

A Virtual Tour of Shaw's London

Our tour of Shaw's London begins in Houghton Street, just off Kingsway, at the **LSE** (London School of Economics and Political Science), one of the foremost social science universities in the world.

The LSE was founded in 1895 by four members of the Fabian Society (Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas and Bernard Shaw).

Its initial funding came from a £20,000 bequest to the Fabians by Henry Hunt Huchinson.

The aim of the School was the betterment of society, by studying poverty issues and analysing inequalities. Sidney Webb had a vision of a "centre not only of lectures on special subjects but an association of students who would be directed and supported in doing original work".



LSE held its first classes in rooms in John Street, then at 10 Adelphi Terrace, where Charlotte Payne - Townshend, later Mrs Bernard Shaw, had an apartment.

In 1900 LSE was recognised as a faculty of economics in the newly-constituted University of London, offering first university degrees principally dedicated to the social sciences.

In 1902 the School moved formally to its present site in Clare Market, off the Aldwych, and in May 1920 King George V laid the foundation stone of the "Old Building".

LSE now has over 9,000 full-time students, and a worldwide network of over 100,000 alumni in 190 countries.

A total of 16 Nobel Prize winners in economics, peace and literature have been either LSE staff or alumni.

You can then walk to the centre of Waterloo Bridge for views up and down the River Thames and of the National Theatre on the opposite bank, and then back to Covent Garden market (including St Paul's Church, designed by Inigo Jones and the setting for the first scene of Shaw's Pygmalion. You could loiter behind the pillars with a notebook, pretending to be Professor Higgins!

Shaw in 1938 receiving the title deeds of an earlier, abortive attempt to establish a National Theatre (he led the campaign at a time when the British government was strongly opposed to public subsidy of the arts)

We will take in a number of the locations associated with Shaw (see next page for a full list of where he lived in London) but also, for the benefit of first-time visitors to London, other places of interest.



The National Theatre (on the south bank of the river) has in recent years done fine productions of St Joan, Major Barbara and The Doctor's Dilemma. It was built in the 1970s, but the campaign to establish it had lasted many years.



Facing us at the end of Kingsway, as we turn left into the Aldwych, is **Bush House**, home for many years for the BBC's World Service; George Orwell worked here in the 1940s and is said to have made it the model for the Ministry of Truth and Room 101 in his 1984.

Travelling along the Strand, we pass Kings College (part of the University of London), Somerset House (a magnificent 18th century building formerly government offices and now an arts and cultural centre), the Lyceum Theatre (where Henry Irving and Ellen Terry performed) and the Savoy Theatre (original home of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas).



Adelphi Terrace in the time of Shaw

We then turn off the Strand to: **Adelphi Terrace** Charlotte lived at 10 and this was the Shaws' London address for the first 29 years of their marriage. The building no longer exists, having been demolished and replaced with a monumental Art Deco block in the 1930s.

The Adelphi district, between the Strand and the River Thames, was developed between 1768-72 by the Adam brothers John, Robert, James and William Adam (adelphi is the Greek for brothers). Robert Adam was influenced by his extensive visit to Diocletian's Palace in Dalmatia, and applied some of this influence to the extensive visit to Diocletian's Palace in Dalmatia, and applied some of this influence to the design of the Adelphi. The terrace was London's first neo-classical building, consisting of eleven

large houses, with vaulted wharves beneath. At that time the river was much wider than now (see picture below), before the construction of the Victoria Embankment in the 1860s. Adelphi Terrace has had many notable residents. David Garrick lived for his last seven years, and died in 1779, in the centre house; the novelist Thomas Hardy, the playwright J M Barrie, the Victorian impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte, the philanthropist and social reformer Charles Booth, and the novelist John Galsworthy all lived here.



We return to the Strand, cross Trafalgar Square (adorned with Nelson's Column), under Admiralty Arch, and along The Mall, with St James's Park on our left and Buckingham Palace straight ahead. At the Victoria Memorial in front of the Palace we turn left and return along Birdcage Walk on the other side of the park.

One of the many photographs which Shaw took from the windows of Adelphi Terrace in the early 1900s



This takes us to Parliament Square, with Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben to our right.

We turn left along Victoria Embankment; on our left are various government offices, on the right (across the river) the former County Hall, now housing the London Aquarium and other exhibitions, and the big wheel (the London Eye).

Where Shaw lived in London

Shaw came to London in April 1876, aged 19, to join his mother and sister at 13 Victoria Grove (now Netherton Grove), off Fulham Road, West Brompton

23 December 1880, they moved to 37 Fitzroy Street (an unfurnished first floor apartment; it was insalubrious and Shaw was often ill)

22 April 1882, they moved to 36 Osaburgh Street, on the north side of Euston Road (second floor of a highly respectable house)

The landlord went bankrupt, so they moved in March 1887 to 29 Fitzroy Square (5 rooms, on the third and fourth floors); Shaw lived here until he married in 1898

1 June 1898 he married Charlotte Payne-Townshend, moving to her residence at 10 Adelphi Terrace

In 1906 they took a tenancy at Ayot St Lawrence (dividing time between there and London); intended originally as a temporary home, they bought it in 1920

In July 1927 they moved from Adelphi Terrace to a serviced apartment at Whitehall Court (this was Shaw's London address until his death in 1950)

The New Adelphi, which replaced Adelphi Terrace, seen from across the river



As we turn left into Northumberland Avenue, we pass the Playhouse Theatre (formerly called the Avenue Theatre), where Shaws Arms and the Man received its first performance.

Whitehall Court

Shaws home from 1927 until he died.

Whitehall Court is a vast French-chateau- style block built between 1884 and 1887 mostly by architects Thomas Archer and Arthur Green, also responsible for the Hyde Park hotel (originally a gentleman's club, now the Mandarin Oriental). One end of Whitehall Court, now the National Liberal Club, was designed by Alfred Waterhouse, better known for the Natural History Museum which is in the same Gothic Revival style.



There was nothing shoddy about this so-termed "palace of flats". Beneath the ornate exterior lurked all the mod cons of the day: electricity, lifts and sound-proofing. Among its decorative features are glass canopied doorways, arched loggias and the prominent towers and gables forming a skyline visible from the Embankment. With as many as 20 rooms, the largest of the flats dwarfed today's penthouses. With a pleasant and convenient location between Whitehall and Embankment, Whitehall Court attracted politicians, actors, writers and gentlemen of means.

Among those who resided there at one time or another were William Gladstone, H G Wells, Oscar Wilde, Lord Kitchener and Grand Duke Michael of Russia. Flat number 54 served as HQ for MI6 (the secret intelligence service) during the First World War, while during the Second World War parts of the building served as embassies for both the USA and the Soviet Union.

From Whitehall Court we proceed back to Trafalgar Square, past the National Gallery and St Martin-in-the-Fields, up Charing Cross Road,



Whitehall Court seen from across the river

into Tottenham Court Road, and then turn into Great Russell Street. This takes us past the front of the British Museum. Although we won't stop here, we note it as having been such an important part of Shaw's self-education.

British Museum

The British Museum was founded in 1753, the first national public museum in the world; it began as a place to display the collection of more than 71,000 objects bequeathed by the physician and naturalist Sir Hans Sloane. Visitor numbers have grown from around 5,000 a year in the eighteenth century to nearly 6 million today.

By the 1850s the museum badly needed a larger reading room and it was decided to construct a round room in the empty central courtyard of the building. **The Reading Room** opened in 1857; using cast iron, concrete, glass and the latest heating and ventilation systems, it was a masterpiece of mid-nineteenth century technology. The room had a diameter of 140 feet (= 43 metres, wider than the Dome of St Pauls Cathedral) and was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. The bookstacks surrounding the room are made of iron and contain 25 miles of shelving. Shaw of course used the Reading Room almost daily from his first arrival in London; other famous readers included Karl Marx, Oscar Wilde, Rudyard Kipling, Conan Doyle, H G Wells, Lenin, Mark Twain, Mahatma Gandhi and George Orwell. In 1997 the books were moved to the new purpose-built British Library in St.Pancras. As part of the museum's Great Court development the interior of the Reading Room was carefully restored, with the interior of the dome repaired and the original blue, cream and gold colour scheme reinstated.



The Reading Room was used as a temporary home for special exhibitions until the new World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre opened in 2014.

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art RADA is one of the oldest drama schools in the UK, and is generally regarded as one of the most prestigious in the world. It was founded in 1904 by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the leading actor-manager of the

day, famous for his spectacular Shakespeare productions at the Haymarket Theatre. The initial managing council included the actor Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson (for whom Shaw had created the role of Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra*) and the playwrights Pinero and Barrie; they were subsequently joined by others including Shaw himself, W S Gilbert and Irene Vanbrugh.

In 1912 Shaw donated the royalties from Pygmalion to RADA (allowing it eventually to benefit substantially from the success of My Fair Lady). Shaw gave occasional lectures to the students, including one called Elementary Economics for Actors.

In 1920 RADA was granted its Royal Charter, and in 1921 a new theatre for the academy was built in Malet Street, adjacent to the Gower Street premises.

In 1927 the two Georgian houses which comprised the Gower Street site were replaced with a single new building, with Shaw donating £5,000 towards the cost.

When he died in 1950 Shaw left one third of all his royalties to RADA (the other two beneficiaries being the British Museum and the National Gallery of Ireland).

Fitzroy Square

Shaw and his mother moved to 29 Fitzroy Square in 1887 and he was to stay there until he married eleven years later. (They had earlier lived for 16 months in 1880-2 at 37 Fitzroy Street, which is just off the square, and is now – considerably smartened up since Shaw’s time – the London base for the Scientology movement). In his small study at Fitzroy Square Shaw wrote his music and drama criticism, his Fabian essays, The Quintessence of Ibsenism and his first seven plays,

The plaque on the wall reads:
George Bernard Shaw lived in this house 1887- 1898
“From the coffer of his genius, he enriched the world”

The blue plaque is for Virginia Woolf, a later occupant of the house which is now, like many of those in the square, offices.



The London tour was devised and researched by the late Michael Sargent.

Michael was an educationalist and theatre director. He directed four plays by Shaw, including Caesar and Cleopatra and Mrs Warrens’ Profession and also devised & presented entertainments for the Shaw Society on Shaw and the New Woman, Shaw on War and the Ellen Terry/Bernard Shaw correspondence

Tour guides Michael Sargent and the late Malcolm Wroe (actor, writer and Shaw Society member