

## Hairs and graces

James Waldron on the three Ts of wet-shave houses

**Y**ears ago I was an enthusiastic patron of Piers Adam's establishments. His various nightclubs and bars would entice me on an almost nightly basis, and then, once a month, I would repair to his now-defunct barber's. Adam's of London was designed for the type of man who isn't really comfortable in the poncey and brittle atmosphere of a unisex 'salon', but nonetheless seeks style and luxury. The staff wore proper barbers' jackets, rather than camp, two-sizes-too-small T-shirts, but the place was unashamedly chic. And modern: they had natty keyboards set into the leather armrests for example, so you could surf the net while being attended to.

Nowadays, what with BlackBerry-type kit, perhaps that feature could be seen as old-fashioned. A fact that does lend weight to the policy of simply never acknowledging the passage of time. Such is the strategy followed by that triumvirate of old wet-shave houses, the three Ts: Taylor's, Trumper's, and Truefitt & Hill ([truefittandhill.co.uk](http://truefittandhill.co.uk)). The last lays claim to being the oldest barber's shop in the world, established in 1805. That, of course, was the year of Nelson's most famous victory, and the Trafalgar range of aftershaves (as light and refreshing as ocean spray) remain the patriot's choice. Since that date the company has ushered through its door any number of illustrious figures, including Winston Churchill (whose barber had to pay great attention to avoid depositing any lather on the Romeo y Julieta on which the great man would puff throughout).

But it is Geo. F. Trumper ([trumper.com](http://trumper.com)) which is the most trad. There are, I am told, no plans to open an outlet in Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, as Truefitt's have done, and the gentlemen's club character of the Curzon Street shop remains intact. I found this in no



Truefitt & Hill

way alienating when I visited the place the other day (proof, I suppose, that I've left my glamorous and youthful days behind me). Fusty is the word some might use, but it must be entirely divorced from its more literal, olfactory meaning, because even Trumper's greatest detractor couldn't deny that the company is in possession of some fantastic scents.

When Mr Gary, the man assigned to look after me, passed the Rose shaving cream under my nose, the gorgeous Turkish-delight smell was almost enough to allow me to overcome my irrational fear of the barber's shop shave. Indeed, the man himself was an excellent

advertisement for his own ability with the blade, boasting facial skin which would have shamed the average baby's bottom. However, since I'd shaved that

morning, Mr Gary suggested I partook of a 'head friction' instead. The name sounded almost as frightening as 'cut-throat razor', but it turns out to be a wholly agreeable, and very aromatic, indulgence. It involves the repeated tipping on to the cranium, and the massaging in, of copious quantities of the after-

shave of your choice. It's a deeply relaxing experience, but with the added piquancy of the liquid's tingling away on the skin. I chose the Extract of Limes, which is a truly magnificent summertime scent, but the sheer volume used meant that it was a mistake to descend into the rush-hour Tube in the immediate aftermath. I was aware of a powerful citrus haze surrounding me, and although I tried not to meet anyone's glance, I was sure there were some watering eyes in my vicinity. (I should add that a couple of hours later, out in the open air, I was reliably informed that there was no more than a suggestive hint of the lovely aroma.)

The Limes is on the verge of replacing my current daytime fave, Floris No. 89. The

latter was also the choice of Ian Fleming's James Bond, but it's safe to assume that 007 was associated with Trumper's too, because we now know that MI6 was based a few doors away. The proximity of the service is apparently one of the factors behind the discretion for which the company is known. One specific manifestation of this is that each chair has its own heavy velvet curtain which can be drawn to create a private booth, a feature particularly appreciated by those requiring tinting or hair-piece fitting. Mr Gary offered to close the curtain for me, but I insisted that they remained resolutely open. I needed everyone to know that while I may be mature enough to enjoy the Trumper's experience, I am still in possession of my own, non-silvery, hair.



### THE THREE TS

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#### TRUEFITT & HILL, LONDON

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