

The Savile Club

Title 63 A

Halfway between the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square and Claridges Hotel, in the very heart of London's Mayfair, stands the house of the Savile Club at 69 Brook Street. It is a typical 'Gentlemen's Club' which still in the year 2000 does not elect ladies. I was elected a Member in June 1958.

The election procedure is simple: A member writes the candidate's name, his profession and his address into a large book, kept for this purpose. It is then left to other members, if they approve of the candidate, to add their own names, as a supporter. About eight supporters, after giving their reasons in writing, are generally considered sufficient for election. The book is analysed twice a year by the Selection Committee.

My Proposer was Frank Horrabin, the Map Artist who had designed most of the maps in the books of H.G. Wells and whom I knew well, as he had drawn many maps for my Journal *Discovery*. Among my supporters I was proud to have C.P. Snow, David Low the cartoonist, Michael Ayrton the artist, John Bunyan and Raymond Postgate. I had a total of 23. The Club has no political affiliation and my supporters were both of the right and of the left political persuasions.

During the more than now 40 years of my membership, I enjoyed every hour I spent at the Savile, eating many luncheons and dinners, talking and having a drink, always pleasant times during which I made many new friends. Being a scientist, this was surprising, as the present membership of the Savile is mainly 'artistic', with predominantly authors, script-writers, journalists, actors, film and television producers and musicians.

The Club was founded in 1868, and early literary members included Robert Louis Stevenson, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Max Beerbohm, W.B. Yeats, Lytton Strachey, J.B. Priestley, A.P. Herbert and Thomas Hardy among others. The world of Music was represented by Sir Edward Elgar, Sir William Walton, Sir Arthur Bliss and Roger Quilter.

Famous Savilians were Henry Moore the sculptor, as well as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, whose classic films *49th Parallel*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *Red Shoes*, gave such pleasure to millions in the 1950s. Sir Ralph Richardson, the great actor was a Savilian, and so was Kingsley Martin, the caustic editor, Sir William Osler historian of medicine, and others, lawyers and judges. Lesley Plummer, the politician, was a Savilian and the full list can be found in *Hang up your Halo in the Hall*, the Club's excellent history by Garrett Anderson, published by the Savile Club in 1993.