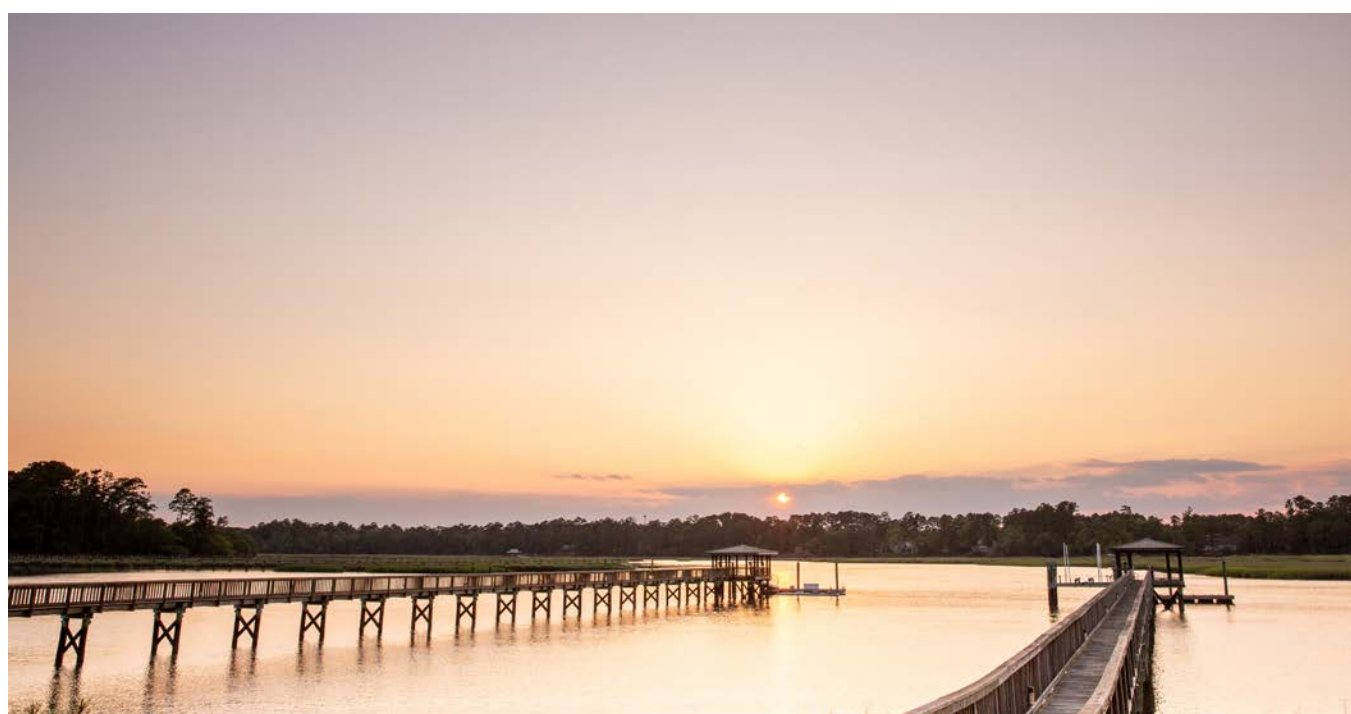


MEMBER STATES

Private member clubs have a rich and varied history, but have recently gone through a change in direction to better engage with a more diverse and discerning membership. A lot is being done to bring these institutions up-to-date and drive member engagement bringing back the membership value to a private club. Unique examines the future of private member clubs.



Private members clubs were originally established in the 18th century and were social focal points for British upper-class men – which goes some way to explaining the etiquette and exclusivity of many members-only clubs to this day.

These clubs were founded in the West End of London, with many of the originals still operating today, while countless contemporary clubs have joined those ranks in recent years. Clubs such as White's Brooks' and Boodle's were favoured by the aristocracy and also, importantly, allowed gambling, which was illegal outside of these establishments.

White's was founded in 1693 and is still considered one of

the city's most exclusive private clubs. Current members include the Prince of Wales and Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge. Being a men-only club has caused controversy, with former Prime Minister David Cameron resigning his membership over the club's policy.

White's occupied a number of properties over the years and its members had something of a reputation – none more so than the man widely regarded as the 'inventor' of the tailored suit and tie, Beau Brummell.

Brummell was such an influence on London society that he had the prime window seat reserved for him at White's – right up to the point he was forced to escape to France following gambling debts that he could not meet.

A close friend of the Prince Regent (the future King George IV), Brummell became the arbiter of fashion, and established a mode of dress that rejected overly ornate clothes in favour of perfectly fitted and tailored bespoke garments. This look, which became the suit and tie we know today, was based on dark coats, full-length trousers rather than knee breeches, a shirt and elaborately knotted cravat.

Brummell was the original dandy, and claimed it took him five hours to get dressed each day, while insisting his boots be polished with champagne.

While Brummell was clearly not a typical private club member, he is perhaps the most colourful, and he was an important figure in establishing private clubs as the height of society in England.

These private clubs really took off in the 1880s, with more than 400 in London alone at their peak. These numbers were swelled in part by various Reform Acts, which allowed more men the ability to vote, and boosted the ‘gentlemen class’. However, with the established clubs having limits on membership and long waiting lists, this saw new clubs opening to accommodate demand, often reflecting specific interests of their members.

Clubs were opened with connections to universities or sections of the armed forces, or to those members with a particular interest in the arts, literature, travel, exploration, or sports. By the late 19th century, any gentleman was able to find a club so long as his character was not in question.

Most gentlemen frequented only one club which most defined their background and interests, but it was not uncommon for some to have multiple memberships, especially royals and politicians. In the 1960s, Earl Mountbatten was said to have 19 club memberships – regarded as something of a record.

Clubs spread around the world, partly due to the extensive British Empire, and fine establishments can now be found virtually everywhere around the globe. Usually based around sporting or social activities, these are important grounds for business, as well as exclusive enclaves for politicians and those with significant influence as well as personal wealth.

THE FUTURE

Women-only clubs (such as AllBright) offering a holistic approach to wellness and career opportunities are currently big in London and in the US, while the success of creative industry darling Soho House – founded in London in 1995 – has seen it expand rapidly across the US, Europe and Asia, while also diversifying into restaurants, cinemas, spas and motels.

It is clear that members clubs are evolving and thriving, and continue to offer something specialised for everyone, but that is not to say the sector is without its challenges.

“The private club industry has been under rough weather over the last

couple of decades due to changing lifestyle preferences,” says Rathan Kumar, Founder and CEO of MobiCom – aggregating the world’s largest network of private clubs and their members through its technology driven product platforms, PlatinumClubNet™ and OneClubNet™.

“However, the industry is now positioned to take off as clubs embrace newer ways to adapt to challenging times – including infrastructure upgrades, exploring avenues to monetise under-utilised club facilities, revisiting club rules, focusing on enhancing member engagement in club events, and participating in global

network of private clubs offering a multitude of benefits to the club and their members.”

PlatinumClubNet and OneClubNet enable private clubs to offer a global private club citizenship to their members enhancing the value of an individual club membership, contrary to the traditional manually operated, limited reciprocity driven, inter-club access. These platforms extend to the members the ability to request seamless direct access to private clubs worldwide, alongside offering curated member demographic driven benefits and experiences, complementing their lifestyle.





create new experiences, enhancing value, benefits and relationships.

To receive Platinum Status, private clubs undergo comprehensive evaluation on criteria including universal recognition, excellence in amenities and facilities, caliber of staff and professional service levels, quality and commitment of membership, governance and prudent fiscal management adapting to changing times and overall experience.

A recent feature by Forbes magazine said the top 25 golf and country clubs in the world are among the one's recognized as Platinum Clubs. This includes clubs like the outstanding Augusta National Golf Club, with members including the likes of Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Condoleezza Rice

While clubs like these will always do well, they have faced a changing membership profile, and Kumar says it is essential that clubs move with the times and further engage and cater to the member aspirations.

"The demographic of membership has been impacted by the shift in changing lifestyle preferences," says Kumar. "In the last couple of decades, the average age membership shifted from 45 years to 60 years as younger members gave up their membership due to changing lifestyle. However, with clubs adapting to changing times, over the next 5 years the average age should come down to 50 years as newer membership programs, benefits and value will be offered by clubs attracting a younger audience to join their club."

Importantly, they also offer membership benefits tailored to recruit and retain Millennials – complementing their tastes and preferences – and offer luxury lifestyle privileges and bespoke experiences that are hand-crafted for members.

"This is the future of private club membership," says Kumar. "Platforms like PlatinumClubNet provide essential interaction between club and member, while also increasing engagement and providing curated experiences that discerning members have come to expect from a private club. The more you engage, the more you retain and the more you retain, the more you recruit."



Platinum Club® status in the Private Club industry has been the most revered among the industry professionals since established in 1997 and is considered the Michelin Star of private clubs. There are 845 Platinum Clubs across 50 countries in the world today – representing the top 3% of the finest private clubs among golf and country clubs, city clubs, athletic and yacht clubs.

PlatinumClubNet enables members of these Platinum Clubs to request access to participating Platinum Clubs around the globe, engage, network and