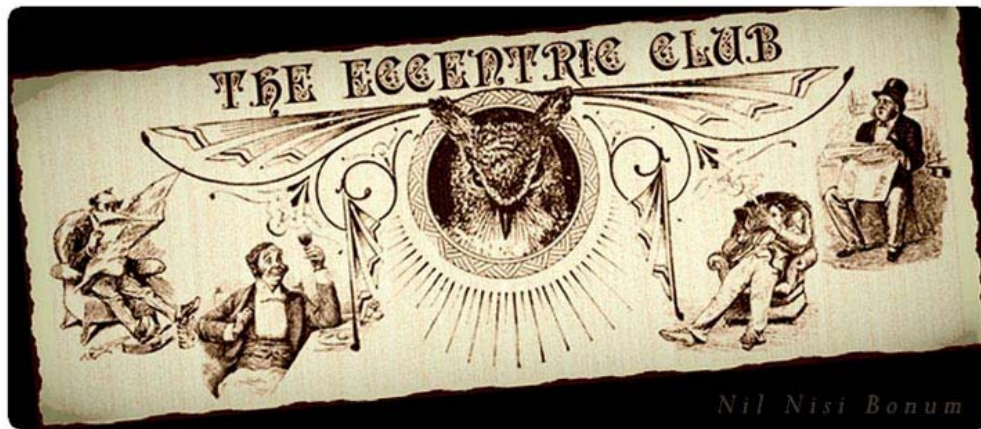


The Eccentric Club's Daring Comeback



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Press Release Summary: The Eccentric Club, once an important institution in the British society, closed down in the mid-1980s, is about to make a daring comeback to the London clubland on 29th of August - this time not in Mayfair, but in Bloomsbury.



Press Release Body: *"The Eccentric Club in London with its clock running backwards: I wished they would have me as a member, so I could meet all my old friends again..."* (**Anthony Steyning, the writer**)

The Eccentric Club, once an important institution in the British society, which fell victim to a careless gamble with property developers in the mid-1980s and, subsequently, lost its premises in Mayfair and was closed down, is to experience a much-anticipated revival and to make a daring comeback to the London clubland

on 29th of August - this time not in Mayfair, but in Bloomsbury, in the premises of Pushkin House, the Russian cultural centre, named after Alexander Pushkin, Russia's most celebrated and most eccentric 19th century poet. The reason for such a choice of venue was purely incidental and primarily due to the friendliness of the Pushkin House staff and their own excitement about the re-launch of **The Eccentric Club** by a group of keen enthusiasts and devoted volunteers, members of a few other London clubs, who believe that the Eccentric Club is still missed by many and undeservedly forgotten by the society and the media.

"The Club's name is a long established and reputable brand, its famous members of the past were those who had shaped the British culture into what it is now, its history is inseparable with that of Britain itself", say the organisers.

On the 29th of August they intend to re-launch **The Eccentric Club (UK)** officially, in a traditional eccentric and entertaining style, with the music performances, a witty satirical operatic/jazz cabaret "Kiss & Tell", speeches by Henry Hemming, the celebrated author of recently published "In Search of the English Eccentric" and Lyndon Yorke (a mechanical follyologist voted 'Britain's Most Eccentric Person' in 2002), and more entertainment in various shapes. Equally entertaining promises to be the socialising with the meticulously selected guests from the artistic, scientific, literary, legal and business circles.

Traditionally believed to have been founded in 1890 by Jack Harrison, a theatrical costumier from Shaftesbury Avenue, the new **Eccentric Club** may actually become a century older due to the claims of its organisers to have proofs of the Club's existence in the 1780s. Such a change in the Club's 'birth certificate' most probably will not go unnoticed by the other clubs, but at the moment this does not seem to worry the organisers who believe that the Club has experienced many resurrections and has been founded several times by totally unrelated and socially distinct groups of people over the last two centuries.



The new Club's website states that it has served "as a meeting point to many great and original minds, pioneers of thought in artistic, literary, theatrical, scientific, legal and political circles, providing an amicable environment for their recreational and creative pastime as well as a testing ground for the novel and controversial theories and approaches to the issues equally important to the British society and the entire mankind." Considering what's going on in the world today, many feel that it is high time The Eccentric Club was reborn and some new debates on some old issues to be launched.

You may of course be wondering what is meant by 'being eccentric' these days, after all it has been unfortunately misinterpreted over the years. The new founders have redefined its meaning to "British eccentricity is a reluctance to be bound by social, spiritual, scientific, political, esthetical or any other limitations and an everlasting desire to explore every manifestation of life around us for the benefit of gaining personal experience and translating it through various mediums such as art, business, science, social events to the others, to the society and, in particular, other individuals which are seeking new knowledge and experience and are ready to perceive it...".

The previous **Eccentric Club**, started in 1890 by **Jack Harrison**, a theatrical costumier and the father of popular musical comedy actresses Phyllis Monkman, Dorothy Monkman and Beryl Harrison, from its humble beginnings in Shaftesbury Avenue rose to become one of the most influential artistic and business establishments in Britain as well as one of its most generous charities.

During both World Wars, members of the Eccentric entertained the troops on the frontline, raised in total over £100,000 for wounded soldiers, visited them in hospitals and distributed food, tobacco, cigarettes and pipes, built numerous hospitals, hostels and orphanages. On average, since the 1920s the Club was spending over £1,000 a year on various charitable needs.



The new Club organisers pledge to honour the charitable traditions of its predecessors. They believe that today, in the times of common globalisation, it is essentially important to support local, national and European charities which far too often remain undervalued and underfunded whilst the larger international organisations' needs seem to be more of a priority.

The new **Eccentric Club** started just over a year ago with an eccentric idea of its restoration and a website appealing to any possible supporters of such an initiative. The response was truly overwhelming and beyond any expectations – emails were coming in literally daily. Although, a share of correspondence was from those doing genealogical research for their own families or some famous former members of the Club, a larger proportion was from those who were actually looking for The Eccentric Club to learn more about it, fascinated with its history and the remarkable input into the British culture. Two London-based TV production companies were immediately interested in shooting documentaries about the new Club's birth.

Restoration of **The Eccentric Club** in the 21st century is an amazing challenge and everyone involved feel most excited about the journey ahead of them. The organisers believe they are closer to the original founders of the Club than those who have inherited it and lost it. Starting the Club from the very beginning – finding the patrons, acquiring the right members, raising funds, organising events, establishing own clubhouse – requires a lot of energy and aspiration. But a prospect of running one of the most fascinating clubs in the British history fuels this ambitious beginning.

Finally, the new Club's organisers see it essentially important to highlight and celebrate the British kind of eccentricity – an innate ability to ignore the well-trodden routes of the others and invent own original ways, find surprisingly fresh approaches to the long decided issues, proudly demonstrating to the rest of the world the great mosaic of possible solutions and points of view. And, as we know from the history, the world has often followed the British eccentrics and acknowledged their genius...

The Eccentric Club restoration was welcomed by many celebrated and distinguished individuals. Amongst those who wished the best of luck to the endeavours of the new Club organisers are HRH Prince Michael of Kent, Mayor of London Boris Johnson, Lord Bath and Lord Montagu (who was the last Chairman of The Eccentric Club in the 1980s).

FAMOUS MEMBERS OF THE CLUB: Jack Harrison, Sir Charles Wyndham, Viscount Burnham, The Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Montagu, Sir Frederick Wells, Sir James Miller,

Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander, Sir Walter de Frece, H.Montague-Bates, Lionel Brough, John Hollingshead, M. De Paleologue, Henry Ainley, George Robey, Dan Leno, Little Tich, Sir Henry J. Wood, Sir Landon Ronald, Arthur Lloyd, Fred Bishop, Bill Gavin, Dick Upex, Bud Flanagan, Tommy Trinder, Ben Warris, Joe Davis, Jack Trevor, James Moore, and many many others.

Unconfirmed famous members: Julius M. Price, Dudley Hardy, George Graves.

HRH Prince of Wales was the Club's primary Patron for almost all of its history. In total, 35 Lord Mayors of London were selected as Honorary Life Members of the Club.

We regret but we have no images available to accompany this Press Release. Images of the old Eccentric Club are obtainable from Getty Images (Hulton Archive: <http://www.gettyimages.com/Search/Search.aspx?contractUrl=2&language=en-US&family=editorial&assetType=image&p=%22eccentric%20club%22&src=standard>), images used on www.eccentricclub.co.uk are mostly licensed from www.clipart.com.

Web Site: <http://www.eccentricclub.co.uk/club-events.php>

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The Main Entrance is located on Bloomsbury Way, across the road from the Swedenborg Society building. The nearest tube stations are Holborn, Tottenham Court Road and Russell Square. There is a secure public car park in Bloomsbury Square.

More info: <http://www.pushkinhouse.org.uk/>