting house (fig.5) to Marie-Antoinette’s boudoir at Fontainebleau (fig.6).

Fontainebleau shows what the finest European craftsmanship could do with mother-of-pearl. Although you have to wonder, presented with a peerless work of nature such as the nautilus (compare fig.7 with fig.8) whether this is really an improvement.

London’s contribution to mother-of-pearl’s mystique can only be done justice in a separate essay but I just wanted to share this photograph of a rather stylish pearly prince and princess from the 1920s (fig.9)...

The charitable pearlyies bring us back to buttons and a little digression into the US industry, which grew up in the late 19th century along the Mississippi River. In response to the prohibitive cost of buttons made from more exotic shells (most commercial mother-of-pearl species favour the Indo-Pacific) the US manufacturers used freshwater mussels. At one time there were 60 button factories along the river and whole families were employed

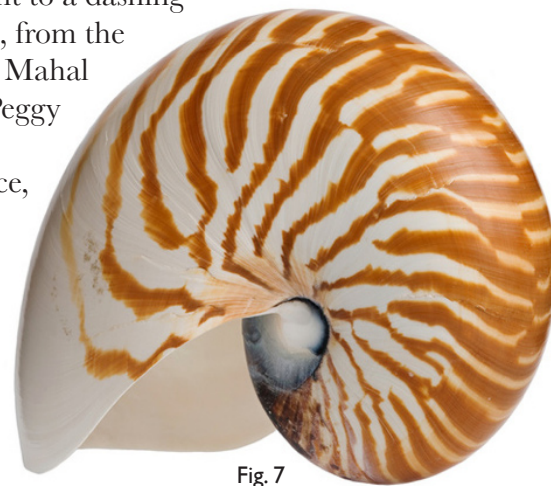


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

catching, cleaning, drilling and polishing (fig. 10).

The two world wars and plastic did for the industry but probably saved a shell species or two from extinction.

The Commercial Topshell (*Trochus niloticus*) shown in fig. 11 at the top was one such; the second photograph shows button blanks cut from the thick base and lower sides of the shell. If you look at your mother-of-pearl buttons you can sometimes see pink markings on the underside, indicating that they were cut from a Trochus shell. Key mother-of-pearl species today are the Black-lipped Pearl Oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera*), the Gold-lipped Pearl

Oyster (*Pinctada maxima*) and the beautiful New Zealand Abalone or Paua shell (*Haliotis iris*) with its distinctive opalescent interior.

Fig. 12 shows another way we’ve exploited the unsuspecting mollusc to make little trinkets. Tiny plastic Buddha images have been



Fig. 9

this is the first known pearl culturing technique.

Gambling, fish, and slow boats from China

This example hauls us back to the mysterious East and the second part of my essay, which is about a particular type of Chinese mother-of-pearl artefact I have recently begun to collect.

When, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet’s liability of a younger sister Lydia is finally unleashed on society, she spends a giddy evening playing cards at a neighbour’s.



Fig. 10

inserted under the mantle of this Cockscomb Pearl Mussel (*Cristaria plicata*), prompting the animal to secrete layers of mother-of-pearl over them. These will later be chiselled off (unfortunately that’s the end of the line for the mollusc) and given as temple offerings. In use by the Chinese since around AD 500 (when moulds were of clay),

On the way home “Lydia talked incessantly of lottery tickets, of the fish she had lost and the fish she had won...” The fish she was talking about were in fact a kind of gambling chip, and could have looked something like those shown in fig. 13, and the “lottery” was just a simple game of chance, not too challenging even for Lydia. In the 18th century, European, and especially English, society was crazy about gambling and a multitude of card games—piquet, faro, quadrille, ombre, loo, Pope Joan, deep bassett, spinado, and so on—

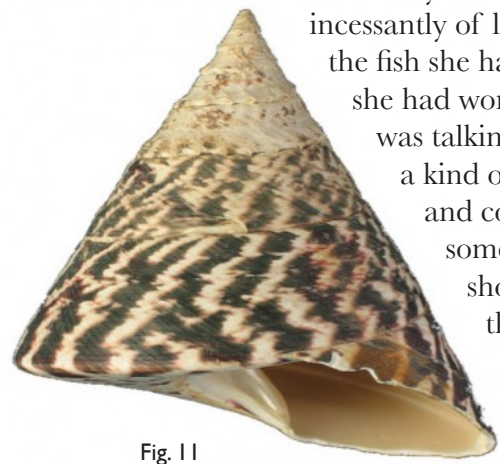


Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

gained popularity among the leisured classes. The same people were equally crazy about the new luxury exports coming from China—silk,

tea, ivory, porcelain. The little fish at the top is engraved with the figure of a Dutch merchant: it was people like him (and also sea captains and agents of the East India Company), who made a little money on the side of their main transactions in Canton (Guangdong in southern China) by importing novelty items such as mother-of-pearl gaming counters.

Whether or not these were first used by the Chinese (also keen gamblers) is not known, but the counters soon caught on in Europe. The first Briton we have evidence for buying them was one Lady Griselle Baillie, who, among other achievements,*** kept a very detailed account book for many years at the beginning of the 18th century (fig. 14).

As well as learning how much it cost to tune your spinets or see the lions at the Tower, we can see, at the bottom of the right-hand page, that in 1716 “3 dusone mother pearl fish” cost her “6s. pr. du”. She also ordered “6 dusion counters 4s. dus.”

These slightly cheaper counters were probably round ones, which usually made up the earliest sets of mother-of-pearl gaming chips along with the fish. There were usually 140 pieces in a set (an easy number to divide



Fig. 15

Fig. 16



Fig. 17

(Not actual size: counters are typically 1½–2½ inches long)



42 THE HOUSEHOLD BOOK [1710	
[Sundries]	[Sterling]
	£ s. d.
To Cess for the poor three quarters at Ladyday next	1 2 6
febr. 10 To a joyner for puting out the closet door	1 0 0
For news Saterday 11th 1s. 2d., 2s. 1d. ½, 2s. 8d. ½.	0 6 0
For chairs 7s. 6d., 2s., 1s.	0 10 6
For letters 1s. 6d., 9d., 3d., 3d., 3d.	0 3 0
For water tax half a year from Midsomer to Christenmas	0 10 0
To John Simmerall	1 1 6
For mending the watchmans box 1s. to him 1s.	0 2 0
To St Leonards' son Patrick Ingles	0 10 0
To the Bannew for Grisie	0 5 0
To the Bannew for Rachy	0 5 0
To the Opera for Rachy	0 10 9
For a fram to Captain Kirtons' Pictor	2 3 0
To Mr Doll the painters man	0 3 0
March For chairs 2s. 7d., more 2s.	0 4 7
For news papers 1s. 3d., 1s. 2d., 1s. 6d., 1s. 2d.	0 5 1
For letters 6d., 5d., 7d.	0 1 0
24 To the watchman a quarter at Ladyday	0 2 6
Ap: For news 1s. 1d. ½, 1s. 2d., freeholders 3s., 1s. 2d., 1s. 2d.	0 7 7 ½
For letters 1s. 3d., 1d., 1s. 2d.	0 2 6
For mending Rachels watch	0 6 0
To Mr. Frazer Minister	0 2 6
To Rachy for a Play and ane opera	0 15 0
For tuning the spinets	0 2 6
For 8 yards lutstring to Raplochs daughter	2 8 0

¹ Mr. James Ingles, fourth son of Cornelius Ingles of East Barns, married Elizabeth Holburne, and purchased the lands of St. Leonards.
² See p. 31. ³ See p. 36.

1716] OF LADY GRISELL BAILLIE 43	
[Sundries]	[Sterling]
	£ s. d.
For a bed to Johnie Stewart 2 weeks	0 5 0
For a coach, 1s. 1s.	0 2 0
For window tax 3 quarters from Midsomer to Ladyday 1716	1 2 6
For seeing the lyons in the Tower	0 1 6
May 5 For news 1s. 5d., 4d., 1s. 6d.	0 3 3
For letters 1d., 7d., 1d., 9d.	0 1 6
May 10 To Docter Arburthnet ¹ for Rachy	2 3 0
For a coach 1s.	0 1 0
For Rachel Dundas's going and comeing from Twittnem	0 1 6
June For 2 weeks news 2s. 4d., more 1s. 6d., 3s. 2d.	0 7 0
For letters 3s. 6d., 3d., paper 10d., letters 6d. 7d.	0 5 8
To Jamie Scugald	0 5 0
To P. at Mr. Andersons	0 10 0
To Mr. Andersons Bathel	0 2 6
For 2 gallery tickets to ane opera	0 3 0
To Barnackie's ² benefite 2 tickets to the opera	2 3 0
To Mrs. Betsons Nurse	0 5 0
To Poket 2s. 6d.	0 2 6
For a coach 2s. 6d., 2s. 1d.	0 4 7
For a soliter	0 3 0
To Mr. Scote Garner at Chelsy for dressing the Gardine, etc.	2 12 0
For 3 dusone mother pearl fish 6s. pr du; 6 dusion counters 4s. dus.	2 2 0
To Mr. Baillies Poket of Ladyday quarter	12 14 0

¹ Dr. John Arburthnot, Queen Anne's favourite physician, author of several works; frequently mentioned in the *Journal to Stella*.
² See p. xlix.

Fig. 14

Fig. 18



another set (without lettering).

Monograms were very popular motifs on counters bought by slightly less well-off card players (fig. 16 and 17). Incidentally, the initial on both these counters is seen on a background of very fine cross-hatching, the technique for which has never been rediscovered. The quality (or total absence) of this hatching is one clue to determining if a counter is a modern fake.

of Marlborough had played for half a crown per fish. Sometimes these values were engraved on the counters; some special sets were even customised for a particular card game.

Aristocrats ordered the counters at the same time as their porcelain dinner and tea services, and of course had to have their coats of arms on them. They sent bookplates from their libraries for Chinese craftsmen to copy. Unfortunately sometimes mistakes were made in these cross-cultural transactions. The counter in fig. 15

shows the Maitland arms, but the "DEO JUVANTE" is spelled incorrectly, with a "B" rather than an "E" at the end. When you consider that the Maitlands had probably had to wait two or three years for the ships to bring back their gaming pieces from China, this must have caused considerable disappointment. But they were rich enough to order

The other side of the counter usually had a scene from everyday Chinese life or a fictional episode. Many fish-shaped counters bore a pair of billing birds, originally derived from a motif on a porcelain dinner service made for Lord Anson, who circumnavigated the globe between 1740 and 1744 and discovered the breadfruit along the way. Anson and his crew saved the port of Canton from destruction by fire in 1743 and a dinner service was made in recognition. The teapot depicted in fig. 18



Fig. 19

version of the design, which became very popular (the round fruits among leaves represent the breadfruit).

Over the years, between 1750 and 1780, the billing birds also appeared on counters, gradually being simplified to appear more as in fig. 19. The state of this motif can be one of the few indicators of

when a non-armorial counter was made: they are otherwise very hard to date precisely, although we know that at certain periods different shapes were made (for example, "shuttle" and oval forms appeared between 1785 and 1810).

The most famous of all these counters among collectors today belonged to Queen Charlotte, the consort of George III, who was so keen on playing cards she actually had two sets (fig. 20). These were sold at the auction of her possessions in 1819 and occasionally individual counters come on the market. Their border design was copied in lesser sets, which can therefore be dated after about 1785.

Eventually, fashions in polite entertainment in Europe changed: people were more likely to play whist, which had a different scoring method. Back in China, craftsmen tried to compensate for the fall in demand by diversifying, making sewing requisites such as silk winders: the example shown in fig. 21 is typical in showing the "Dog of Fo" motif at either end.

But around 1840, the craft died out. Very few complete sets of gaming counters survive but, given the huge numbers produced during their period in vogue, it is still possible to pick up individual examples relatively cheaply. Look for them at car boot fairs and markets (especially on jewellery stalls). They can vary wildly in the thickness and quality of the mother-of-pearl, and in the precision of the



Fig. 20



engraving. But, considering you are buying a 200-year-old antique reflecting the meeting of two cultures, and crafted from one of nature's most beautiful materials, I think they are a bargain.

* For a less garbled account of this process, NSC boffins might like to read "The dynamics of nacre self-assembly" at rsif.royalsocietypublishing.org/content.

** Porcelain is so named from the Italian for cowrie shell, porcelana, a word related to that for a little sow, porcella, which the plump shells resembled, at least to 16th-century Italians. The sheen of porcelain also reminded them of the shiny shells, hence the connection.

*** The Gazetteer for Scotland lists her as "Song-writer and heroine".



Fig. 21

ART OF DARKNESS

Notes from the Glastonbury Festival: Part 2 By Artemis Scarheart

IN NEWSLETTER 58 we published fragments from the diary of Artemis Scarheart, fearless Member of the NSC Glorious Committee for Life, as he travelled upriver to probe the Dark Continent that is the Glastonbury Festival of Performing Arts. Since then, new scraps of deranged scribblings have come to light, and we here print the second instalment of his report. Make of it what you will...

THE FIRST full day of the Festival opens. Driven from my tent early due to the scorching heat so while the rest of our refugee camp stirs I sit on the carpet of our camper van area and flick through a book I had brought, *Chief of Station, Congo* by Larry Devlin, about the first CIA man in the Belgian Congo after independence. A good read and a good preparation for the times here.

Thanks to the camper van we break our fast around a coffee table with hot drinks and some of that Italian bread that has chocolates in it. Civilised. Then it's into my campaign gear and we go for a

bimble. As previously stated, your handsome and courageous correspondent is not camping with the great unhosed but in a performer area with its own security, shower block, chow hall and subsidised bar.

Crusing through this area are all manner of circus folk in all manner of vehicles. Various heavy moving wagons from behind the now vanished Iron Curtain are in vogue as are

modified camper vans and vehicles that could only have been made by an engineer who had a deep appreciation, nay love, of the absurd whilst also being colour blind.

Eventually we get to the security barrier in daylight. Here are three or four people whose jobs it is to stand there all day and all night in all weather to make sure that non-Talent is kept out of our area. Going out is easy, one just strolls pass wishing them a fine day. On the way back though—especially when it is cold and wet—they are like bulldogs and demand to see your wristband and your lanyard to make sure

Scarheart resists the blandishments of a local houri. Note the stout jackboots that save him from the worst of the mud



The local village is a riot of colour. Mostly a sort of mud-brown colour

you are allowed into the Zone.

Passing by them we are out for our first stroll. The tree from Minas Tirith is less impressive in daylight but there is a timber and canvas two-storey pub straight out of *The Shire* (a quick pint of eight-per-cent cider is consumed to help with the walk), a stone dragon lurking in a pond, various scrap metal sculptures and many, many, many hippies.

Several hours later we have done a brief promenade and stopped off for drinks. My chums now must go and perform so I am left to my own devices and head back for luncheon.

Rather than risk a bout of food poisoning or spend an inordinate amount of money I have taken some US Army ration packs. These splendid packs, decorated with a green and golden eagle, contain all a man needs in the field so they should be good for me.

Pork rib? Buffalo chicken? Tacos? What to have? In the end, for the first meal I plump for pork rib. Slashing open the pack I discover yet more packs and reams of instructions. In short

order I put Packet A into the cardboard box it came from and add water. A chemical agent in the Packet then gets tremendously hot and starts to cook.

While this is going on I use the tablets to purify some water (needless but I went the whole hog) and use a similar mechanism to make coffee. Then I eat some Patriot Cookies which are small biscuits in shapes such as the flame from the Statue of Liberty, the letters "USA", an eagle and other Patriotic Symbols. What a remarkable nation the USA is, I think as I now have some crackers with cheese and jalapeños.

Scarheart's performer friends—his meal ticket into the Zone



Finally the pork rib is done. It is hot and surprisingly tasty and after my exertions I wolf it down and also a few other things in the packet. The waterproof matches are not that toothsome but I can exchange them with natives.

In all a highly satisfying repast and indigestion only comes on when I read the packet more thoroughly. RESALE IS A FEDERAL OFFENCE, US DOD USE ONLY. CONTAINS SUPPLEMENTS NOT LISTED ON INGREDIENTS, IF ALLERGIC CONSULT MEDIC. EAT BEFORE 2015. WARFIGHTER TESTED, WARFIGHTER RECOMMENDED.

As the wrappers and packets start their self-destruct cycle I decide to take myself off to see some music. Although the festival still hasn't kicked off properly yet, Mr B. is on one of the stages somewhere and Club Member RN will be about too, so off I head.

Eventually I find the area where Mr B. will be on. Rammed beyond belief. After managing to meet with RN we share some revolting elderflower wine out of teacups and then head in. My height is a great advantage as is my indifference to others' suffering so we manage to get good spots and on comes the man himself.

A good set in all and the crowd seem to get behind him, but there are more covers than usual. Is this a set for the crowd? Is it how "he rolls" these days? Hard to say and hard to breathe at times so when he finishes to a loud crackle of applause I make my excuses and leave. By now RN is either dead or slightly out

of my line of sight, so I resolve to tell the Club he died like the Yorkshireman he was.

Once again the campsite is dark and there are even more people than previously. The rain has made the mud flow, but my East German jackboots make short work of it. Others stick fast and soon I realise that often I'm not walking over dry parts of the mud, but rather boots, wellies and shoes that others have lost to the all-sucking quagmire. Huge piles soon build up next to any bin, enough rubber for a whole plantation. So much for the green credentials.

Recollections are hazy (I'd had a decent slug of cognac and several ciders by this point, let alone the WARFIGHTER RECOMMENDED secret supplements in my food) but I stopped off to see some jazz (crap), some folk (earnest) and some funk (burn it all). My attempts to discover some music I liked were still for naught as Mr B. doesn't really count in the nicest possible way for my purposes. I was here to push back my aural boundaries dammit and that I would do I loudly swore, before a huge wicker St George who appeared to be helping Gaia rebuild the ozone layer or something.

Then I withdrew past Security into the Zone and caroused with my friends until 6am.

Next time: Will Scarheart find a form of music that does not make him enraged and nauseous?

Scarheart and NSC Member RN await Mr B's performance



Neary's Restaurant



IN PRAISE OF A FLYBLOWN INSTITUTION

By Count Martindt Cally von Callomon

IT'S QUITE SOMETHING when one sees the proclamation "Est. 1967" over a business letter head only to retort "well that was hardly yesterday" when in fact it represents 44 years of slog. Should the New Sheridan Club ever up-sticks and board the *Empress Of Canada* for the seven-day sea voyage to The Americas we may find ourselves landing on the Isle of Manhattan, probably with quite a thirst on after all that sea air and vomit. I venture that there would be no better rehab than a swift visit to Neary's Restaurant (the term is used loosely) at 358 57th Street, New York.

Many a fellow Member may share my loathing of the self-conscious "themed bar" the like of which clogs the streets of, say, Dublin, where witless property developers and opportunists pile on the servitude and décor in the belief that the "punter" (that's you and me, dear friends) will be foxed into the foolhardy sham that "dis is de real ting".

This is not the case at Neary's. Yes it is a bar run by an Irishman, but it is definitely not an Irish bar.

This is the place the Irish of New York come to elevate themselves out of the poverty and hey-nony of the Guinness-trap, this is the *aspirish* bar, the



The proud exterior

place you come to better oneself and not rub shoulders with either hoi or polloi. It nestles in the quiet mid-town suburbs where absolutely nothing ever happens, it is also like walking into the bar in The Shining.

The lighting is positively Kubrickian, the fetid air hangs heavy with an indistinct odour. Fat? Urine? Animal waste? The garish carpets needed a good valet some 20 years ago but instead got successive eager layers of the Shake-N-Vac and the ancient bar-keeps take their time mixing you the drinks.

And oh, the drinks. You will get the best, the driest Gin Martini in New York here. The ban on smoking is a safety measure, not down to health risks: no-one should go near their Martinis with even so much as a spark, never mind naked flame, and all served by a genial white-haired gentleman who, on occasion, rotates his false teeth in his mouth with a comfortable clatter. He never resorts to a "measure" when

This shot of the staff, from the website, shows them proudly in their thoroughly Irish livery. Shame they couldn't quite squeeze everyone in

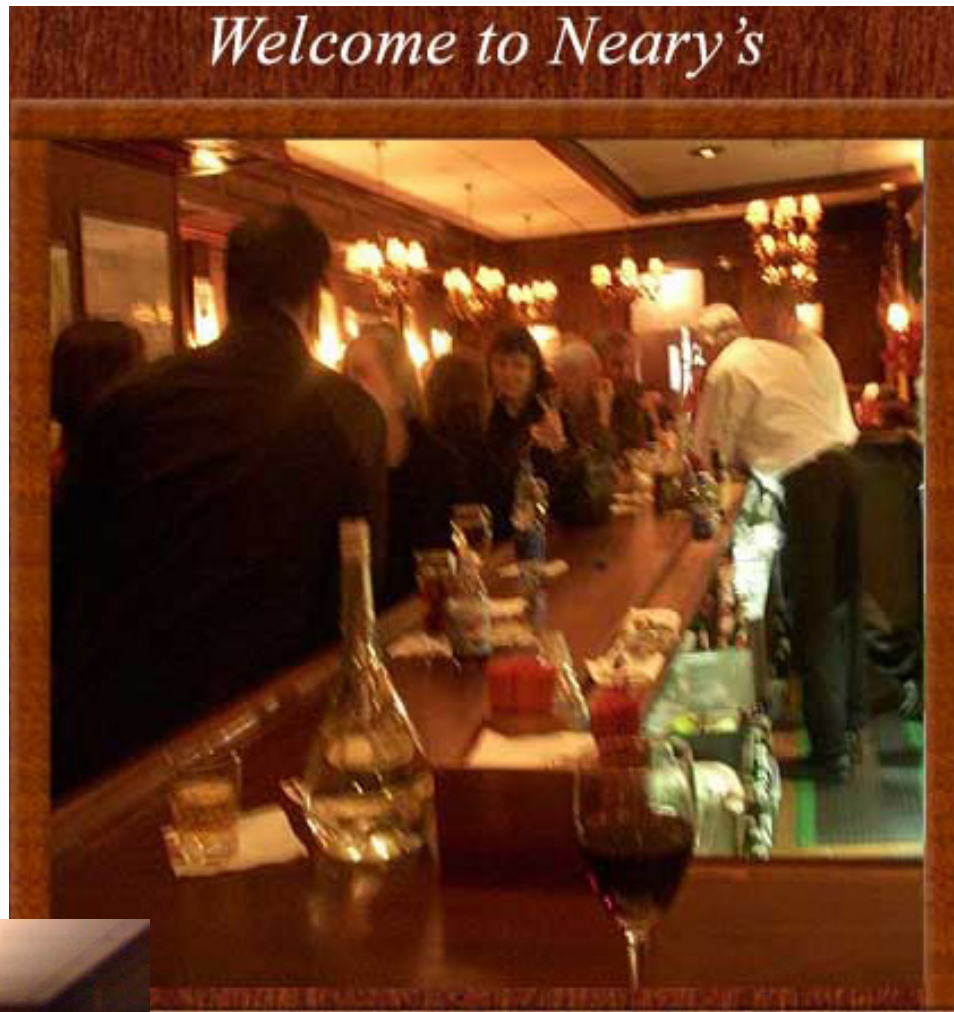


it comes to filling the glass (or topping it up if he made just a little too much for your dollar).

I cannot comment on the taste of the food as only a fool or hardy explorer would partake. It is served by ancient tottering waitresses on thick pale plates and it looks like a 1960s Kodachrome version of what may have once been known as “dinner”.

The walls are bedecked in images of customers past. Some are now ex-presidents, many are from the Constabulary: I think you get the idea. These are Americans of the Republic, and as far away from the French understanding of that word as one can get.

The photos on the website are suitably out-of-focus or look as if they came straight off an American Motel TV set: gaudy and colourful, much as the food and attire of the



Cally's snaps (left) may lack something on the technical front, but are no less slick than the ones on the website (above): perhaps this is how Neary's really does look after a couple of their Martinis

ancient regulars. There appears to be an age limit operated on the door: no-one under 80 gets in unless they tinker you're from de oll country or have money to spend on the barstool.

The photos in this article, however, are quite a different matter. I come from Suffolk, a country where they still point at 'planes. The folk in this Restaurant are still of the opinion that a camera steals souls. The emergence of my camera caused raised eyebrows and a degree of consternation. Was I about to incriminate the husband who insisted he was working late in the office? Was I a “snooper”? Was I the grandson of WeeGee about to witness a terrible *moida*? I slipped it back into the attaché and relied on the under-cover eye-phone shots here, all graced with the clouds of clandestine.

Neary's comes highly recommended: as much a part of New York as any Empire State of Liberty and the polar opposite of any Wetherspoon, thank the Lord.



Prohibition Blues



A FEAST OF SPEAKEASY-THEMED ENTERTAINMENT COMING YOUR WAY

NSC MEMBER Captain Richie Paradise recently got in touch asking that I alert any Members who typically eddy around the Bristol area to his forthcoming cabaret on Saturday 22nd October. Ziegfeld and Paradise's Cabaret of Curiosities has been running since March 2007 at the Cube Cinema, a sort of workers' cooperative, featuring such vaudeville and cabaret luminaries as Boys and Dance, Terry Saunders, Hoop La La, The Hot Potato Syncopators, Thomas Truax, Curtis Eller, Tuesday Laveaux and Keda Breeze. The event in October, however, is more specifically entitled “Prohibition” and offers to take us back to the 1920s and 1930s with “a night of hot jazz, swinging dance steps and a whooping and a hollering from a select crew of magicians, comedians and vaudevillian stars. In sweet speakeasy style, expect hooch in paper bags, guys down on their luck and dames cutting the rug. Dig out your glad rags, set your sky-piece with style and come on down and have a ball, hep cats!” Tickets are £8 (advance booking recommended) and doors open at 8pm.

Things Prohibition-oriented seem all the rage at the moment—not least my own Candlelight Club, which throws regular speakeasy-style parties in London. I don't know if the hit TV series *Boardwalk Empire* has anything to do with the vogue, but the Candlelight Club event last weekend was an official launch party for the new series (sorry, “season”) which airs in the UK on Sky Atlantic beginning this coming Saturday at 9pm. Sky had bussed in a handpicked collection of “key bloggers” and showed them the first episode of the new series. They even paid to have costumiers Prangsta turn up (in what looked like a converted prison van) with enough outfits



Ziegfeld and Paradise

for all of them: once dressed and styled in suitably vintage manner the VIPs were snapped by our mobile photo studio and given a sepia-tinged print to take away with them. I'm afraid that regular

Candlelight Club events are not quite as elaborate as this, but you do get a live jazz band, vintage DJing from the NSC's own MC Fruity, an ever-changing cocktail menu and a room lit entirely by candles. We have two parties this month (15th and 22nd), both of them a collaboration with Jameson Irish whiskey and located in a new venue for us, an intimate and rather quirky shebeen with wood-panelled walls, up a flight of stairs behind an unprepossessing door in the heart of Soho. Jameson are sponsoring the BFI London Film Festival and the joint will have a cinematic flavour. Needless to say, Jameson's features in the cocktails, and there are some inventive concoctions on offer...

Finally there is, of course, Bourne & Hollingsworth's club night Prohibition, featuring live bands, gaming tables and other acts. I have never actually been but I believe it is always London-based and I'm told it operates on a more barn-like scale, with some 900 people in a big hall, and that they serve drinks in teacups too! I gather they will have an event in November but the date has not been released.



Showgirls dress the guests at the Candlelight Club's Boardwalk Empire launch party

The Cocktail Cabinet

Wherein Members drink to cool down or warm up, depending on whether it's Monday or Tuesday

Drinking in the Pink

By David Bridgman-Smith

The Pink Gin is an old navy drink, a mix of gin and Angostura Bitters. Gin was the naval officer's drink of choice and the bitters were thought to have medicinal properties. Traditionally, the drink is associated with Plymouth Gin, a spirit from a city with strong naval connections.



Pink Gin & Tonic, made with "The Gin of Champions," SW4; (right) by contrast, Lebensstern Pink Gin comes with the Angostura ready mixed in



Mixing a Pink Gin

There seem to be a few different ways to mix the Pink Gin, which we will investigate in turn. The same basic recipe is used for each: 35ml gin and 3 dashes Angostura Bitters.

1) Shake

Shaken in a shaker with ice then strained into a glass. In appearance, this is not only pink, but

(Left to right) These pink gins have been stirred, frozen, built and shaken respectively



there is also a transition in opaqueness: from clear at the bottom to cloudy at the top; quite picturesque. This is a clean and crisp drink; it's easy to taste both the gin and the bitters and there is a sharp finish that makes the mouth water. Perhaps this method causes too much dilution though, even with a short shake.

2) Stir

Add the ingredients to a bar glass with ice, stir, then strain. Our second method produces a drink that is almost as smooth as the shaken version, but with much more flavour. It is both more herbal and more bitter. This is a hearty and tasty cocktail; to me, just what a Pink Gin should be.

3) Build

As 2) but leave the ice in! Add gin, bitters and ice to a glass, stir briefly to mix and drink. Starts strong but inevitably mellows as the ice melts.

4) Pink Gin with water

I got this from the head distiller at Plymouth who took me to see the spring where they get their water—which was cold enough to chill a Pink Gin without ice. Water from the fridge will do instead, but I found this recipe to be too watery. The added water makes a very smooth drink, this comes at the expense of flavour.

5) From the freezer

Simply keep the gin in the freezer and pour into a glass with the bitters. I found this version to be very strong and quite warming, although the

intensity of flavour is curbed. For me, it was neither smooth nor soft enough.

Pre-mixed

If you don't want to make the drink yourself, why not buy a pre-made example?

Lebensstern Pink is a bottled mix of Lebensstern Dry Gin (from Austria) and Bitter Truth aromatic bitters. The gin was originally made specifically for the Lebensstern Bar, which is situated on the 1st floor of Café Einstein, a Coffee House in Berlin.

Lebensstern Pink tastes of juniper, cinnamon and other spices & roots. It is quite soft and very similar in character to a Pink Gin, with some warmth and a finish of juniper, cinnamon and anise.

Pink Gin & Tonic

Finally, we come to my favourite variation on a Pink Gin: the Pink Gin & Tonic. This is simply a Gin & Tonic with a few generous dashes of Angostura Bitters. It is refreshing, like a Gin & Tonic, but there is a slight, sweet, herbal spiciness that may fool you into thinking that someone has splashed a bit of ginger ale into your drink. It's been a while since I have had one of these, but I now recall why I liked them so much. Cool and crisp, like a Gin & Tonic, but with that added depth of flavour. I might not drink these all night, but as the first G&T of an evening, it's a pretty good bet.

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



somewhat neglected and concocting new things. Please do have a look here: www.seraglia.com. Finding myself also in possession of a rather impressive collection of things of age and rarity, it has become necessary to offer some of them for sale—here: www.glamourkitten.com.” Some of Miss Darling’s Seraglia offerings are displayed on this page. Moreover, she has generously offered to give NSC Members a whopping **25% discount** on purchases.

At Glamourkitten simply enter the code **SHERIDAN** in the relevant box; at Seraglia just mention the Club when ordering.



New Members

AS THE RECENT delightful Indian Summer is suddenly sucked into a vortex of rain, chill winds and, all too soon, a muddy pulp of fallen leaves, we proffer the meta-physical rubber galoshes of NSC

Membership to the following sterling types, all of whom have sworn the oath in the last month: Elizabeth Ward Doty, Laurie Green Eames, Kimberley Miller, Major Cowpie, Paul Williams and Alistdair Wilson-Googh.



CLUB NOTES

Special Offer for Members on Vintage Finery

AT OUR “KISS ME QUICK!” summer party we were delighted to be able to offer an extra raffle prize, a vintage brooch donated by NSC Member Miss Lucy Darling. Miss Darling has since told me a bit more about her impressive portfolio of activities (have a look at www.represent.com).

“I have of late been fashioning jewellery,” she adds, “taking that from the old which is



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.

🍷 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 5th October
8pm–11pm
Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB

Members: Free
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)

See page 2.

Cakewalk Café

Wednesday 5th October
7pm–1am
Passing Clouds, 1 Richmond Rd (Behind the Haggerston), Dalston, London E8 4AA

Admission: Free

Night of live jazz led by Ewan Bleach and Nicholas D. Ball, featuring an open mic session from 7pm, live band from 8.30 and a late jam session from 11pm. If you would like to join in email ewanbleach@gmail.com

Blind Lemon Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 9th October
10.30am–5pm
The Guildhall, High Street, Bath
Admission: £4.50 (£3.50 concs)

Vintage everything from Victoriana to the 1970s (shudder), plus vintage hair and makeup and on-site alterations. See www.blindlemonvintage.co.uk.

Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 9th October
11am–5pm (trade from 10.30am)
Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent’s Park Road, London NW1 7AY
Admission: £3 (£4 trade before 11am)
Clothing (both men’s and women’s), accessories and textiles from the 1800s to the 1980s. For more info see www.vintagefashionfairlondon.co.uk.

The Candlelight Club presents The Jameson Apartment

Saturday 15th October
7.30pm–1am
A secret central London location
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

The Candlelight Club is a clandestine pop-



up cocktail bar with a 1920s speakeasy flavour, in a secret London venue completely lit by candles. Each event offers a one-off bespoke cocktail menu with special themes and

featured ingredients. There are live period jazz bands plus dance or burlesque acts and vintage DJing.

This time we’re collaborating with Jameson Irish Whiskey to bring you an intimate, cinematographic-tinged speakeasy to mark the BFI London Film Festival. Live music will come in the form of the saucy, smoky tones of Gracie and the G-Spots, as well as our house DJ MC Fruity.

Heroes at Highclere

Sunday 16th October
10am–4.30pm
Highclere Castle (aka “Downton Abbey”), Newbury, Berkshire
Admission: £15 (less for concs, families,



The dramatis personae of Downton Abbey

children, etc.)

A celebration of the work of all those members of our Armed Forces who have been injured or have lost their lives in the service, from the First World War to Afghanistan. This is a charity event in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund, Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes, the Soldier's Charity, the Florence Nightingale Foundation, Army Medical Museum and Cancer Trust.

The event will be an action-packed First World War themed day full of exhibitions, displays, special guests from the *Downton Abbey* TV drama (filmed at Highclere) and an exclusive opportunity to tour the Castle. Exert yourself with the army assault course, paint ball and climbing wall, meet some army dogs or watch 90 motorbikes. There will be an auction of *Downton Abbey* props and memorabilia. More details and tickets at www.cornexchangenew.com.

Vintage Tea Party

Saturday 22nd October

2–5pm

Shoreditch Town Hall, 380 Old Street, London EC1V 9LT

Admission: £35: email vintageteapartylondon@gmail.com to purchase

Dress: Vintage

A charity tea party to raise money for research into combatting breast cancer. Sip flavoured teas, devour dainty sandwiches and pretty cakes while raising a glass of bubbly; guests will also have the opportunity to partake in a charity auction for lots of lovely goodies, have a vintage hair and makeup session, tap their feet to Swing Patrol and more besides.

To make a donation see www.donatetobreastcancer.org/vintageteapartylondon. For more on the event see www.facebook.com/VintageTeaParty.

The Candlelight Club presents The Jameson Apartment

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In the Know

See above.

October Plenty

Sunday 23rd October

12–5pm

Outside Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, 21 New Globe Walk, Bankside, London SE1 9DT
Admission: Free

The October Plenty Festival is an urban harvest festival, celebrating British produce, tradition and independent farming with song, dance, games and plays. The Festival begins with music and dance on the Bankside at Shakespeare's Globe where you will be joined by the 12-foot-tall Corn Queene, the fiddle-playing Bear and The Berry Man who offers libations for the coming year. The



whole assembly then dances a farandole to Borough Market where there will be story telling in the Apple Orchard; “The Marriage of Wit and Wisdome” performed on the cart-stage; music, dance, apple bobbing, conkers and the annual Execution of John Barley Corn. There will also be a tasting table of old apple types from London by Brogdale Horticultural Trust.

Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 23rd October

11am–4.30pm (trade from 10.30am)

The Urdang, The Old Finsbury Town Hall, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RP

Admission: £4 (£5 trade before 11am)

Some 45 stalls offering vintage clothes, shoes, handbags, hats, gloves, textiles and jewellery from the 1800s to the 1980s. There is also a tea room, alterations booth plus sometimes live entertainment too. Currently nominated for Best Vintage Fair in the Vintage Guide to London 2011 awards. More details at www.clerkenwellvintagefashionfair.co.uk.

Antique vs Vintage

Saturday 29th October

10am–4pm (trade from 9am)

Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell Village, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1UF

Admission: £2

Busy, high-quality fair with one hall for antiques and one for vintage fashions. More at www.antiquestovintage.co.uk.

The annual October Plenty festival



The Skeleton Swing Ball

Saturday 29th October

7pm–11.30pm

The Swan at the Globe Theatre, 21 New Globe Walk, SE1 9DT London

Admission: £7.50 in advance

A Halloween-themed swing dance night from the ladies behind the Sovereign Swing Ball. DJing will be Swing Maniac (Mouthful o' Jam, Cakewalk), Swinging Dickie (Blitz Party, Prohibition) and Whisky Holloway (Swing Pit), all in the Balcony Room of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (where it all seems to be happening this month), with views out over the Thames.

Die Freche Muse

Saturday 29th October


10pm–4am

A secret private Dalston residence

Admission: £10 in advance or £12.50 on the door (but you must RSVP in any case to die.freche.muse@gmail.com)

Dress: Ghoulishly gorgeous, dead aristocrats, starving poets, syphilitic artists... 1920s and 1930s, strictly enforced

Hosted by Baron Von Sanderson, Die Freche Muse is a club night created in the great tradition of European Cabaret: irreverent, decadent, sexually ambivalent and dissolute. For your entertainment this time Accordionist Tom Baker will be singing songs from the darker side of life—vignettes of despair and destitution for your delectation. Burlesque performer and cabaret singer Elsie Diamond will perform her “Masochism Tango” act just for you.



A Manhattan cocktail is expertly prepared by a genial bartender at the Candlelight Club's *Boardwalk Empire* party last week



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 technological bent can befriend us electrically at www.facebook.com or even www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub.

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