

Are you being Sloaned?

Meet the Chelsea set
serving the super-rich

Catwalk confidential

Behind the scenes
at Fashion Week

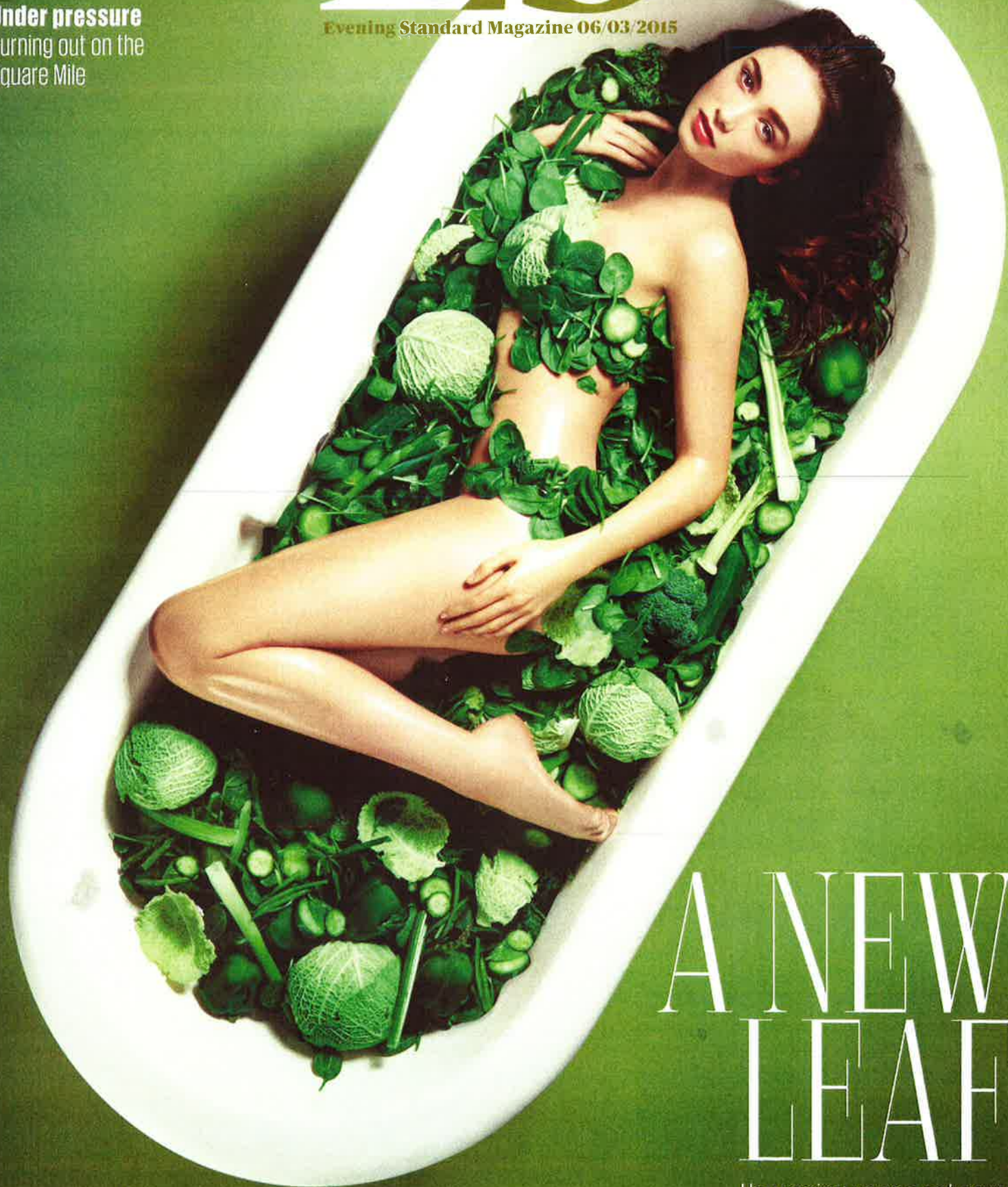
Under pressure

Burning out on the
Square Mile

ES



Evening Standard Magazine 06/03/2015



A NEW LEAF

How going vegan got sexy

The Royal Borough of Kensington
and Chelsea
SLOANES
FOR HIRE, S.W.1

What do you do if you've got the right name, went to the right school and keep the right company but the family coffers are empty? Set up a business working for the capital's international super-rich, says Sophia Money-Coutts. But at what cost?

Of course we're all slaves to foreigners,' said my friend Joe last weekend. 'They're the only ones with any cash!' Joe is a 30-year-old Sloane who went to the Oxfordshire public school Radley, never knowingly appears in public without a pair of suede loafers and works for a Swiss family office. He was referring to the declaration last month from Peter York, author of the original *Official Sloane Ranger Handbook*. In *Prospect* magazine, York wrote that Sloanes have been losing their way ever since their red-faced, frilly-collared heyday in the 1980s, to the extent that they are now modern servants. They have become pitiful, deeply unfashionable creatures, York insisted, apart from one successful substrata who have thrived, becoming 'butlers' to the 21st-century New Rich.

'I can't think of anyone who's actually a butler,' said another Sloaney friend, missing the point entirely, as bumbling Sloanes are apt to do. 'Only the Russians really have butlers now.' What York meant was that, these days, if you're a Saudi princeling in London looking for a house/car/boat/Picasso/nutritionist/florist/interior decorator/horse/tiger (more on that later), there is sure to be a Sloane willing to help. The Saudi prince is grateful for the help and the Sloane's

The fixer Harry Becher (centre, at Mark Club) runs a concierge business

introductions; the Sloanes are grateful for the business. Everyone's a winner.

Property is the most booming area for poshos who know the city well and are connected enough to know when mansions in Knightsbridge, Mayfair and Chelsea are coming on to the market. Anthony Becher, a charming, 35-year-old Old Marlburian who looks a bit like Owen Wilson, works for RFR, an upmarket property company that sources houses, sometimes northwards of £50m, for various nationalities. 'We've seen an increasing amount of Brazilians and second-generation Saudis, Russians and Kazakhs who



have been brought up in a Western education system and are gentrified, cultured and more ambitious than ever,' says Becher when asked who are the major players on his books. No demand is too much. One German client's search was entirely dictated by finding somewhere with the right dimensions for his grand piano. And for a Vietnamese client, RFR had to remove the roof to rid the house of 'bad energy', then put it right back on again. Feng shui can be a bitch.

Anthony's brother Harry, 37, runs his own concierge business, BHB, which he founded in 2012 and which organises every little detail of a client's life, from private tutoring to birthday parties, opera tickets to 'getting relatives out of war zones'. 'We've worked on a number of super-extravagant requests,' says Harry, 'but the one that shines through was the last-minute demand for a live performance by a globally renowned tenor, a Sydney Olympics-style fireworks display, a Cirque du Soleil-type performance and a five-course Michelin-starred dinner, all to take place on the roof of the Louvre with two days' notice. When I asked what they were celebrating, there was a one-word reply: "Love."' The party cost the client £560,000.

In truth, today's Sloanes are only doing what British toffs have always done, which is follow the money. It's how the empire was built – posh Brits spreading themselves across the globe in a great trading swoop. It's why, a century or so ago, waves of aristos married American heiresses to protect their estates (as illustrated by the Granthams in *Downton Abbey*). Today's Sloanes are in a similar bind because they have to pay for themselves. Gone are the trust funds that the previous generation enjoyed, their parents having largely spent what cash they had on private school fees or London flats for their children. And although this hasn't left the Sloane exactly destitute, it does mean they've had to sharpen up and sniff out jobs in order to afford the Sloaney way of life: dinners over a 'bloody good Pinot' in pubs off the King's Road; shooting on Gloucestershire estates; skiing in Verbier; jetting off for friends' weddings in Cap d'Antibes or Tuscany in the summer.

For them, it's more about self-preservation than servitude. Sloanes are neatly and quietly using their contacts, honed at private school and university, to land lucrative jobs flogging super-expensive houses or horses. There's no snootiness about it. Whether trading with an American hedge funder or a Qatari sheikh, Sloanes don't mind as long as the clients have the cash. 'Oh, apart from the Chinese,' says one, who wishes to remain nameless. 'They're the most difficult to work with because they always want things done yesterday. Or at least "NOW NOW NOW". But, you know, the Chinese have the money to spend.'

Henry Smith, a 28-year-old Old Etonian who works for Cecil Wright & Partners, a super-yacht brokerage based in St James's and Monaco, understands the exacting demands of foreign clients. Henry, from a grand West Sussex family, co-founded the company in 2013, selling and renting yachts from 50m



Drive on
Charles Innes-Ker, Marquess of Bowmont and Cessford, runs a chauffeur service using a fleet of Jaguars



Head of ceremonies
New Sloanes set up weddings (right, in Spain), parties and special occasions



Just the ticket
Tickets to events such as the Veuve Clicquot Gold Cup polo final (above) are on the wanted list

upwards to a smorgasbord of international clients – French, American, Japanese and Russian among others. No demand is too much. Smith has flown food from a deli in the South of France to a yacht in the Maldives in a matter of hours by a combination of private jet and helicopters for a Russian client, and sourced 2,500 pink and silver balloons in two hours for the surprise birthday party of an American client's granddaughter on a yacht moored on the French Riviera. For a French family, he had to work out how to get two tigers on to a 70m yacht for a party because his clients wanted their guests to pose for pictures with them. 'The paperwork was a nightmare,' says Smith. 'Hoisting tigers in glass cages apparently isn't covered by normal insurance premiums.' No matter; he managed it, securing a pair of unsuspecting tigers on loan from a circus.

That's the thing about Sloanes, they are entirely dependable. Unflappable. Terribly British and calm in a crisis. Which is why foreign billionaires feel so comfortable working with them. It's a symbiotic relationship – the Kazakh gas kingpin is happy to stump up the cash for the Sloane's services because they aren't just buying a yacht or a swanky, eight-bedroom house in Mayfair; in truth, they are also trying to buy their way into British society, using these discreet, well-connected fixers to help them find a route in.

'All our foreign clients want to buy into the

**SLOANES ARE DEPENDABLE.
UNFLAPPABLE. TERRIBLY
BRITISH AND CALM
IN A CRISIS. WHICH IS WHY
FOREIGN BILLIONAIRES
FEEL SO COMFORTABLE
WORKING WITH THEM**

British way of life, go to the polo, shooting, racing and so on,' says a 30-year-old former Sandhurst captain who works for a private security company in Mayfair, which is employed by dozens of wealthy foreign families to protect them wherever they are in the world. For Sloane boys, this is a popular career option after leaving the army. They have been trained by one of the best military forces in the world, have technical security knowledge and global connections. They are impeccably dressed in Savile Row suits and talk with James Bond's clipped and reassuring accent (Bond, after all, went to Eton). They just need to make some cash, because they're never going to be able to afford a Sloane lifestyle on an army salary. 'Nigerian oil billionaires are the new kids in London right now,' says the officer. 'But we also work for a lot of Egyptians who have come here since the Arab Spring, and Russians, obviously.'



Have-nots
Henry Smith (left) works for superyacht brokers Cecil Wright. Emily-Rose Gibbs (below left) works for Kasimira event planners

Or you could do what another Sloane ex-Sandhurst boy, Charles Innes-Ker, Marquess of Bowmont and Cessford, has done and set up a chauffeur firm, albeit a very grand one called Capstar, which uses a fleet of Jaguars to shuttle wealthy tycoons and visiting CEOs around town. Alternatively, you could sell them cars, as Max Wakefield does. Wakefield, a forty-something former Sandhurst officer, is CEO of Chillingham Classics, which sells rare Ferraris, McLarens and Porsches to wealthy collectors, customised exactly as they demand. 'Most super-rich don't value originality. To repaint a car or adjust and tweak to their comfort is of no concern – like digging a basement or gutting a historic house – whereas it would make the British buyer blanch.' You have to make sure you're wearing a suit, though. 'I once had to convince an American buyer that one of the leading Porsche experts in the country was, in fact, not a farmer. In all subsequent conversations, the buyer referred to the man as "the farmer". It made credibility difficult.'

TODAY'S SLOANES ARE ONLY DOING WHAT BRITISH TOFFS HAVE ALWAYS DONE – FOLLOW THE MONEY. IT'S HOW THE EMPIRE WAS BUILT

Party planning is another booming area for Sloanes. Emily-Rose Gibbs works for Kasimira, the South Kensington-based party planner co-founded by Marina Fogle, wife of retro Sloane turned TV hunk Ben Fogle. 'We've certainly seen a rise in the number of foreign clients,' says Gibbs. 'They now include French, Russian, Italian, Spanish, American, Indian, Nigerian and Swiss nationalities, who all love a quintessentially English party.' For one Russian client's six-year-old's birthday party, Kasimira rewrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, created costumes for each child and built a woodland set for them to act out the play in. For an American child's sixth birthday party,

Yahs across the years
The evolution of the Sloane Ranger

SLOANES THEN

Called Caroline or Rupert

Girl Sloanes work as a cook or a typist until they get married, after which they never work again. Boy Sloanes work for their godfather's merchant bank

Live in a flat their parents bought for them in Chelsea or Earls Court

Votes Tory because Daddy does

Favourite animal is a dog

Idolises Lady Diana Spencer, thinks she'll be marvellous for the Royal Family

SLOANES NOW

Called Cressy, Poppy, Edie, Hugo or Will. Still a few Ruperts

Girl Sloanes work in luxury travel PR until they get married, then start a 'mummy blog'. Boy Sloanes sell expensive properties and toys to rich foreigners

Live in a flat their parents bought in Fulham, Battersea, or Earlsfield at a push

Maybe this funny chap called Nigel or something ghastly?

Favourite animal is a dog

Idolises Kate Middleton, thinks she's marvellous for the Royal Family



the company created a lion's head ice sculpture with caviar coming out of its mouth. Kasimira is far too discreet to mention anything so vulgar as money, but it's safe to assume that the costs, even for children's birthday parties, can run well into tens of thousands of pounds.

Sloanes have to be on their guard, however, because these clients are more exacting than British ones. 'We have very few truly old-school Brits as clients,' says a friend called Tom who works in an art gallery in Mayfair. 'Possibly because British toffs have more conservative taste and prefer more traditional pieces, from Old Masters to stately furniture, but also because many can't justify spending £100,000 on a dining table or chandelier when their roof needs to be repaired.'

Exactly. So Tom spends much of his time running around after wealthy foreigners. 'One South Asian couple living in Kensington have been particularly active in their acquisitions recently,' he says. 'Asking us to place artworks in their home and leave them for 48 hours or so before deciding whether or not they'd like to keep them.' We're not talking cheap watercolours. These artworks, light installations and contemporary sculptures can command six-figure sums. 'It's a service we're happy to offer for the international elite,' says Tom chirpily. 'We know they're good for it.'

They sure are, but still, the Sloanes have to sweat for it. 'Super-rich foreigners have no time for problems, so if something won't be ready on time, you'd better find a replacement because there isn't much patience,' says Tom. 'We usually quote much longer lead times than for, say, a British customer.' They can also be pretty fierce. 'One of our clients called up Banham security to say that if the company didn't solve a problem with their painting security system, they would buy Banham and have them fired,' Tom adds. So, apart from being polite and charming at all times, the canny, 21st-century Sloane has also learned to cross the super-rich at their peril. *Sophia Money-Coutts is features editor of Tatler*