



## GREAT LOCATION, BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY, THE FRIEZE OF APOLLO

by Lew Toulmin

We visited the Travellers Club briefly in June 2010 and then had lunch and a tour in September 2017.

The Club is in historic Pall Mall, in an excellent location in the heart of “club land,” between the Reform Club and the Athenaeum. Room rates are reasonable on weekends, and similar to other nearby clubs during the week. Staff are helpful, friendly, and even amusing.



### HISTORY

The Travellers Club was founded by Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh in 1819 in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, to enable gentlemen to meet and entertain distinguished visitors from overseas. Early members included Tallyrand (the French ambassador to the Court of St. James), and five future Prime Ministers.



The Club evolved into the club of choice for British foreign service officers and foreign ambassadors resident in London. It is non-political.

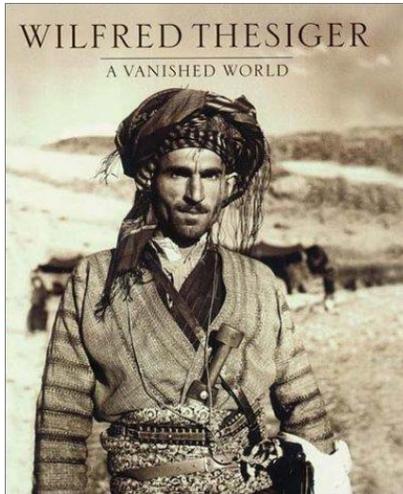
The clubhouse was built in 1829 by Charles Barry (photo left). The inspiration was the Palazzo Pandolfini in Florence by Raphael. The garden design was inspired by Barry’s Venetian grand tour. He became a member in 1834.

### MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to men only, and is based on letters of nomination from existing members, attendance at a reception, and “a sufficiency of signatures in the Candidate’s Book.” Members must have traveled at least 500 miles from London, a requirement left over from the time when that was a major achievement.

There are two categories of membership, Ordinary and Associate. The principal difference is that Associates require nomination from only one existing member, while Ordinary requires two. The nominating members must have known the proposed candidate for at least three years.

Annual fees reportedly were about 1000 in 2010 pounds and are 1100 pounds now. Women may visit and use the club, but cannot enter two of the public rooms. In describing this situation, one of the staff said with a wry smile, “Big boys with little minds, what can I say?”(!)



The most distinguished recent member was perhaps Sir Wilfred Thesiger, CBE DSO FRAS, an extraordinary traveler, writer, early member of the elite SAS, and expert on the Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq and the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia (photo left).

Other distinguished members have included the Duke of Wellington, Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, and Captain Robert Fitzroy of the *Beagle*.

The Club patron is the Duke of Edinburgh. Prince Charles, the Duke of York, the Earl of Wessex, the Duke of Kent and Prince Michael of Kent are all honorary members.

## LOCATION

The Club is at 106 Pall Mall, near the National Gallery, Sotheby's, Piccadilly, the Institute of Directors (IOD), shopping on Jermyn Street, etc. The Club is closest to Piccadilly Circus tube station on the Piccadilly Line, where there are stairs, or Green Park, where elevators are available all the way down to the tracks. Both tube stations are on the Piccadilly Line to Heathrow Airport.

## FACILITIES

The Club is smaller than the nearby Reform Club, RAC and Athenaeum, but the public rooms are gorgeous, and feature original art by Sir Thomas Lawrence, RA FRS. The library is deservedly called one of the loveliest libraries in London. It is about two-thirds devoted to travel and exploration.

The red and white frieze above the library books (photo below) is a smaller version of the famous Bassae Frieze from the Temple of Apollo in the Peloponnesus. It was created about 410 BC. The original is over 90 feet long and two feet high, and is housed in the British Museum. It was excavated by Charles R. Cockerell, a founding member of the Club.



The public rooms include a bar, smoking room (these are the two male-only preserves), two dining rooms, library and several meeting rooms. There are rarely activities on the weekend. A typical Club event we noted in 2010 was a private tour of Windsor Castle led by Field Marshall the Lord Bramall, KG GCB OBE MC.



The Club is closed or has very reduced services for ten days over Christmas/New Year's, four days at Easter, and three weeks in August.

## DRESS CODE AND RULES

The dress code is collared shirt, tie and jacket for men, and a vague equivalent for women. Persons staying in the Club and eating breakfast need not adhere to the code. There is no display of business papers in the public rooms except the main hall and a hired private room. No children under 14 are allowed. There is no smoking in the Club -- most especially in the Smoking Room!

**THE TRAVELLERS CLUB**  
BEDROOM PRICES FOR RECIPROCAL/GUESTS MEMBERS  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Bedroom	Number	Double occupancy (D/O) Single occupancy (S/O)	£	£
			(Monday-Thursday)	(Friday-Sunday)
Deluxe double with bath	1, 2	D/O S/O	290.00 230.00	225.00 200.00
Super Deluxe suite (with four poster bed)	8	D/O S/O	365.00 310.00	280.00 245.00
Single with en suite	3, 11 and 16		175.00	115.00
Double/Twin with en suite facilities	4, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18 and 19	D/O S/O	250.00 200.00	190.00 175.00
Double room with en suite facilities	14 and 15	D/O S/O	250.00 200.00	190.00 175.00
Large single without bath (Communal bathroom)	9 and 10		115.00	105.00

Early morning tea and a daily newspaper are complimentary. There is an additional charge for English breakfast of £15.50 per person or Continental breakfast at £8.00.  
All prices include VAT at 20%.  
Email: [reservations@thetravellersclub.org.uk](mailto:reservations@thetravellersclub.org.uk)

## BED ROOM DESCRIPTION AND RATES

There are 17 bedrooms at the Club, and staff advise that these are often booked several weeks in advance. All bedrooms were re-decorated in the last two years, are regularly updated, and now all have air conditioning. Décor varies from plain to charming. Rates are shown on the card to the left. Photos of rooms with rates are shown at the end of

this review. The best value room/price quality combination is probably room 15. Check rates and room descriptions before making a reservation.

## FOOD

In 2010 I was told that prices for dinner main courses were reduced to about 9 to 10 pounds between 6 and 7 pm and 9 and 11 pm, a terrific bargain by London standards. Unfortunately this program is now discontinued.

For lunch in September 2017 my wife Susan had the lemon sole, which she rated as an “A,” very tasty, at 21 pounds. Her dessert was a trifle but it was more than a trifle too liquid, and hence was only a “B” at 4.5 pounds. I had a three course special of a peppered mackerel with excellent horseradish cream (an “A”), roast chicken (“B+”) and chocolate sponge pudding (“A-“), all for 21 pounds. With a guest charge of 4.5 pounds and a Coke the total meal for two was 53.60 pounds, including VAT, and of course no tipping was allowed under Club rules.



## BEDROOMS



Bedrm 2: 290 pounds double occ. M-Th;  
225 F-Sun



Bedrm 4: 250 pounds double occ. M-Th;  
190 F-Sun



Bedrm 8: 365 pounds double occ. M-Th;  
280 F-Sun

## OTHER PHOTOS



Bedrm 15: 250 pounds double occ. M-Th;  
190 F-Sun

