



Title 63 C

Herbert George Wells, born in Bromley Kent in 1866, died in Hanover Terrace, Regents Park, London in 1946. At the age of 18 he received a scholarship to study biology at the Royal College of Science, South Kensington, also the Author's College. H. G. Wells graduated in 1888. In his first two books published, *Textbook of Biology, Part I Vertebrata*, and *Part II Invertebrates and Plants*, Wells describes himself in 1893 as B. Sc. London, F.Z.S. and 'Lecturer in Biology at University Tutorial College'.

These publications would never have made him world-famous, but his next books *The Time Machine* 1895, *The War of the Worlds* 1898 and *The first Men in the Moon* 1901, showed Wells, as the author of these astronomical fantasies, to be a writer of great scientific imagination, of vigour, vitality, nay exuberance. His many subsequent volumes of social themes, comic novels, even a historical treatise, showed Wells to be undeviating and fearless in his efforts for social equality, world peace and the future good of humanity, often brought about by the rightful use of science.

I felt a great affinity for Wells, I had studied at the same College and I am a member of the same Club, the Savile, but above all, I found in many of his writings a basic philosophy which I have here called the 'Scientific Temper'.

Caricature by David Low, a member of the Savile, published as Supplement to The New Statesman, 16 January 1926. (Author's Collection)

I don't know if every Club has a motto, but I do know that the Savile Club's motto expresses perfectly the behaviour and feeling of its members. A simple translation of *sodalitas* would be 'comradeship'. But I would prefer 'solidarity', which is defined as "The fact or quality of a community of being perfectly united, or at one in some respect of its interests or sympathies". This represents admirably the Savile Club's *convivium*, namely its general spirit of 'feast' or 'entertainment', while being in the Club.

The Savile appeals to me, and undoubtedly to its other members, because of its free and easy atmosphere, its liberal style and the graciousness of its beautiful House. Its code of behaviour, (dress: tie and jacket) bans any social misdemeanour, although occasional drunkenness has occurred. Here is an example.

Not all candidates are elected, as for example Lord George Brown, the deputy Prime Minister of a past Labour Government. At a guest dinner to meet new candidates, he got so drunk that he committed the unforgivable sin of making a speech, advocating his suitability as a member. He was asked to leave the table and was so inebriated that he fell down the splendid curved staircase leading from the dining room and landed oblivious of his surroundings at the bottom. His proposer withdrew his name. (From Anderson's history)

Sir John Cockcroft defined the spirit of the Savile admirably: "I take my acquaintances to the Athenaeum, but my friends to the Savile". The Athenaeum which historically accepted as members only the Aristocracy, Bishops and Fellows of the Royal Society, has in recent years, presumably for financial reasons, lowered its entrance conditions, but has retained the traditional and conventional atmosphere of its establishment.

In contrast, the Savile has always remained casual and informal, corresponding naturally to the character of its 'artistic' membership. At the Savile it is a tradition that members are expected, even encouraged, to speak freely to each other, at all times and everywhere in the Club—except at the Breakfast Table!

Only one great scandal is recorded in the Club's history, when H.G. Wells seduced the daughter of a fellow member and used this affair as the plot for his book *Ann Veronica*. Her father, Mr Reeves, the Director of the London School of Economics, never forgave him, and even the generally tolerant Members of the Committee asked Wells to resign. For the next 28 years Wells used the Athenaeum, but in 1937 returned to the Savile, where he was once again received with much pleasure. (Anderson).

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