

At long last, the Alumni Association is most pleased to welcome our newest members, the Summer Schools Class of 2022. We hope that you enjoyed your Summer School experience and that you will continue to remain active in the Alumni Association in the years ahead. To find out more about the Alumni Association, please visit our website: vsaalumni.org

This issue is packed with news and info. ENJOY!



REPORT FROM THE 2022 Newport SUMMER SCHOOL

Pauline Metcalf

The Alumni gathering at the Metcalf family house was much appreciated by the very interesting Newport 2022 class who came from diverse locations and backgrounds. **Pauline Metcalf** welcomed the class to her family's wonderful property outside Newport with its refreshingly airy 1930s house, *Philmoney*, by George Locke Howe. **Bob Chapman** spoke enthusiastically about the Alumni chapter and explained its role in providing scholarship assistance for current and future students. The reception was excellent and the program went very well - as always!

REPORT FROM THE 2022 London SUMMER SCHOOL

John Waters (Newport 2007, London 2013 and 2022, and former Chicago co-director)

On June 28, the Alumni Association underwrote a well-attended reception at 1 Priory Gardens, in Bedford Park, London. 1 Priory Gardens is the office of the Victorian Society for England and Wales (known as the Vic Soc), and was therefore a very appropriate venue for the gathering. Along with this year's VSA London Summer School class, attendees included Vic Soc staff, as well as a number of its trustees and volunteers.

The group was welcomed by Vic Soc director Joe O'Donnell. Architect John Scott, chair of the Vic Soc's Southern Building's Committee, gave an engaging overview of Bedford Park, considered to be the first garden suburb. Begun in 1875, it includes buildings by E.W. Godwin, Richard Norman Shaw and other important Arts and Crafts architects. The Vic Soc's office was designed by E.J. May and constructed in 1880. It has recently undergone a major restoration and renovation project led by John Scott's firm, West Scott, Architects.

The reception was held in a new gathering space created during the renovation and the rest of the office was open for attendees to tour. Passions for the Victorian and Edwardian were shared, and the UK and American groups were able to learn something about each other's organizations. The connection with the London Summer School is a strong one, with numerous summer school lecturers and tour leaders serving as committee members for the Vic Soc. As in-coming summer school director Kit Wedd is a trustee for the Vic Soc, it seems likely that connection will continue.

Rumor has it that summer school members and some of the Vic Soc's "Young Victorians" group carried festivities across the street to the Tabard, Bedford Park's Arts and Crafts pub. This is hearsay though, since this old Victorian passed on the opportunity!

Along with the reception on the 28th, the Alumni Association treated the summer school class to a drink at the Philharmonic Dining Rooms in Liverpool on July 3rd. "The Phil" is located across from Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, and its dining rooms appropriately include musical themes in their decoration. The Phil is a Grade I listed building, the highest level of historic or architectural significance in the UK.

After a long day of touring Liverpool, the summer school class was ready to enjoy a more leisurely architectural experience at the Phil, and most of the group contentedly stayed on for dinner there. Thanks to the Alumni Association for hosting these two very enjoyable events!





(John Waters excellent photos at the Phil of the recently restored interior.)



LONDON'S CLUBLAND

Jo Banham (Director, London Summer School 2017 -2022)

Gentlemen's clubs were an indispensable part of elite Victorian men's lives. They were spaces for drinking, dining and socialising, a refuge from the demands of family life, creditors and the outside world, and a place where wealthy men could reinforce personal and class identities. Clubs reached the peak of their popularity in the 1880s and 1890s when more than 400 were located in London's West End. They were not only a distinctly urban phenomenon but were also generally understood to be peculiarly British. The de Goncourt brothers famously declared that if two Englishmen were washed up on a desert island they would instantly form a club, and if a third scrambled ashore, the original two would waste no time in blackballing him! Exploring London's Clubland has long been a highlight of the London Summer School and many alumni will recall donning jackets and ties for visits to the Reform, the Travellers, and the National Liberal Clubs as part of the programme. This article provides an overview of the history of Clubland during its prime and suggests how club 'manners' reflected contemporary ideas about what it meant to be an English gentleman.

The origins of London's oldest clubs lay in the coffee houses first established in the mid 17th century. Noted for their democratic character, these establishments were open to anyone who could pay the one penny entry fee. Their atmosphere was unceremonious and convivial and they facilitated the informal exchange of news and gossip beyond the control of the Royal Court. Access to printed materials was another attraction and most coffee house proprietors took out subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals that were made available to their customers free of charge. These men-only, social environments sowed the seeds for the later development of club culture.

By the middle of the 18th century, the socially mixed and welcoming character of coffee houses had begun to change. Some raised entry fees to encourage a wealthier clientele, while others provided rooms for



specialist groups like the Dilettanti Society whose members shared an interest in Greek and Roman antiquities. But it was gambling that provided the most important impetus

for the creation of private members' clubs. Gambling was an integral part of 18th century culture and wealthy men bet on virtually everything – when people would get married, when they would die, when they would go to war and so on. It was at card games, however, that the largest sums could be lost or won and it was the desire to protect high-stakes games from players who were not bound by the gentleman's code of playing fairly and honouring their debts that led a group of aristocrats to found Whites, the first gentleman's club, in 1697. In 1755 Whites moved to its current home at 37 St James's Street, a 4 four-storey building with an elegant Palladian façade incorporating a large bow window where Regency dandies would gather to observe passers-by on the ground floor. From the start, the club was notorious for gambling. Jonathan Swift described it as “the bane of half the English nobility” and Lord Alvaney, one of its most celebrated members, was reputed to have bet £3,000 on which of two raindrops would reach the bottom of a pane of glass first!



Where Whites settled others followed, and London's Clubland soon came to occupy the small geographical area around St. James and Pall Mall. By the middle of the 19th century this district had become one of the most expensive and fashionable in the West End and its parades of large neo-classical buildings were home to at least thirty clubs. The high concentration of prestigious clubs in one area gave London's Clubland its uniquely local character. Members could walk from one club to another; they were also near the theatres and opera in Covent Garden, and the luxury shops in Bond Street and Piccadilly. And Clubland was close to Whitehall and the Houses of Parliament – a feature that became more important as the links between politics and gentlemen's clubs became stronger in the mid and later Victorian period.

NOTE: Further Info on the Parthenon frieze can be found at:

[Parthenon Frieze - Alchetron, The Free Social Encyclopedia](#)



Early Victorian clubhouses like the Athenaeum (established in 1824) and the Reform (established in 1832) set new standards for club architecture in the scale and elaboration of their design with magnificent facades that were intended to convey wealth, status and distinction. The favourite style was classical, a choice that was partly due to fashion and partly to the associations of learning,

debate and male sociability that were linked to ancient Greece and Rome. The Athenaeum, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge whose members have included 51 Nobel Laureates, was designed by Decimus Burton in the severe classical style. It has a grand entrance in the form a large Doric portico topped by a gilded statue of Athena, and above that the façade incorporates a bas relief copy of the Parthenon frieze.

Charles Barry was the architect most often credited with inventing the Victorian clubhouse style and in the Italian Renaissance palazzo he found the perfect model for his London clubs. His Reform Club – erected in 1841 - was inspired by Rome’s Palazzo Farnese with a three-story, Portland stone exterior that is uncompromisingly symmetrical in all its details. Each of the windows on the main floors is enclosed in its own aedicule – a kind of mini-building made up of two columns and a pediment – and the entrance is surrounded by a large Italianate door case. Everything about the design is intended to express exclusivity and privacy. The impenetrable façade is almost forbidding in its stateliness and was clearly intended to discourage casual visitors. The privacy of the club was also jealously guarded by its hall porters who were trained to turn away creditors, money lenders, mistresses and wives! The interiors also illustrate many of the features found in other clubs, including a magnificent double-height inner





hall, lit by a glass atrium and flanked by columns, statuary, and an imposing gallery. Club halls were often very grand, not so much to impress guests but to reinforce their members sense of their own importance. The ground floor was the most public space and includes a

large coffee room overlooking the garden, a library and a smaller morning or dining room. The upstairs rooms were more private and were generally reserved for reading, smoking and gaming.

The Reform Club was one of several institutions that had strong political affiliations. Established in the wake of the 1832 Reform Bill it quickly became the nerve centre of the fledgling Liberal party. The Carlton Club performed a similar role for the Conservative party and its founding, also in 1832, symbolised the party's determination to oppose any further electoral reform. The political activism of both these clubs was, however, relatively short-lived. The Reform was replaced by the National Liberal Club housed in Alfred Waterhouse's vast French-Renaissance style building in 1884, and the Carlton was superseded by the National Conservative Club in the 1880s. Meanwhile, other clubs catered for more specialist groups: the United Services Club was for senior officers in the military, the Travellers was for members who had travelled at least 500 miles from the capital, and the Garrick was for writers, actors, and musicians.

Victorian clubs increasingly acted as surrogate homes, providing all the comforts and necessities for daily life with facilities for dining, socializing, receiving and sending mail, playing games, and even sleeping overnight. The homo-social conviviality of this all-male world was gratifyingly familiar to men brought up in the similarly all-male environments of public schools and universities. And gentlemen's clubs offered an alternative site for male domesticity away from both the oppressively female atmosphere of the family home and the competitive worlds of business and public life. The accommodation was comfortable and decidedly masculine, with liberal use of dark colours, wood paneling and leather chairs. Bedrooms became more important as club



memberships grew and access to cheap rooms in the heart of London's West End was another significant attraction for members living out of town. Clubs like the Travellers, the Oriental and the East India Club served a useful role in providing a base for the vast army of men who went abroad to

service Britain's empire during their periodic return visits to the capital.

The last quarter of the 19th century saw a huge increase in club membership. Military clubs had the largest numbers because most of their members lived overseas; political clubs had the grandest buildings; and purely social clubs like Boodles and Whites were the most socially exclusive. Many men belonged to several clubs. Lord Rothschild, for example, belonged to at least five clubs in 1895; he would discuss politics at Brooks, racing at the Turf Club, and business at Whites. Yet, despite their growing numbers, elite clubs remained highly select. Originally their membership was confined to the uppermost echelons of society. During the Victorian period, however, definitions of what it meant to be a gentleman were changing: it was no longer just a matter of birth and breeding, but also about education, income, and above all gentlemanly behavior. This expanded definition enabled new money to mix with old but wealth alone did not guarantee entry to London's most prestigious clubs. An ideal clubman was also honorable, courageous, athletic, talented and good humoured. Sociability was deemed so vital that it spawned the term 'clubbable'.

Being accepted by an elite club conferred considerable status on new members. Men listed their clubs in Who's Who and fathers put their sons' names down on club waiting lists as soon as they were born. Every candidate had to go through an election process and four or five votes against was enough to incur rejection. Although black-balling – as it was called – was socially damaging, it was as nothing compared to the disgrace of expulsion. This was brought about by defaulting on bets or debts of honour, being

repeatedly and obviously drunk, brawling in public, cheating at cards, and breaking the code of club confidentiality by repeating gossip outside the club. Expulsion was a very public declaration that the member was not a gentleman and it was not an experience that anyone could be expected to recover from.

Victorian women, of course, were not permitted to join gentlemen's clubs but from the 1880s they began to establish their own. The most socially elite aped the exclusivity and grandeur of their male counterparts. The Alexandra, founded in 1884, restricted membership to ladies who attended court drawing rooms while the even more luxurious Empress Club (1892)

boasted two drawing rooms, a dining room, a library, a writing room, and a magnificent staircase decorated with images of Shakespeare's heroines. They were founded as resting places for the wealthy West End shopper – where respectable women could meet, dine and socialize in luxurious surroundings without the need for chaperones.



Members of the University Women's Club (1887) were more high-brow and were united by their intellectual interests and university education. The Pioneer Club (1892) also catered for professional women with an interest in social, political and educational reform. By 1899 there were around twenty-five clubs in London available for aristocratic and middle class women. Most were based in the streets north of Piccadilly, some distance from St. James's, and they never acquired the social cachet or privilege that was associated with the older gentlemen's clubs.

The death of so many club members during World War 1 put an end to all but the most successful of London's clubs. There was a brief revival of club life in the 1920s and 1930s when clubs like the Gargoyle catered to the hedonistic habits of Evelyn Waugh's Bright Young Things. Based in Soho rather than St James's, they admitted women as well as men and encouraged an atmosphere of Bohemian partying and heavy drinking rather than respectability and exclusivity.

London's Clubland continues to flourish today but in a very different form and on a much-reduced scale. With the exception of the Garrick in Covent Garden, all clubs now accept women and many of the traditional regulations regarding dress and types of entertainment have been relaxed. The old idea of the gentleman's club as a home from home, where men would spend the greater part of their day, has been replaced by a greater emphasis on using the facilities for work, networking and entertaining. Nevertheless, the grandeur of the club buildings and the ostentation of their ceremonial dinners are useful reminders of the power and influence that London's most exclusive establishments once enjoyed and it is a privilege to be able to provide a glimpse of their architecture and interiors for students on the Summer School.

Further Reading

Barbara Black, *A Room of His Own: A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland*, Ohio 2012

Anthony Lejeune, *The Gentleman's Clubs of London*, London 2012

Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain*, London 2011

George Washington's Places: Alexandria and South Fairfax County



The Smithsonian Associates program in Washington, DC is offering a day of adventure traveling from Old Town Alexandria along the George Washington Parkway to Mount Vernon and beyond to recall the life and legacy of George Washington as a general and president. Historian and writer **Laura Macaluso** (Newport 1999, London 2017, and Chicago 2020), author of the new guidebook *A History Lover's Guide to Alexandria and South Fairfax County*, leads the tour.

For info and tickets:

[George Washington's Places: Alexandria and South Fairfax County - Smithsonian Associates](#)

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS



Pauline Metcalf (London Sumer School, presenter at the Newport Sumer School, and host of the alumni reception) was recently honored by The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home. The Mount is a turn-of-the-century home, designed and built by Edith Wharton in 1902. The Mount is a National Historic Landmark today. The Mount is a cultural center that celebrates the intellectual, artistic, and humanitarian legacy of Edith Wharton.

Pauline was honored because of her interest in Ogden Codman and her excellent preservation efforts at the Mount. Pauline is retiring from the Board at the Mount. The evening and tributes were so special. Pauline's support and guidance has made The Mount with its innovative programs and gardens a very special place. Prof Richard Guy Wilson talked about some recently discovered photo archives and Pauline inspired all with her comments. A lively reception followed the program. Congratulations to Pauline for her many achievements and special thanks for her firm and faithful support of the Summer Schools.





The Alumni Association is sad to report on the passing of **Helen Sonnenberg Tucker** age 96, of New York, New York. Helen passed away on Wednesday, August 3, 2022, of natural causes. She was born June 11, 1926. She grew up in Gramercy Park in New York City. She was a member of the class of '47 at Vassar College. Helen is survived by her three children: Steven Tucker and Susan Tucker of New York City, and Barbara Tucker Cardinal of North Truro, MA. as well as by two grandchildren, Julian and Camille Cardinal, and a great-granddaughter, Olivia Cardinal. Her husband, Michael, predeceased her.

Helen was the daughter of the renowned publicist Benjamin Sonnenberg. Helen was President of the Gramercy Park Foundation and a generous and dedicated philanthropist. She served on the boards of MacDowell, The New York Public Library, The Municipal Arts Society, and The Victorian Society Scholarship Fund. The Victorian Society Scholarship Fund was founded in her father's study on Gramercy Park, and Christopher Forbes of Forbes magazine was named President. Helen worked tirelessly over three decades on benefit teas that provided scholarships for young enthusiasts of the Victorian era. Under the guidance of Prof. Richard Guy Wilson, the Victorian Society Summer School programs are held each summer in Newport, Rhode Island with other schools in London and Chicago.

Helen was such a crucial figure in the history of the VSA Summer Schools. She followed in her father's footsteps supporting the VSA from the beginning. Ruth Emery, a retired professor of 19th century history and literature was key! This all took place in the 1960s & 70's. The NY chapter was the original one, before a national Society headquartered in Philadelphia, was launched. The Victorian Society had a significant and prestigious role in the historical preservation movement because 19th century architect was just being saved in NY. Without her constant support and initiative at a crucial time in the beginning, combined with that of Ruth Emery and Kip Forbes (head of the Victorian Society Scholarship Tea Fund started by Helen's father), the Victorian Society Education program and the launch of the Summer Schools would not have been possible. In essence, Helen's vision, support, and efforts made it possible to have the VSA Summer School programs!

Kip Forbes found a pic he took at a benefactor lunch hosted by Henry McIlhenny at his legendary townhouse at Rittenhouse Square. Helen has HRH The Duke of Gloucester on her right, while the Duchess is to Henry's right at the far end. Ruth Feder is smiling leaning forward on the left, Astrid is chatting to her neighbor on the Duke's right and Margaret Trombly has Styles Colwell to her right.



The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association

John C. Freed, a longtime VSA and Alumni Association supporter made provisions for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association in memory of his partner, **Paul Duchscherer**. **Paul Duchscherer** very thoughtfully made provisions in his trust for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association as well as designating the Alumni Association as the beneficiary of all future royalties from his many books and other publications. The **Bob and Carole Chapman Fund** very generously awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Alumni Association Chapter in memory of **Carole Chapman**. **Darrell Lemke & Maryellen Trautman** made provisions for a bequest to the Alumni Association

The Officers and board members of the Alumni Association are extremely grateful to all alumni who help support our mission. We offer our special thanks to those listed below who made additional contributions—above and beyond their membership dues—to the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund.

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