

REVIEW!

How come
we're all so

Strait-laced?

A discourse on
the corset

**Smart, just
like a Chap**

Mr B's video
(starring
Members
of the NSC)
is revealed

**Drinks of
the rich
and
famous**

You know you've
made it when
you have booze
named after you

**The most
haunted
house
of all**

Vintage horror at our
Halloween Film Night





The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of The Wheatsheaf, just off Oxford Street. The Wheatsheaf is one of Fitzrovia's historic pubs, a one-time haunt of Dylan Thomas, George Orwell, Augustus John and Julian Maclaren-Ross. In fact Thomas met his wife Caitlin in The Wheatsheaf and, legend has it, he was known to flash at women there as well. Fitzrovia's associations with literature go back to the eighteenth century. In the twentieth century both Woolf and Shaw lived in Fitzroy Square; Pound and Lewis launched *Blast!* at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel in Percy Street. John Buchan lived in Portland Place and in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Richard Hannay has a flat there. Both Lawrences (D.H. and T.E.) took rooms there, as did Aleister Crowley, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Katherine Mansfield.

The Next Meeting

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday 7th November in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. Comedienne, broadcaster and columnist Viv Groskop will entertain us with her vintage-themed improv comedy troupe "Upstairs Downton". As the name suggests, they aim to improvise a "lost episode" of the *Downton Abbey/Upstairs Downstairs* genre. Viv herself writes for *The Independent*, *Independent on Sunday*, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *FT Weekend*, *The Observer*, *The Guardian*, the *London Evening Standard*, *Red*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* and *High Life*. As a stand-up she was a finalist in Funny Women 2012 and semi-finalist in So You Think You're Funny 2012.

The Last Meeting

At our October meeting a big crowd

rolled up for our speaker, Mrs Pandora Harrison, whose topic was corsetry. The subject was close to her heart (a number of her slides turned out to be glamorous studio shots of herself tight laced) and she gave us a thorough canter through the history of figure-controlling foundation garments, the regularity with which we reject them, then are drawn back again, the fetishisation of them, various icons of corset-wearing, the long tradition of men's corsets, right up to the modern resurgence of interest in corsetry thanks to Vivienne Westwood, burlesque and steampunk.

The talk was illustrated with a record 435 slides, and for the occasion the Club invested in a wireless controller so that Pandora would not have to bark out, "Next slide, please," 435 times...

Many thanks to Pandora for her sterling effort. An essay version of the talk begins on page 4.



Upstairs Downton in action at Herr Kettner's Kabaret in September



(Left) Pandora begins; (right) Craigoh salutes the latest issue of *Resign!*; (below) an array of corsetry brought along by Pandora by way of illustration; (below) a rare sighting of Mrs H. with Dorian and Torquil



(Right) Pandora's audience; (below) with a drawing fetishising the corset



(Clockwise from below left) A very rare sighting of Prof Pinkerton, poring over the newsletter; Russell Nash natters to Miss Minna; Mark Gidman and Giles Cuplepper; a rare sighting of Mai Møller; a rare sighting of Louise Newton; the cider finally kicks in for Helena



The Corset

The FOUNDATION of FASHION

BY PANDORA HARRISON

IN 1982 A SMALL, CONCERNED GROUP of men and women in Canada, America and the UK formed The London Life League (L3). They took their name from *London Life*, a low-circulation magazine of infamous reputation that was produced in an alley off Fleet Street next to The Old Cheshire Cheese pub between 1920 and 1960. It was devoted to the fetishisation of aspects of feminine dress—such as gloves, high heels, stockings and, of course, the corset—aiming to inspire readers to maintain and appreciate such items of clothing.

Members of L3, of whom I have been one since 1989, had been alarmed by the dramatic decline in the availability of tight-lacing corsetry, an alarm prompted by the closure of three long-established traditional corsetry manufacturers at the beginning of the 1980s. The group's main goals were to ensure that traditional tight-laced corsets could continue to be made to the quality demanded by the discriminating wearer, and to pass on to future generations an appreciation of corsetry's aesthetic, spiritual and physical advantages.

The history of Western fashion and notions of beauty revolve around female silhouettes that

are completely unnatural and, in fact, hide the true shape of a woman's body. For hundreds of years the legs, in particular, were disguised by the use of the farthingale (a hooped petticoat), panniers or the crinoline. All of these were worn with a tight-fitting boned bodice and eventually a corset as well. How did such modes of dress evolve and why? Perhaps it was the climate or simple modesty, but James Laver, a fashion historian in the first half of the 20th century, championed the theory of "Shifting Erogenous Zones", the idea that society's notions of which parts of the body were sexually pleasing changed—for example, the wide hips of a healthy child-bearing body or the tiny waist of the helpless female, the shapely calf of a long leg with small feet, slim ankles, slender hands, a large bosom and long neck with sloping shoulders. All these traits, at one time or another, were considered alluring. And fashion evolved to highlight this: this year bodices will be low cut to focus on the breast,

but last year skirts were worn

narrow, thus emphasising the hip and thigh. Clothing that sculpts the body in accordance with the current ideals has a long history. Medieval aristocrats wore gloves with elongated fingers to give their hands a tapered look.



Elizabethan men wore doublets with tight hose and a "cod piece" which could be unfeasibly large. Courty ladies wore high-heeled shoes to give the appearance of having a smaller foot. Today women wear them to give height or to enhance the length and shape of the leg. Such "illusion dressing" continues today with silicone "chicken fillets" to slip inside an underwired bra.



The unnatural silhouette

In the West one ideal feminine figure that has cropped up time and time again is the hourglass shape. There is a Victorian definition that the corseted proportions of the female frame should be calculated as twice around the thumb should be once around the wrist, twice around the wrist should be once around the neck and twice around the neck should be once around the waist. (A delightful image of perfection for a doll, but not realistically attainable for a human.)

Dress reform activists of the 19th century had many arguments against the use of corsetry and the pre-Raphaelite artists pleaded, "The unnatural can never be beautiful." But the fashion industry was robust in its defence. In her *Gentlewoman's Book of Dress* (1890) Mrs Fanny Douglas writes, "The opponents of the corset and the waist are a little too fond of pointing to the Venus de Milo as proof of how beautiful a waistless woman can be. They forget or ignore the fact that the Venus de Milo is a charming nudity, and that it is the custom in most countries to cover oneself with clothes. Had Venus been compelled by a cold climate to drape herself, we have little doubt she would have worn stays to give her clothes the shape they lacked." This highlights the true purpose of many foundation garments, to support the body and moderately shape the figure so that clothing fits well and does not sag or wrinkle—not only enhancing a feminine figure but securing the

wearer's appearance and reputation by keeping her outwardly tidy. Foundation garments as the foundation of good grooming.

A history of the corset

Around 1900 evidence was found of a Minoan culture on Crete dating back to 2500 BC, including artworks suggesting that men and women wore a laced garment, possibly of

leather, resembling a corset. Many cultures in the Cradle of Civilisation practised waist constriction, usually in the form of excessively tight belts. David Kunzle speculates in his book *Fashion and Fetishism* (2004), "... the Minoan ideal of artificially enhanced slenderness found its way along the trade route to the Black Sea, and took root ... in Circassia, where it developed into the very constrictive bark or leather corset described in 19th-century travel books."

In medieval Europe the shaping of the body and support of the breasts was performed by the design of the dress itself with laces to adjust the fit. By the end of the 13th century the *colle* or *surcoat*, a close-fitting bodice of linen, was a mainstay of women's fashion. Queen Isabelle of Bavaria (1370–1435) allegedly introduced a more structured garment, the whalebone bodice or *corps baleine* (reputedly the origin of the word "corset", from French *corps*, meaning "body"). During the Renaissance, women's dress took on a new sculpted shape. The two-piece garment known as a *boddy* or pair of *boddys* became the first real undergarment with genuine support in mind. Lacing front and back, these would create the smooth conical torso of the 16th century and become the widely known stays of the 17th century.

The boddys' strength and smoothness came from the use of whalebone with a "busk". Whalebone was not actually made from a whale's bones but from baleen, a fibrous material



Statuette of a Minoan snake priestess



A steel corset

in the whale's mouth. It was lightweight, flexible and easy to split into thin strips, just right for inserting into pockets sewn into a bodice or corset. The boning keeps the garment upright and free from wrinkles. The busk was a long flat piece of ivory, horn, wood, metal or leather which could

be inserted in the front laces or into a pocket to ensure the boddy kept a smooth, straight shape.

Steel corsets like cages covered in velvet, known as "iron bodies", also existed, though their use is unclear (see below). Well-to-do Puritans of the 17th century embraced the fashion of dressing in tight stays as a form of discipline to produce more sober orderly behaviour. From their passion for the staylace we get such terms as to be "staid" or "strait-laced" referring directly to their sobriety.

In the 18th century the stay became one with the dress bodice. Known as a "boned corsage" this formed the upper part of a fashionable lady's dress with back lacing and a pointed busk in front. Wealthy women had their stays made out of matching dress fabric and they could be worn over the top of the dress skirt with a chemise of light cotton beneath. The back was laced and cut high up to the shoulder blades with shoulder straps that tied at the front. Stays for the larger lady could have four sets of lacing, possibly to allow for the stays to be pulled tighter. "Pride feels no pain!"

The first technical manual concerning the construction of stays was published in 1769. It was titled *The Art of the Tailor of Bodies for Women and Children*. The trade of "staymaker"

was a masculine one and was quite respectable in the 1700s despite the comical image of the staymaker taking advantage of his clients. Eventually in the 19th century the corset maker was more commonly a woman but the designing of corsetry was more often still done by a man.

The French Revolution led to a revolution in fashion. A desire to eliminate class distinction meant the end of oversized court dresses: the Directoire period (1795–99) immediately following the Revolution favoured simpler dresses for its female citizens. But the corset did survive by evolving into a long, lightly boned, back-lacing garment still with shoulder straps that gave the wearer a slender appearance and a full bust supported from beneath.

It was not long into the first Napoleonic Empire (1804–15) that the Emperor reintroduced sumptuous dressing, bringing new designs in undergarments.

The first modern corsets were produced in 1816 resembling designs we know today with gussets or flutes to accommodate the natural hips for a better fit. In 1825 the waist was back, commonly accentuated by a wide sash or belt of ribbon. The sleeve begins to balloon while the skirt also expands to a bell shape, thus adding to the image of a small waist. Women could appear as over decorated as a wedding cake and as brightly coloured as a bouquet of flowers, in their hats and plumes.

The bright young things of this period were the "Romanticists", followers of the new ballet, romantic novels and poets like Byron and Shelley. James Laver describes how women in this circle "began to suffer from perpetual migraine, to look pale and to faint upon sofas at the slightest provocation. To be fat was almost a crime, and even to look healthy was something approaching a solecism. An ideal fragility was the prevailing mode and to attain it women were willing to suffer martyrdom." This was the first of three periods of fashionable tight-lacing in the 19th

century—the others being the 1870s and the 1890s.

Corset designs continued to flood into patent offices with new gimmicks and improved fit, including the "split front busk" in the 1830s—made from two pieces of flat steel that act as a clasp. Now the corset could be put on without having to unlace it completely. In 1842 lacing at the back of the corset was redesigned for easy adjustment of tension using "pullers", loops of lacing located at the waistline. Thanks to new steam-driven industrial sewing machines, by 1856 almost every woman owned a reasonably priced corset. But in fact the fashionable "cage crinoline" hooped petticoat supporting huge skirts, creating an illusion of a small waist, meant all women could look fashionable without the inconvenience of a too tight corset.

In the 1870s the obvious display of a lady's curves beneath narrow, figure-hugging dresses was quite a contrast to the crinoline look. So restrictive were these dresses that the skirt was tied from underneath, behind the knees, displaying the curving shape of a lady's hip and thigh. *Punch* magazine had a field day, ridiculing the corsetry, false hair pieces and high heels of the era.

After hundreds of years of hunting whales close to extinction, whalebone was becoming expensive. By 1860 alternative boning appeared in the form of thin steel strips known as "flat steels", but these tended to rust. Goose quills, an alloy of silver, steel and platinum, and "cording" of cane or reeds were also widely used, but in 1894 galvanisation and a cellulose coating on the flat steels seemed to do the trick; more importantly the "spiral steel" arrived, galvanised steel wire wound

Of corsets and men

As early as the 1790s the Dandy popularised a silhouette of a narrow waist, tight trousers and a pouter pigeon chest, created with padded jackets and simple stays. The Dandy look peaked between the 1820s and 1830s, the only time when tight-lacing was high fashion for both men and women. Both sexes were ridiculed for the narrowness of their waists.

The Dickensian period of 1840–1860 saw male civilian stay wearing on the decline. The urban fashionable gentleman might still be corseted when in town, but enjoyed relaxation from formal bondage when in the country. A good example is art critic and society Dandy Count Robert de Montesquiou (1855–1921). By the mid to late Victorian period (1867–82) corsets for men were no longer obviously worn outside of the military.

The military officer wore simple stays to protect him from excessive activity that might cause injury. Stay wearing was particularly popular with commissioned officers in the imperial armies of Prussia, Britain, France, Russia and Austro-Hungary up until the end of the First World War. Some sources focus on severe restrictive corseting in German, Austrian or Prussian military men—although the Austrians were not an impressive war machine they did have the best-looking uniforms. Early 19th-century cadet colleges in Moscow and St Petersburg may also have gone in for systematic corset training, and an English manual of the 1830s takes for granted that stays are worn by cavalry officers, who insist on the back support a corset could provide.

The term "military" tends to be used to describe the style of corset (a high top) suited only for male wear. It is not necessarily a corset used with uniforms. Typically it is cut to compress the paunch, at least slightly indent the waist, and continue a smooth line over the entire chest. When tightly laced it affords the wearer a severely upright posture and carriage.

At the end of the Victorian period, thanks to the increasing interest in healthy activities,



Cartoon from Punch, 1878



THE NEW HUSSAR HESSIANS AND PANTS.
"SEE, I'VE DROPPED MY HANKERCHIEF, CAPTAIN DE VERR!"
"I KNOW YOU HAVE, MISS CONSTANCE. I'M VERY SORRY. I CAN'T SNOOP, EITHER!"

the corset for men developed into the socially acceptable body belt, acting as a chest and back protector with an emphasis on masculinity and sporting pursuits. By the end of the First World War corsetry for men was just for orthopaedic use, although in the 1940s Symington's successfully promoted a Liberty Health Belt for abdominal control while J Roussel Ltd produced the Linia Belt, ads for which proclaim that it "...has been recognised for many years as scientifically and medically correct in design. It restores dropped organs to their correct position; it gently massages fat away and restores youthful appearance."

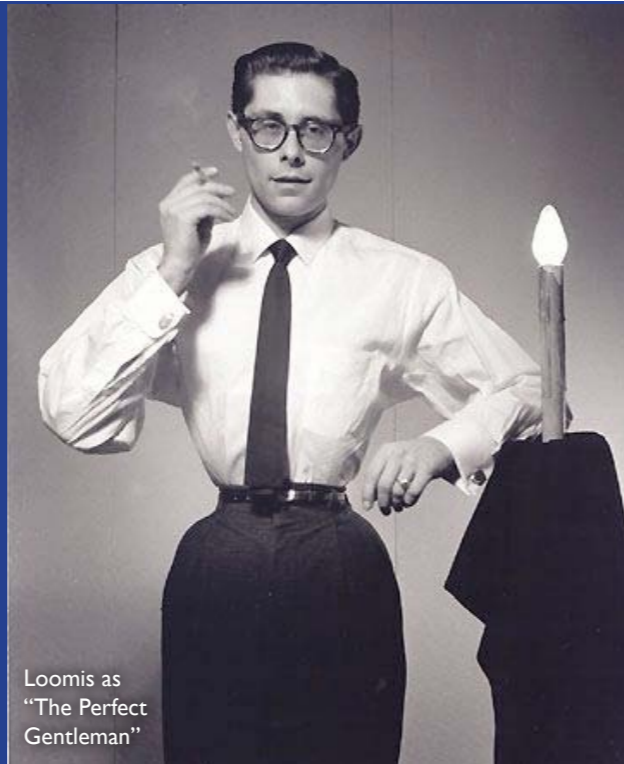
Today due to an explosion in knowledge and accessibility anyone can acquire custom-made garments, whether to tight-lace and change body shape or just to improve posture and the fit of a three piece suit.

Male corsetting in other cultures

Among the Dinka of the southern Sudan the men wear long decorated "corsets" of leather and beads. The garment is sewn on to the man's body and worn continuously, only changed to reflect age or status." Ibitoe tribesmen of New Guinea have a culture that praises the small waist in men. During puberty a boy is ceremonially fitted with the *itiburi*, a tight belt of beaten bark that must not be removed. The boy is required to endure the compression until his body has adjusted. If he should ask for the belt to be removed, it would only be replaced with a tighter one. One can only imagine the stamina and courage required to wear this belt, far less forgiving to the body's natural shape than the Western corset.

From Perfect Gentleman to The Modern Primitive

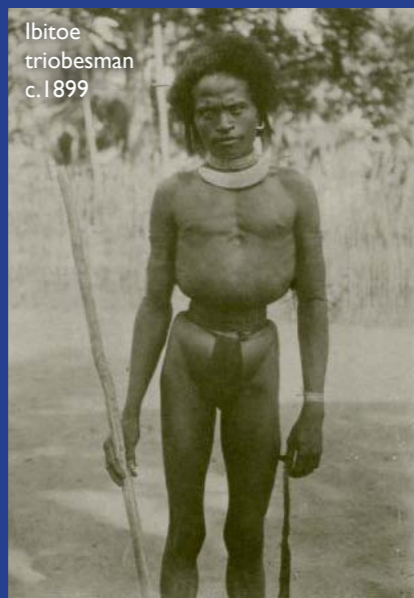
One of the most famous male corset wearers of the 20th century is Roland Loomis. Born in 1930, he was very close to his grandmother who wore traditional lacing corsetry. Then, when he was 14, he saw a young Ibitoe tribesman wearing the *itiburi* in an encyclopaedia. Finding he wanted to emulate the boy, he started wearing a wide leather belt. "It is much



Loomis as "The Perfect Gentleman"

less comfortable than a corset," Roland says, "for the edges are not padded or conical. Even when well powdered or greased, these edges soon feel like two hot wires. I eventually got to 16 inches, and gradually developed a tough, callused skin ... but the belt left permanently embossed marks on me. By the time I graduated from college in 1952, I was 'figure-trained' with an *unbelted* waist of 21 inches. After a period in the army, during which my waist was back to a normal measurement, I could finally, in 1954, pursue my lifelong dream: revive the small waist. I moved to San Francisco and enrolled for graduate work at San Francisco State University in Theatre Arts where I learned costume making including corsetry. With much effort I learned to cut and make my own corset patterns. My first corset allowed me to reduce my waist to 22 inches. My second was cut to 19 inches and I took to sleeping in it. Eventually I was able to close it. I then ripped open all of the seams in my best pair of trousers and dress shirt and modified them to fit my new dimensions."

By 1958, at the age of 28, Roland became "The Perfect Gentleman", reducing his waist to 19 inches using corsets he had designed and made himself. In later years Roland would reinvent himself as Fakir Musafar, The Modern Primitive and further explore forms of tribal body modification.



Ibitoe tribesman c. 1899

into a spring and then milled flat creating a very strong flexible bone.

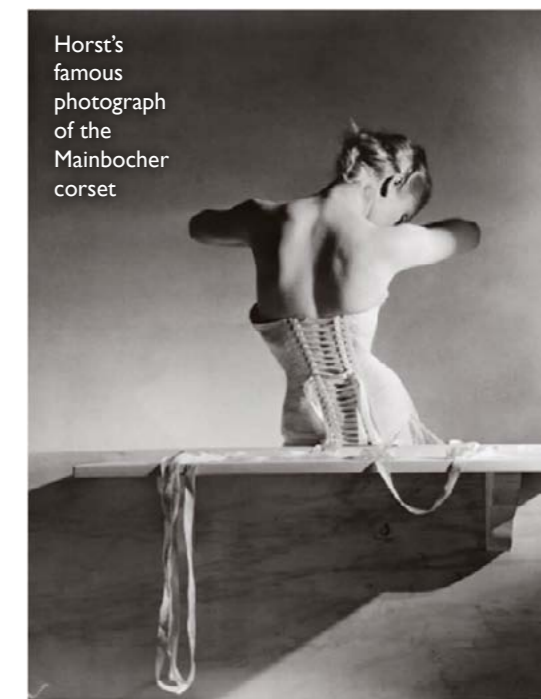
In the early 1890s a new severe straight-front corset known as the "S-bend" was designed. Cartoonist Charles Dana Gibson attempted to lampoon the "New Woman" but instead unintentionally created a heroine and fashion icon with the "Gibson Girl". The Edwardian and Belle Epoque era saw the corset lengthen down to the knees to accommodate the new "hobble skirts", which were so narrow at the ankle as to impede the wearer's gait and cause them to take tiny steps. It was said that some ladies took to wearing fabric shackles around their ankles to avoid ripping the narrow skirt. The knee-length training corset kept the wearer's gait in very small steps but did not allow her to sit down!

The "New Figure" of 1910 released women from Victorian extremes. Most would attribute the fall of the corset directly to Paul Poiret's sensational designs for the Ballet Russe, inspired by the Orient and dubbed the "Harem Look". The young also took to corsetry made of vulcanised rubber cloth with less boning, used for sports corsets and in 1913 a dance corset (called "the tango") which claimed to prevent muscle fatigue. But the Great War cut off supply of raw rubber from plantations within the Empire, and research surged into man-made fabrics. The brassiere and short elastic girdle were more practical than a tight-lacing corset, and the corselette, appearing in America in 1919, combined the two and was an instant success.

Between the wars, dresses, corsets and undergarments became quite flimsy once more, in a shameless display of the natural body and glorification of youth reminiscent of the Regency period. By 1923 sheets of rubber fabric were used to create a sort of tube corset or "roll-on" girdle, no longer sculpting the figure but controlling it, as a slimming aid. But society still considered it to be indecent for a lady to appear in public without a foundation garment of some sort.

In 1939 there was actually a swing back to the nipped-in waist thanks in particular to

Mainbocher's "Waltz Waist", a pale pink, back-lacing corset beautifully photographed by Horst in a neo classical pose. This photo was the shot heard round the fashion world and many designers took the lead to return to small waists (the new "figure of eight" silhouette) in their autumn collections of 1939, helped by the nostalgia of the movie *Gone With the Wind*, released that year. A two-inch reduction was recommended to an ideal waist of 26", as opposed to the 1920s ideal of 28". It was a short-lived fad, thanks to the onset of war once more. By 1941 rationing was in full force. Women from all walks of life were forced into "utility corsets", simple "roll-on" girdles that were known, thanks to inferior materials, as "futility corsets".



Horst's famous photograph of the Mainbocher corset



Late Edwardian corsets

Christian Dior's "New Look" in 1947 appealed to a depressed market. Boned dress bodices and suit jackets with nipped-in waists and full circle skirts prevailed for a decade, a symbol of a return to happier times for Europe. "Waspies" were developed for the New Look, short corsets only six inches deep, with boning and elastic inserts to achieve the desired hourglass look. By the 1950s *Vogue* magazine would opine: "A figure's not God-given. Grace depends on good exercise and good corseting. The exercise is up to will power; the corset to wise choice." Screen sirens and top couture house models were seen flaunting waist measurements as small as 19 or 20 inches emphasising their full busts and hips. The lingerie designs of the period by companies like Warners were engineering



Jayne Mansfield exhibits a 1950s corseted figure (measurements 40"-21"-35")



A Thierry Mugler catwalk corset

feats of delight in two-way stretch elastic fabrics that are still copied today. The “Merry Widow”, a combination of long-line brassiere and waist-cinching garter belt, was named after a popular MGM film of 1952 starring Lana Turner: the advertising slogan proclaimed “You’ll look so naughty and feel so nice!”

New wonder fabrics developed by DuPont including Lycra and Spandex meant that a foundation garment could feel as light as a modern swimsuit. But the final blow to corsetry came with pantyhose or “tights”—there was no

longer a need for a separate garment to hold up the stocking or the need for the stocking to hold down the corset! Tights with reinforced tummy control panels put an end to the need for a separate foundation garment. Skirt hems could rise as high as they liked and the seamed stocking was outmoded.

So, as in the 1920s, the 1960s moved towards the youth market with a boyish look demanding freedom and comfort, epitomised by Twiggy. Throughout the 1970s (rather like the 1930s) a cultural focus on youth and body exposure resulted in greater reliance on diet and exercise, rather than foundation garments, to create a desirable figure. Was this the end of the corset? For a time it seemed so, with the art of corset-making dying out with the aged ladies

who worked the sewing machines in the few remaining factories such as Vollers and Axforde. Then in the 1980s a revival began with 18th-century-inspired catwalk designs from the queen of alternative fashion Vivienne Westwood, and the birth of the “Goth” style tribe who liked Victorian costumes. These trends found their way on to the catwalk shows of major haute couture designers like Christian Lacroix, Alexander McQueen and Donatella Versace.

Corset Myths

Although “tight-lacing” was popular during the late 1800s, women rarely reduced their waists more than a few inches. A corset with a 20-inch waist measurement would generally be worn with a gap at the back, so the woman’s corseted waist measured between 21 and 24 inches. So where did the tales of obscenely tiny 13-inch waists come from?

From 1830 to 1900 a great deal of material was published both for and against the corset. The main culprit was *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, in which letters were published allegedly sent in by tight lacers themselves. However, external evidence indicates that many of these letters represent sexual fantasies rather than authentic experiences, and some may have been fraudulently concocted to increase circulation.

Many publications on fashion history have accepted as fact that in the 16th-century Catherine de Medici imposed a rule of 13 inches for all the ladies in her court, enforced with the use of steel cage corsets. The source of this information was a paper written in 1865 by Lord William, at the height of “the Corset Controversy”, and he offered no evidence. It is now thought the steel corsets may have been orthopaedic braces to correct spinal deformities and posture, ceremonial or just for display. (Some are also modern forgeries.) The same 13-inch ideal has also been cited for the English court of Elizabeth I, a fanciful notion dating from 1965 and inspired by a lack of perspective interpretation in 16th-century royal portraits.

Over the years, corsets have been accused of causing a litany of health problems—that they misshape internal organs and cause cancer, TB, fainting, haemorrhoids, coughing, palpitations, pulmonary disease, apoplexy, asthma, anaemia, curvature of the spine and occasionally

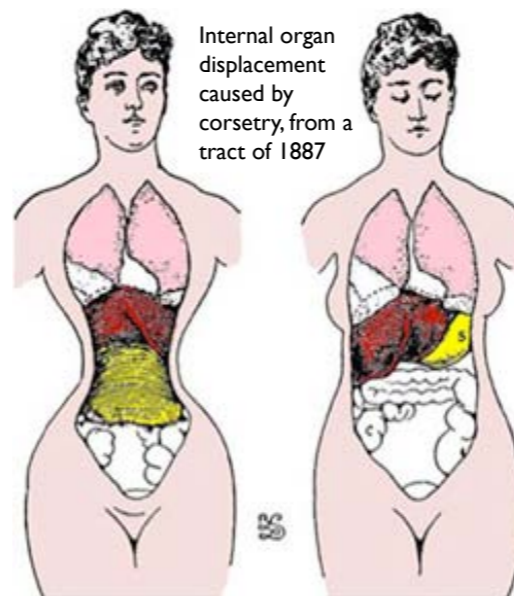
miscarriages. Other “illnesses” attributed to corsets imaginary sexist conditions, such as “hysteria”.

In *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (1995) Valerie Steele observes that the idea that corsets misshaped the liver came from the natural variation in liver shapes. When doctors performed autopsies, they would see odd-looking livers and attribute it to corset-wearing. Twentieth-century X-rays show that a tightly laced corset compresses the “floating” ribs (the lower five, which are not attached to the breast bone) and moves the internal organs, although when the corset is removed the body seems to revert to its normal shape. There is no record of a woman having a rib surgically removed to better fit into a corset—a particularly absurd myth given the deadliness of surgery in the 1800s. Most authorities today agree that extremely tight corsets might risk physical harm, as they do force organs to shift and cause indigestion and constipation. Prolonged use can eventually weaken back muscles. But in general corsets are no more deadly than high heels.

Throughout the 19th century corsetry was advertised in some quarters as actively *promoting* health, and thousands of patents were sought for designs from pregnancy corsets to short demi-corsets for support while labouring, riding or other sporting activities. The “electric corset” promised its wearer vigorous health and a graceful figure by virtue of the magnetic properties of the garment’s metal components.

The end of the 19th century saw the emancipated and independent New Woman, far more active and health-conscious than

her ancestors, participate in sports such as riding, roller and ice skating, hill walking and climbing, bicycling, golf and tennis. But her appearance was that of the narrow-waisted Gibson Girl, so her vigour inspired lightweight



Sex and fetishism

Around 1900 the periodical *La Vie Parisienne* printed a story describing the nuptial night in terms that directly link the unlacing of the corset with the act of deflowering. Yet, far from the stereotypical frightened and passive Victorian bride, the woman is joyful and self-assured:

Trembling, happy, your husband unlaces you with an uncertain and clumsy hand, and you laugh, mischievously, joyously ascertaining that his confusion is caused by the sight of your beauty. You are happy to feel your omnipotence: you take care not to help him untie the knots or find his way among the lace-holes; on the contrary, you take pleasure in prolonging his tentative gropings...

The message is that the ideal married couple should be happy lovers and that erotic lingerie contributes to their marital satisfaction.

Real life British couple, Will and Ethel Granger lived their entire married life under the lace. In the 1960s Will wrote and had privately printed a 34-page biography of his wife, in which he tells of how he met Ethel in the mid-1920s when she was a “plain Jane” with a 23-inch waist. Through perseverance he encouraged her to grow her hair, wear three-inch heels, try a corset and have her ears pierced, which he did himself. Over the years he managed to alter Ethel’s appearance completely with corsets laced to 15 inches, numerous piercing in her ears and nose some of which were quite large to accommodate “plugs”, heels up to 5¼ inches and heavy make-up. Some of the corsets were chosen by Will and designed to his specifications (which could mean a very high restricting back or long over the hips). Very few of Ethel’s photos show her smiling, though in the biography Will expresses no doubt that all the tightening and piercing constitutes the most solid emotional and physical bond in a marriage that never faltered. The Grangers became cult figures within the underground world of enthusiasts, and Ethel entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* with “the world’s smallest waist”. Ethel died in 1982, a few years after her husband, having tight-laced almost to the end.

Another more recent example of a lengthy marriage under the lace is that of American couple Bob and Cathie Jung. Cathie is the

current living holder of the world record with a waist of 13¾ inches, but on a day-to-day basis her waist measures 16 or 17 inches. She is 5 feet, 6 inches tall and weighs about 130 pounds. She wears her corset 24 hours a day, taking it off only to bathe, and this, in turn, has permanently affected her body. X-rays of her torso appear to show a modification of the lower ribs and possibly an increased space between vertebrae. Cathie's husband Bob is a surgeon and she is confident that he would never insist she do anything medically dangerous.

Bob has had a life-long interest in corsets. When they first began dating in the late 1950s, he encouraged her to wear corsets on special occasions. For their wedding day, he had a traditional lacing corset custom made for Cathie to wear. She wore corsets occasionally after that, mostly in the evenings. Then in the 1990s with their children grown up, she and her husband began to train Cathie's waist. Bob admits that the visual appearance of corsetry is sexually stimulating but Cathie says she is not stimulated in this way, and does it purely to please Bob.



Ethel Granger

It is important to distinguish between ordinary fashionable corsetry, as practised by most 19th-century women, and the very different minority practice of fetishistic tight-lacing. The psychological appeal of the sensation of support delivered by a corset might derive from the feeling of being embraced (either by the mother or the lover). Rigid or tight clothing tends to make the individual more aware of his or her body; for some a too-tight corset offers pleasurable pain and for others an emphasis on erotic scenarios involving dominance and submission.

William Stekel, a sexologist of the early 20th century, described a "respectable" married man who tight-laced, cross dressed and wore women's high-heeled shoes so tight he limped: "It actually appeared as if physical pain were an integral part of his bliss and he gloated in it as long as it were caused by some feminine article of apparel. He often tried, unsuccessfully, to lace himself so tightly that he would faint. He even persuaded his wife to lace herself closely and tied her corset tighter every day himself until her waistline had been reduced about six inches. This also gratified him sexually."

corsetry that allowed greater freedom of motion. Sports corsets were designed like the "Swiss belt", cut low under the bust and high over the hip, like a wide belt constructed out of petersham ribbon with very few bones at the side. The female traveller could now enjoy a tropical or safari corset made of an open-weave mesh cotton which would provide support yet allow the skin to breathe in the heat. There were even corsets designed specifically for swimming.

Feminist historians may argue that corsetry functioned as a coercive apparatus through which patriarchal society controlled women, but it is certain that the women who wore these corsets did so quite of their own volition, because it made them feel attractive and properly dressed—two important indicators of status. Men might not have oppressed women by demanding they wear corsets, but women

certainly wore them to impress men and assert their rank among other women. The corset was associated with respectability: not to be laced was to be morally and sexually "loose".

Corsets Today

The 1960s brought a change in politics and society and anything backward-looking was rejected. The final nail in corsetry's coffin was the "bra burning" attitudes of the feminist movement. That instrument of torture, the corset, was the symbol of male dominion and lingerie was a way of reducing women to sex objects. To go "braless" was the ultimate statement.

But by the end of the 1970s lingerie designer Janet Reger gauged women's need to have a bit of femininity back in their lives. She made it acceptable for a woman to "power dress"

yet still have her feminine charms, even if they were hidden under her suit. And since Vivienne Westwood brought corsetry back into fashion in the 1980s it hasn't really gone away. Today's girls don't need to prove their equality—they have "girl power" and they can wear whatever they want, even a corset.

But where the corset was once an indicator of respectability, to the general public today it probably has a sexy or even fetishistic image. There were always "French postcards" that played on men's curiosity about corsetry, but it was only when it stopped being worn by most women that the shift came. Street fashion writer Ted Polhemus observes, "When an article of clothing moves out of the mainstream it either disappears or becomes iconacised. The corset was iconacised by fetishism and fetishism makes a museum for previous fashions like the seamed stocking and long glove." It was just such a fetishism that fuelled *London Life* magazine.

Today corsetry has moved from the catwalk to the high street, and the popularity of burlesque and steampunk means that it is truly a fixture in the 21st century. But when corsetry declined in the 1960s and factories started to close there was a risk that the corset-maker's skills would be lost. L3 member Michael Garrod took up the craft in retirement, as a hobby that has turned into a business: True Grace became one of the world's most respected names in custom-made corsetry. It was "cottage industry" companies like this, theatrical costumiers, enthusiastic fashion students and superb books on corset construction that kept the knowledge going. (The only thing that could genuinely cease corset production would be for the manufacture of components like the steel busks and bones to stop. Many of these components are still made using "antique" machinery, which is expensive to maintain.)

Today, 30 years on, the remnants of The London Life League can rest easy, as it is possible for anyone to obtain a

well made custom-fitting corset. Dutch corsetier Jeroen van der Klis was originally trained as a mechanical engineer but now, under the name of Bizarre Design, custom-makes corsets for clients all over the world. Although inspired by traditional corsetry, his designs are constructed in leather, without conventional busks, relying on lacing, the shape of individual panels, and special wire boning, giving the figure a smooth moulded look. San Francisco-based Dark Garden Unique Corsetry is the pride and joy of Autumn Carey-Adamme, a corset fan since the age of ten who has spent most of her life training in costume and corset making. "I design corsets for historical re-creationists, brides, cross-dressers, drag queens, waist trainers, restriction fetishists, leather fetishists, Victorian fetishists, Betty Page aspirants, 'normal people' wanting a foundation under evening clothes, people who need to wear a back brace, club kids, professional dominants (and submissives), and the more and more people who simply want them as a piece of fashionable wardrobe."

In the same mode is the work of Katie Birrel of Miss Katie, the retro and modern designs of What Katie Did and successful crossover from Fairy Goth Mother and Velda Lauder.

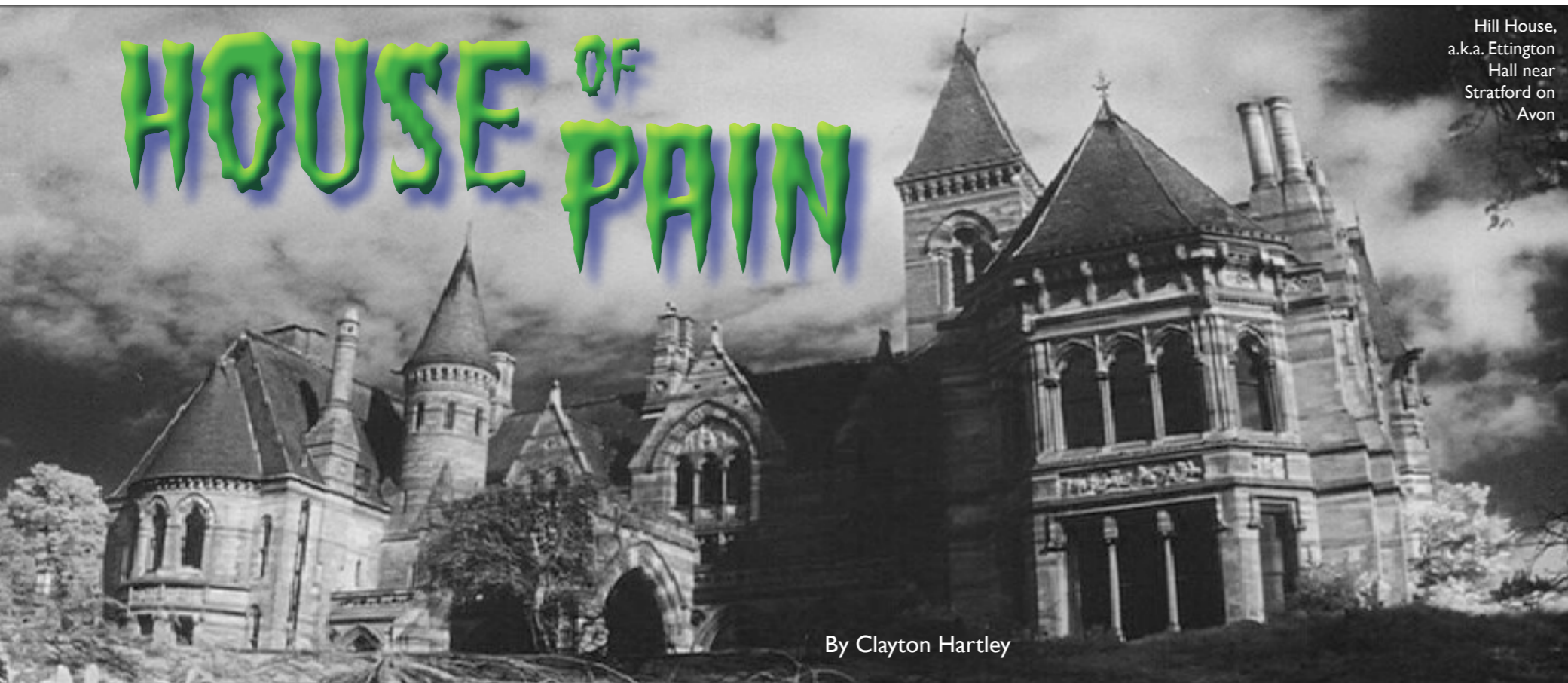
Corsetry has never been so popular and

so openly worn since the Edwardian era, as something that can be used to improve posture or encourage dieting, for sexual conquest, erotic titillation, sculpting the body into a desired unnatural form, body awareness through discomfort or just to create a smooth surface, a foundation on which to build one's sartorial appearance. There is no substitute for the feeling one gets from wearing a custom fitted corset, the confidence, deportment and, of course, the shape. I hope that enlightenment and the availability of well-made corsetry will allow it to continue to thrive in modern society.



Cathie Jung in a silver corset by Anthony Pacesa

HOUSE OF PAIN



Hill House,
a.k.a. Ettington
Hall near
Stratford on
Avon

By Clayton Hartley

AS A HALLOWEEN SPECIAL, our Film Night this month was the 1963 ghost tale *The Haunting*. Not many people have actually heard of it, despite the fact that it has always been critically respected and was placed by Martin Scorsese at the top of his list of scary movies of all time. I myself was introduced to it by a friend and was completely won over, so in the same way I wanted to share it with Members of the Club. (In fact the local reputation of these events is clearly spreading—on the night there were more civilians present than NSC types.)

The plot of the film concerns a group of people who go to an allegedly haunted house to conduct paranormal research. Leading them is Dr Markway (played by Richard Johnson), who is desperate to vindicate the field of study to which he has devoted his career (much to his wife's contempt). Joining them is cool 1960s chick Theo (Claire Bloom), who is something of a clairvoyant and whose outfits are a series of specially designed Mary Quant numbers. Luke (Russ Tamblyn) is a self-confident, Martini-swilling Ivy Leaguer who is set to inherit the house and assesses everything in terms of its resale value—he definitely has no time for the supernatural. And the last guest is Eleanor (Julie

Harris), a fragile woman who has been crushed by 12 years of caring for her demanding, bed-ridden mother, and views the experiment as a holiday. The film actually starts with a canter through the house's history, how it was built by domineering Hugh Crain, whose wives had a habit of dying mysteriously, and whose daughter Abigail was brought up incredibly strictly and never left the house, spending her life in the nursery. Abigail dies knocking for help while her paid companion canoodles with a suitor downstairs. Later we learn that Eleanor blames herself for her own mother's death, because on the night of it she was reluctant to answer the old woman's knocking.

The film was directed by American Robert Wise, who had a long and diverse career that included *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956), *West Side Story* (1961), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979). Yet when it comes to *The Haunting*, the chap in the street is sadly far more likely to be aware of the dire 1999 remake with Catherine Zeta Jones and Liam Neeson, a film that revels in soulless CGI and isn't remotely scary. In fact the best thing to be said about the remake is that

it shows how right Wise got it the first time round.

The movie is based on the 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson. Wise later reported that he had been reading the novel while working on *West Side Story*: "I was reading one of the very scary passages—hackles were going up and down on my neck—when [screenwriter] Nelson Gidding burst through the door to ask me a question. I literally jumped about three feet out of my chair. I said, 'If it can do that to me sitting and reading, it ought to be something I want to make a picture out of.'" Gidding went on to write the script for the movie version.

At a time when plenty of horror directors were using gore and gruesome special effects to try and be scary, Wise instead treated his subject like a good ghost story, suggesting horror but allowing your own imagination to fill in the gaps—knowing that the viewer's imagination can always produce something scarier than anything a director can put on screen. For my money, films like this always age well: 1979's *Alien*, directed by Ridley Scott, for example, is a very different film, but also actually shows very little of the alien (which is ultimately a man in a rubber suit) until the very end, instead allowing our fear of what lurks in the shadows to run riot, or using an approaching

blip on the screen of a tracking device to make it clear that *something* is coming. Likewise, when the noises come in the night at Hill House, Eleanor feels Theo gripping her hand in fear so tightly that it hurts—then when the lights are turned up she realises that Theo has been on the other side of the room all along. So who, or what, had been holding Eleanor's hand..?

But in the case of *The Haunting*, Wise primarily has the challenge of showing on screen a process in which the characters become increasingly scared, not of a monster in the house with them, but of the house itself. Eleanor gradually realises that the house wants her. Perhaps the use of echoey voiceover to reveal Eleanor's thoughts seems a bit cheesy today, but most of Wise's tricks are actually to do with camera techniques. Instead of colour he shot in black and white but used Panavision, the wide-screen format we take for granted today but which was still in its infancy at the time. Asking about a wide-angle lens, Wise was told by the president of Panavision, "We have developed a 30mm but it's not ready for use yet. It's got a lot of distortion in it." Wise replied, "That's exactly what I need for certain places—I want the house to look almost alive."

The film is a jarring sequence of unusual camera angles and startling edits. One shot uses a swinging mirror, and in fact pretty much every interior shot has a mirror in it. From a production point of view this would have been a headache, having to make sure that the camera doesn't see reflections of equipment or a continuity girl chewing gum, etc. But Wise



Left to right, Dr Markway (Richard Johnson), Cleo (Claire Bloom), Eleanor (Julie Harris) and Luke (Russ Tamblyn)



The second Mrs Crain bites the dust with a typically extreme camera angle

In addition to mirrors, Hill House is full of statues, presumably a short cut to giving the house a personality, a face. Faces even appear to Eleanor in the patterns on the wallpaper. But it is also part of the general Victorian clutter of the place, doubtless meant to be unnerving in itself to a 1960s mind. We may have fallen in love with Victoriana all over again since then, but at that time it would have been considered oppressively old-fashioned.

External scenes were shot at



A face in the wallpaper



That spiral staircase

clearly wanted to pull out all the stops to confuse the viewer's perception of the geography of the house, to make it seem somehow *not right*. There is a spiral staircase that plays a big role and at one point the camera seems to rush up it. Wise later revealed that they built a trolley that could run on the handrail, fixed a handheld camera to it and allowed it to roll all the way down—then simply reversed the film. This keenness on altered perceptions of reality is pretty much in keeping with the era in which the film was made: the plots of films like *The Ipcress File* (1965) or indeed many episodes of *The Prisoner* (1967–8) involve brainwashing through drugs or sensory deprivation, etc., with camera tricks used to try and give an impression of the victim's deranged perspective. In the case of *The Haunting*, Wise is trying to depict the indefinable sense of dread and unease that gradually grips the characters the longer they spend in the house.



You may not believe in ghosts but you cannot deny terror!

Ettington Hall, near Stratford on Avon, but the internal shots were all on sets lovingly created at MGM's studios at Borehamwood. (Although filmed in the UK the film is set in New England.) In fact when a celebratory screening was held in 2010 at the house itself, now Ettington Park Hotel, guest actor Richard Johnson revealed that it was the first time he had actually been inside the place. Some of the dramatic shots of the exterior were achieved using infra-red film, creating black skies and bold contrast and texture on the brickwork.

The other unusual thing about *The Haunting* as a horror film is that it is essentially about people, and their relationships with one another. You can see a contemporary trailer online where the studio is doing its best to sell it as a horror flick—"You may not believe in ghosts but you cannot deny TERROR!"—but it doesn't really work because you can't cut together an anthology of individual shots that are

horrific in themselves. Instead tension gradually builds not least because of the growing tension, much of it sexual, between the characters. Luke tries in on with Theo, but Theo is after Eleanor (in the book Theo's sexual orientation is made clear from the beginning as she is seen having a bust-up with her girlfriend, but this was omitted from the film). Eleanor has a crush on Markway, leading Theo to swing between affection towards her and jealous playground humiliation. It's not clear to what extent Markway might return Eleanor's feelings, but when his wife arrives unexpectedly the social dynamics get even more turbulent and Eleanor's emotional state is primed for the finale.

In this environment where everyone seems to want something they can't have, Eleanor seems to take first prize: her youth has been squandered on the cruel manipulative mother, and her smug married sister (who never helped care for the old woman) treats Eleanor like a child and blames her for the mother's death. It's as if the film is about despair and disappointment and asks where these sad energies go—is it possible for them to suffuse into the fabric of the place where they happen? By the end of the film sceptic Luke just wants the house burned to the ground. Without wishing to give too much away, Eleanor achieves a kind of release, though the social conventions of the time would not allow her to live happily ever after with married Markway.

At one point artist Theo picks up a dish and declares it to be by Bernard Palissy: "I never thought I'd see one of these outside a museum." No more is made of this, which might seem odd. Palissy was a 16th-century French artist particularly active in the field of ceramics. Not wanting the artist's hand to be any more visible than necessary, he made dishes with reptiles, plants and shells in relief—achieved by taking actual creatures and making moulds from them. So in a sense you have an inanimate object that bears a permanent impression of a living thing. A metaphor for Hill House, perhaps?

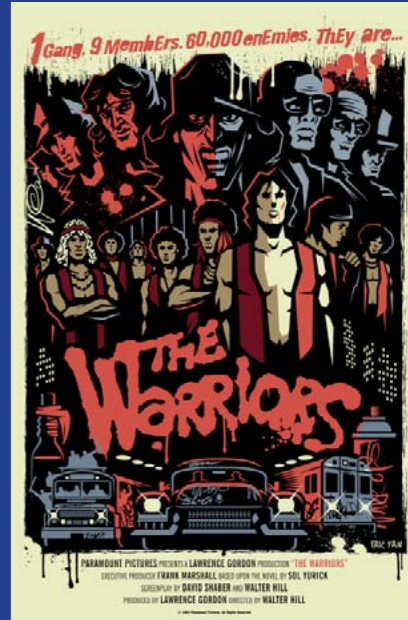


A plate by Bernard Palissy

Film Night: *The Warriors* (1979)

7pm, Monday 19th November
The Tea House Theatre, 139
Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL
(020 7207 4585)

This time Ed Marlowe presents Walter Hill's 1979 classic that blends gritty social (sur)realism with Greek literature to produce a distillation of America's 1970s angst about social decay. New York's Times Square may today be a scrubbed tourist trap but in the 1970s was virtually a no-go area of drug dealers, prostitutes, strip joints and porn cinemas. *The Warriors* supposes a



version of New York in which a multitude of warring street gangs overwhelm the police. One gangster brings all the hoods together for a summit meeting where he proposes they unite against the cops—but things go wrong and our heroes, a gang called The Warriors from Coney Island, find themselves isolated, everyone out to get them. Somehow they must battle their way home. The plot is actually based on Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

Filed almost entirely on the streets of New York, from sunset to sunrise, the production had to deal with threats from real gangs and the odd murder nearby holding up shooting; typically the local hoods had to be paid off before filming could even start. When actual gangsters were drafted in for crowd scenes, off-duty police officers had to be included to ensure things didn't get out of hand. Hill's vision originally involved a voiceover flagging up mythological parallels and also some animated sequences—he was a fan of comic books and wanted to bring out an flavour of that look—but the studio wouldn't pay for that. However, we will be showing the "Directors Cut" of the film in which some of these elements have been reintroduced.

The Cocktail Cabinet

Wherein Members bound into the arms of Bacchus

Drinks of the Rich and Famous

By David Bridgman-Smith

There are many benefits to being rich and famous: the attention, the glamorous invitations, the ability to think that you are better than anyone else (or so I imagine), but to me the true mark that you have “made it” is that you have some intoxicating liquor created in your honour. (Failing that, you can always create it yourself.) This is a tradition that goes back centuries and in this article I will have a look at some of the finer examples.

The King’s Ginger Created for King Edward VII

A keen sportsman and huntsman, King Edward VII travelled between different estates, often riding in one of the new, open-top horseless carriages. Concerned about the damage that this breezy contraption may cause to the monarch, the Royal Physician approached Berry Bros and Rudd (the Royal Wine & Spirits Merchant) to create a tonic to reinvigorate His Majesty after a journey. The result, following some experimentation, was The King’s Ginger, a liqueur made from distilled ginger root, a mix of other herbs and spices, and sugar. It’s perfect for hipflasks and is still enjoyed by the Royals of today—Prince Charles is known to mix it with vodka to make his preferred tipple.

Nose Fresh ginger peel and a



little orange marmalade.

Taste A rich and intense flavour with some sweetness. The real, genuine ginger root flavour lasts. This is unlike most other ginger liqueurs that I have tasted; it has great warmth and a long, fiery finish, although it’s not too hot. This also mixes exceptionally well in a 50/50 mix with Scotch.

Sir Walt’s Liqueur Created by Sir Walter Raleigh

During his imprisonment in the Tower of London, explorer Sir Walter Raleigh grew a variety of herbs and spices (discovered on his travels) in the gardens. Using these ingredients, he made the famous Great Cordial. The recipe is a closely guarded secret, but we know that it includes the following ingredients: fresh rosemary leaves, saffron, ginger, juniper berries, cardamom, iris leaf, cinnamon, anise, orange and lemon peel, hyssop, black pepper, caraway, gentian root, cloves, peppermint leaves, sweet balm, cumin, and angelica.

Nose A rich and complex nose with hints of juniper, beeswax, rosemary, menthol and sweet balm. In some ways, it reminds me of a fine moustache wax. There are also some spicy notes of cumin, cloves and ginger.

Taste The flavour continues with its great complexity and I am, again, reminded of a barbershop. The sweetness is not overpowering and the juniper and pine notes continue too. There are some refreshing elements, but it’s also quite intense and I think this could be a delightful digestif.

Vin de Constance Enjoyed by Napoleon (and Elinor Dashwood)



Although this was not strictly created for Napoleon, he was rather fond of it (as was Prussia’s Frederick the Great). In fact, it was the beverage to be seen drinking for the 19th-century crowned heads of Europe. Such was Napoleon’s fondness for it, that when he was exiled to St Helena following his defeat at Waterloo, he had this signature drink shipped in specially.

In Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, Mrs Jennings remembers her husband’s fondness for the wine, claiming that it benefits his “colicky gout” and Elinor Dashwood reflects to herself on its “healing powers on a disappointed heart”.

Created in the late 18th century in the Klien Constantia estate in South Africa, the wine was sweet and enjoyed great popularity until Phylloxera (the wine blight) struck the Constantia estate in the late 1860s. In 1986, the sweet Constantia wine was recreated and is now known as Vin de Constance.

Nose Dry grape, followed by sweeter honey and spice notes, such as cinnamon and nutmeg. Very inviting.

Taste The wine’s texture is smooth and silky. In terms of taste, an initial dryness leads to some sweeter honey notes, followed by the flavours of fresh, succulent and juicy grapes. There is a plummy jamminess towards the end and a hint of copper on the finish. Lightly chilled, this is a crisp and refreshing drink and very pleasant to savour. While tasty on its own, it also works superbly with a squeeze of lemon juice and soda water.

Finally, the trend for the famous (and infamous) to attach their name to some brand of booze is still alive and well in the 21st century; here is

a selection of the more notable:

- Dan Akroyd** (comedian): Crystal Head (vodka)
- Willie Nelson** (country musician): Old Whiskey River (bourbon)
- Danny DeVito** (comedian): Limoncello
- Cleo Rocos** (former muse of Kenny Everett): AquaRiva (Tequila)
- Ice-T** (wide-boy): OG Original Gangster XO (brandy)
- Marilyn Manson** (musician): Mansinthe (absinthe)
- Ron Jeremy** (adult “entertainer”): Ron de Jeremy (rum)
- Barry Norman** (film critic): Pickled cocktail onions

While some of these products are actually quite good, I doubt that they will still be around in 100 years (unlike the first three drinks mentioned).

For more cocktail recipes, product reviews and musings on booze, see the *New Sheridan Club’s Institute for Alcoholic Experimentation*





CLUB NOTES

Video Fails to Kill Ukulele Star

IN THE LAST issue I mentioned that a group of NSC covers had helped out the omphalos of “Chap Hop”, Mr B. the Gentleman Rhymer, by appearing in the video for his latest tune “Smart, Just Like a Chap”. You may like to know that the finished reel is available for viewing at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sScMXslontQ&list=UULH_hNllzMmEOXv7tNAsGdg&index=1&feature=plcp (bit of a mouthful, I know, though it’s best not to try and pronounce it).

New Members

AFTER THE FRIGHTFEST of Halloween, with armies of masked children assaulting our homes demanding bribes, and the firestorm of Guy Fawkes Night, as neighbours’ gardens erupt like the shell-pocked plains of the Somme and the cordite stench creeps in through closed windows, we now have only the tawdry spectacle of the US election to deal with. How gratifying to have



been able to offer NSC Membership—both soothing and invigorating, and pleasingly old fashioned, like a tot of The King’s Ginger (see page 18)—to the following in the last month: Lars Karnestam, Liam Riley, Simon Jones, Francesco Pollastri and Scott Baker.



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 plus our Facebook page and the web forum.

🚫 NSC Club Night

Wednesday 7th November
8pm–11pm
Upstairs, The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB
Members: Free
Non-Members: £2 (first visit free)
See page 2.

Cakewalk Café

Wednesdays 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th November
8pm–1am (swing dance classes 7–8pm and 8–9pm)
Passing Clouds, 1 Richmond Road, Dalston, London E8 4AA
Admission: £5 (£3.50 if you’re in 1920s/1930s clobber) or £8 including a dance class; £12 including both.

Live swing jazz every Wednesday featuring Nicholas Ball, Ewan Bleach and chums, with optional dance classes from Swing Patrol.

The Guinea Club

Thursday 8th November
8pm

Bar Solo, 20 Inverness Street, London NW1 7HJ
Admission: Free

A night of traditional cabaret, hosted by NSC Member Anke Landau channelling Marlene Dietrich... This time featuring Mzz Kimberley, Jordan Le Fay, Little Queenie and much more.

London Swing Cats present

Hip Shake

Friday 9th November
Doors 7pm, swing taster class 7.30, dancing till midnight
Orford House Social Club, 73 Orford Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9QR
Admission: £9 (students £6)

Dancing to rhythm & blues tunes from the 1940s and 1950s, plus vintage and repro clothing and accessories for sale.

Vintage Photo Booth

Sunday 11 November
10am–5pm
London location secret (?)
Admission: £175

A collaboration between vintage styling team Lipstick & Curls and “pin-up” photographer Tony Nylons. You get a complete hair and make-up makeover, some tips and tricks on

vintage styling for your chosen decade, then you get a photo session with the insalubrious-sounding Mr Nylon. At the end of the day you can choose four photos to take away with you. They are happy doing individuals, couples or groups. For more details and to book email info@lipstickandcurls.net.

Hula Boogie

Sunday 11th November
7pm–1am
South London Pacific, 340 Kennington Road, London SE11

HULA BOOGIE!
An AWESOME night of FLOOR STOMPIN' MUSIC from the 1940's & 1960's

SUNDAYS
15th July 2012
19th August 2012
16th September 2012
21st October 2012
11th November 2012

MUSIC, COCKTAILS & DANCING 'TIL PAST MIDNIGHT

Dance classes
Jive & Hukilau Hula
7.30pm - 8.15pm

Admission £7

FURTHER INFO: WWW.HULABOOGIE.CO.UK
info@hulaboogie.co.uk 0208 672 5972

South London Pacific, 340 Kennington Road, London SE11 4LD

4LD

Admission: £7

A night of cocktails and dancing to vintage music from the 1940s and 1950s, with a South Sea flavour in this splendidly styled Tiki bar in South London, with resident DJs Miss Aloha and Reverend Boogie. There is a jive class from 7.30 to 8pm and a lesson from Miss Aloha in the Hukilau Hula Dance from 8pm to 8.15.

The Political Impact of London Clubs

Monday 12th November

7pm

Royal Over-Seas League, Park Place, off St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LR

Admission: Free

NSC Member Seth Thevoz reprises his talk based on his PhD research, a roller coaster of bribery and corruption looking at how London's world of gentleman's clubs has been critically influential in the country's politics. All welcome.

Swing at the Light

Mondays 12th, 19th and 26th November

From 7pm

Upstairs at The Light Restaurant and Bar, 233 Shoreditch High Street, London E1

Admission: £8 for class and club, £4 just for the club night after 9pm

An 18th-century cartoon predicting political chaos as a result of fomentations in the clubs of St James's



Dress: Vintage/retro appreciated

Weekly vintage dance night in a venue with a wooden floor and its own terrace. Beginners classes from 7.30, intermediate classes from 8.15, and "freestyle" from 9pm, with DJ Tim Hellzapoppin'.

Spin-a-Disc

Mondays 12th, 19th and 26th November

8-11pm

The Nag's Head, 9 Orford Road, Walthamstow Village, London E17 9LP

Admission: Free

A music night organised by Auntie Maureen: you bring your favourite discs (33, 45 or 78 rpm) and she spins them.

Ukulele Cabaret 5th Birthday Party

Tuesday 13th November

8-11pm

The Lincoln Lounge, 52 York Way, King's Cross, N1 9AB

Admission: Free

Cabaret diva Tricity Vogue celebrates a birthday version of her regular ukulele-driven night, this time featuring star of the Edinburgh Fringe hit *Formby*, Ewan Wardrop, Uke of Edinburgh winner Jo Stephenson, Martin Wheatley, Matthew Gunning, plus guests Lana

Shelley and Rosa Conrad who played at the very first Ukulele Cabaret five years ago.

Henry Brothers' Single Launch

Wednesday 14th November 8pm

The Windmill, 22 Blenheim Gardens Brixton, London, Greater London SW2 5BZ

Admission: Appears to be free

Purveyors of old-time blues and bluegrass, the Henry Brothers celebrate the release of "Ballad of the Lawson Family", their bid for the Christmas No.1, a rousing tale of family murder and suicide, available on 7" vinyl and modern MP3 download. With support from The Ramshackle Union Band and country rock troubador Simon Stanley-Ward.

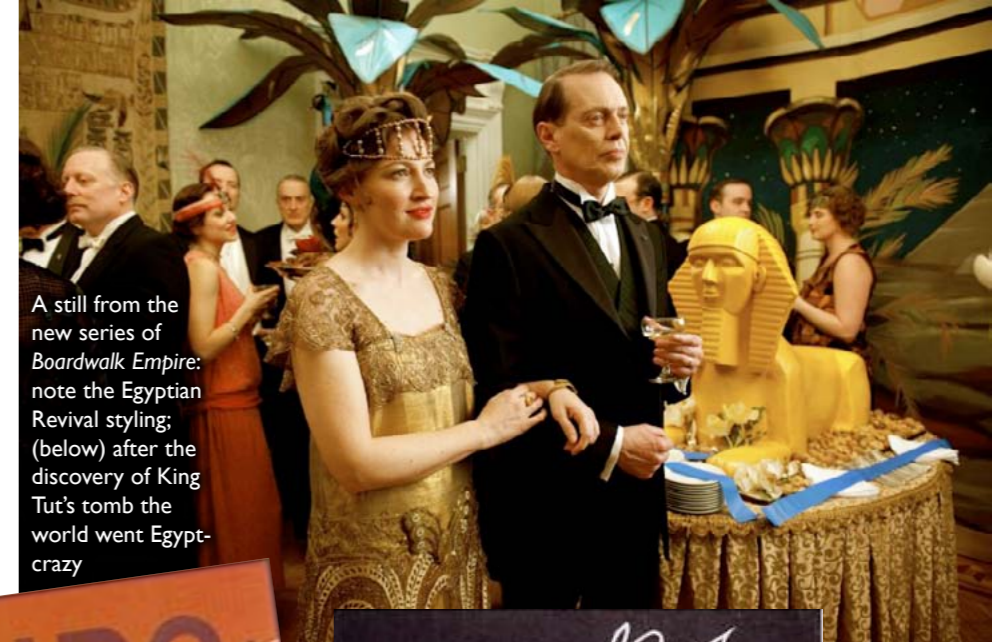
The Candlelight Club: Land of the Pharaohs

Friday 16th and Saturday 17th November

7.30pm-12am

A secret London location Admission: £15.75 in advance

Dress: Pith helmets, kohled eyes, Deco headdresses, fly whisks, or the usual Prohibition dandies, swells, gangsters and molls, degenerate aristos and decadent aesthetes, corrupt politicians and the Smart Set In the Know



A still from the new series of Boardwalk Empire: note the Egyptian Revival styling; (below) after the discovery of King Tut's tomb the world went Egypt-crazy



The Candlelight Club is a clandestine pop-up cocktail party with a 1920s speakeasy flavour, in a secret London venue completely lit by candles. Each event offers a one-off cocktail menu with special themes, plus live period jazz bands and vintage vinylism from DJ MC Fruity. Ticket holders get an email two days before revealing the location. This time we're giving it an Egyptian theme—Howard Carter's discovery in 1922 of the treasure-filled tomb of King Tutankhamun sparked a worldwide obsession with all things Egyptian (although the Theda Bara film *Cleopatra* five

years earlier helped as well). Art Deco jewellery and architecture featured patterns and colours from artworks in the hoard, or even specific Egyptian imagery, as did fashion. There was a surge in tourism to the Valley of the Kings, all helped by the romance of a rumoured “curse of the mummy”. A *The Mummy* movie came out the next year, followed by the seminal Boris Karloff version in 1932. Live music will come from those pith-helmeted troubadours Albert Ball’s Flying Aces with platter spinning from the NSC’s own MC Fruity.

Shoreditch Vintage Fair

Saturday 17th November
Midday till 5pm
Shoreditch Town Hall, 380 Old Street
London, Greater London EC1V 9LT
(020 7739 6176)
Admission: £2

Some 60 traders gather to peddle clothes, accessories, homewares, and jewellery from the 1940s to the 1980s (eek!). There is also a Vintage Tearoom by Teaspoon Events and a Vintage Beauty Parlour by Lipstick and Curls, plus live performances. To keep up to date see the Facebook page.

A Dapper Tea

Sunday 18th November
2–5pm
Drink, Shop & Do, 9 Caledonian Road,
London N1 9DX
Admission: £18 in advance only

A vintage tea party offering tea, sandwiches and sweetmeats, plus full bar, guest speaker and raffle prizes, all in aid of Prostate Cancer Research. More details on the Facebook page.

Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 18th November
11am–4.30pm (trade from 10.30am)
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. More details at www.clerkenwellvintagefashionfair.co.uk.

NSC Film Night

The Warriors (1979)
Monday 19th November
7pm–11pm
The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk,
London SE11 5HL (020 7207 4585)
Admission: Free
See page 17.



Desmond
O'Connor

Herr Kettner’s Kabaret

Friday 23rd November
7pm–2am
Kettner’s, 29 Romilly
Street, Soho, London
W1D 5HP
Admission: Non-dining
tickets £20, dining
tickets £65. Telephone
0207 292 0512 to book
or email hannah@kettners.com

Dress: 1920s Berlin, moustachioed dandies, dizzy flappers, monocled counts, decadent aesthetes, firebrand radicals, apoplectic Teutonic military officers, predatory cross-dressers, itinerant jazz musicians, black/white tie

A special collaboration between Clayton Hartley of the Candlelight Club and Kettner’s, the Soho institution that has been throwing parties since 1867, this night evokes the bohemian spirit of 1920s Weimar Berlin—the economy in tatters and the government a political free-for-all, citizens plunge into nightly whirls of Champagne, dancing



Mat Ricardo



Ruby
Deshabillé

and laughter while their money still has some value. Spread across two floors of Herr Kettner’s beautifully decadent house, this party offers you live 1920s jazz from Champagne Charlie and the Bubbly Boys, with complimentary swing dance lessons and vintage DJ Swingin’ Dickie; a full bill of cabaret featuring ukulele-driven ribald song from Desmond O’Connor, cabaret vamp from shock-haired Belgian Laurie Hagen, stunning burlesque from Ruby Deshabillé and acts of eerie physical skill and aplomb from master juggler and balancer Mat Ricardo; a vintage photo booth; wandering magician Oli B; a masterclass in absinthe with a complimentary sample courtesy of Pernod, and much more. There are dining tickets too, offering a three-course meal with exclusive cabaret performances. More at HerrKettnersKabaret.com.

Chaz Royal’s 10-Year Anniversary Celebration

Friday 23rd & Saturday 24th November
8pm–12.45am
Bush Hall, 310 Uxbridge Road,
London W12 7LJ

Admission: Currently from £27, in advance

Self-styled International Impresario and “Burlesque King” Chaz Royal celebrates ten years promoting burlesque and cabaret around the world with a special event (though he doesn’t seem to be giving much away about who is performing). Each night has just 250 (seated) tickets and at time of writing they are 75% sold already.

The Phoenix Dance Club

Friday 30th November
9pm–2am
The Phoenix, 37 Cavendish Square, London
W1G 0PP

Admission: £5

Dress: Smart or vintage

A monthly night of hot jazz and swing for dancers at the Phoenix Bar, Oxford Street, on the last Friday of the month. With resident DJs Turn on the Heat and Swingin’ Dickie, plus special guests playing the best sounds from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Now offering a special selection of Phoenix Club cocktails—the Broadway Limited, the I Can’t Dance, the Al Capone’s Spats and the Cotton Club.

The Men Who Made Menswear

1pm, Saturday 1st December
3pm, Sunday 2nd December

Russell Nash is a professional tour guide and a member of the City of Westminster Guides & Lecturers Association. He has devised a London walking tour which charts the history of menswear over the past 200 years. Join him for a stroll around St James’s and Mayfair as he tells the story of men’s clothing through the lives and careers of the men who commissioned, inspired and made it.

John Lock, Bunny Rodger, The Duke of Windsor, Tommy Nutter, Henry Poole, John Stephen, Montague Burton, Beau Brummell, Lewis Hepworth, James Lock and Rupert Lycett Green are just some of the familiar and not so familiar names that crop up on this tour. Ever wanted to know why George “Beau” Brummell became so famous? Or where Mr Fish popularised the kipper tie? Or the sartorial connection between Jan 30th 1969 and Feb 14 1969? Or why St James’s became associated with gentlemen’s clubs in the first place? Or why the election of a Labour Government in 1945 inspired Teddy Boys? Or how the Marshall Street baths played a significant role in how today’s high street looks? Or why Edward VIII looked so good in plus fours?

The tour will take place at 1pm on Saturday December 1st and 3pm on Sunday December 2nd—the perfect warm-up for

The Chap Ball or hangover cure the next day. It starts on the steps of the Athenaeum Club, corner of Pall Mall and

Lower Regent Street, London SW1Y 5ER.

Tickets are £8 (£6 for NSC members). No need to book in advance, just turn up. However, please contact Mr Nash by electronic mail at mr.russnash@gmail.com to let him know you are coming.



Our own Pandora Harrison
(in the late 1980s or early
1990s, I would guess),
becorsetted and giving it
some Sisters of Mercy (see
pages 4–13)

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