

P O M P

POMP

*This book is dedicated to Peter York and the
late Ann Barr, who paved the way for future
Sloanes and those who take the mantle*

POMP

Old Money, New Rules

Written and Produced
by
Lara Howard



Sloanes picnic in the polo park circa June 1985. Photograph by Homer Sykes.

Foreword

POMP is neither a guide nor a manual. It does not aim to provide precise historical details or sociological analysis. Nor will it teach you how to climb the ranks of the British aristocracy, although you might pick up a few tricks along the way. Instead, this book chronicles the stories, lives, behaviours, upbringing, and all the social nuances, class codes, and cultural binaries associated with one of Britain's most enduring curiosities: the upper class.

In a time when class boundaries are more blurred than Donald Trump's eyesight, where Sloane Rangers wear Apple watches and baseball caps, and would-be debutantes live in flats in Hackney, it's harder to distinguish the British upper class from those who simply play the role. POMP does not aim to ignore the societal imbalance caused by extreme wealth and income disparity, along with a cultural history that has traditionally favoured the rich and the aristocracy. POMP is crafted with satire and keen observation. It aims to entertain, poke fun, and revel in the absurdities of British 'poshies'.

Read on with a raised eyebrow, an observational or self-deprecating sense of humour, and a pinch of salt (Maldon, obviously).

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Illustration by Oliver Preston

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Introduction

Britain can be quite a peculiar place. Despite experiencing one of the most significant socio-cultural shifts in recent years, with the far-right gaining influence and the wealth gap widening, an intense cultural fascination with the upper class persists. Royalty, history, heritage, and opulence continue to fascinate us on screen, from *Rivals* and *Bridgerton* to *Downton Abbey* and *Saltburn*. Instagram accounts satirising the quintessential ‘posh’ Brit are proliferating – look up Archie Curzon or The Chin Dictionary (which I include later). This enduring interest suggests that, as a nation (and for our international cousins), we have an obsession with learning about the elite, not only as a form of escapism but also to critique, reflect on, and laugh at the inequalities and quirks of our society.

POMP, if you weren’t aware, is short for pompous - ‘an ostentatious and splendid display’. This book aims to ostentatiously, splendidly, and intimately chart the journey from the ‘80s Sloane Ranger to the modern-day Chin - a slippery slope – or possibly incline - from tradition and defined etiquette to nuanced displays of wealth and altered behaviours.

For me, the precedent for displaying satirical and often self-deprecating humour comes from various ‘insiders’ who cleverly poked fun at their own kind. My social commentary and anthropological account here wouldn’t be possible without Peter York and Ann Barr, the inimitable creators of *The Sloane Ranger Handbook* in 1982. The subheading reads, “The First Guide to What Really Matters in Life.” – an immediate inference to the satire and dry wit exuded from its pages. The Sloane Ranger was a particular archetype (and stereotype) of an upper-class person who roamed the streets of London’s Chelsea in the 1980s. They dressed, spoke, and behaved in a certain way. Peter York and Ann Barr’s genius put them on the global map.

I sat down with 80-year-old Peter York for afternoon tea (actually coffee, which is now reluctantly allowed) to discuss everything related to Sloanes and the publishing industry. He's as dashing as expected in an immaculate suit and gets straight to the matter from the start. He reminisces about the early days of writing with a mix of amusement and disbelief "I'd never been a writer before. I had a proper job." He only began writing for Harper's and Queen because his then girlfriend, who had been hired as a writer by Ann Barr, the deputy editor, became so annoyed by his sub-editing that she asked him to write a piece, and Ann Barr agreed. Harpers and Queen, at the time, was the magazine now known as Harper's Bazaar (they dropped the 'Queen' in 2006). It was here that he found his voice, but not exactly his audience: "Pre-Tina Brown, Tatler was very dull. Harpers and Queen, too. At the centre of the readership were ambitious women who mostly cared about their daughters marrying a Duke."

Fortunately for Peter York, Ann Barr permitted him to write about almost anything he wished. This partly helped shape his career and the magazine's ethos. "Ann let me write pieces even if she knew they wouldn't be for the readership. I'd put cover lines against these crazy stories - 'German electronic routes of disco,' 'Boy George and the Blitz Club.' This was of no interest to the "Jane Austen mums who were still looking for their daughters' dukes." But Barr, described as "the most extraordinary person," allowed him to continue, and suddenly, "I redeemed myself by writing a piece on the Sloane Ranger." It was readers like these - the aspirational, socially curious, slightly snobbish audience - who fell in love with his work. "They would write in and say, 'We loved this...my brothers...husbands...friends are just like that!'"

When discussing how *The Sloane Ranger Handbook* was created, York vividly recalls the moment. It was 1981; Stephen Quinn was the publisher, and there was more money, more advertising, and greater interest than ever before. He approached York and Barr: "We're doing so well that the in-house book publisher - Ebury Press - wants to compile a collection of books". Peter immediately remembers taking out a manila brown envelope, placing it vertically on the table to write a list, and only one name came to mind... The Sloane Ranger Handbook. And why, at that very moment, did he know it was the right choice?

“There was someone called Diana Spencer around. People were absolutely fascinated by her, but they didn’t know about SW1 and the people who surrounded her...” He knew then that the book would have to include her, and she had to be on the cover – even though “we eventually realised she wasn’t a Sloane Ranger.” The book sold out “instantly. From September to pre-Christmas, there were constant reprints.” The success helped define a cultural phenomenon: “If you were an aspirant, there was only one way to go — the Sloane Ranger way.”

York’s observation of class, wealth, and aspiration is witty and enduring. But I had to pick up on the comment on Princess Diana. I ask, how is she not a Sloane Ranger? “She was an aristocrat. It was different. You can’t lose status the same way because you consider you were born with it,” he stated, capturing the subtleties of inherited privilege. Like many in that era, the shifts in public discord and politics even affected the Sloanes “Americanisation, aspiration, and affluence — if you were a toff, you would wear shabby clothes. That started to vanish in the '80s.” However, York always distinguished the differences between Sloane Rangers and the aristocracy: “There is a difference. At the time, people didn’t realise. The aristocracy are uninhibited. They can do what they want.”

Amid the glamorous parties and cultural shifts, he recalls the fabulous parties. Media and celebrity culture transformed the publishing industry as he attended nearly every party, book launch and Sloane-related event: “I was the face of the brand. I attended the fabulous parties, received terrific coverage – Champagne house sponsored, of course.” He credits Ann’s own upbringing in wealthy circles (She was from the Iron Bru family) and social observations as the reason for their success. “She had been writing and taking notes on these people for years at House and Garden and Harper’s. She was brilliant, although she always complained I gave her the boring bits.” His admiration for her is palpable. Sadly, she passed away in 2015, but her legacy lives on. “For its time, our observations were terribly accurate. There was no average media observation of posh folk.”

They truly were the first to do this, transforming both satirical writing on a traditionally closed and private group of individuals, and capturing the rhythms of British society during an intensely transitional period. Times change, and York reflected on these subtleties that shifted from the Sloane Ranger era, “Mothers started talking about their daughters; instead of ‘She’s marrying...’ They’d say, ‘She’s doing her PhD at Harvard’.”

From the glittering days of the Sloane Ranger, York recognises the change to the very world he championed. Speaking of the modern-day counterpart, whimsically titled *The Chin*, he says it’s not the same. Television shows like *Made in Chelsea*, which show videos of the King’s Road and young people drinking in pubs we can’t afford, highlight this shift. “It’s just not the same. I get very agitated that wealthy people drive culture wars to divert attention from their own interests.” While the Sloane Ranger looks very different today, and perhaps for good reason... In fact, he regrets publishing a book called *Cooler, Faster, More Expensive: The Return of the Sloane Ranger* in 2007, which was too ahead of its time. “We had to say that everything had changed. When only some things had changed.” In the process of seeking a different life – less aristocratic, less ‘Chelsea’ (for financial or other reasons) – “they De-Sloaned themselves.” He believes they were too early to make these statements, so hopefully almost 20 years later, now is the time approach the Sloane Ranger legacy in its newest and most contemporary form.

Although I don’t fully belong to the same financial or social class as many of the people Peter York has chronicled and whom I include in *POMP*, I’ve been on its fringes my whole life. And that’s what’s most important. It makes me a perceptive observer and grants me access to many people who trust me with their stories and let me into their world. To an extent, you need to be part of it, and understand it, to comment on it. For *POMP*, the aim is to satirise, engage with, and observe the quirks, hierarchies, and obscurities of Britain’s elite. It’s not about indulging them or minimising the injustices and hatred this country harbours, or the apparent issues with class mobility. Instead, it seeks to poke fun, find escapism, and enjoy some of the rich history and heritage woven into our culture.

Enjoy!

The Sloane





Ranger

*Previous page:
Ha Ha Lawn at Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Glyne, East Sussex,
England, July 1985. In formal evening attire, a couple of opera lovers
enjoy an alfresco smoked salmon supper and a still unopened bottle
of Champagne. They are discussing the merits of the first act of
Mozart's Idomeneo based on a story by Homer.
Images: Homer Sykes. From his book, "Colour Works: My British
Archive The 1980s AND 90s."*

Previous page: Couple Open Air Sex UK 1990s. Leaning against his Racing Green Triumph Stag in the late summer sun at the exclusive Number 1 Car Park at Royal Ascot, a couple celebrate a win on the runners or perhaps are just enjoying some serious foreplay after a bottle or two of bubbles.

Images: Homer Sykes. From his book, "Colour Works: My British Archive The 1980s AND 90s."

From Persia with Love

The salacious life of Simin Nafis Tehrani

If you search for Simin Nafis Tehrani on Google, you'll discover a woman who has lived many lives. Extremely private yet incredibly warm and welcoming, she is a walking contradiction. She regularly reminisces about the "glory days" - her aristocratic youth and earlier life filled with wealth and exuberance - yet she has lived in a small council flat in Soho for thirteen years. Her life has been marked by scandal and gossip, with accusations of fraud, questions of authenticity, and, quite frankly, eccentric behavior. Yet, beneath the surface, she is a gentle and genuine woman - someone who has experienced the height of opulence within both Iranian aristocracy and English society. And someone who has endured immense familial grief and the collapse of the only world she ever knew.

It's common for wealthy individuals who lose their money, home, and lifestyle to cling to the life they once had and to portray to others that they still belong to that world. Enter Simin. Although her actions have been scrutinised by UK media and legal authorities (which I dare not confront her about), she continues to party, always smiling and referring to herself as a Persian Princess in the city she's called home for more than sixty years. Her stories are remarkable, and although I've had to verify their accuracy sometimes, they've always proven to be true. She's rubbed shoulders with royalty, still works today as a translator, DJ'd at iconic Mayfair venues like Annabel's, and modelled alongside "The Shrimp," Jean Shrimpton and the likes of Joanna Lumley. She remains a complete enigma. Exotic, eccentric, vibrant, a little crazy; Simin takes me through the days she views as "the best of her life."



Photographs courtesy of Simin Nafis Tehrani's private collection.

In 1959, Simin moved to her family's residence on Cheyne Walk, an historic address in Chelsea, London, renowned for its famous riverside townhouses and notable residents. Her mother, only sixteen years her senior, was a cousin of the Shah of Persia. They were the last of the Qajar Dynasty before their eventual downfall in 1979, when the Shah was deposed and the monarchy overthrown to establish the Islamic Republic of Iran. When I question her about the move, she explains: "That's just what the wealthy Iranians did. They moved to Chelsea." And Simin only left in 2012, fifty-three years later when she moved to her flat in central Soho. Outside, it's a nondescript building; inside, you are stepping into a bazaar. The space is small but full of character. She has decorated every inch of the walls, floors, ceilings, and even the exterior herself. The colours, textures, lights, Persian music, and aromas take you to her soul - and soul is very important to her.

Her eccentricity is unmatched. She is tiny (under 5 feet), attributing her svelte physique to Pilates and three days a week of consuming only five hundred calories - "How else could I fit into the jeans I wore in 1963?!" At seventy, her skin is like silk (there's a lot of Botox involved, but still!) She reminisces about how much she misses her mother, fondly telling me about their weekly tea date at the Ritz hotel, whereby she "always had to dress smartly. The full Sloane attire." Her brothers attended Hill House School, then Shiplake, and an independent private school just outside Henley. They attended Henley Regatta every year, the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, and she really enjoyed telling me about how many yachts they frequented - primarily through invites by arms dealers -



including Adnan Khashoggi, who married one of her many cousins, and renowned businessman, Fahad Azzima. She speaks fondly of days at Wimbledon, specifically remembering meeting Brooke Shields, who married a Persian, and not to forget the time...

*“Prince Charles danced with me,
and he was just terrible. He kept
stepping on my toes!”*

Her encounters with royalty and London’s social elite in the 1970s stemmed from her deep passion for music and nightclubs. Simin could dance endlessly. For her Seventieth birthday, she wore a full traditional belly dance costume at a club night she organised in Mayfair. Her favourite place to frequent in the 70s was known as “The Saddle Room,” a nightclub on Park Lane, famed for its “horse and carriage” theme. It was opened by Helene Cordet, Prince Philip’s childhood friend. According to Simin, Cordet had a daughter – the spitting image of Prince Philip – his “alleged love child.” Simin even gave Helene a Persian record that she loved; “She would play it all the time. And then there was the club manager, Lorenzo, who kept all our secrets!” Simin and her posse spent many evenings at The Saddle Room as they had to “avoid Annabel’s, as that’s where our parents would be!” Her anecdotes are endless. She speaks of Princess Margaret always being on the scene, someone Simin believed was deeply unhappy. Apparently, she would join them at Simin’s cousin’s house, Cookerie Fallah, who was working for Tatler at the time, and Princess Margaret would always come with over forty people, never alone.



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Her fondest memory was the opening of "Tramp" nightclub on 18th December 1969. The club was founded by Johnny Gold, Oscar Lerman, and Bill Ofner. Simin describes that evening as if it were the height of glamour and English eccentricity, which it probably was in the "Swinging Sixties". Named after Charlie Chaplin's Tramp character, her family quickly took a 'permanent table,' where she had "Joan Collins on my right, followed by the Best (George Best), Omar Sharif on my left, next to Imran Khan and all my lovely cousins." She goes on to say she organised a tennis match between the Shah and Omar Sharif: "I could never refuse such a charming, charismatic friend." I sometimes find it hard to believe her (as so many of the people she speaks of are no longer with us). Still, she recounts stories so personal that I cannot discredit them. I can't resist asking about Dodi and Diana – chief Sloane Ranger – to which Simin states, "It's so funny because I was betrothed to Dodi's cousin Faisal, but I said no. I'm just so glad she got a decent fuck out of Dodi!" Not the reply I expected, but I (in very British fashion) move on quite quickly. Simin notices and promptly says, "You're too British, come on my darling, we can talk about fucking." So, we did.

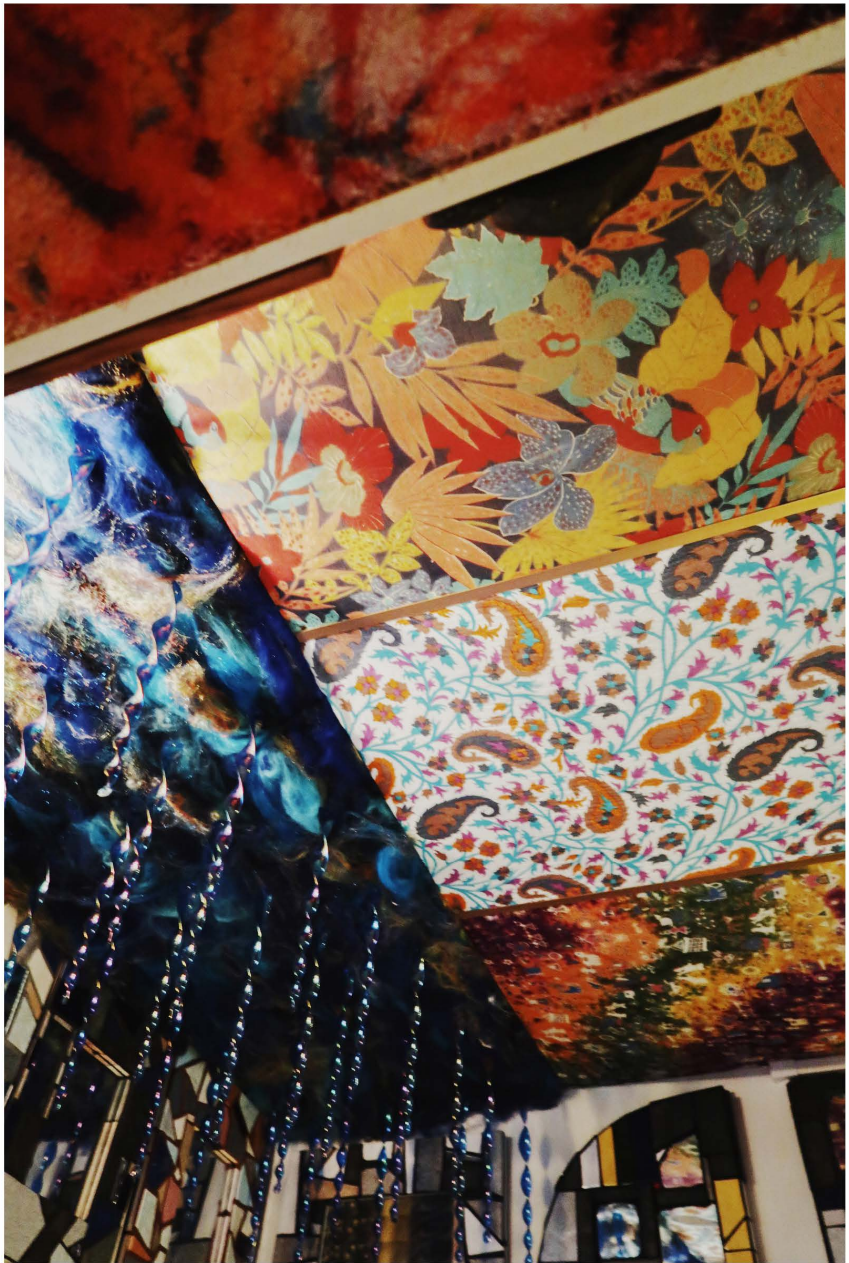


*...I ask her bluntly, “Did you ever shag a Sloane?”
“Darling, I shagged them all.”*

She recalls dating a stockbroker named Oscar in the '80s. He was a nervous wreck who never slept: “I don’t know if it was the cocaine or the markets. All I remember is that we both lived in Chelsea, and he would estimate how long it would take to get to me – there and back to the office – and squeeze in a quick fuck between meetings.” Apparently, he was suited, booted, and handsome, so it was worth his time. Her candour, given her traditional background, is remarkable; she only says, “I’m Persian. We speak openly, honestly.”

She speaks wistfully about Chelsea and London losing their charm. “Ceconi’s was the only place left.” Today, she remarks that very few spots still embody that lifestyle. If you want to try, then there’s Bacchanalia, Chiltern Firehouse (pre-burning down), Flute (“once you’re in the system, you’re in for life”) and Dear Jackie (“great but no place to snog”). Of Chelsea, she says, “Now, in my eyes, it’s boring.” The decline of the Drug Store and Kensington Market was when she felt their character was fading. The Drug Store, she explains, was a three-tiered cosmetic department store on a corner of the King’s Road; an iconic spot for Sloanes to explore on a Saturday morning. She mentions they called them ‘yuppies’ (Young Urban Professionals), a slightly broader and more classless eponym. The very wealthy would commute between Chelsea and their country estates. At least that part hasn’t changed.





Photographs courtesy of the author



Simin's Soho Flat

The only brand her mother or family would wear is Hermès: a small belt or a ‘Kelly’ bag was the epitome of elegance.

Simin constantly refers to the exuberant lifestyle of her youth and rarely reveals what truly happened to her wealth, her family, and her world. While she mentions “their crash,” which occurred in 1979, she doesn’t discuss the repercussions of this on her lifestyle. Her wealth, you might say, lies in her experiences, friends, acquaintances, and a life well lived. She is also open when commenting on other people. Simin does not have an iPhone – she dismisses them as “déclassé.” Other items on her list that she views as “fake rich” include any logo; “the wealthy would not wear logos.”

Positive optimism, she says, keeps her going. Signing off every text, email, or handwritten letter with ‘Oceans of love,’ her zest for life is infectious – even if we don’t always quite know if we are hearing the truth. I point to the beautiful pink crochet cardigan she picks up, saying how much I love it. “I love this cardigan. I’m in love with it. I’m always in love – even if I am not in love with a person, I am in love with life. That’s what happens when you are born and live in the best era of history; I adore that this cardigan will outlive me.”



Daffyd Jones: A Lens on the Elite

England: The Last Hurrah

Daffyd Jones is a renowned British photographer who offered the public a unique and invaluable glimpse into British high society. From hunt balls to political conferences, the young photographer began capturing pivotal moments from these events in June 1979, when the new editor of Tatler, Tina Brown, hired him. His modest nature earned him entry into the most exclusive circles of society, armed only with a camera and a vision.

In his book, *England: The Last Hurrah*, Daffyd and his former editor, Tina Brown, reflect on navigating the shifting social landscape. Brown arrived at Tatler at a crucial moment in social politics: “England was on the cusp of Mrs Thatcher’s ascendance to Downing Street, and with it came an era of social division and aggressive new money... There was a nostalgia for the Brideshead Revisited era of aristocratic whimsy and frolicky romance.”

Brown observed the decline of the Tatler’s iconic party pages and feared its identity was shifting. She cleverly “employed a smattering of Etonians,” Daffyd remarks, who were “clever, charming, ironic... simply not being an Etonian was cause for amusement.” With this, invitations to events and the staff became just as much part of society as their subject matter. She revamped Tatler to address “these crosscurrents, the emerging social edge, the high-low social mix. The secret excesses that still existed behind the closed doors of England’s great houses, and it needed to be chronicled with a cleverly irreverent point of view.”



Blizzard Ball, London, 1986

Brown credits Jones's humble upbringing, attending a state school in Oxford where he earned extra money as a school cleaner, as the reason he had "the perfect Townie vantage point from which to view the privileged antics of the Oxford Jeunesse Dorée."

Jones reflected on the exclusivity and routine upheld by the royals and upper class, which evidently made it easier to photograph. From being invited by mothers to parties or memorising the royals' consistent routine of "hunting, polo, Chelsea, Cowes, horse trials, the Derby and Ascot," he visited these places to confirm that they were designed to "keep people out. Back then at Ascot, you needed two recommendations from members who had attended for at least five years. These days, they clearly just let anyone in!"



Caledonian Ball, Englefield House, Berkshire, 1987

“Each day I would hang my dinner jacket in our yard to blow away the smell of cigarettes.”



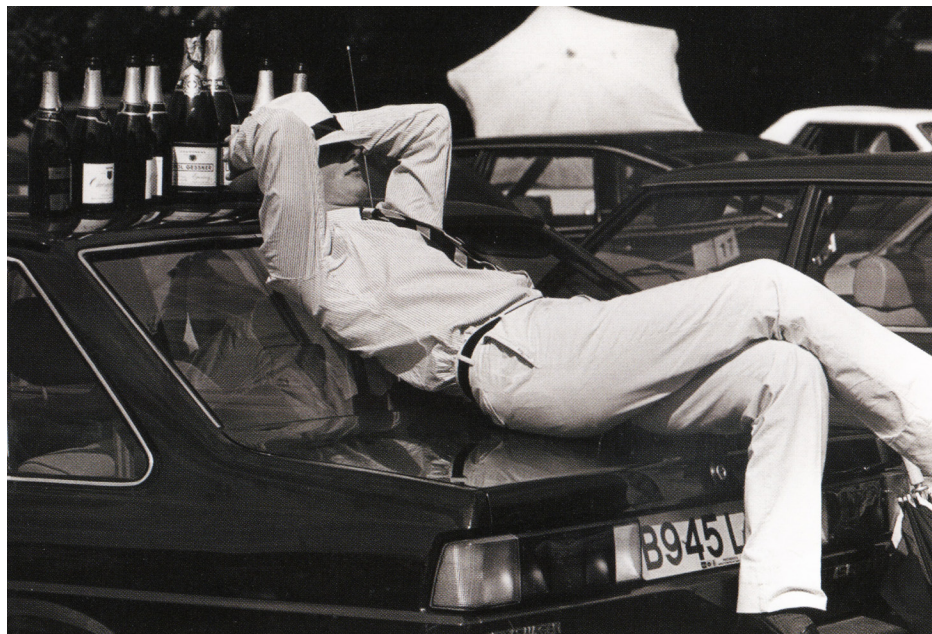


William Nott and Edward Hoare at the Grattan-Bellew/Sebag-Montefiore/Courtald Dance, Boodle's, London, 1981

Jones's photographs accompanied a social commentary. He observed themes by noting events, parties, and conferences. He remarks that there was always someone asleep, "suggesting a society in decline." The façade of the ultra-wealthy British elite is not always as it appears. He remembers the beauty of the magical country homes, "many with inhabitants living carefully off their dwindling inherited wealth."

Jones concludes the introduction of his book with a subtle foreshadowing of his photographs: "I had access to what felt like a secret world...It was a subject that had been written about and dramatised, but I don't think any photographers had ever tackled it before. There was a change going on. Someone described it as a 'last hurrah' of the upper classes."

Brown also reflects on this, offering a poignant observation on how this period shaped today: "Dafydd's brilliant evocation of a time and a class only seem more potent today, when we know that so many of the moneyed twits in his '80s portfolio ended up running the country, as they always have. His genius is to preserve something elegiac in the satire. These were, after all, just young people having fun."



Charles Stanhope, Henley Regatta, 1985



Caledonian Ball, Englefield House, Berkshire, 1987



Crispin Balfour, Dangerous Sports Club Tea Party, Dutch Ambassador's house, Gloucestershire, 1981



Paul Golding at the Piers Gaveston Ball, Park Lane Hotel, 1983

Stiffies, Social Change and Success

The Life and Good Times of Melanie Hampton

Melanie Hampton MBE (don't forget the MBE) is a force of nature. She can talk—and swear—for England. If she were asked, she would. A true patriot, she has dedicated over thirty years to the insurance industry, founding and running her own company, Alexander Miller. Additionally, she served for eight years as a Wandsworth borough councillor and finally as a Cabinet member for adult healthcare.

Melanie was awarded an MBE, graciously accepted, in the King's 2024 Birthday Honours List for her political service, latterly as Chair of the Carlton Club Political Committee. The Carlton Club is London Tories' heartland - a private members' club in St James's where the original Conservative Party met—and still does for a liquid lunch (strictly no jeans or trainers).

Her achievements are evident, her business expertise impressive; yet her most tremendous success (aside from her second husband and grown-up offspring) is arguably her reputation as the life and soul of the party. She's extremely proud of this accolade, joking that she wants her tombstone to read: "RIP: Melanie always threw a good party." I wonder where she finessed her hosting and society-driven abilities? "Well, darling, it was the Sloanies of course!"



Melanie Hampton MBE. Courtesy of The Worshipful Company of Paviers

The Exeter Years

When Melanie arrived at the University of Exeter in the 1970s, the campus and the city looked different from how it does now. Then a rural outpost, now a bigger but still rather British nondescript town. Of the 3000 students (now 40,000), Melanie recalls that only about 10% were women. For young Melanie, this was a distinct advantage! She describes herself as a “self-professed minx” who won the hearts and minds of many of the public-school boys (Etonians) and consequently immersed herself in that lifestyle. Whilst the University motto is ‘Follow the light’, Melanie also made it her business to ‘Follow the money’!

Contrary to her outward demeanour, she’s proud of her state school upbringing and self-made wealth. At Exeter, “there was definitely snobbery, but no one held it against me. It mattered more that you shared the same values and morals. If you did, you were accepted into the group.” It’s worth noting that Melanie originally came from a very wealthy family in Northern Ireland, as she later mentions, “You know, darling, we had the big houses and the servants, but we lost it all.” Like many of the people I have spoken to, Melanie quickly rushes on and doesn’t allude to why or how her family lost their money. She has tact, charm, a fierce sense of humour, and the brazen ability to hustle: “I was such a monkey, I always got myself invited to the balls. I had lots of boyfriends, so if one of them was an arsehole, there was always another one to invite me somewhere else!”



Photographs courtesy of Melanie Hampton's private collection

She believes women of her generation rarely attended university because their 'Daddies' considered it "terribly vulgar." As a result, she found herself in a minority and quickly joined the "Green Wellies," an elite group of Etonians and other students from public schools. She explains the name, saying, "Initially, it's because we literally wore green Barbour wellies." But it came to mean much more. "We were a tribe. If you wore the green wellies, you were recognised as part of that tribe." She adds: "There was nothing trendy about having them; it was all about tribal identity and the aspiration to belong." Melanie attributes this mentality, apart from the shared quirkiness for country attire (and country homes), to Britain's political shift. "Thatcher unleashed materialism. Suddenly, everyone could rise through the ranks and aspire. People who hadn't been born into privilege could dress the part, act the part, and join in." She discusses the Thatcher 'tribe' mindset. Even in fashion, she says, everyone saw someone they wished to emulate.

She got on better with the 'boys' than with the girls. In her first year at Exeter, she shared a room with a poor girl whom "the Etonians would just call Brenda, it was terribly unkind." (FYI, her name was not Brenda.) Most would be horrified, but the "Green Wellies" gang met nearly every evening for dinner parties in the dorm room. Melanie explained: "She looked at me in horror when I pulled gin or champagne from my drawers." Chest of drawers of course. After several dinners, Brenda insisted on moving. Melanie wasn't surprised; they were opposites. "She found me totally mad. You know... she was just dowdy, wore jeans...dowdy...boring." Safe to say that Melanie and Brenda did not keep in touch.



Melanie's Daddy with his hunting horn.

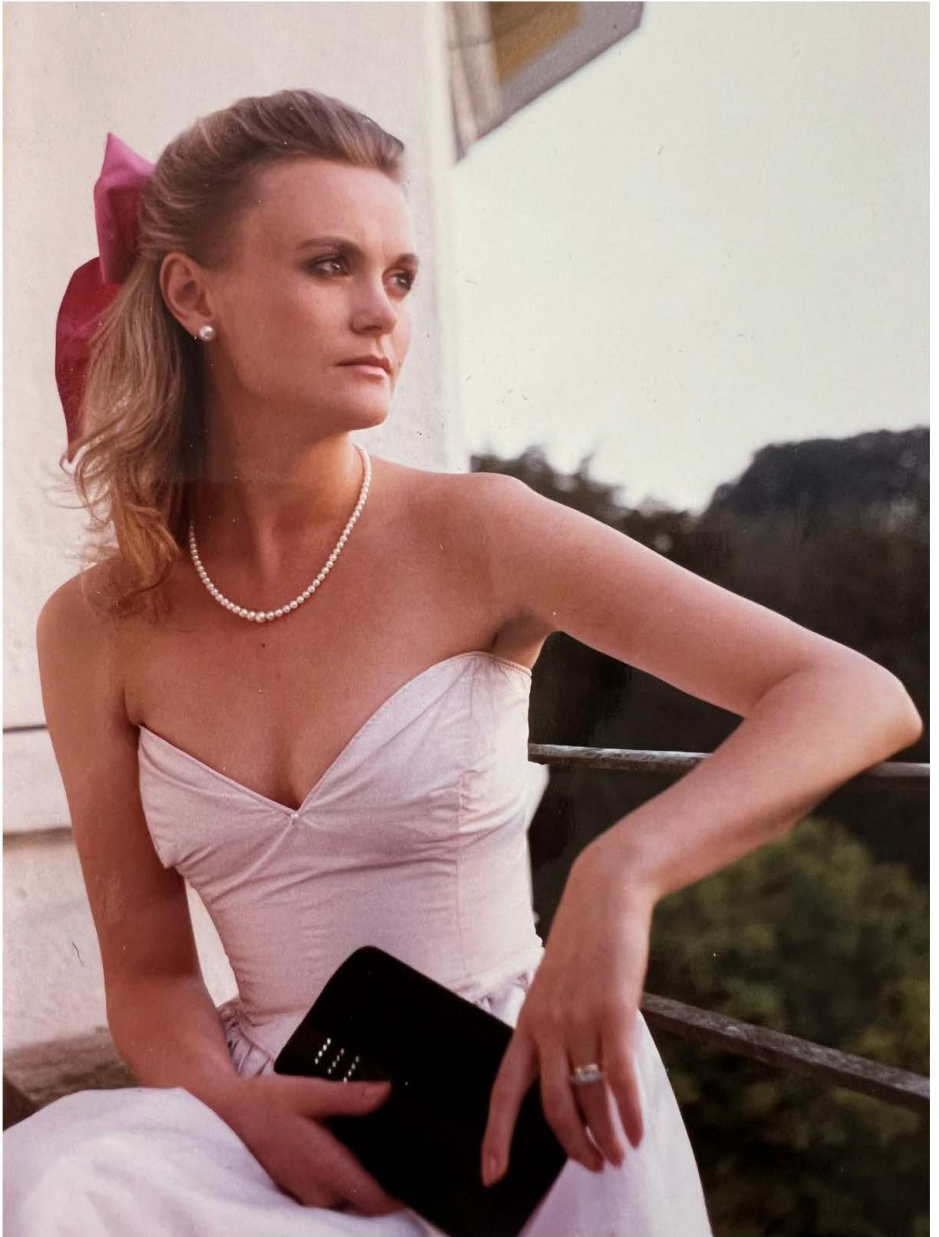
All roads (men) lead to London

– 1980

After Melanie firmly established herself in the “Wellies,” she moved to London. Knowing only four people there at the time, she had to rely on her socialising skills (and men) to become part of the scene. She was living in Windsor, commuting in for every party or ball she was invited to. But by this point, she had a “terribly rich man chasing after me - constantly harassing me to move to London. He wasn’t a big pash, but he was dotty about me!” With him paying for the dinner bills and encouraging her to move, she joined her friend Panda, who had just bought her first home on the Fulham Road (as one does after university).

Melanie fondly remembers this period, recalling with remarkable clarity that this exact moment marked the start of the “Sloane thing really starting to roar.” Even invites (called “stiffies”) to early evening drinks parties were formal. “We would wear knickerbockers and frilly shirts with pie-crust collars. Then the pearls. Just pearls and more pearls. Even the wealthy didn’t seem to have much money, so costume jewellery was acceptable then.” She also recalls how often they would ‘dinner party’—using it almost as a verb. Rarely would they go out, preferring instead to host black-tie dinner parties at home.

It’s hard to believe that such elaborate balls and events were held in London for 21-year-olds. Melanie emphasises, “The deb balls were out of fashion by this stage. We would be invited to huge charity balls because someone’s parents would have bought a table.” And what did they wear? “Proper ball gowns, darling!” “Always a bustier so that it could fit the fat Sloanes and the skinnies. We absolutely loved taffeta and dupion silk – loved it!”



*The World
of Work*

While she revelled in the London ‘stiffies,’ the country parties were sometimes too much even for Melanie. “The big parties with dogs crapping everywhere and everyone shagging each other – I mean, I was absolutely horrified – god bless my Northern Irish Presbyterian soul.” These escapades often involved food fights, which Melanie found pathetic. At least among her Sloane men, she admired their rather dashing sense of style.

She says at the time, "Every single man had a pair of Gucci snaffle loafers." She describes their obsession with Gucci "pre-Essex logo mania" as the height of exuberance and taste in those days. "It was a much more formal way of living. Dinner parties, house parties, balls, 30th birthdays, we always were grand, always in black tie."

Melanie started working in insurance immediately after graduating from university. She was a graduate trainee at Lloyd's, an insurance broker. Just as she had learnt to navigate the higher echelons at Exeter, she quickly advanced through the ranks, leveraging her status as one of the few women to be assertive and outspoken like her male colleagues. "Insurance was always for the arrogant. Even then. You had the Eastenders who favoured giving all the jobs to their own. Then there were the Etonians, who often secured roles because they were too thick to do anything else." Melanie embraced the power suit. Looking back, she notes, "The suit was a power play for women emerging from the home, the kitchen, domesticity. Even the fluffy debs wanted to look powerful."



Melanie's official engagement photograph

For the first time, women were not only working alongside their male counterparts at the same level but also dressing the part, playing by men's own rules. Not only did insurance provide another arena for socialising and networking over fancy lunches and events, but it also highlighted the social changes unfolding in London under Thatcher. "All of these people I was around were so aspirational, all from different backgrounds. They were suddenly making a lot of money in the city. You were either 'rich rich' or city rich." "It felt like a period of monumental social change – it was extraordinary. I experienced it firsthand, and it distilled down. We were all young, aspirational, and striving for a particular standard of living. Eventually, it went out of fashion. But now, as my daughter tells me, it's back: "The Chin is in!"

While Melanie's career and personal life progressed, political and social changes shifted the lifestyle path for her and other Sloanes. However, she states that most have remained "Sloanie Ponies to this day." She prophesies a gradual return to the tribalism and lifestyle that once defined her life. "People have lost their sense of belonging and are gradually returning to their tribes; people like themselves." Controversial to many, Melanie believes these tribes are especially re-emerging with her Gen Y children. "I sent them to private boarding schools, and they've experienced real envy and class heritage that's now made them more accustomed to sticking together." This is, of course, not the case for most of the British public, but there is a certain degree to which the unashamed outward display of wealth and the former 'Sloane' lifestyle is creeping back. Whether it be Instagram influencers flaunting extreme wealth, or the popularity of the 'old money' trend that swept the fashion world in 2023, there is arguably some truth to Melanie's quite outlandish statements. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

The Sloane Ranger on Film

Sunil Gupta's London 1982 Archive



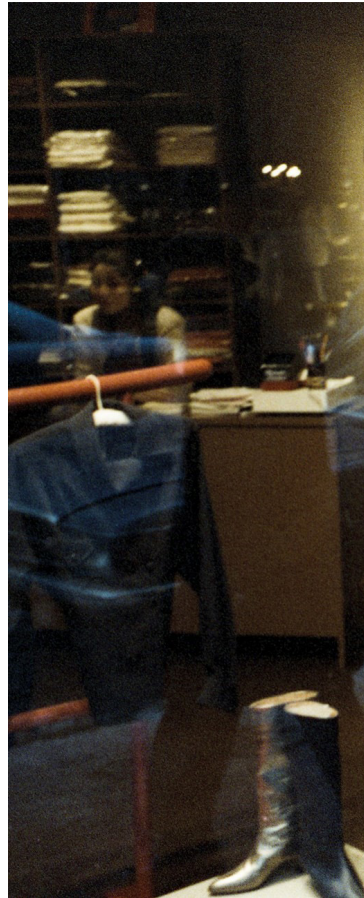
All photographs courtesy of Sunil Gupta's book, London 1982



Photographer Sunil Gupta was born in New Delhi and raised in Montreal. He studied under Lisette Model in New York before moving to London in 1982 to attend the Royal College of Art.



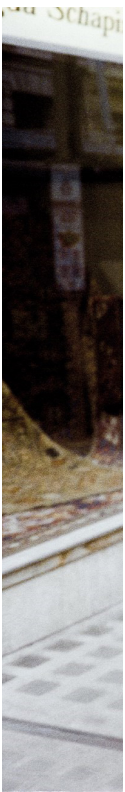
In his book, London 1982, he captured iconic images of the ‘Sloane Ranger’—made popular that very year with the release of The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook. However, this hadn’t necessarily been his intention.





“I hoped to repeat my experience of Christopher Street in New York, except now in London and in colour. It wasn't to be. Even what appeared to be a concentration of gay life was not dense enough to create its own public space, so I was getting either huge gaps between people or a crowd of very mixed people.

I decided to abandon an exclusively gay subject and started concentrating on whatever caught my eye - migrants, people of colour, gay men, elderly people out and about on their own.”







Although he didn't find what he initially sought, the series of photographs provided a real-time portrayal of the Sloanes, New Romantics, and pensioners who once stylishly browsed the King's Road, Chelsea.



"I'd Never Even Been to Lane 2"

Growing up and going out in SW3

I believe you should know that this interviewee has a pseudonym — let's call her 'Henrietta', or Hettie for short. The real Hettie prefers to remain anonymous because, even though she's forty and lives in a small Scottish town, she's afraid that "Mummy might find out" about her teenage escapades in Chelsea. It's interesting how even as adults, offspring show respect for their parents by hiding their youthful exploits or keeping some home truths secret. Another key point is why parents, who owned a house off the King's Road and spent most of their time in Scotland (leaving an empty party pad to three teens) would expect their £6 million home **not** to host 150-200 teenagers every month - teens who escaped boarding school without their parents knowing - and unintentionally turned it into what Hettie describes as an "underground nightclub." Unlike Raffles or Annabel's, at least this one was free!

Hettie recalls that the '90s King's Road felt like a different world. When they were in their early teens, friends would meet at the so-called 'Pigeon Park' opposite The Six Bells, a former pub that became Henry J Bean's (and is now part of the once exclusive but now ubiquitous chain, The Ivy). The 'Park' was a small, grassy square with a bench, tucked between the fire station (the real one!) and the Chelsea Farmers' Market. They'd drink their parents' alcohol, as Hettie admitted, "mainly champagne stolen from one of our wine fridges."



Photographs of Chelsea courtesy of the author

At fourteen, they could start going into pubs (licensing laws seemed a lot more relaxed in those days). Hettie hung out at Henry J. Bean's and spent many hours at The Cadogan Arms (which still exists today). Close to the Bluebird - another upmarket restaurant where reality show *Made in Chelsea* is filmed most days - The Cadogan Arms once had a pool table where Hettie explains, "You'd go meet all the Etonians in there and get sozzled." They didn't stray very far, she says, "sometimes maybe The Goat and Boots on the Fulham Road, but honestly that was different territory—we didn't like to leave Chelsea." She was among the "Chelsea Brigade," mainly 'posh toffs' who attended schools such as Cheltenham Ladies' College, Francis Holland, Eton, and Stowe. They all met at Costa Coffee on weekends, where "you could smoke inside those days!" Hettie happily reminisced about her past order of "a hot chocolate and a pack of Marlboro Lights." Apparently, "Mummy" was none the wiser, as it was well known to Sloanes that visits to Costa Coffee and smelling like an ashtray went hand-in-hand.

Hettie attended Wycombe Abbey, an elite boarding school in Beaconsfield, just outside London. She and her friends would persuade the bursar to let them escape to London on "falsified papers." One of the perks of a privileged background seems to be that it arms you with skills like bending the rules – always in a tactful and clever manner. With money, you can get away with almost anything. As Hettie tells me, "We would come up with some lie as to why they had to let us go back to London for the weekend. All they wanted was a parental signature – that we obviously forged – and we were allowed to leave."



*“We didn’t like to
leave Chelsea.”*

Not only did they get permission, but Hettie would always sign off the forged letter with “Please provide her with £50 for a train ticket and taxi.” This expense, Hettie explains, was added to the end-of-year bill, of which “Daddy wouldn’t notice such a small expense, given how vast the boarding bill was.” So, at fourteen, they headed off to cause chaos on the King’s Road without their parents knowing.

As Hettie grew older, places like 151 and Raffles became her regular spots for weekly nights out before heading to Manchester University. She states this casually, yet with genuine conviction, when she says, “I never bought a drink.” “Prince Andrew and all these older men with bottles of champagne and vodka would buy us drinks and get us into everywhere we went.” She emphasised that “I was too clean cut to have touched them with a barge pole,” but she managed to get what she needed from them. She mentioned never having to pay for entry at any of the nightclubs, “EVER!”, and all the bouncers knew her by name. Her proudest moment was never having to join the exclusive members’ club ‘Raffles’ since she always got in under her mother’s name, who wouldn’t be caught dead there. She visited so often that she was known by her mother’s name, so when her father eventually brought his wife, she wasn’t allowed in!

As they grew older, they headed to ‘Purple’, a nightclub beneath Chelsea football stadium, and ‘China Whites.’ When I ask Hettie why she never had to pay or queue like everyone else, she replies: “I honestly think it was because we were posh and girls. We were locals. Chelsea was such a bubble; it felt completely safe.



With Harrods just around the corner and dinner at Scalini's, the 'local' Italian restaurant, Hettie was never far from fine dining or luxury shopping.

We would all walk home alone along the King's Road without a second thought." In true '90s fashion, she wore miniskirts and lace-lined cardis from Monsoon or M&S. Hettie admits that her mother never liked spending money on their clothes, especially if they were just for going out clubbing. KOOKAI and French Connection (basically any shop that was on the KR) would be in Hettie's wardrobe.

She reminisces about the house parties she hosted, recalling that she once had so many guests that they accidentally set the floor on fire by dropping a ciggy. We laugh at how she genuinely didn't realise at the time how 'posh' she was, living just three minutes from the heart of Chelsea, but to her, it was simply how and where she was brought up. "We all came from money, but we didn't really have any of our own. I never had to worry about money, as in the social London scene, if you were a girl, you were paid for."

*"I'd never even been to
zone 2. I had no idea
what East
London even was."*



Hettie reflects on how different it was back then—much like most people reminiscing about their Sloanie roots. She notes that you could live in Chelsea (and Belgravia) without being a millionaire. Parents were often doctors or lawyers and weren't as wealthy as maybe needed to live in those areas nowadays. "Look at me, I once got laughed out of the pub because I didn't have enough money to buy a bottle of Rosé, and I lived literally next door to the Cadogana!" She never really saw herself as 'posh', but she now realises how privileged her upbringing was.

"I mean, I was a Deb! I also hosted a Masquerade ball for my 21st birthday, attended by hundreds of people. Everyone just had such broad circles of friends."

Though Hettie now prefers a quieter life, thanks to what she jokingly calls "marrying a commoner," she loved the lifestyle that comes with the SW3 postcode. Although she might not want to admit she was a 'Sloane Ranger,' feeling still a bit too young for that label, there's no denying her roots: "I didn't think Sloanes were particularly cool, I just sort-of accidentally became one."



Iconic restaurant Daphne's, where many a boozy Sunday lunch, birthday celebrations, and special occasions always warranted a visit.

2



THE CHIN



"The Hinge Addicts"



"The Après-Ski Enthusiast"

Illustrations by Oliver Preston
Captions by Author

THE CHIN DICTIONARY

Courtesy of 'Leo', the author of the eponymous bible



Uber rating: one star

Once a Sloane, once a Toff, once even a ponce; the British upper class are never shy of a nickname. Now, if you're in the inner circle, there's a new name they've coined for themselves - The Chin. – The Chin. Most likely derived from “chinless wonders,” an old term used to describe members of the aristocracy. Through investigation, I've also uncovered a contemporary reference: the idea that this type of person often leads with their chin in conversation (raise your chin, and your lip purses, and you get the idea). The moniker is more refined... exclusive (as most things with this crowd are). Who, then, has made it a growing household name? Leo (a pseudonym) is the elusive author of *The Chin Dictionary*, an Instagram account-turned-physical book that has captured the attention of tens of thousands of avid readers.

Satirical, ridiculous, and utterly hilarious, Leo has perfectly embodied the kind of ‘Chin’ we see today. He identifies as a Chin, which is why both insiders and outsiders enjoy his writing. So why don't they take offence at some of his rather outlandish satire? Leo believes that “Irony runs through the Chins.” For example, “The first 2,000 copies I sold... I looked down the mailing list, and the top addresses were Manor, Rectory, Castle, and Vicarage.” They can laugh at themselves while still adhering to traditional upper-class lifestyles. “Chins aren't snobby about people, but they're very snobby about things – anything flashy is a big red flag.” Think of a Chin as someone who tells their father off for making inappropriate comments but willingly accepts Daddy's house deposit money.

The ‘woke-toff’, as it were.

Leo has brilliantly captured the amusing habits of the British upper class and their abundant ‘self-confidence’ by compiling all their wild and wonderful ways into a dictionary. Available exclusively through his website, here's a sneaky peek into the joyfully splendid *Chin Dictionary*:

A tug *n.*

Someone who's always hooked up to a peer.

A TWAT *acronym.*

Only bothering with the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

For only bothering on Mondays, and for about six minutes, see: Cheltenham.

Back office *adj.*

See also: good on clays.

Bed in the house *n.*

Going to a festival because you're invited by the landowner. This takes the worst bit of a festival, waking up in a Tesco Value tent, covered in shit, with your face in a ketamine wrapper, and replaces it with the best bit of a festival: waking up in a four poster, covered in White Company bedding, with your face in a ketamine wrapper.

Been over the guns a few times *expr.*

A bird that's been shot at by everyone. See also: Easier to get into than 151 on a Monday.

Billy Goat *n.*

A billionaire. For a millionaire, see: obvi.

Charlie Brown *n.*

Not needing a map to find Charlie's house, as there are brown road signs.

Chelsea Tractor *n.*

A Range Rover. Shown in the adverts on jungle tracks in Brazil, volcanic slopes in Iceland, and the double red outside Peter Jones.

For the Chin who loves parking tickets, see: Towed of Towed Hall.

Chin n.

A male or female steeped in centuries of aristocratic inbreeding, ever since Willy the Conqueror popped over for a cup of tea. Understanding the true nuances of a Chin if you're normal is like trying to understand dolphins clicking: if the dolphin clicked, chugged a beer off a Titian, chucked a shotgun cartridge in the fire for a laugh, and doubled your rent. The world of Chins takes a century to get into, and one use of the word "toilet" to get kicked out of. If you wear bright clothing un-ironically, can trace your social connections back to the paleontological era, and think meritocracy is a nightclub in Hull, welcome aboard.

The Birthday Montage n.

Celebrating your best friend's birthday by creating an Instagram montage...of you looking amazing. Involves using old photos that you'd otherwise have no excuse to post. In every photo, you're front and centre and look like a Victoria's Secret model. She's blurred, slightly out of shot, and looks raaaaaank.

Turning left v.

Boarding an aeroplane.

Turning right v.

Boarding a PJ.

Twelve Days a Rave n.

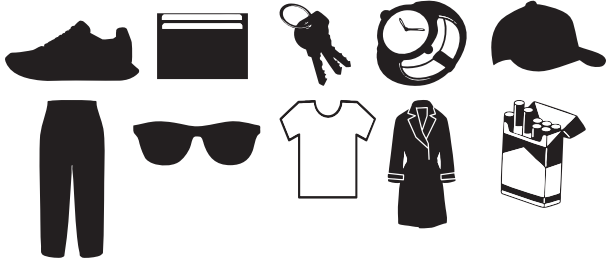
One broken man's epic struggle across the country, during an entire half-term of 18th birthday parties.

AN
EVENING
WITH
JONTY





Jonty Beaufort is without doubt a 'tof.' (and now maybe a Chin). At the ripe but tender age of nineteen, he spends his downtime (of which he seems to have a lot) loafing around the streets of Chelsea and Belgravia and attendant drinking holes, travelling back and forth between Mummy and Daddy's 'flat' on Franklins Row and his estate in Herefordshire. Traditionally, a 'toff' describes someone from the upper echelons of society or refers to their bank account, but apparently, among those 'in the know,' it now denotes a person who splits their time between a large house in the country and a flat or pied-a-terre in London – and almost exclusively SW1 (or 3 at a push).

After leaving Eton and completing his 'gap year,' Jonty (short for nothing, just Jonty plus a heap of unpronounceable family middle names like Farquhar and Colne) is finishing his summer doing precisely nothing at an internship in the City before heading to his next adventure, the University of Exeter, where he'll be reading History (and subsuming vast lines of cocaine). Luckily for Jonty, Daddy has already advised him that since he will be living in the country (Exeter is a city and the Uni sits bang in the middle), he can take the Defender for weekends in Salcombe and jollies to Rock or St Ives, where, sure enough, Jonty has many friends with second homes.

He's excited to leave London, as it's becoming a bit exhausting to live with Mummy and Daddy. They constantly ask what he's going to do with his life while simultaneously topping up his Coutts card (to have an account with Coutts, one must have a million in the bank and pass the bank's stringent vetting rules). It's Saturday and Jonty has a date with Marie Louise, an 18-year-old he knows from Eton days, whom he happened to spot the previous Friday at Loulou's, the private members' club in Mayfair, where teens always bumps into 'old' acquaintances.



He has planned the perfect date for her but first, the outfit needs careful thought – casual but curated:

Outfit: Jonty likes to go high-low: Uniqlo linen trousers  James Perse Tee (white always)  Loro Piano cap  Axel Arigato trainers , and if it gets chilly, his Dad's old Gieves & Hawkes overcoat 

Accessories (the most important part):

Watch: 🕒 Jonty has a few watches to choose from. For Marie Louise, he needs to impress. So, it's the Patek Philippe - a passed down gift for his eighteenth birthday 🎈 - 'never owned, just looked after for the next generation', so he had better bloody well not lose it.



Sunglasses:

Trusty tortoiseshell frames
from Oliver Peoples

Cardholder - never a wallet.

Coutt's card up top and
American Express second.

Baggie (just in case)

Cigarette case: Sobrani.

Monogrammed. Marlboro
Golds always.

House keys: Banham (Coke
detritus remains in the holes)

A quick spritz of Floris Vetiver and he's ready to go. He's texted Marie Louise to meet him for dinner at Colbert, an iconic restaurant in Sloane Square. Marketed as a Parisian bistro, with black and white checked tiles and Art Nouveau posters lining the walls, the casual yet opulent environment exudes a sense of decadence and luxurious relaxation. But the sun is shining, and Jonty has nipped into The Builder's Arms to meet the boys for a quick Guinness 'pre', although no Dutch courage needed for this boy.

Jonty always arrives for a date ten minutes early. Well known by Francois, the Maître d', "How are you today, Monsieur Beaufort?" he has a table right by the window and a bottle of Veuve lined up. His signet ring has been polished (alongside his cig case) by the maid, and he's ready for Marie Louise's arrival. All goes swimmingly! She's in a Zimmerman long-sleeved ruffle floral mini with her mum's Penelope Chilvers wedges. As Daddy isn't here, Jonty fumbles over the wine list for ten minutes, only to turn to Marie Louise and state, "The house is really good here." They ordered the entrecôte for a reasonable £39.95 and finished the dinner with an 'Espresso Mart.'

By this point, Marie Louise is suitably sloshed, wined, dined and unwound. It's time for carriages – or in this case, UBERs! He makes a fuss about paying the bill, only to show off rather than prove he's generous – at the end of the day, Daddy topped him up a few days earlier, so he's got nothing to prove, but blokes always pay in his world. They're heading to meet the lads at Mezcalita for Margs, then will naturally end up at Loulou's, where they met the week before.

Jonty ends the night with a drunken snog after which Marie Louise holds her head out of the UBER like a dog to stop from chunning. Looks like Jonty will be going home alone tonight. At least he got a blozza from Polly in the loos at Loulou's (try saying that after a skinful Jonty) - and he's still got the PP on his wrist, unlike many of his mates who got fleeced of their watches that night.

ALICE HARE

*Fashion Stylist and Journalist with a Modern Twist on the Classic
Sloane Ranger*

Stylist Alice Hare is well-known, well-dressed and well-to-do. After studying French and Spanish, she chose to follow her passion – fashion. We caught up with Alice to hear more about how she has carved out a place for herself as the event stylist par extraordinaire and picked up some helpful tips along the way...



You started your career straight after university. What was your first assignment and what is your career highlight to date?

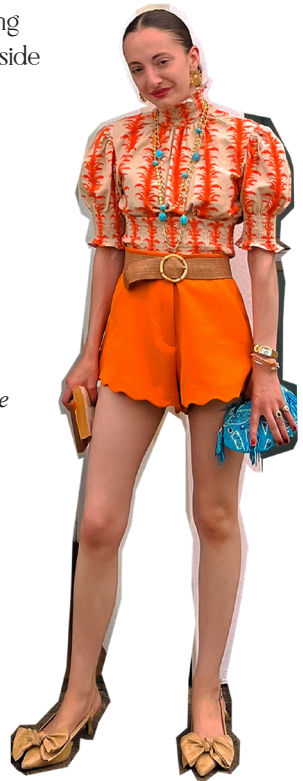
I studied French and Spanish at university, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do career-wise when I left. Everyone kept asking me, 'What do you love?' Deep down, I knew the answer was fashion – I had always been completely enamoured with fashion and its psychologically transformative power, even as a young child. I applied for work experience in all different areas of the industry to narrow down precisely what I wanted to do (it's a big old industry!), and by chance at one of these internships (I was working on a stand at a fashion trade show for an agency) I recognised a stylist whom I followed on Instagram walking around. I nervously approached her, and I am so glad I did – serendipitously, it turned out she was looking for a new assistant. I was her full-time assistant for a year – I really think hands-on training in styling is best. After that, I became a Fashion Assistant at the Daily Mail (I had interned there previously). I then became Junior Fashion Editor there and am now freelancing.



Your style is a unique mix of modern and country influences. How did growing up on a farm in Norfolk and spending time in Spain shape your personal style? Are you always trying to blend traditional British countryside elements with a modern twist?



Spanish women are the most stylish in Europe. They're especially good at wedding guest dressing – Google Inés Domecq for some particularly stellar examples. I also adore Maria de la Orden and Blanca Miro's style – they fuse traditional British countryside style with Spanish flair perfectly.



When dressing yourself or a client for seasonal events, could you give us some tips – the do's and don'ts of what to wear?

Royal Ascot

A mini bag with a top handle (sidenote, I LOVE a Gucci-style bamboo top handle on a bag) rather than a clutch is always suitable for Ascot and other events where you'll be greeting a lot of people. The dreaded clutch bag/drink/race card juggle as you reach out to shake someone's hand is always stressful!



Cheltenham Races

I don't know what it is (I'm a stylist, not a meteorologist for a reason, clearly), but there's something about the specific geography of Cheltenham racecourse that makes it feel about ten degrees colder than anywhere else in the country at any given time. Uniqlo and M&S thermals to wear under your outfit are therefore essential. A stiletto heel is also a no-go at Cheltenham – you need a block heel, so you don't sink into the mud. If you veer from the Cheltenham unspoken dress code of tweed, I'd advise sticking to earthy tones – anything too bright will stand out at the festival.



A Weekend in the Country

Ok – deep breath – but my new ‘weekend in the countryside’ essential is a pair of black PVC trousers. Yes, really. My father is highly confused by them! My very stylish and tasteful mother, however, totally gets them, and that’s all the approval I need. I love clashing them with a welly and battered

Barbour by day (to the naysayers, PVC is warm, wipe clean and waterproof – how’s that for practicality) and then a kitten heel and flouncy top come evening. That’s the key – their subversive nature needs to be clashed with an ultra-frothy, ultra-girly top. And the trousers themselves need to be loose – anything veering on tight and they lose their cool.



Society Wedding

I so wish more people would wear proper hats at weddings, not padded headbands. A headband doesn’t count as a hat! (She says, calmly).

I’m on a one-woman mission to reinstate the headband as an everyday item, and proper, brimmed hats for occasion wear. I also think a wedding needs a heel (it doesn’t have to be high; I love a kitten heel) or a glitzy cocktail flat. It upsets my soul (I only wish I could say I was being tongue-in-cheek...!) to see a beautifully smart look ruined by a contrastingly casual espadrille wedge. There’s a very funny moment in Downton Abbey when two of the men come down to dinner in black instead of white tie, and the dowager duchess says ‘oh, you two are dressed for a barbecue’. That’s how I feel about espadrille wedges at a wedding or the races, haha!

Which designers do you feel are doing a great job reinterpreting traditional British fashion?

I am utterly obsessed with Richard Quinn. I couldn't believe it when the models at his AW25 show walked out to 'Always On My Mind' by the Pet Shop Boys, one of my favourite-ever songs – I keep going on YouTube and replaying a clip of it! The thumping '80s synth pop clashed so perfectly with the Elizabethan-style ruff necks and giant corsages.

What is your most special or memorable piece of clothing?
Do you have any traditional or vintage pieces that you could never throw away?

I have a dress from Monsoon that my mother bought me when I was about four – her friend saw it in the shop window and texted my mum saying 'I've seen a dress that Alice needs!'. She was absolutely right. It's a shift dress covered in the brightest of pink disc sequins. It made a noise as I moved – total heaven for a four-year-old. I wore it with matching pink sequin mules from Jigsaw Junior. My mother tried to donate the dress to one of my little cousins a few years ago and I refused to let it go! I am going to frame it in a glass box and put it on the wall when I move in a few months' time. Apart from that, I have a few pieces that belonged to my granny that I love and will never part with. It's funny how cyclical fashion is – there's a polka dot mini dress with bow belt and box pleats that was hers in the '60s that could be present-day Alessandra Rich.

Is there any item you would never be seen dead wearing?

White skinny jeans give me a slight case of the heebie jeebies.



Photographs courtesy of Alice Hare's private collection



Photograph courtesy of the author

OVERHEARD AT THE BOTANIST

The Botanist is a well-established, stylish upmarket Brasserie situated on the corner of Sloane Square, in the heart of Chelsea, London. Its outdoor tables and high-end clientele make people watching an obligatory pastime. Listening in isn't really a choice here, most of their customers are happy to be seen – and overheard...

I'm so over the South of France.

I wouldn't be seen dead at Royal Ascot on a Saturday.

I wouldn't say you're posh if you're from the Home Counties.

I want the Minuty, not the house.

Everyone knows that he's shagging the staff.

Prince William lost his virginity in our ex-family friend's house.

OMG. I've never spent £300 on cutlery in my life.

I always get a migraine in Peter Jones.

Exeter University wasn't posh. I mean, not compared to Edinburgh

She's a cow.

I grew up learning how to pop a cork. It's a bit embarrassing if you don't know how to.

£70 for a cushion seems quite reasonable.

Are you aristocracy up North? I mean, we have acres...

THE
'IT' GIRLS'
WARDROBE

A Modern Spin on 'The Englishwoman's Wardrobe.'

In 1986, Angela Huth published *The Englishwoman's Wardrobe*. From Princess Margaret to Jilly Cooper to Atalanta Madden (a farmer's wife), Huth captured a snapshot of women's fashion in 1980s England. She interviewed twenty-five women, mostly from high-society circles, about the importance of their wardrobes, personal style, and identity. The images show the women in their grand, stately homes, smart London flats, and the intimacy of their bedrooms. This informal observation of a very formal world at the time recognised the significance of a woman's relationship with clothes. The book was hugely popular with many women who often struggled to dress themselves and choose appropriate attire for different settings. Huth herself was a 'classic' Sloane, moving within the parties and crowds of the British aristocracy. Documenting people within your own inner circle is a recurring theme in POMP, and Angela Huth is no different, offering an insider's perspective on the lives and, in this case, the stylish sensibilities of an Englishwoman's wardrobe.

While *The Englishwoman's Wardrobe* remains a splendid reference for the slightly outdated floral fluffiness of the '80s, there are new faces on the scene. As an homage to Angela Huth's work, I have found three women who epitomise a modern spin on her body of work. Introducing Raphaëlle, Annie, and Kinvara. From Paris, the West Coast of Scotland, and a born-and-bred Londoner (who also splits her time between Jersey and the South of France), they've redefined the meaning of the word wardrobe (and Chin style!) All originating from what could be considered 'upper-class' backgrounds, they individually display a distinctly original sense of style and identity through their fashion choices. Raphaëlle (Raph for short) from Paris, Annie (daughter of Chief Clansman MacLachlan — we refer to her as Ann) from Scotland — not that you'd notice from her accent — and Kinnie (short for Kinvara, obviously) have welcomed me into their wardrobes. Despite their ages, I fear the total value of their wardrobes (particularly Kinnie's love for designer handbags) could exceed that of the average car. The posh 'It' girl no longer sports a uniform like the Sloanes once did. Mixing Barbour with Prada, thrifted jewellery and Dior handbags, family heirlooms with feather boas, the modern wardrobe is surprisingly eclectic...

Raphaëlle *Raph*

23

Paris

Fashion Journalism Student



Rock

Bohemian

Casual









Raphaelle photographed by Greta Požaricka

ANNIE *Ann*

26

London

Drug and alcohol addiction therapist



Eclectic Flamboyant Boho



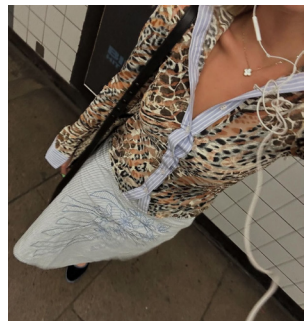
Photos courtesy of Annie's personal collection

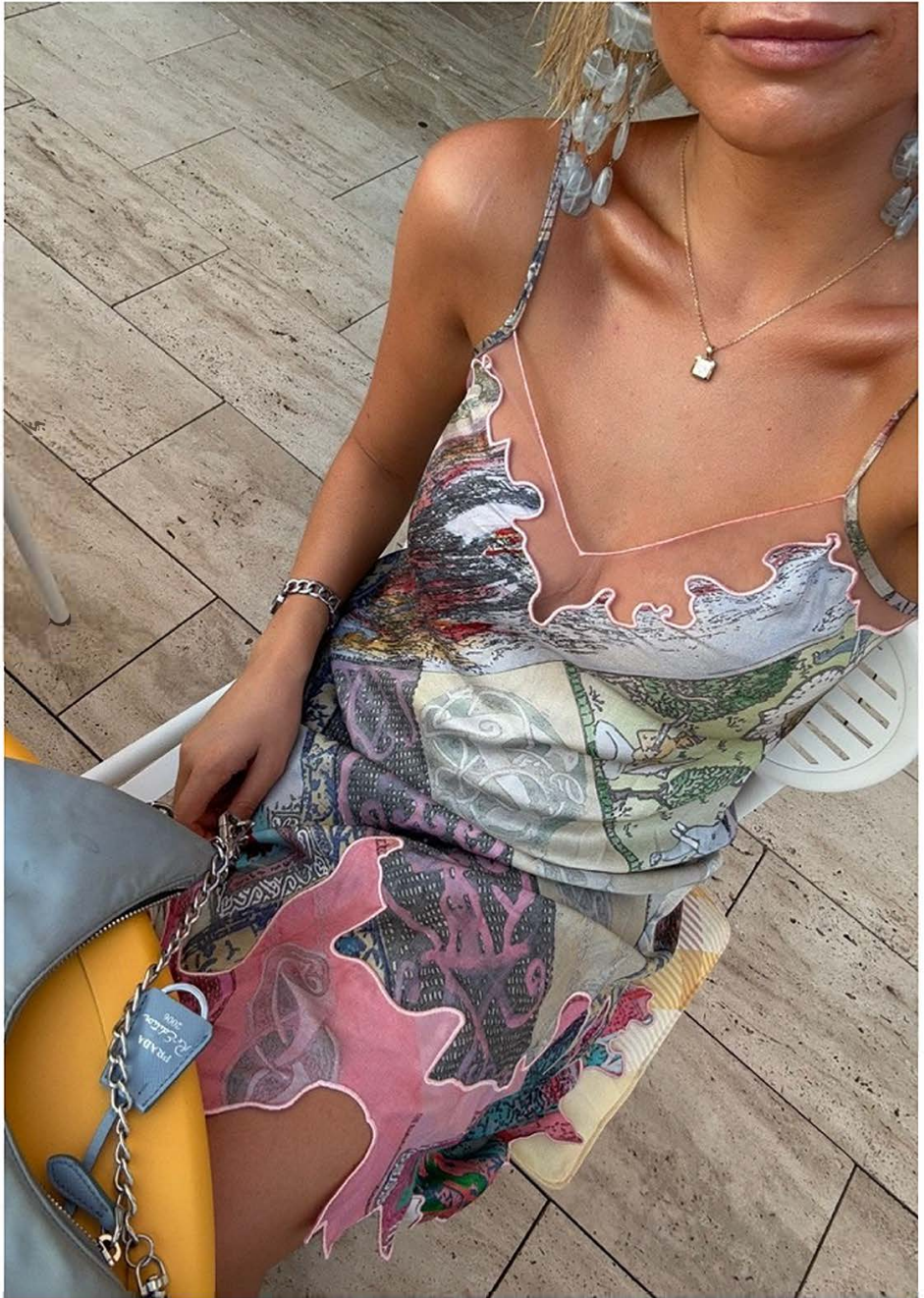


Kinvara *Kinnie*
26
London Finance Analyst



ECLECTIC
DARING
ELABORATE





Photographs courtesy of Kinnie's personal collection.

GETTING
CANDID
WITH KIT

A desire for authentic connection, high-quality food, and plenty of style and entertainment motivated two lifelong friends, Jack Redmayne and Kit Paterson, to establish their own business: The Candid Club. Inspired by the growing popularity of supper clubs among Gen Z, the pair have now hosted six events, each featuring a dinner (prepared by Chef Kit – formerly of Manteca) and a fashion show (showcasing independent designers they find via Instagram). The Candid Club “combines the runway with a kitchen like never before...it lies somewhere between a supper club, an exhibition, and a night out.”

With Kit joining C4's iconic reality series, *Made in Chelsea* for its 30th season (I can't believe we've spent (wasted?!)) so many hours watching it), The Candid Club is set to grow even more than it already has—the ideal spot for the Chins who long for the once-glamorous Sloane Ranger dinner party. I sit down with the lovely Kit for a candid chat (sadly pre-MIC announcement, so I couldn't get the scoop) yet...

Meet the iconic reality TV series Made in Chelsea's newest cast member, who is taking us behind the scenes of his latest venture - revitalising the dinner party scene for today's Gen X, Y & Z.



How did you come up with the idea for The Candid Club?

There are so many possible answers here, but primarily, we see The Candid Club as a way for young people in London to go out and enjoy themselves again. Restaurants price young people out, fashion shows and art exhibitions can be hard to find, and no one dresses up enough anymore! We want to offer something that we believe has been overlooked.

Do you think people are craving this return to dinner party socialising?

Definitely, Gen Z crave real connection without being made to feel it's too organised. By attending the Candid Club, guests are signing themselves up for high-quality food & trusted entertainment, and they know they will likely be surrounded by people who are similar to them—and crucially, new!



All photographs by Cleo Leather

*Is it a return to the old way of dining/
socialising from your perspective?*

It's the modern version. Sharing food with strangers is one of the oldest forms of trade there is, and it won't go anywhere in the future. We heavily rely on social media before and after our events, so rather than it being a return, it's more of a development.

Is there a dress code?

We like people to dress up, as I said previously, there aren't enough opportunities to do so & it's always fun.

What is the age demographic?

Currently, it's 23-30, but we are far from exclusive to young people. In the near future, we anticipate an increase in the age range.



Have you found that people are also using it to meet potential dates/ partners (thanks to dating apps becoming so taboo)?

People aren't necessarily using it to meet partners, but they know that in a room full of 50-60 strangers, there may well be someone who takes their interest.

Would you ever market one for dating?

No - the sexiest part is that this is not for dating. If you meet someone over dinner, it's exciting, but as soon as you start marketing it for potential dates, I think it loses that allure.



All photographs by Cleo Leather



All photographs by Cleo Leather





All photographs by Cleo Leather

How do you choose the venues and designers you showcase?

We are incredibly open to all sorts of venues and designers; we just have to like them in the first place! In a sense, this is why the model works. At the events, we are marketing & advertising both the venue and the brand - why does it work? Because of a proven track record. Jack & I will never sell a brand that we don't think is excellent, and our guests trust us with this.

What is the relationship, for you, that works so well combining food, socialising, and fashion?

The pairing of food & entertainment is a very old one. Think about feasts held in gladiator arenas in ancient Rome, medieval banquets with the dunce providing all sorts of entertainment, and modern-day Las Vegas - get a bite to eat before you go and see a show. Fashion, I think, has largely escaped being paired with this idea - and I believe it works incredibly well as it doesn't distract too much from the main event of being at the table, and the enjoyment of conversation. No one has to stop and listen; it's purely entertainment for the eyes.

How does one attend the event? Do you rely mainly on Instagram?

Instagram for now, but our mailing list is growing very quickly - and if you are on our mailing list, you are a 'member'.

Has the 'member' mailing list been beneficial?

Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most powerful tools available. We inform our members of everything before posting it on social media, and it is incredibly easy to become a part of - sign up to our mailing list on our website.



All photographs by Cleo Leather

Thanks to Kit's latest career move, both flirting and promoting The Candid Club on *Made In Chelsea (MIC)*, the business partners are gearing up for bigger and better. Kit hopes to get more creative with set design, top-tier partnerships, and "pop-ups for week-long stints to put a marker down on their presence in the industry." I dig a little deeper into the air of exclusivity that The Candid Club is quite obviously trying to emit. Yet, Kit's been in this world a long time and knows when to keep things hush-hush. The allure of the Club is that you don't quite know what to expect. However, if you attend one of their events, you might just find the Chin (or MIC cast member) you've been looking for!





All photographs by Cleo Leather

Escape to the Country



All illustrations by Oliver Preston
“How to Be Asked Again”



And beyond ...

Horse Whispers

There is a certain type of well-bred girl you find in the English countryside. We call her a ‘horse girl,’ and she probably attended Millfield, Milton Abbey or Cheltenham Ladies’ College. This last institution of prestigious origins was founded in Gloucestershire 170 years ago. Still operating today, it is renowned for educating the country’s most distinguished young women in literature and Latin, not to mention a lifetime of anxiety and depression. It claims the title of the most expensive school in the country, where one single year of boarding fees is a staggering £60,000 (and that’s before the VAT increase and other costs) – multiply that by the seven formative years most girls spend there, and that’s not exactly a bargain!

Fortunately for Hester Sienna Chamberlain, a self-proclaimed ‘horse girl,’ her parents decided to send all three of their daughters to board at Cheltenham Ladies’, despite living in the Cotswolds (a mere 21-minute drive away). She looks back fondly on her two formative years at Cheltenham (clearly Daddy wasn’t prepared to shell out for the whole seven, especially with three to fund). She developed essential life skills during her time there; she was introduced to Pony Club, and most importantly, learned to count calories, overcome irrational competitiveness, and pretend that Exeter was her first-choice university.

Now an account manager for a ship brokerage (don’t tell anyone, Daddy got her the position), Hester considers her time at Cheltenham one of the happiest periods of her life—pre-recession. After the crash, the most obvious change to her lifestyle was the forced reduction in pony prices to under £20k, compared to the £100k horses she was used to – in her words, was “utterly devastating...like going from racehorses to carthorses”. Such a shame Daddy couldn’t contribute any more...



All illustrations by Brynn Parry from his book, Horses and Courses



Hester tells me that her first heartbreak was when her horse was sold. “I was fourteen or fifteen at the time, her name was Ruby, and she was a thoroughbred, petite – unlike me.” Immediately, I notice the self-deprecating tone that Cheltenham was renowned for. The purpose of Ruby’s sale, Hester explained, was that school fees had increased. Unlike most mums who felt the unwavering guilt of choosing between their careers and their children, Hester’s mother had to decide whether to allocate her husband’s money toward her children’s education or her polo team. It was heartbreaking.

In her Ariat jodhpurs and showjumping jacket, Hester rode for over 15 years. Never shy of her uber-privileged roots or upbringing, she found ‘fake horse girls’ incredibly annoying - “If you didn’t have Dubarrys, you were fucking poyo.” For anyone who didn’t live in the countryside, Dubarrys are a particular brand of Irish country boots, and yes, by “poyo” she means poor. At least for Hester, she prides herself on being a genuine ‘horse girl.’ How to spot a fake? “They would be the really, really rich ones in the wrong gear,” she says with enthusiastic conviction. “Super-loaded girls. Horses would be worth £100k+, all kept together in a livery yard. The wealthiest would have staff and a groom to tack their horse or muck out the stable. They would hop on for a ride, have a little canter (without raising a sweat) and then hand the horse back to the groom. We called them “low-effort horse girls.” Her quick wit and frankly bemusing honesty catch me off guard when she states, “Often the mum would give a little extra to the groom, if you know what I mean.” I do now.

When speaking with Hester, it becomes more and more apparent that the world of horses and polo is inexplicably intertwined with sex (ask Jilly Cooper!). So, when asked how being a ‘horse girl’ prepared her for adult relationships, I wasn’t surprised by her response: “My hymen broke from riding, so I felt prepared for adult life. Well, at least I didn’t bleed when I lost my virginity.” It didn’t end there. Apparently, it’s pretty normal in those crowds to be aware that ‘racing girls’ are far crazier than ‘polo girls.’ Hester explains, “They would always hook up with the owners of the racehorse facilities or the polo grooms. The grooms were usually shipped over from Argentina and given a place to stay in the owner’s house for the summer. That’s when the wives or daughters would usually take their ride.” She was quick to deny that she had anything other than a purely professional relationship with their groomsman, an Argentinian man named Gorgonzola (seriously), who moved in with them one summer. “Well, with three girls in the house, my Dad didn’t let him anywhere near us. He was put up in a caravan in the driveway next door.” I try not to seem too judgmental when asking, “next door?” “Yes,” Hester exclaims, “Oh well, we had a spare house. It was next door where the housekeeper lived. My dad didn’t even want him in that house. It was basically a main house, so why would he?”

It’s hard to believe that these young ‘horse girls’ not only tried their hand at polo (one of the most expensive sports in the world) but were also invited to hunt (less expensive, more bloody). Hester reveals that the first thing she hunted was the scent of a fox, but now her tastes have evolved to finance bros on the Northern Line (preferably between Clapham South and Clapham Common). “I do feel sorry that the foxes were my first victims... as I’ve learnt now, my human victims are far more vulnerable.” She continued, “The urban man versus the Cotswold fox is an unfair competitor.” I ask why. “Foxes run and hide behind bushes, ready to be sniffed out by hounds. London men, on the other hand, hide behind Hinge profiles, shit chat, and most of the time don’t come out of the bushes.” Ah, the era of ghosting has now been likened to fox hunting. We have truly come a long way. “Hounds do have a better success rate than women... they will always win, always lock their catch. A twenty-something girl trying to do that in London nowadays has a success rate of almost zero.”



21ST CENTURY FOX

THE HUNTING DAY



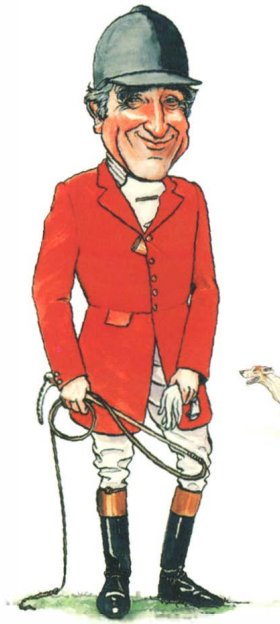
PREPARATION

I suddenly feel compelled to see Hester in action. Maybe she's looking in the wrong places — I ask her, not a 'horse boy' then? "No, they are literally all gay." Clearly, she isn't one to exaggerate! "If they're not, they 100% have had sex with five of your friends, tell you Tally Ho stories until you weep with boredom or display the personality of a Honda Civic." Could one person really come up with so many criticisms of something you ride? Then, suddenly, she stresses that polo players, however, are a "different breed." "I've slept with a few polo players. They are incredibly attractive, and just like jockeys, you can overlook their height if they stand on their wallet." Hester is 5 feet 11, so it makes sense why she describes most 'horse men' as "vertically challenged." Sounds to me like more jockeys and polo players were being ridden than the horses.

So, what happens during a hunt? Back in the day (before the fox hunting ban), it was when everyone would get absolutely "shit-faced," according to Hester, and that's before they even started hunting. She fondly remembers being offered sloe gin at the age of 12 whilst on horseback wearing her red Huntsman jacket. Perhaps not the safest activity, as is often the case in typical British fashion, Hester says, "The number of people I saw fall off their horses because they had been so pissed from the morning session was truly something."

The owners of grand estates usually organised the hunts Hester attended, the only people with enough land to hunt on and enough money to fund the hounds and the staff. The ‘meet’ would start at 9 am, usually outside the house, with hounds, horses, huntsmen and an assortment of sausage rolls, Beef Wellington, and mulled wine – the breakfast of champions! These days, fox hunting is illegal, although those in the ‘Shires’ still meet and chase scented rags across farmland. Hester supports the ban, saying, “The Beaufort would always tear the foxes apart. Any other hunt, though, would be much more ‘friendly,’ meaning they’d simply shoot the fox.” Whilst the hunt was a hoot, Hester stressed that the real debauchery took place at “The Met Gala of the Cotswolds: The Hunt Ball.” Having never been herself, she didn’t have much to add, but she says: “From what I gathered and was told by my parents, the whole countryside brigade: shooting, hunting, fishing, etc., were out of control... complete carnage.”

As the interview quickly shifted onto everything I’d hoped for – self-professed “wanker vibes” as declared by Hester, we moved on to a slightly more serious subject; her belief that her time at Cheltenham and horsy life improved her relationships. She tells me, “I’ve learnt how to manage dynamics with people who were my friends and also my competitors. I’ve taken that into the boardroom with me, too. I’ve learnt graciousness when you lose; for example, I find I am much better at accepting it when a man ghosts me brutally. I used to get into my car and scream after losing a race. Now, like everyone else, I’ve taken up running to deal with rejection.”





Competitiveness among the girls wasn't the only concern. Hester asserts, "You think Dance Mums is intense when it comes to jealousy and competitiveness. You should see 'Horse Mums'. 'It's Dance Mums on steroids.'" If you don't know Dance Mums, it's a highly successful American reality show with as much attention focused on the warring mothers of daughters at a dance academy as on the competing girls. Hester's mum once said to her before a race: "If you don't come home with a rosette this week, I'll sell all your clothes." Luckily for Hester, she outperformed that week, and at Windsor of all places, in front of the Queen, so her wardrobe and Dubarrys were safe – God forbid something happen to the Dubarrys!

So, being a horse girl has been equally an exciting and salacious way of life for young Hester. From the hallowed halls of Cheltenham Ladies' College, liveries, and live-in grooms to riding, racing, and rarified gatherings, Hester gained a remarkable insight into the elite 1%. I finish our conversation by asking if she thinks she'll be having 'horse kids,' and she surprises me with her answer. "I'm a Londoner now," she says with a smirk. "Also, my parents haemorrhaged cash. Well over a million. Let me think... it was at least a million per kid, and there were three of us... so you do the maths, and that's excluding Mum and her polo team." Ah, how the other half live. Let's hope Hester finds her faithful steed soon.

The Chin Heads on Holiday!

Second homes: the latest must-visit spot for the Chin (and their yuppie friends!)

Where some people choose to jet off to the Kavos strip or Ibiza Beach Club, the Chin has a more restful and peaceful option for their 'exhausted' friends who need a bit of R&R. From the West Coast of Scotland to the River Dart, the Chins do what they do best: drink rosé, cook up a nice lobster (no, not caught themselves), do a touch of cold water swimming (swaddled in a White Company towel afterwards), and nestle by a roaring fire in their remodelled castle for a "little weekend getaway."

While second homes are 'frowned upon' by most of the (secretly envious) British public, and taxed not-quite-to-oblivion, Monty and Sapphire have had theirs in the family for hundreds of years! Only now they reside in Chelsea and fall under the category of the UFL or DFL brigade (Up from London... and vice versa). They get on WhatsApp, see who wants to 'train it' or get in the Defender, and the weekend is upon them. Usually on Thursday night, because "who really has to work on a Friday anymore," and with a case of Whispering Angel loaded up, they head to the quiet towns of England and Scotland at least twice a year, to get a little view of "How the other world lives."

All photographs courtesy of the author



"Oh just let me in Darling. This is British Airways for Christ's sake!"

*Illustration by Oliver Preston
Caption by Author*

All roads
lead to the
Scottish
Highlands...



Monty's playing the part in Mummy's apron, but he's panicking inside. He might be wearing the lobsters, but he's not quite sure how to cook them without her help. Just find a chopping board that's far too small and a sharp knife, and you'll look like you know what you're doing. The girls will love it.





They're all so used to views like this; they don't even bother to look at them

“ Where’s the nearest pub that will sell Bolly? ”





“Yay! Barbours for everyone! Don’t worry, my Dad has like a hundred!”



“If I wear my flat cap and drink a Stella, will they think I’m one of the locals?”

Off They Trot to the West Country...





The village of Dittisham is tranquil and twee. Dipping into the Dart, however, is like wading through wee.



They're smiling, but secretly, they prefer thin-stemmed wine glasses "Especially as we're paying for the Minuty."



"This is nowhere near as nice as the Maldives"



“Oh look it's Eliza and William! I didn't know they were coming down this weekend! ”

“ Oh darling, one does not dive into the English sea. One plunges!”





An Englishman in L.A.

*Contributing writer Penelope Chaplin follows a
Toff to the City of Angels*

Santa Monica is stiff with Brits of all kinds. Beauty Brits who've come to find surfing nirvana, Business Brits who couldn't hack Wall Street or the East Coast weather find a niche on the sunny West Side of LA; Arty Brits, Trust Fund Brits and Retired Brits are all here, cluttering up the coffee shops and gasping at the price of the Strawberry Smoothie à la Hailey Bieber at Erewhon. Even the 'independently wealthy' Brit, whose money goes back to some slave-owning ancestor, has landed here, identifiable by their awful sartorial choices, including the culturally-only-acceptable-in-the-UK, black socks and hard shoes with shorts.

Pale, plump and pompous, the young British Toff gargles Velvet Seaforms at 2pm on a fancy Venice hotel rooftop, holding forth to the younger, toned and tanned friends he has managed to make. Admittedly, only by virtue of his vast wealth, the one thing that commands immediate and serious attention anywhere in America, but particularly right here, right now. Afternoon drinking may be out, Grecian Negronis are on hand for the youthful set, making a pitch for a bit of investment in a start-up. Venice Beach, Santa Monica's scruffy neighbour, has the distinction of being the incubator for more start-up companies than its chi-chi neighbour, hence the rooftop bar at the Erwin, walking distance from the established and burgeoning Silicon Beach.

Our Brit Toff is not unaware that what he lacks in physical attractiveness or sparkling conversation is more than compensated for by his enormous and deep pockets - actual, as seen on the weird combination of a camo vest worn over a striped short-sleeved shirt and baggy yellow whale shorts - and idiomatically, he doesn't mind. Having been bullied, bugged and beaten by his friends at his old alma mater in the UK, he quite likes these friendly, nosy and financially rapacious youngsters. He has dropped a strategic squillion here and there to keep them coming and couldn't care less if he loses it, though he suspects he won't.

He quite likes some of the young women who join his crew, whom he's come to think of as his regulars. He's not sure if women are his thing, but these are about as gorgeous, friendly and fit as he's ever seen. Much better, in fact, than some of the floral-clad, shrill-voiced harpies in his old social circles. Anyone who looked remotely like one of these babes wouldn't give him the time of day in the old country. Here, they seem not to mind him. They like his accent and call him sexy and clever, only one of which is true. They have assumed he is gay, and maybe he is. Generally, by four in the afternoon, he is too drunk to know or care.

When quizzed about his home and what brought him to America, he will smile enigmatically and look skywards. He doesn't really know, other than that he feels at home here, where he is a stranger. He brought his beloved Labrador with him, who is currently running loose illegally somewhere on a beach with Ronny, his walker. He's an avid reader of the FT(Financial Times) and The Economist and listens to the BBC news and business programs, which he feels are best digested alongside their American counterparts - the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg Businessweek and CNBC. Old-fashioned choices, but ones he trusts. He knows his little leeches get what micro news they want from tech bro podcasts and some combination of crypto and market spokespeople. As to their politics, like him, they do not care as long as they can see their companies and money grow.

He likes it here and will stay. Not better than old Blighty, just differences he has absorbed, making returning to the UK a fantasy. A visit for a brief indulgence in the superior cultural offerings, a nostalgia for the small, damp green countryside and a faint pang of remorse as he is once again back at LHR, scanning the departures board for his gate back home, to LAX.

Feathered and Weathered

Take your aim...

So, you think you know your pheasant from your partridge, your Purdey from your birdie? Shooting is one of the few sports (if you can call it a sport) where etiquette has remained unchanged for hundreds of years. If you understand the difference between picking up birds and picking up birds, try the quiz below. It's designed for those in the know and those who want to be... (and not for the faint-hearted) You never know, you may be pheasantly surprised...



Illustration by Oliver Preston



READY FOR STUFFING

Illustration by Brynn Parry from his book Sex and the Country

1) Which car would be socially unacceptable at a shoot?

- 1) A Ford Fiesta
- 2) A Land Rover
- 3) A Ferrari

2) What do those on a shoot have in their hip flasks?

- 1) Ribena
- 2) Viagra
- 3) Sloe gin

3) What do you call someone who participates in a shoot?

- 1) A shooter
- 2) A gun
- 3) A bird killer

4) *Where do they buy their outfits?*

- 1) *M&S*
- 2) *Mountain Warehouse*
- 3) *Cordings*

5) *How many birds would you expect to shoot in a day (amongst 8 people)*

- 1) *Less than 8 (a very long day)*
- 2) *More than 80 (a very expensive day)*
- 3) *More than 800 (a lot of pheasant stew)*

6) *What's for lunch?*

- 1) *Egg and chips*
- 2) *Beef stew*
- 3) *Vegan curry*



OLIVER PRESTON



. . . UNDRRESSED BIRD

Illustration by Brynn Parry from his book Sex and the Country

7)What is the proper name for each part of a shoot?

- 1) A lane
- 2) A drive
- 3) A cul-de-sac

8)What does being in a shooting syndicate mean?

- 1) You are a hit man
- 2) You get invited to a lot of parties
- 3) You split costs

9) What is the correct term for collecting dead birds?

- 1) Hoovering up
- 2) Picking up
- 3) Chucking up

10)What happens if you mistake a bird and accidentally shoot a gamekeeper or a dog?

- 1) You go to prison
- 2) You get a round of applause
- 3) You must eat them

Answers (if you care) at the back....

Is etiquette still relevant?

Etiquette expert William Hanson discusses changing attitudes towards British behaviour and the dos and don'ts he deems non-negotiable!

William Hanson runs *The English Manner*, a renowned UK etiquette training institute, where he instructs individuals, businesses, and even film producers on the principles of good manners. He's also a well-known face on daytime television and social media, and has published several books, including, most recently, *Just Good Manners*, a definitive guide to 'proper' behaviour. He also co-hosts the podcast *Help I Sexted My Boss*, with Jordan North, where the two advise listeners how not to upset someone (or how they more politely phrase it: avoid awkward moments).

William is frightfully 'rah,' but he comes across as funny, kind, and warm. With only twenty minutes free in his schedule, for which he immediately apologises (etiquette 101!), we get off to a swift start. What I want to know is the 'tells' and signs that remain in place – especially those that have stood the test of time since the 'Sloane Ranger' Eighties. Is behavioural etiquette still intrinsically linked to class? Are manners as vital as they once were?



Photograph of William Hanson, courtesy of williamhanson.co.uk

He may hold views that many find outdated, but he expresses a desire to break down class binaries and judgments that still obscure etiquette in British society. So much so that he says, “I slightly baulk at the word ‘tells’ because I don’t think they’re as clear cut or as many as there used to be... life is different from the Eighties.” His underlying belief is that your behaviour or class standing in society “doesn’t particularly matter if you are a nice person.”

Where I thought the primary signifiers of etiquette would be between classes, Hanson credits the greatest demise of British traits to American influence. “You can be non-British and British and fall into the American trap.” What does he mean by this? His biggest ‘tell’ or ‘ick’ is that the common phrase “How are you?” is almost always misunderstood as a genuine question, unlike the British rhetorical question. He believes a traditional Brit (whom he calls a ‘trad-Brit’) would “slightly baulk at themselves for mistaking the question for a real enquiry into your health, which it really isn’t.” I couldn’t agree more, and I then laugh at his response: “You should always also answer ‘Yes, I’m very well, thank you’, even if you have only one day left to live!”

William attributes the current trend of overenthusiasm and, even worse, over-familiarity to our friends across the pond. Even dining – how we eat, how tables are set (see next page), and dining vernacular – has been overtaken by Americanisms. He insists it has nothing to do with xenophobia. Still, he feels that among the “younger generation of the ‘perceived upper classes’ or ‘upper middle,’ there isn’t such a thing as a trad-Brit anymore, especially as it’s so transatlantic.” “They don’t even know how to set a dining table the British way.”

As I puzzled over what the ‘British way’ was, I reached for Hanson’s copy of *Just Good Manners*. Thanks to Hanson’s guide, you can now feel confident and comfortable when hosting friends for dinner, if you follow the steps below:

-*Step 1.* Position the chairs - always spaced evenly!

-*Step 2.* Centrepieces – Floral arrangements (not too strong a scent) often twinned with (unscented) candles

-*Step 3.* Cutlery. Plate first – central. Forks are set on the left, while knives and spoons are set on the right. We do not position cutlery for pudding above the plate. Place everything down the sides as it adds an air of grandeur to even the most pedestrian of tables. Place the cutlery the diner will use first on the outermost part of the setting and work inwards. Fork tines are set facing upwards, as are the bowls of spoons; knife blades should point inwards, towards the plate.

-*Step 4.* Napkins (NOT serviettes) – Placed in a neat, flat fold to the left-hand side of the setting, or – if someone’s been creative and done some napkin origami – in the centre of the setting facing the diner. They definitely do not belong in glasses.

-*Step 5.* Glasses – Finally, placed left to avoid knocking them over, but ‘white to the right’. Only set the glasses you will be using above the knives and spoons, with the main glass positioned directly above the knife that will be used for the main course.

A modern guide to good British behaviour

Just Good Manners



'Incredibly interesting and very funny' *The Times*

William Hanson
The *Sunday Times* bestselling author



So, picking up on the earlier point, why the disdain for these Americanisms? He explains how he often finds himself visiting friends for dinners where they've gone on a "slight rant about how terrible America is," and I look at the table to see it set like an American's. He is quick to assure, "It has nothing to do with xenophobia, and one obviously doesn't say anything as that would be poor manners, but the irony gets to me." The irony of opinion versus etiquette is a frequent observation that baffles him. "I was driving over the weekend to visit my husband's family, and the number of Union Jack and St George flags I saw – half of them weren't even being flown correctly." I nod; we share the same views on the associated racist and far-right rhetoric symbolised by these flags in the UK right now. "They're upside down! They think they're being patriotic, and they can't even fly their own country's flag correctly." We agree; the irony is extraordinary.

I am pleased that an interview I expected to focus mainly on the dos and don'ts of dressing or speaking reveals more about traits and behaviours devoid of 'classism'. A recent etiquette lesson Hanson was teaching provided an example of these British 'isms.' He told the group, "In Britain, if there is one biscuit or something left on the table, it is considered appropriate etiquette, if you want it yourself, to go through the motions of offering it to everyone else by saying, 'Would anyone like the last biscuit?' If you are British, you know the usual response is to decline, and then the person who asked gets to eat their biscuit." He explains, "It is British code to offer the biscuit to everyone, but it basically means I want this biscuit myself and I'll be having it." Suddenly, he notices the face of a Polish student, shocked - "as if she

suddenly saw the clouds part”- going on to 'admit' that she had always said yes to the offer, often followed by a rather awkward moment. “I think it’s things like that, rather than wearing brown shoes on a Tuesday with a suit, for example, that are still ‘isms’ very prevalent in British culture and society.” He perceives that this is not limited to a particular class. I agree that almost every British class engages in that ritual. “It’s just very British – the veil of politesse – and putting other people first. At the very least, share it – that would be the most democratic approach.”

Moving on to fashion, I briefly revisit the brown shoe debate, which I see as more of a ‘middle to upper class’ rule of thumb. William agrees, “I would say it’s still a no-no, but very few people are aware of it.” During a work trip to Barcelona, while giving a seminar on a yacht, his colleague Alexandra was surprised by his pairing of jeans and brown loafers. Stepping ashore, she declared, “No brown in town!” (the supposed rule). He responded, “Firstly, we are in Barcelona, not London,” and “Secondly, I’m in jeans!” William strongly believes the rule only applies when wearing a suit, demonstrating that all codes and etiquette are open to personal interpretation. “But yes, the ‘no brown in town’ was originally about any type of shoe with any type of clothing, but if you look at the Prince of Wales, he wears brown shoes all the time on a Wednesday and with anything.” Times are changing! Although Hanson quickly interjects, “Not with a suit – I would never wear brown shoes with a suit – unless it was a tweedy one in the countryside.”

The dislike of brown shoes is strangely one of the most class-challenging codes. “Yes, I often notice it, especially during the summer – at a Northern wedding – with very light blue suits, trousers often too long, and really light brown shoes... God bless them, they’ve all made an effort, and they think they look a million dollars, which is lovely. But it’s just really grating.” Something so irritating to William that he almost included “no light suits and no brown shoes” on his wedding invitation. In the end, he settled for “further advice, please see *The Bluffer’s Guide to Etiquette for Dressing*,” which was a shameless yet necessary plug for his recently published book.

Some visitors to *The English Manner* are likely looking to either experience or immerse themselves in a world they’re not familiar with. Adopting British behaviour or learning etiquette that’s deeply ingrained in our culture – not just our social class – isn’t an instinct. William speaks of a client who once came to him, “A barrow boy–to use the vernacular,” who was dating a Japanese princess. He said, “I don’t know what to do. I love her, but I don’t know how to behave in formal environments – both in Japan and Britain.” So, William gave him a quick course in dining etiquette, meeting and greeting, and conversation. “We didn’t want to change his accent. It’s offered – we have elocution lessons – but we don’t want to change who someone fundamentally is – you must be true to yourself.”

In very British fashion, he quickly asks if I've happened to see the new 2025 film, *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale*, based on the globally popular series, which follows the lives of an aristocratic family managing a large country estate in the first half of the 20th Century. He references one real-life character who appears in the film, writer, composer and raconteur Noel Coward. He's an example of someone "very much of his time, born into a lower-middle class, but could tell a good story, have great social skills, and ended up dining with the Queen Mother every week." He believes he was just a decent person. I believe that now, if you're a fun, nice, and decent person, you are accepted. I'd say that people who strictly follow every rule might do themselves more harm than if they follow one rule. You're likely to progress further that way than by just being so by the book."

The etiquette expert makes a living by teaching good manners, but also sees the outdatedness and possible underlying snobbery of this practice. While it was once considered the height of sophistication to dine, dress, and socialise carefully according to social norms, good manners are now regarded as more important. Perhaps the Chin will be more forthcoming with this attitude ... (not so sure Jonty follows these rules!)



Photograph of William Hanson, courtesy of williamhanson.co.uk



*Airkissing Sloane Rangers, Badminton, Gloucestershire. May 1985.
Photographed by Homer Sykes.*

Afterword

So, my dear reader, I hope you've enjoyed the lively mania of the Sloane Rangers of the '80s, the not-so-modern but equally hedonistic Sloane equivalent of the Chin, and all the escapades they so kindly shared with me for this book.

POMP started as a jest, a deep dive into the craziness of society's most extravagant and 'pompous' displays of wealth and heritage. But, like any good masquerade (party or fraud), these stories, I hope, reveal or teach a different side to this country's wild and wonderful upper class.

Underneath the pie-crust collars, Patek Philippe watches, and Hermès handbags, beyond the relentless chatter of Royal Ascot, holidays in the South of France, and judgmental side eye, these are genuine people who laugh at themselves, share their stories, and revel in the chaos of British society (whether they were born into it or made their way into it). I hope you've enjoyed learning about them, laughing at them, and, at the end of the day, humanising them.

Please close this book with a smirk, a sigh, or even a huff-and-puff (yes, I'm looking at you, Jonty). Please leave it in the loo, gift it to a friend, or use it as a coaster. The archetypes may shift, the etiquettes fade, but the joy of satirising the rich will (I hope) never cease to entertain...

Shooting Quiz answers:

1) 1+3, 2) 3, 3) 2, 4) 3, 5) 2 or 3, 6) 2, 7) 2, 8) 3, 9) 2, 10) 1 or 2

Mostly 1s - Stick to knitting
Mostly 2s - Polish your barrels
Mostly 3s - Buy a spaniel

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Illustration by Oliver Preston.

I sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the creation of POMP. To the late Ann Barr and very much alive Peter York, authors of *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook*, whose work inspired this very book. Without your wit, satire, and sharp observation of the ‘Sloane,’ we might not have realised how wonderful it is to poke fun at them. And special thanks to Peter York for sitting with me, guiding me through the realities of that world, from glamorous publishing parties and society gossip to the joy of a dry humorous take on life.

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To my sub-editor, Tessa, I promise I’ll share some of the profits if I ever get published!

And to Andrew, my tutor. Thank you for the inspiration... and the support.

Lara

