



Dan Sederowsky

Guy Heathcote



moustaches!

It is one of the most exclusive – and eccentric – societies in the country. When the historic Handlebar Club held their annual convention in the New Forest, **SARAH JONES** couldn't resist going to meet them.

But thanks to the “madness of one or two people” the club never folded and today it is in “rude health” with around 100 members, aged from their 20s to their 90s.

It may be based in London – members who live near the capital meet in a pub there on the first Friday of every month – but the Handlebar Club has members across the world.

Attending their annual convention in Lyndhurst recently were a number of the overseas contingent.

Members from Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium all made a pilgrimage to the New Forest event.

Based at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel, the weekend included visits to Buckler's Hard and the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu. Of course, they attracted attention wherever they went.

For 44-year-old Steve – dressed in a tweed suit and sporting a burgundy club tie, artfully decorated with white curly moustaches – it all started when he first left home.

“When I went to university I grew as much facial hair as I could. It's a rite of passage for a lot of blokes.

“First of all I had a red mohican, then I shaved that off and grew a goatee before trying a handlebar. I've stuck with it pretty

much ever since. I suppose I'm an exhibitionist like most of us are.

“People told me I should join the Handlebar Club but I thought it would be full of a load of old fuddy duddies. I eventually went six or seven years ago and found out that they weren't at all. It's actually a lot of fun.

“When we get together we never talk about moustaches. It's just like going down the pub with mates, we just all happen to have moustaches.”

While eating candy floss and chewing bubble gum may be off limits, it's a small price to pay for members of the exclusive club.

Their facial hair has added benefits and can even prove to be a draw for the ladies. Well, some at least.

“There are definitely two camps,” says Steve, who works as a salesman in Kent. “Some of them love it. There are one or two – how do I put this? – who are almost groupies.

“But then there are some who hate it, like my fiancée. She's not so keen on the tache but she knows how much fun it is and how much I enjoy being part of the club.

“We are getting married in August and the deal is that I don't have to shave it off but I do have to use straighteners and wax

GUY HEATHCOTE, 42, is a research scientist from Maybush, Southampton.

“I always get strange looks or people staring at me when I'm in Southampton. I'm in my early 40s so for someone my age it's not very common at all but usually it's quite positive attention.

“I had a ponytail down my back and a goatee for a long time. Then about seven years ago the ponytail was falling out and the goatee was looking a bit raggedy so when I saw someone with a handlebar moustache, I thought maybe I should try that.

“It looked a bit odd for the first year or two. It took two years to get it right.

“I like the fact it's unusual. A lot of people almost consider it unthinkable to have a handlebar moustache so to grow one and see how people react to it is quite fun.

“Even though it's just a few hairs it has more significance than that. It's definitely part of who I am now.”

it to make it look very beautiful. Normally I just put leave-in conditioner in it.

“I'm concerned it might overshadow how beautiful the bride looks!”

While handlebars remain fairly common in countries like Turkey, India, Iran and Iraq, Steve is counting on them never enjoying too much of a resurgence at home.

“I hope they never make a comeback here,” he says. “We wouldn't be special then, would we?”

■ For more information on the Handlebar Club, visit handlebarclub.co.uk