

# DESIGN!



**A party to  
celebrate the  
Dickensian  
Christmas**

## WHAT THE DICKENS..?

### **Incendiary Eccentrics**

Odd fellows from both sides of  
The Troubles in Northern Ireland

### **The Picture of Dorian Gray**

The delightful George Sanders  
version from 1945 is the main  
feature at our January Film Night

### **Poteen Genie**

The Irish high-strength moonshine,  
banned for decades, rises from the  
ashes as a respectable beverage

### **Ale and wassail**

The Club descends on the  
Dover Castle pub for the annual  
pre-Christmas devastation

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW SHERIDAN CLUB • ISSUE 75 JANUARY 2013**



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

**The Next Meeting**

The next Club Meeting will take place on Wednesday **2nd January** (early, I know, but we could change it) in the upstairs room at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB, from 7pm until 11pm. Mr Luke Wenban will entertain us on the rollicking subject of *Agent Zigzag*, a cheeky jailbird recruited by the Nazis as a spy who promptly turned double agent. "Safe-cracking, grand larceny, girls, prison escapes, pockets full of dynamite, girls, broken noses, espionage, girls, alcohol and danger," Luke says, to give you a flavour of his talk. "A chap's day out! I hear you cry. But no, not just any chap, or cad for that matter; this is Agent Zigzag— Edward Arnold Chapman a.k.a. Edward Edwards, Edward Simpson, Arnold Thompson, Fritz Fritzchen (Little Fritz), Agent X and Agent Zigzag. A one-



Chapman in 1942 (above) and in later life as an honorary crime correspondent for the *Sunday Telegraph*, mostly warning readers to steer clear of people like him



man operation who showed pluck and courage when our country needed it the most."

**The Last Meeting**

At our December meeting, Mr Ed Marlowe used the story of his homeland to illustrate the point that even brutal sectarian struggle has its lighter side, showing us a rogues' gallery of colourful eccentrics from both sides of The Troubles in Ireland. Careful to cover loyalists and nationalists equally, and betraying no partisanship (though perhaps the mysterious strangers in black balacavas lining the front row had something to do with it...) he showed us, like the ghosts of Christmas past, a line of affable drunks, tragically misunderstood radicals, lion-fanciers, drag queens and good old unpredictable psychopaths. He also taught the wretched English in the room a thing or two about Irish history.

Many thanks to Ed: an essay version of his talk begins on page 12.



(Far left, top to bottom) Ed begins with a disclaimer; Ed seems surprised to find a map of Ireland in his slides; (no picture of Sam Duddy as "Samantha" could be found but Dolly Parton gives you a good idea; (left) the pub kindly supplied us with a tree; (below) Ed's audience



(Right and below) Ed is suspicious of Mr Prooth's (allegedly legal) new swordstick



(Left) Craigoh in the Wrong Hat; (below) Pandora



(Below left to right) Mark and Mai have a peanut-eating competition; Matthew Howard expounds; Kevin Wheeler looks like he's just remembered he has to stab someone; an advert for preppy label "Man at NSC"





Costume prize-winners Pandora Harrison (as Mrs Haversham) and Ed Marlowe as Marley's ghost

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

WE CHOSE DICKENS as the theme for this year's Christmas party (it was his 200th birthday in 2012) and people came as Miss Havershams, chimneysweeps, costermongers, Magwitches and general Victorians.

Our traditional Grand Raffle this time featured such curios as a pair of wooden crutches, a turkey, DVDs of Dickens adaptations, some antiquarian books, Victorian finger puppets, the *Ladybird Book of Charles Dickens*, an Oliver Twist toy theatre, a Royal Doulton Dickens plate, a bottle of sherry, a tin of Quality Street and a voucher for a whitebait

supper at the Trafalgar Tavern in Greenwich (a meal that Dickens himself used to enjoy).

As well as the annual Christmas lucky dip, we also had an electric pocket-picking game (which sadly started to go on the blink fair early on), where contestants had to lift a pocket watch from a jacket pocket without touching the sides—if they did a light flashed. And no NSC party would be complete without a shooting game involving the, now rather battered, ancestral foam dart gun. This time the object was to Shoot the Crutch from the Cripple, with Action Man standing in for Tiny Tim.

Live entertainment came in the form of Mr B the Gentleman Rhymer who, although not especially Dickensian, was jolly good as ever.

Prizes for best costumes went to Pandora Harrison's Miss Haversham, complete with mouse and mousetrap in her hair, and Ed Marlowe's Marley, complete with handkerchief around his jaw, chains and a ledger.



(Above) Chairman Torquil; (above right) Laurence as the country squire he is; (below) Dorian as Bill Sykes and Mai as a stable boy; (right) Mrs H. as the Infant Phenomenon and Zack as himself





The **Electrical Pocket-Picking Game** involved “dipping” a pocket watch from the pocket of a tweed jacket without touching the sides. The watch was wired up to a battery and a torch bulb, and the inside of the pocket was lined with conductive foil—if you touched the sides the light flashed. (Above) Fiona makes a valiant attempt but Scarheart yells “Stop thief!” as the light comes on. Meanwhile Chuckles likewise gets off to a ropery start (below left) before applying his cold reptilian reasoning and conquering the mechanism to a round of well-earned applause



(Left) Essex also managed to beat the system, while resident Special Constable Compton-Bassett (below) is clearly genetically incapable of successful crime. Mai (right), on the other hand, went home with a new life skill



The majesty of **Mr B the Gentleman Rhymer**. He even managed to conjure up one of those “hands in the air” moments that you read about in *Mixmag* (bottom right)





**Shoot the Crutch from the Cripple** involved firing a foam dart at Tiny Tim (top right). Jeremy (below) seemed not to understand the game, yet won by shooting away the crutch—leaving Tim standing



**The Grand Raffle!** (Left) Scarheart hold aloft the *Ladybird Book of Charles Dickens* while Torquil reaches into a hat for the winning ticket; (right) Mai, like a number of game winners, receives a NSC Jubilee mug and stick of NSC rock. Well, we have to get rid of them somehow...



(Left) Craigho was one of a number of convicts in the house; (below) Rachel Downer, as the Ghost of Christmas Past, wins a DVD of *Oliver!*



(Left, above) Mr Hartley makes the announcements; (above) Karen Hendry wins a DVD of *Scrooge*; (right) never before has a man looked so pleased to win a set of famous Victorians finger puppets (since you ask, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale; (left, below) Callum Coates wins a vintage edition of *A Christmas Carol* itself



Raffle photos by Suzanne Coles



As the evening draws to an end Scarheart (in the bowler) decides to distribute the remaining Lucky Dip prizes



A jolly chimney sweep

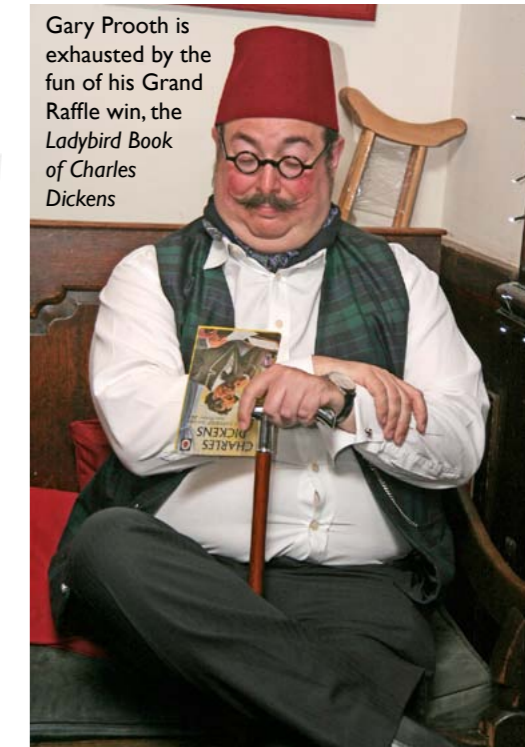
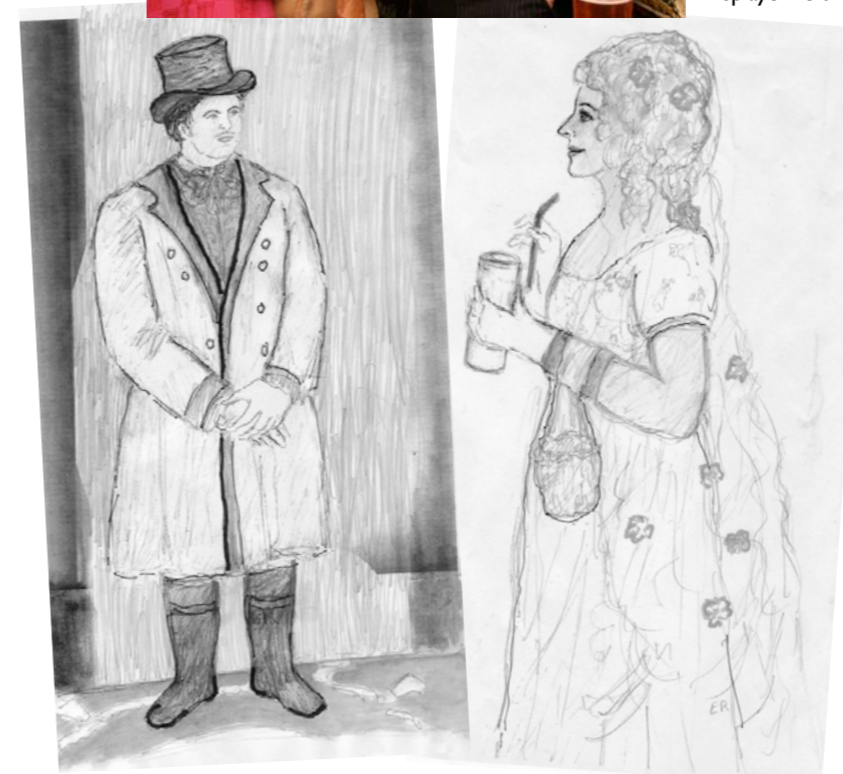
(Left) Jennifer Siggs wins an original copy of Eugen Sandow's Victorian body-building book; (above) Dorian Loveday wins a Christmas pudding; (above right) Hanson Leatherby wins a bag of chestnuts; (right) Pandora wins a fetching brooch kindly donated by Miss Lucy Darling's online vintage emporium Glamourkitten.com; (left) Scarheart holds aloft the undoubted star prize, a pair of old wooden crutches; (Below left) "Chuckles" Younghusband is so pleased to win a bottle of Harvey's Bristol Cream that he performs a spontaneous Usain Bolt lightning bolt celebration; (below right) Adrienne Coles is the lucky winner of a frozen turkey—which she then had to work out how to get back to Sussex



Bunty (left) and Essex



(Left) Eugenie Rhodes makes her exit. You may have noticed her making some sketches during the evening: a couple are displayed left



Gary Prooth is exhausted by the fun of his Grand Raffle win, the Ladybird Book of Charles Dickens



*Eccentric and artistic persons from within the ranks of Ireland's warring paramilitary factions during the 20th century*

THESE ARE MANY things of which we Irish are rightly proud. Our countryside. Our hospitality. Our cultural gifts to the world. Our literary heroes. Our musicians. Other things we have given the world make us less than proud. I can but apologise on behalf of my people for the Jedward. Sadly, for all too many people of a certain generation or two, for any mention of Ireland, especially the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, the image which first springs to mind will be men in ski-masks, with guns. It is not my intention in this piece to defend paramilitary violence. Nonetheless, these men have stories worth telling. A British Under Secretary of State once famously referred to Irish paramilitaries, the IRA in particular, in the wake of a Republican bombing as “fascist beasts from hell”. The enduring tragedy of the island is that they were not monsters, but human beings. On both sides of the divide these were ordinary people who, given other opportunities, had much else to contribute and might well have even been eminent New Sheridans.

**Irish History for English People (and others)**

For many centuries, Ireland and its natives were left largely alone to do as they pleased. The Romans never attempted an invasion. St Patrick peaceably brought Christianity to Ireland. The Vikings came and established a settlement to

which present-day Dublin traces its roots. It was not until the 12th century AD that the political relationship with England began in earnest. This story begins with Dermott Macmurrrough, the King of Leinster. Dermott came to the throne in 1126. A hard man, Dermott killed or blinded seventeen of his rivals during the year 1141 alone. A long-running feud with Tiernan O'Rourke, the King of Breffney, became bitter in the extreme in 1152 with the kidnap by Dermott of Tiernan's wife. Eventually Dermott was defeated and exiled to France. Dermott approached Richard de Clare, the second Earl of Pembroke—better known as Strongbow—who was persuaded by the offer of Dermott's daughter Aoife's hand to assist Dermott in retaking his kingdom.

Over time, the Anglo-Normans took control by force or otherwise of much of the island, though it was the infamous Plantations from the mid 16th century onwards which were to strengthen the English hold over Ireland. The nationalism which was to change and shape Ireland once more was still some way off from the 16th century. Nationalism truly arrived in Ireland only in the late 18th century, following a broader European trend of the day. An early high point was the 1798 rebellion by the United Irishmen, Catholics and Protestants alike fighting together for Irish freedom, the right of non-Anglicans to vote, rights for the Irish

tenants of absentee English landlords, equality before the law. Westminster responded to such open rebellion by passing the Act of Union in 1800, dissolving the old Irish Parliament entirely and subjecting Ireland to direct rule from London.

Emancipation and other reforms came later, but still violence occurred, such as the Fenian Rising of 1867. The true game changer, however, was the Home Rule crisis. With the Home Rule Bill of 1886, PM Gladstone sought to devolve key limited powers to a Dublin parliament ruling the whole island. The Bill was rejected by the Commons; a second Home Rule Bill in 1893 by the Lords. In 1912, Liberal PM Asquith needed the support of Irish Parliamentary Party MPs, and thus a third Home Rule Bill was introduced. Unionists made clear the lengths to which they would go to resist Dublin rule. The Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, signed by 471,414 men and women, proclaimed the readiness of its signatories to use any means including violence to oppose Home Rule. This populist event is a key root of the twentieth century violence, as it effectively gave birth to the first modern paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force, in January 1913. The UVF inspired the formation of the Irish Volunteer Force in Dublin later that year; thereafter both would run German guns into Ireland to arm their men.

Neither UVF nor IVF were formed to fight each other, but rather the British, the former ready to fight the British army, to use force to remain under direct British rule (yes, you read that correctly). With the outbreak of war in 1914, the implementation of Home Rule was suspended. The UVF were contained by being subsumed into the British army. On the nationalist side, the men were split. Some of the IVF joined the British army, believing that they were fighting for the rights of small nations, and that they would be rewarded with Home Rule at war's end. Others chose to remain in Ireland, ready to defend against any attempted German invasion. Yet others,

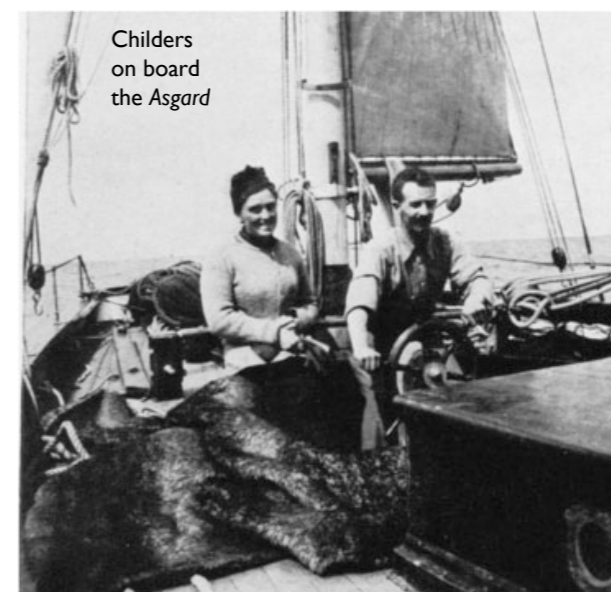
firm in their belief that “England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity”, planned and carried out the Easter Rising of 1916. The Rising was a military disaster, and when the rebels were led away by British soldiers, the ordinary people of Dublin, who did not care for their aims, jeered.

However, public sympathy was reversed as British authorities spread the executions of the Rising leaders across several days rather than one big event. Particular sympathy was swayed by the executions of James Connolly, tied to a chair as injuries sustained during the fighting left him unable to stand before his firing squad, and Joseph Plunkett—his shooting hurriedly rescheduled lest his terminal consumption take him first. This sea-change in the attitudes of the clear majority of people on the island, formerly satisfied with Home Rule, led to the Sinn Fein general election landslide of 1918, and provided the impetus (and manpower) for the War of Independence. This latter conflict commenced in January of 1919, and raged until late 1921. Following a ceasefire, the Anglo Irish Treaty was signed at 2.10am on the morning of 6th December. The treaty settlement, which fell far short of a wholly independent, all-Ireland republic, and introduced partition, creating Northern Ireland, split nationalists, leading to a bitter and bloody Civil War in 1922–3. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Irish Free State gradually found its footing, eventually being recognised by Britain to be, from Easter Monday 1949, a wholly independent, sovereign republic. Thus did modern Ireland arise.

**#1 Robert Erskine Childers**  
(25th June 1870–24th November 1922)

Let us begin not with an Irishman, but rather an Englishman. Born in Mayfair, to wealthy parents, Childers' father was an eminent

British Orientalist, while his mother came from Anglo-Irish land-owning stock in County Wicklow. Childers was any orphan by the age of twelve, when he and his four siblings were sent to live with family in Ireland. From this point, he came to identify strongly



with Ireland. The young Childers excelled academically, reading the Classics and later law at Trinity College, Dublin. While a student there, he became President of the Trinity College Debating Society, where he developed a reputation as a fearsome orator, especially against Home Rule. At this time he also took up sailing. Childers, a staunch believer in the British Empire, joined the City Imperial Volunteers in 1898. As “Spare Driver”, with duties extending to caring for a pair of horses and riding them in the ammunition supply chain, he set sail for South Africa and the Boer War. Childers spent two months on the front line before being wounded out with trenchfoot. He later returned to the front, but his unit’s tour of duty soon ended, and Childers returned to England in October 1900.

As an author, Childers’ first published works were a series of detective stories for the Cambridge Review and a memoir of his military service. His most significant contribution to literature, however, was his 1903 novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*. This has been recognised as the first modern thriller, the first spy novel, and was number 37 in *The Observer* list of “The 100 Greatest Novels” of the last three centuries. The plot turns on the discovery by the protagonist of a German militarist plot. Really, it was a comment on the increased German militarisation of the period, and the apparent British lack of preparedness. The novel is a true Chappist read that any New Sheridan should peruse at least once.

One link between this literary highlight and the next phase of Childers’ life is his yacht the *Asgard*, on board which his novel was inspired. After publishing *The Riddle of the Sands*, Childers became a significant contributor to *The Times’ History of the War in South Africa*, published in 1907. He was very critical of British military tactics during the Boer War, while speaking approvingly of the Boer’s guerrilla methods. In 1911, Childers wrote *The Framework for Home Rule*. As a prospective Liberal Party MP, his argument, now in favour of Home Rule, was primarily economic. Slowly, Childers became more and more pro-Irish Nationalist, heavily influenced by his increasing belief that the Boer War could have been avoided with competent diplomacy. In 1914 he became involved with the Irish Volunteer Force, and organised the

Howth gun-running, bringing in guns on board the *Asgard*. Childers was not himself in Ireland during the 1916 Easter Rising, and had not been party to its planning. Hearing of the events while in London, Childers was shocked by what he considered to be the overly heavy-handed way in which it was put down and its leaders executed. When, in 1918, it was proposed to extend conscription to Ireland, he was further angered. His later political writings increasingly attacked British policies on Ireland.

Now an elected Sinn Fein official, he functioned as Secretary General to the Irish delegation at the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations in the Autumn of 1921. Childers turned against the final draft of the Treaty, especially the Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown which was to be required to be signed by all members of the new Irish Parliament, and fought on the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. Captured and found guilty of offences against the Free State, the Englishman Erskine Childers was executed as an extreme Irish Republican in November 1922. Churchill called the late Childers “[a] strange being, actuated by a deadly and malignant hatred for the land of his birth”. Eamon de Valera said of Childers “Of all the men I ever met, I would say he was the noblest.” Childers was a Chap to the last. Before he died, he elicited a solemn promise from his son to track down and shake the hand of every man who signed his execution warrant, making clear to them that he bore them no grudge. Immediately before his execution, Childers shook hands with every member of his firing squad. His last words were “Take a step or two forward, lads. It will be easier that way.”

## #2 Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (23th December 1878–26th April 1916)

Skeffy, as he was known around Dublin, became a footnote in Irish history due to the events surrounding his death, but he was an extraordinary individual who deserves to be remembered also for how he lived. Born Francis Skeffington in County Cavan, the young Skeffy was academically gifted. He attended University College Dublin from 1896, where he became a close friend of James Joyce. Skeffy, at best unconventional by comparison to his peers, refused to shave, cultivating a voluminous beard, far from the clean-shaven norm at the



Skeffy

time. He eschewed trousers in favour of knickerbockers and long socks. His lapel was accessorised with a proudly worn “Votes for Women” badge. It was through his support for universal suffrage that he met his wife Hanna; when they married, feminist Francis Skeffington took the name Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, and Hanna Sheehy

became Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington. Following their wedding, Skeffy organised a petition calling for UCD to admit women students. The couple were widely known throughout Dublin as prominent members of various debating and literary societies. Skeffy was often to be seen orating on street corners, hanging off a lamp post as a vantage point, holding forth on one of his many pet causes.

After Skeffy’s graduation, he forged a career as a freelance journalist and activist. The couple were both members of movements campaigning for universal suffrage, labour rights and Home Rule by constitutional means. In 1914, Skeffy was jailed for six months for active public opposition to British army recruitment in Ireland. Although a nationalist, Skeffy’s opposition to the recruitment drive was born from his radical pacifism: he was equally firm in his opposition to Irish Nationalist militarism. During the Easter Rising, Skeffy and Hanna took differing approaches. While Hanna took food to the rebels in the GPO and elsewhere, Skeffy publicly condemned the violence, and was even seen attempting to come to the aid of wounded British soldiers. Amidst the fighting during the Rising, looting was widespread. Distressed by the breakdown of law and order, Skeffy went out into the melée and attempted to organise a group of citizens to put a stop to this. He was arrested by British soldiers. No reason was given for his arrest, although once he had admitted that he sympathised with the political aims of the rebels, he was held as an “enemy sympathiser”.

The officer in charge, Captain J.C. Bowen-

Colthurst, sent him out as a hostage, with an Army raiding party. Skeffy’s hands were tied and the soldiers given orders to shoot him in the event that they were attacked. Bowen-Colthurst led these men to raid a shop believed to be owned by a rebel, resulting in the deaths of several people, none of them rebels. Skeffy, who had witnessed these killings, was subsequently shot on the Captain’s orders. Bowen-Colthurst attempted a cover-up, but his superiors were alerted and quietly found him to be “guilty [of murder] but insane”. Bowen-Colthurst spent the following eighteen months in an insane asylum, before retiring to Canada on a full pension. So ended the life of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. He was thirty-seven years old.

## #3 Sean O’Casey (30th March 1880–18th September 1964)

Sean O’Casey is widely remembered as one of Ireland’s greatest playwrights. He was also a man who made the jump away from violence, later coming to condemn it through his art.

Born John O’Casey in Dublin, 1880, O’Casey had a hard early life. His father died when the young Sean was only six years old, leaving behind a family of thirteen. Sean’s early education was limited; he did, however, teach himself to read and write by 13. At 14 he left formal education and took on various odd jobs to help feed the family. From the age of ten, O’Casey and his brother had performed various plays at home—often Shakespeare—and young Sean had had a small role in a play in a theatre which stood on the site which would later be the location of the Abbey Theatre, where a number of his most famous works would be premiered.

By his mid-twenties, O’Casey had developed an interest in the Irish culture and language, learning to



Sean O’Casey



speaking Gaelic and to play the uilleann pipes. In his working life he came to be involved in the labour movement in Dublin, which would later lead to his involvement in the Irish Citizen Army. The tiny ICA, at its peak never larger than 150 members, was formed in 1913 as a volunteer group to protect union members from physical attack by thugs hired by company owners to break the unions. For the men of the ICA, Irish nationalism was not an end in itself: true freedom was only to be had by replacing the British establishment with a completely new social order, an Irish socialist republic.

The entertaining *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*, published by O'Casey in 1919 as Sean O'Casey, is well worth a read, especially its discussion of these early days interspersed with all sort of prime literary references, often Shakespeare (O'Casey refers to the men of the ICA, out on training manoeuvres, bedding down for the night "to sleep, perchance to dream"). O'Casey became disillusioned with the ICA as it became subsumed into the mainstream of militant nationalism. It might fairly be said that O'Casey saw the writing on the wall: Dublin Connolly rail station was named not after James Connolly the socialist, but James Connolly the nationalist martyr.

In 1917, O'Casey was inspired to write by several keenly-felt losses. His mother and sister both died, while his close friend Thomas Ashe also died while on hunger strike in prison. O'Casey became the first Irish playwright of note to write about the Dublin working classes. *Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), his first play to be accepted by the Abbey Theatre, explored the impact of revolutionary violence on the surrounding community. *Juno and the Paycock*

(1924), later made into a feature film by Alfred Hitchcock, takes place in the aftermath of the Civil War, uncertain times for ordinary Dublin people who have lived through five long years of constant violence. *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) takes on the Easter Rising, using Padraig Pearse's own words to condemn it.

Over time, his work came more and more to reject violence while emphasising social issues. His representation of women is notable. O'Casey's men are typically all talk; only Jack Clitheroe (*The Plough and the Stars*) and Johnny Doyle (*Juno and the Paycock*) come close to achieving their aims. Jack dies in the Rising leaving behind his pregnant wife, while Johnny, ultimately killed by the IRA, has lost an arm in the Rising and spends his last years a bitter shell of a man. In the world of O'Casey's plays, all the common sense belongs to and is expressed by the women. Of particular note is Bessie Burgess, a late-middle-aged, curmudgeonly Protestant and unrepentant Unionist, loudly singing "Rule Britannia", who lives in the same tenement block as the main protagonists in *The Plough and the Stars*. When Nora is left on her own, losing her wits following the loss of her husband and a still birth, it is Bessie who tends to her and ultimately (at the cost of her own life) stops her from being inadvertently shot by a British squaddie who mistakes her silhouette in the window for that of a sniper.

O'Casey met his wife in England in 1927, while overseeing a London production of his work. He married and settled there. He continued to write plays which concentrated increasingly on social issues rather than Irish nationalism. These never achieved quite the same success as his Dublin trilogy, but he continued to write nonetheless until his death in 1964. His works continue to be performed the world over, and the Irish people are rightly proud of his contributions to our literary heritage.

## #4 Brendan Behan (9th February 1923– 20th March 1964)

As he was born into a staunchly republican

family during the closing months of the Irish Civil War, it was perhaps inevitable that Brendan Behan would become involved in paramilitarism. A member of the IRA's youth wing by 14, he joined the organisation proper by the time he turned 16. A poet, novelist, essayist and playwright in both English and Gaelic, he produced early writings very much intertwined

with his politics. Early inspirations came from various stints in prison for involvement in IRA activity; his book *Borstal Boy* was inspired by his own spell in borstal in 1941. In 1942 he was sentenced to 16 years in Mountjoy prison for the attempted murder of two police detectives.

His release, as part of an amnesty, in 1946 effectively signalled the end of his IRA career, although he did serve a short sentence in 1947 for attempting to spring a comrade from Manchester gaol. Behan spent the remainder of the Forties and the early Fifties as a journalist for the *Irish Times*, publishing various books and memoirs on the side. His big breakthrough came with his play *The Quare Fellow*, staged originally in Dublin during 1954, before opening in London in Stratford's Theatre East in May 1956. It later transferred to the West End.

If there is one thing Behan is remembered for above all else, however, it is as a drinker. His influence as both a writer and a drinker—he often described himself as "a drinker with a writing problem"—looms large in some corners of popular culture, not least those frequented by Shane Magowan, a living legend in his own right. An serendipitous burst of publicity for the West End staging of *The Quare Fellow* came when Behan made a drunken appearance on the Malcom Muggeridge television show to promote it. Behan's drunken yet good humoured demeanour endeared him to his English audience; perhaps the comedy Irish drunk routine helped them to forget the more unsavoury elements of his past. A fellow guest on the same Muggeridge episode, Jackie



Contemporary newspaper coverage of Buck Alec's highly unusual domestic pets

Gleason, commented that this incident was "not an act of God, but an act of Guinness".

Behan himself had a way with the one-liner, often in the form of a harsh yet humorous critique of his own people. "It's not that the Irish are cynical," he once said, "it's that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody." On another occasion he opined: "All publicity is good, except your own obituary." In any case, Behan did not seem to much mind the critics: "Critics," he said, "are like eunuchs in a harem; they know how it's done, they've seen it done every day, but they're unable to do it themselves."

It is often hard to fathom how Behan managed to combine his prodigious drinking with his output as an author, but he had a system: he would rise every morning at seven and immediately set to work in order to cram in several hours' worth of writing before the pubs opened at noon. There are also many accounts of him sitting in corners of various Dublin pubs, with his typewriter on the table, writing away. Of course, he had had many years of drinking practice under his belt by this point. One day his grandmother was seen dragging the eight year old Behan up the street on which he lived, in the direction of the family home. An acquaintance stopped her, and looking at young Brendan, said "Oh, my! Isn't it terrible ma'am to see such a beautiful child deformed?"

"How dare you", replied Behan's grandmother. "He's not deformed, he's just drunk!"

In England, authorities were always keeping



Behan as he will mostly be remembered

an eye on him due to his past, but MI5 appeared not to be too concerned: their file on Behan noted: “he is too unstable and too drunken to be particularly dangerous.” Eventually, Behan’s alcoholism took an even firmer grip, and in the end, he drank himself to death. His monument, a bronze statue of Behan sat on a bench, is situated alongside Dublin’s Royal Canal, which is referenced in his song “The Auld Trainagle”, that opens *The Quare Fellow*, and which Behan would often drunkenly clamber onstage to sing himself at performances.



## #5 Alexander “Buck Alec” Robinson (c.1901–1995)

Of all the Loyalist hardmen, Buck Alec is one of the most legendary, fast becoming myth. In part this is because, while he died as recently as 1995, very little actually seems to be known about him for certain. He was born in Belfast’s York Street around 1901 and all that really seems to be known about his early life is to be found in his early court record, which shows a string of offences including larceny, assault, robbery, and indecent and riotous behaviour.

He was only about 12 years old when he first appeared before a magistrate. One day, when apparently 19 years old, Buck Alec was out taking a stroll on the Glencairn Road in Belfast, when two young boys came running out of the garden of a big house, chased by a man wielding a hammer. While the boys cowered behind him, Alec relieved the man of the hammer before knocking him out, and going about his own business. Later that same day he was arrested and subsequently sentenced to two months’ imprisonment for attacking the man and theft of the hammer.

Buck Alec was later encouraged to join the Ulster Special Constabulary, a reserve police force established in 1920 at a time of unrest and formed mostly of former UVF men and soldiers

of the 36th Ulster Division. He also claimed to have been a bodyguard for Dawson Bates, the Minister of Home Affairs in James Craig’s new Northern Ireland government. At this time, Buck Alec turned his skill as a brawler to a more sporting purpose enjoying success with his first lawful bout in the boxing ring during 1922, at the King’s Hall in Belfast, representing the USC. Later, in 1927, he would go on to win the Irish Middleweight Championship.

During this time, Buck Alec was also a member of the Ulster Protestant Association, a paramilitary

death squad that by reputation killed Roman Catholics for being Roman Catholics. He was implicated in several shootings and bombings before being interned in October 1922, then later released on the condition that he leave Northern Ireland for England. He failed to settle there, returning home (and, as a result, to a further period of internment) after only a few months. Much of the years 1923 through 1927 were spent in the USA. It appears that this might have been an expedient decision, as by this point he is rumoured to have become infamous among his opposite numbers in paramilitary circles. It is known that he spent time in both Chicago and New York during those years. His claim to have known Al Capone is probably true, though whether he actually worked for the infamous gangster as a hard man and general enforcer is a matter of conjecture. Another big name in whose employ Buck Alec was believed to have been during this period was Joe Kennedy, the patriarch of the American political dynasty, who made all his money bootlegging during prohibition.

By 1927, Buck Alec was back in the Six Counties, He was no longer involved in paramilitary movements, yet petty criminal convictions, mainly for street-fighting, continued, the last recorded being in 1959. In and around the Second World War period he acquired the first of the pets with which his

name is now synonymous in Belfast: a lion.

Sheila and Roger were apparently purchased from a circus. Buck Alec and his lions became part of a travelling show which toured Ireland: Alec’s turn was to wrestle them. It is often said that the lions were toothless when he bought them, though a photographer who took pictures of Joy, the lion he owned when he became the subject of a *Picture Post* article in 1952, was given the fright of his life when Alec encouraged him to lean into Roger’s enclosure to get a good shot, and the lion went for him. Alec’s lions, teeth or no, were neither trained nor tamed. So where did he keep them? Well, in his back yard. The tiny back yard of a two-up, two-down Belfast terrace. The lions lived in what the *Picture Post* described as “a giant chicken coop, about twelve feet by eight by sixteen”. Teeth are not directly mentioned in this article, but the photographer is recorded as having said “Blimey, I’ve photographed six flipping wars, not counting the perishing Mau Mau, but I’ve never seen the likes of this.” There are many rumours about all sorts of things the lions supposedly ate over the years, one of the most persistent of which has it that cats used to disappear from the local neighbourhood with some regularity. The most commonly told story about Joy, Sheila, Roger was that Alec was often to be seen walking the streets of North Belfast with one of his pride on a leash, as casually as if it were a Labrador.

Buck Alec died in 1995. He remains an enigma: to some he was a terrorist murderer, to others, a folk hero, a hard man but one who believed in a fair fight. There is certainly also more than enough to his story to form the bones of a superb Hollywood biopic.

## #6 Evan Abbott Samuel Duddy

(25th August 1945–17th October 2007)

Sammy Duddy was born in Belfast in 1945, shortly after the end of the war. Duddy displayed early signs of some literary talent: at the local secondary school, he used to write Valentine poems for his friends to send to the girls in

the class. One such epic has survived:

*I held your hand in class today,  
My mates think I’m a fool—  
But you’ve a thirty-six inch bust,  
And I’ve a six inch tool.*

The Cyrano de Bergerac of Ulster loyalism.

Duddy left school aged 15, and became involved in various loyalist vigilante groups. In 1971, he joined the newly formed Ulster Defence Association. During the 1974 Ulster General Workers’ Strike, Duddy once physically blocked the notorious Reverend Ian Paisley from entering a meeting of the Ulster Workers’ Council Co-ordinating Committee; no mean feat, given Paisley’s physical size and demeanour in his prime. Another story has it that during this strike Duddy was in command of a squad of UDA men who hijacked a baker’s van to use as part of a roadblock. The driver was paid in cash the value of the bread which he was as a result unable to deliver.

Duddy was literate and well spoken, far from the thuggish manner typically associated with loyalist gunmen. In 1983 he published a book of his own poetry, *Concrete Whirlpools of the Mind*, which received critical acclaim for its nuanced and sensitive exploration of the mindset of young working class men drawn into paramilitary violence. In the early 1990s, he retired from involvement in paramilitarism, and moved on to the fringe loyalist Ulster Democratic Party. Inevitably, the shift from a

war footing to working within the democratic process was as difficult a jump for some loyalists as for some extremist republicans, and Duddy found himself in the middle of a feud with Johnny “Mad Dog” Adair. The feud culminated in a hit on Duddy’s house, ordered by Adair. Duddy escaped injury, but one of his precious dogs, seven year old Chihuahua Bambi, was killed outright. Adair would later claim that Duddy never got over this loss.

Duddy is now remembered best not as a published poet,



nor as a gunman, but as the loyalist paramilitary who throughout the Seventies made regular appearances as Samantha, “the Dolly Parton of Belfast”. Said Duddy, “I wore a miniskirt many a time, but it was usually a long dress, a straight black wig, a pair of falsies I bought in Blackpool and loads of make-up to cover my freckles. The darker the mascara the better, and scarlet lipstick, because I was a scarlet woman.” Samantha was a very popular turn in loyalist nightclubs, even performing at one time for British soldiers on duty in the Six Counties.

On one occasion, Duddy himself came close to danger when his car suffered a flat tyre in a staunchly nationalist enclave of Belfast. Two local men stopped and changed the wheel for him, before waving him off...all within a few feet of a mural threatening Duddy with death. Dressed as Samantha, he passed unrecognised. Another time, Duddy, as Samantha, was chatted up by an on-duty RUC officer who had clearly mistaken him for female. Then there is the tale of two British squaddies who threw down their rifles and set about each other with their fists in front of “Samantha”, one crying “I saw her first!” Duddy, presumably, did not hang around for his own *Crying Game* moment.

Samantha’s days were numbered when, in 1981, several senior Loyalists were implicated in a paedophile scandal at Kinchora Boy’s Home, and Andy Tyrrie, the UDA Supreme Commander, ordered Duddy to “grow a moustache and drop [his] voice”—this in a community where unreconstructed views of sexuality and gender run deep. In 2002, a 57-year-old Duddy considered a return to the stage in order to raise funds for loyalist prisoners, “one last outing for young Samantha”. One fellow loyalist commented: “He wasn’t so bad in the Seventies, but I dread to think what he’d be like now his cheeks have gone a bit ruddy. But we’ll see what he looks like with a wig on.”

Duddy died of a heart attack in 2007, aged 62, bringing to the end the strange tale of possibly the only loyalist hardman who ever wore lipstick and a dress.

## #7 Michael Stone

(Born 2nd April 1955)

Stone was born in Birmingham and his parents’ relationship broke down very early in his life, leaving him to be raised by his mother’s

sister and her husband as their own child in Ballyherbert. In 1959, the family moved to Belfast’s notorious Braniel Estate, one of the most extreme loyalist areas of the city. Stone was a member of the Army Cadets at 14, and here received his first firearms training. By 1970 he had left school, expelled for fighting, with no qualifications. He first joined the UDA following an initiation exercise then common among paramilitaries, which involved him and two friends being given a dog to play with; after thirty minutes, they were given a gun and ordered to shoot the dog. Only Stone was prepared to go through with it, and he alone was recruited. He would later be charged with and convicted of various terrorist attacks, most notably at Milltown Cemetery in 1988.

Stone’s Milltown attack was during an IRA funeral, his targets Gerry Adams, leader of the republican Sinn Fein political Party, and Martin McGuinness, another leading Sinn Fein man long believed to have been the ultimate head of the IRA. They escaped unscathed, but Stone killed three Catholic civilians and wounded



over sixty more. When charged, he also confessed to the murder of three other people in unconnected attacks. These others were, he claimed, active IRA, although prosecutors believed him to be mistaken. Stone was sentenced to 684 years imprisonment, to serve at least thirty.

A Rambo-style nutcase to many, to others Stone was a champion. A mural depicting him as a “loyalist hero” briefly appeared on a Belfast wall. Later, following prison, he would receive a

rock star welcome at a gathering of loyalists in central Belfast. While in prison Stone discovered both a passion and a talent for contemporary art. Initially this extended to little more than painting paramilitary murals on the walls of his cell, but later his themes became more nuanced, exploring issues of identity, belonging and community.



Stone is arrested for his “art performance” attack on the Stormont

had come to believe that dialogue was the only way forward in the post-ceasefire Northern Ireland. He continued to produce art which began to sell well and fetch fair prices, albeit that this in itself raised criticism from those who found it distasteful that he should profit from his notoriety.

Then, at 11.16 on the morning of 24th November 2006, Stone was arrested for attempting to enter the Stormont parliament buildings while in possession of an imitation handgun, a knife, and several pipebombs, having already placed explosive devices around the grounds of the building. He was quickly stopped by security on duty, in part due to his limited mobility: he has walked with a pronounced limp ever since sustaining an injury during the Milltown attack. Northern Ireland’s press were well represented at this event as it had been timed to take place during a meeting of the political parties to negotiate the new power-sharing arrangement—especially sensitive as extremist parties on both sides, had recently been voted into the position of being the dominant political representatives for their respective communities. A letter signed by Stone and dated to the day before the attack, and in which he described his intention to kill Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, was later

In July 2000, he was released from prison on licence, under the provisions of the Belfast Agreement. No less a loyalist than ever he had been, Stone nonetheless

received by local press. Stone was, as per the terms of his licence, immediately returned to prison to serve out the remainder of his previous sentence, and charged with attempted murder.

By the time of the trial it was widely known that Stone’s defence intended to argue that this was not a terrorist attack per se, but rather a piece of performance art which simulated such an attack. Stone claimed, in essence, to be saying to two belligerent political camps “Will you work together, or would you prefer to return to this sort of thing?” In court, Stone claimed that the weapons he was carrying were mere symbolic – the explosive devices, which he professed to have no intention to use, he said would have been ineffective anyhow. The imitation gun had a sponge inside it in place of a cartridge, representing “sponging unionists” who stayed in power due to loyalist votes, but by maintaining extreme and obstructionist stances failed to improve things on the ground for these communities. Other items represented a grudging acceptance of Republican commitment to work within the democratic process.

Reading the press coverage of the trial, it seems conceivable that Stone was sincere, if somewhat deranged. The trial judge however considered the defence case to be “hopelessly unconvincing” and “self-contradictory”, and in December 2008 sentenced Stone to serve another 16 years in prison, on top of time already being served for previous convictions. A later appeal returned a verdict in early January 2011 which confirmed the lower court’s decision.

## Epilogue

Seven very different men whose lives were touched by violence. All had something else to offer as performers, as artists, as community organisers. In the New Northern Ireland, one in which even Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness could work together, it is to be hoped that over time new generations of eccentrics will grow up, their talents exploited to the full while their lives remain untainted by destructive violence. The flag controversy of December 2012 has shown how easy it would be for old bigotries to take the reins once more. They used to say in the early days of the ceasefire, “It’s all over, bar the shooting.” Time will tell.

# An Englishman's Dover Home is His Castle

There's nothing really very special about the Dover Castle pub in Weymouth Mews, behind Portland Place, other than that it is a Sam Smith's pub, so the drinks are reasonably priced (and everything, including soft drinks and spirits, is Sam Smith's branded). But early on in the Club's history it became an official haunt. In particular we gather every year on the last Friday before Christmas, to say fond farewells before we must tear ourselves away from the warmth of the Club to spend Christmas in

the cold embrace of family and loved ones. Here are some snaps from the latest get-together, on Friday 21st December.

(Below) Pipemen Ian White (l) and Ian Valentine (aka Frisax) strike a pose with their briars, presumably before disappearing into the tiny courtyard to smoke them; (below left) Sadie Docherty, sporting a fetching new do



(Right) Curé Michael Silver, in the garb of his secular day job; (below) Oliver Lane (r), clearly rapt by Dave Hollander's anecdote



(Above) As Dave stands to make his speech, one wonders what story Rachel is telling Ches...



(Above) Lord Mendrick, whom we see only once a year because he works in Egypt; (left) Jonathan seems ever aware of the camera (I think he's doing "Blue Steel" in this shot)



(Left) Mark Gidman (top) and Mai Møller; (right) Scarheart says, "Touch me again and I'll kill you."



## The Cocktail Cabinet

Wherein Members drivel about tipples

### Poteen

By David Bridgman-Smith

**P**oteen (also spelt *poitín*) is an interesting spirit, hailing from Ireland. Like absinthe, it can be surrounded by a degree of murk and mystery, following its ban (along with all other unlicensed distilling) by the Irish authorities in 1661. Modern-day poteen has been legal in the Republic of Ireland since 1997; before then, the emerald isle had a history of illicit distilling. For the purposes of this article, “poteen” will refer to the legal spirit and “moonshine” to the illegal.

As with many homemade spirits, poteen was typically made of whatever was to hand, be that grain, potatoes, whey, or something else. The case of whey is an interesting one, as it is referred to in the poem *Bainne “Dhuba na Féilr”* (Milk of the Generous Wee Black Cow) by Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1906–1970).

Understandably, the customs men were not happy with the production of duty-free alcohol and, while a barrel of fermenting grain could

easily be identified and confiscated, even the most hard-line revenue man wouldn't take away the family cow.

To get to grips with modern-day Poteen, I was invited along to the Shebeen, the only poitín/poteen bar in the country, which lies in the basement beneath the Kentish Canteen in Kentish Town, North London.



Distillers of illicit Irish moonshine—possibly unwise to allow the photograph...

Apart from working on their own house poteen and offering a range of poteen cocktails available, they also stock the largest collection of brands that I have ever seen. I was lucky enough to have a taste.

**Knockeen Hills** (90% ABV) Also available at 60% and 70% ABV

A whey-based poteen that has been instrumental in the granting of GI status to Irish Poteen.

**Bunraty** (40% ABV; also available at 45% ABV)

This is made with malted barley and has rather a fruity nose. This fruitiness (like a fruit salad) extends to the taste and I found it to be quite odd, unlike anything I have tasted before.



A selection of poteens at the Shebeen

**Celtic Poteen** (made in Wales) (48% ABV)

Quite a shy nose, while on the tongue there was some vanilla and some floral notes, including chamomile. Overall, this was rather clean tasting and more like vodka than other Poteens.

**Zatori** (45%ABV)

Genever on the nose, along with some grapes and malt; as such, it reminds me a little of soju or even sake. To taste, the malt and grape continue and there is quite a lot of complexity in these flavours. It also reminds me of *eau de bière* (beer eau de vie).

**Cooley** (65% ABV)

Made by the Irish whiskey company Cooley Distillery, but currently discontinued as one of the casualties of the Jim Beam takeover of the firm. On the nose there are hints of genever, hops and bread. On the tongue, it is quite powerful, with lots of flavour of spice, malt and wheat. As such, it puts me in mind of a young wheat whisky.

**Bán** (52.7%ABV)

Made from a mix of malted barley and sugar beets, this was designed by Dave Mulligan for the Shebeen bar as well as for general release. When I spoke to Dave, he talked of his experience with genuine Irish moonshine and how Bán reflects the flavours that he associates with this. Characteristics that he looks for is a slight bready maltiness, some sweet fruitiness, and high strength, enough to provide some warmth.

Bán (Irish for “white”) has quite a minimal nose, with just a hint of grapes and grain. There is a lot of flavour and its character gradually



Bachelors Walk



Italian '96



James Joyce

develops over time. After some fruity notes there's vanilla, followed by elements of dry wheat; this sweet-to-dry transition is very intriguing and lends itself well to mixed drinks.

#### The Cocktails

Dave and his colleague were then kind enough to mix me some of their signature drinks.

**Bachelors Walk** (Sazerac Variation)

[Courvoisier VS, poteen, Peychaud's Bitters and absinthe] Just the right level of sweetness, with fruity, floral notes. All of the flavours work well with the Absinthe to give an impression of liquorice allsorts. Excellent.

#### James Joyce

[Poteen; red vermouth; Cointreau; lime juice]

The floral elements of the poteen work well, and there's plenty of warmth to go with the fragrant flavours.

#### Italian '96

[Poteen, Campari, red vermouth, Aperol]

The classic bitter-sweet finish of a Negroni but unusual given the lack of piney juniper. Good and warming and very easy to drink, this could quickly become a favourite.

It was a treat to visit this bar but even more so to find out more about poteen and sample such a collection of spirits.

Shebeen, 300 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2TG (020 7485 7331), open Tuesday to Sunday, 5.30pm to midnight.

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

# THE EXCHANGE & SMART

**FOR SALE:** Vintage evening shirt by Gieves, £25

I bought this Gieves collarless evening shirt from a vintage emporium simply because the fabric was so gloriously light and fine. There is no indication of size, but sadly it is too big around the collar for me, so I must sell it on.

The collar measures 17 inches and the sleeves are 30 inches, cuff to collar. Note that the sleeves have been gathered up at some point to shorten them. If you let these out you could add up to another two inches to the sleeve length. The chest is about 48 inches,

the length of the tails 34 inches and the starched bib 14 inches long.

The shirt is currently in a state of high starch. I notice that it needs only two shirt studs: at the bottom of the bib is a cunning tab on one side which pushes through a slot on the other side, and presumably buttons to the top button on your dress trousers (which, if they are decent vintage ones, will be on the inside rather than the outside). This has the effect of



pulling your shirt front down and keeping it taut, smooth and in place. There is also the customary loop to secure your tie at the back.

There is no damage anywhere that I can see. £25 plus any delivery. Contact [mrhartley@newsheridanclub.co.uk](mailto:mrhartley@newsheridanclub.co.uk).



## Gilbert & Sullivan Fundraiser

MEMBERS OLIVER LANE and Ella Armstrong Lach are also members of the King's College London Gilbert and Sullivan Society (in fact I believe they met through that group). They would like to draw Members' attention to a concert that is to be held on Saturday 2nd February at the KCL Chapel, Strand, London WC2R 2LS. It will be an evening of favourite chorus numbers, solos and patter songs to raise money for costumes and sets for their 2013 *Yeoman of the Guard* show. Oliver points out that for some the venue alone might make the trip worthwhile—"you won't find a better example of high Victorian excess anywhere". See below:



## New Members

AS THE TERRIFYING cipher of a whole new year lies before us, full of mystery and potential for success or failure, happiness or woe, we offer the cosy certainty of NSC Membership to the following trembling neophytes, all of whom have been wise enough to join up in the last month: Elaine Martel, Peter Rees, Meredith Lloyd, Richard Hawker, Richard Christmas, Birgit Gebhardt, Jonathan Brooker, Sharon Davies and Dr Andrew Twist.

Film Night:  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945)

7pm, Monday 21st January  
The Tea House Theatre, 139  
Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL

Mrs H. has been keen to get hold of this film since DVDs were invented but for a long while it was not available in Region 2 format. We have now secured a copy and present it for our January Film Night.

Based on Oscar Wilde's 1891 novel, the film concerns a young, handsome, affable but slightly naive young man, Dorian Gray. While posing for a portrait he is visited by his friend Lord Henry Wootton, who opines that the only life worth living is one dedicated entirely to pleasure, without commitment to others. Moreover, armed with his youth and beauty, Dorian can have anything he desires. Dorian is persuaded, and declares that he wished his new portrait would grow old instead of him.

He happens to voice this wish in the presence of a statue of an Egyptian deity...

Dorian embarks on a career of hedonism, breaking off an engagement to a young singer at Lord Henry's suggestion, on the grounds that marriage would cramp his style. Even when the spurned woman commits suicide, he adopts an air of indifference, heading straight off to the opera. But when he returns he notices that his portrait does indeed seem to have grown older, uglier and sterner. So he locks it away and forbids anyone to look at it. As the year pass, Dorian himself does not age.

Dorian is played by Hurd Hatfield and Sibyl the singer by Angela Lansbury. But the star has to be George Sanders as Lord Henry, a masterful study of caddish charm and silver-tongued wickedness.

The film is shot mostly in black and white (for which it won an Oscar) apart from two colour shots of the portrait itself!





## Forthcoming Events



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

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

### 🎪 NSC Club Night

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

### Old Hat Jazz Band at Jamboree

Friday 4th January  
8pm–12am  
Jamboree, 566 Cable Street, London E1W 3HB  
Admission: £4.50 in advance, £6 on the door  
The seven-strong Old Hat Jazz Band belt out the quintessential sound of 1920s New Orleans.

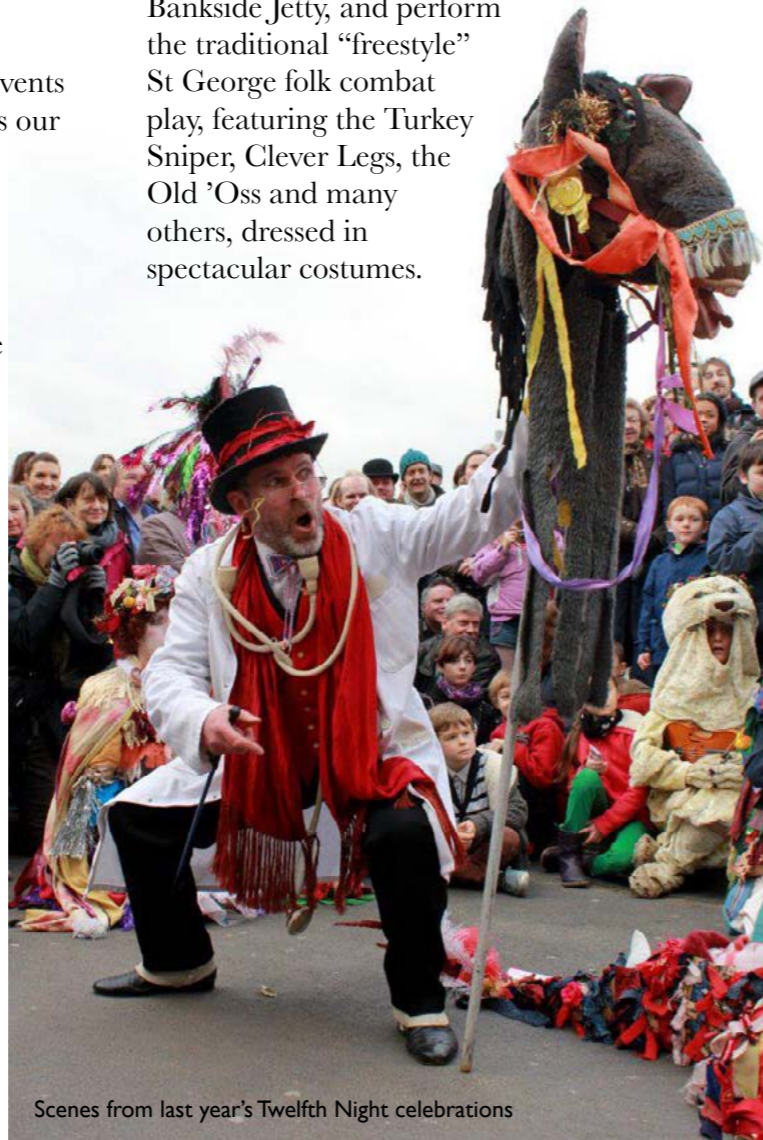
### Twelfth Night

Sunday 6th January  
2.45pm  
Bankside, just outside Shakespeare's Globe  
Admission: free

The Lions Part, a troupe involving our own Callum Coates (see back cover), invites everyone to their 19th Twelfth Night Celebration, beginning on the Bankside near Shakespeare's Globe and continuing by procession to the historic George Inn in Southwark. A collective celebration of the New Year, it mixes ancient Midwinter seasonal customs and contemporary festivity.

To herald the celebration, the extraordinary Holly Man, the winter guise of the Green Man (from our pub signs, pagan myths and folklore), decked in fantastic green garb and evergreen foliage, appears from the River Thames. With the crowd, led by the Bankside Mummers, the Holly Man will “bring in the green” and toast or “wassail” the people, the River Thames and the Globe (an old tradition to encourage good growth) with the London Town Crier.

The Mummers will then process to the Bankside Jetty, and perform the traditional “freestyle” St George folk combat play, featuring the Turkey Sniper, Clever Legs, the Old 'Oss and many others, dressed in spectacular costumes.



Scenes from last year's Twelfth Night celebrations

The play is full of wild verse and boisterous action, a time-honoured part of the season recorded since the Crusades.

Cakes distributed at the end of the play have a bean and a pea hidden in two of them. Those from the crowd who find them are hailed King and Queen for the day and crowned with ceremony. They then lead the people through the streets to the historic George

Inn in Southwark for a fine warming-up with storytelling, the Kissing Wishing Tree more dancing and mulled wine.

### Spin-a-Disc

Monday 7th January  
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. For more details email [ask@auntie.maureen.info](mailto:ask@auntie.maureen.info).

### Swing Cats Corner

Tuesday 8th January  
7–11pm



Orford House Social Club, 73 Orford Road, London E17 9QR  
Admission: £9 (£6 students/MU)

Swing dance teachers London Swing Cats start their own night, teaching mainly 1940s style Lindy Hop. Beginners' class at 7.30, intermediate

at 8.30, then general music and dancing till 11pm.

### Cakewalk Café

Wednesdays 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th January  
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, with optional dance classes from Swing Patrol.

### The Candlelight Club: Shanghai Grand

Friday 25th and Saturday 26th January  
7pm–12am  
A secret London location  
Admission: £15.75 in advance  
Dress: Prohibition dandies, 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 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 the New Sheridan Club's own DJ MC Fruity. Ticket holders get an email two days before revealing the location.

This time it celebrates 1920s Shanghai, a heady mix of hungry modernism and centuries-old tradition, a melting pot of opium gangs, international diplomacy and decadent opulence. It was called the Paris of the East—and also “the most decadent place on earth”. With no visa restrictions, it filled with refugees from Nazism and White Russian aristocrats paying their way with smuggled jewels. In jazz clubs plutocrats and Hollywood stars rubbed shoulders with gangsters and warlords...

### 🎪 NSC Film Night

#### *The Picture of Dorian Gray (1945)*

Monday 21st January  
7pm–11pm  
The Tea House Theatre, 139 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HL (020 7207 4585)  
Admission: Free  
See page 27.

### The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan

Saturday 2nd February  
7.30pm  
Chapel of King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS  
Admission: £5  
See page 27.

GEO INN



Our own Callum Coates in last year's Twelfth Night mummery on London's South Bank. This year's is this coming Sunday

OPEN - 11 pm

FOOD - 10 pm

### CONTACTING US

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

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