

# GENTLEMAN'S JOURNAL



## The Diary: A Gentleman's Burns Night

Dry January met its match at a black-tie Burns Night of bagpipes, haggis, high-proof single malts and heroic excess, a gloriously un-dry celebration of Scottish ceremony and convivial indulgence.

The best thing about Dry January is breaking it. But after (nearly) a month of frankly heroically good behaviour, one can't simply swan-dive off the wagon again with a mundane continental lager or a room-temperature ale. One wants something with a bit of pageantry. Some panache. A little pomp and ceremony. Perhaps — and I'm completely spitballing here — a bagpiper in tweeds reading the poetry of Rabbie Burns before slaughtering a haggis with a miniature sword. That was the crescendo of a very un-dry dinner yesterday evening, at least — a black-tie bash held for 42 of our absolute closest friends (plus David Tollemache) in the handsome upstairs room at The Walmer Castle. Here, in partnership with the exceptionally fun bunch at One Cask at a Time, guests toasted to the memory of Scotland's greatest poet and the glory of Scotland's greatest export: single malt whisky. Could I have told you without looking it up just now that our sumptuous opening Auchentoshan 1998 boasted fruity top notes of lemon zest, unripe melon, pineapple, and faint florals on the nose? At 59.5%, I'm not sure I could have told you much. But there's no point doing things by halves in this dreariest of months — a theme that continued with the vast haggis-topped steaks that were presently served to the gently swaying crowd. (Real Scotsmen, I was very soon to learn, pour a drop of whisky atop their haggis before tucking in.) And then the lights dimmed and Geordie the bagpiper made his solemn entrance into the hush, followed closely by an overawed young chef with a large and stoic haggis, ready to make its ultimate sacrifice. Great chieftain o' the pudding race! There was scarcely a dry eye — or glass — in the house.

Lucky guests included: Araminta Reed, Leo Suter, Oliver Proudlock, Sean Teale, Eric Underwood, George Blandford, Eleanor Wellesley, Arthur Kay, Sheyi Cole, Mathias Le Fevre, Mickey Down, Jamie Edmiston, Alex Heerema, Sabrina Percy and Sam Webb.



Mathias Le Fevre



Russell Bradley, Arthur Kay & Jamie Morrison



Archie Rutland, David Tollemache & George Blandford



Edward Bayne



Luca Faloni and Rosi Walden



Joe Kennedy



Mickey Down



Mathias Le Fevre, Sheyi Cole & Eric Underwood



Joseph Bullmore & Mickey Down



Joseph Bullmore



Henry Hales



Oliver Proudlock, Sheyi Cole & Leo Suter



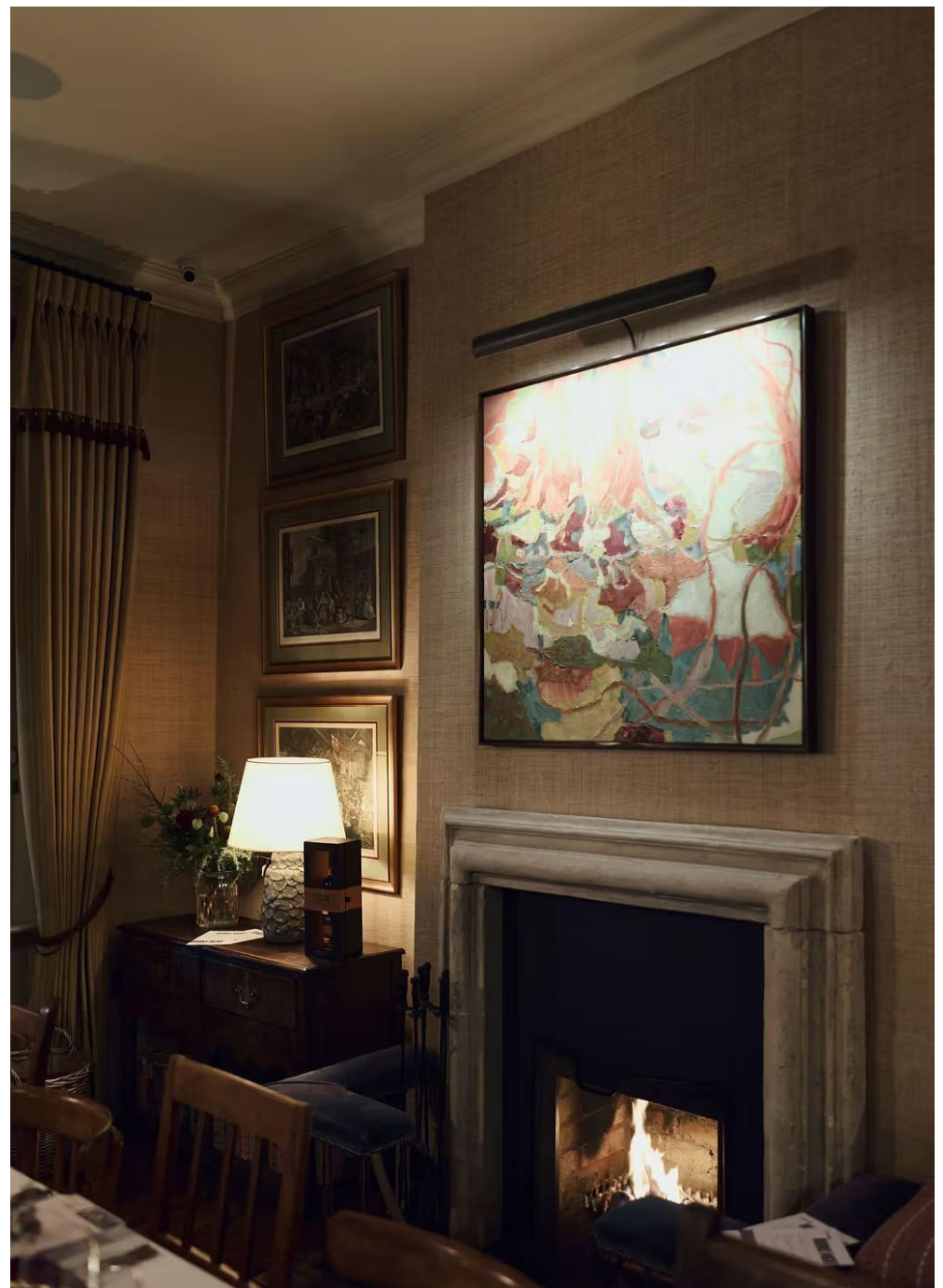
The Walmer Castle



Geordie The Piper



David Tollemache & Eleanor Wellesley





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One Cask at a Time



Sean Teale & Leo Suter



Russell Bradley & Jamie Morrison



Sam Webb



Oliver Proudlock



Sam Webb & Oliver Proudlock



Eric Underwood



Ed Straker



George Blandford



Araminta Reed, Sabrina Percy & Eleanor Wellesley