

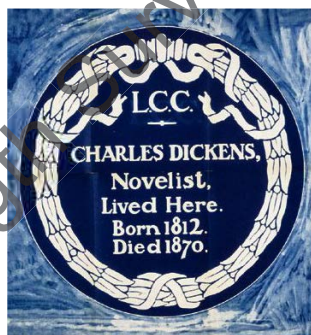
LONDON'S SECRET PLACES

Discover more
of the City's
Hidden Secrets

Graeme Chesters & David Hampshire

LONDON'S SECRET PLACES

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Survival Books • Bath • England



Acknowledgements

First published 2013

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-907339-92-9

Printed in Singapore by International Press Softom Limited

We've been the fortunate recipients of much help, support and enthusiasm in researching and writing this book. In addition to the many photographers who provided images, we would like to heartily thank the following people, in no particular order: David Perkins (Roots & Shoots), Helen Idle (Rivington Place), Penny Fussell (Drapers' Company), Mick Taylor (Wandle Industrial Museum), Ginette Kentish (Musical Museum), Rachel Bairsto (BDA Museum), Julie Ryan & Douglas Lee (Capel Manor), Imbal Mizrahi (Photographers' Gallery), Susan Bowler (Queen's Larder), Gary Brailsford-Hart (City of London Police), Matthew Jones (College of Arms), Susan Fenwick (Company of Watermen & Lightermen), Liberty Rowley (Mall Galleries), Clare Sexton (Valence House), Anna Evans (Royal Court Theatre), Natacha Antolini (Institut français), Catherine Parry-Wingfield (Sandycombe Lodge), Heather Jones (London Wildlife Trust), Doug Daniels (Hampstead Observatory), Varind Ramful (Serpentine Gallery), Sarah Eicker (Fitzroy House), Liz McAllister (Freightliners Farm), Tim Webb (RSPB), Hardip Sohal (Valentines Mansion), Adam (Fullers Brewery), Paul Williams (Honeywood Museum), Ann Vincent (House Mill), Alison Wright (Camden Arts Centre), New Collier & Michael Sherry (Brunei Gallery), Claire (de Morgan Centre), Brenda Martin (Dorich House Museum), Amy Rolph (RFU), Marina (Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum) and Sue Bradburn (Royal College of Art).

Finally, special thanks are due to Peter Read, who commissioned and edited this book, Alex Browning for proof-reading, Di Bruce-Kidman for the DTP and cover design, Jim Watson for the superb maps and our partners (Louise and Grania), for continuing with the pretence that writing is a proper job. Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers who provided images (listed on page 318) – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring London to life.



London's Hidden Secrets

A Guide to the City's Quirky & Unusual Sight



ISBN: 978-1-907339-44-0

Graeme Chesters

A unique and unusual guide to London's hidden and lesser-known sights not found in standard guidebooks. London is a city with a constant state of flux. London's Hidden Secrets takes you off the beaten path to seek out the more unusual places that often fail to register on the radar of both visitors and residents alike, and aims to sidestep the buses and queues of London's tourist-clogged attractions and visit its quirky, more mysterious side.

£10.95

London's Hidden Secrets Volume 2

Discover More of the City's Amazing Secret Places

ISBN: 978-1-907339-79-0

Graeme Chesters
& David Hampshire

Hot on the heels of London's Hidden Secrets comes another volume of the city's largely undiscovered sights, many of which we were unable to include in the original book. In fact, the more research the authors did, the more treasures they found, until eventually a second volume was inevitable. Inside you'll discover a wealth of historic buildings and other ancient buildings; secret gardens and 'lost' cemeteries; fascinating small museums and galleries; atmospheric pubs and stunning hotels; cutting-edge art and design, and much more: 140 destinations in all corners of the city. Written by two experienced London writers, LHS 2 is for both those who already know the metropolis and newcomers wishing to learn more about its hidden and unusual charms.



£10.95

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NOTE

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Introduction

London is one of the world's leading tourist destinations with a wealth of world-class attractions – more than any other city in the world – that draw millions of visitors a year; amazing museums and galleries, beautiful parks and gardens, stunning palaces and grand houses, and much, much more. These are covered in numerous excellent tourist guides and online, and need no introduction here. What aren't so well known are London's numerous smaller attractions, most of which are neglected by the throngs who descend upon the tourist-bogged major sights. What *London's Secret Places* does is seek out the city's lesser-known, but no less worthy, 'hidden' attractions.

When we set out to research and write this book's sister title *London's Hidden Secrets*, we had no idea just how many treasures we would find – and the more research we did, the more 'secrets' we discovered – until a second volume and this third book became inevitable. We have both lived and worked throughout the city and, like most long-term London residents, we thought we knew the city pretty well. However, we were surprised to find just how many little-known delights London has to offer – not only had we previously not visited many of the places featured in this book we hadn't even heard of any of them.

Inside you'll discover a wealth of fascinating small museums and galleries; historic buildings and other ancient buildings; amazing parks and gardens and historic 'lost' eateries; atmospheric pubs; cutting-edge art and design; and much more. A total of almost 140 destinations in all corners of the city and its suburbs. Of course, not all are secrets, but many are hidden and largely unknown except to a small band of insiders and locals.

London's Secret Places isn't intended as a walking guide, although many of the places covered are close to one another – particularly in the hubs of Westminster and the City in central London – where you can easily stroll between them. Almost all are, however, close to public transport links and relatively easy to get to. What's more, the vast majority are free, so there's no excuse for not getting out and exploring!

With a copy of *London's Secret Places* to hand to inspire you, you need never be bored of London (or life). Researching and writing this book has been a pleasure and a labour of love – we hope you enjoy discovering the city's secret places as much as we did.

Happy Hunting!

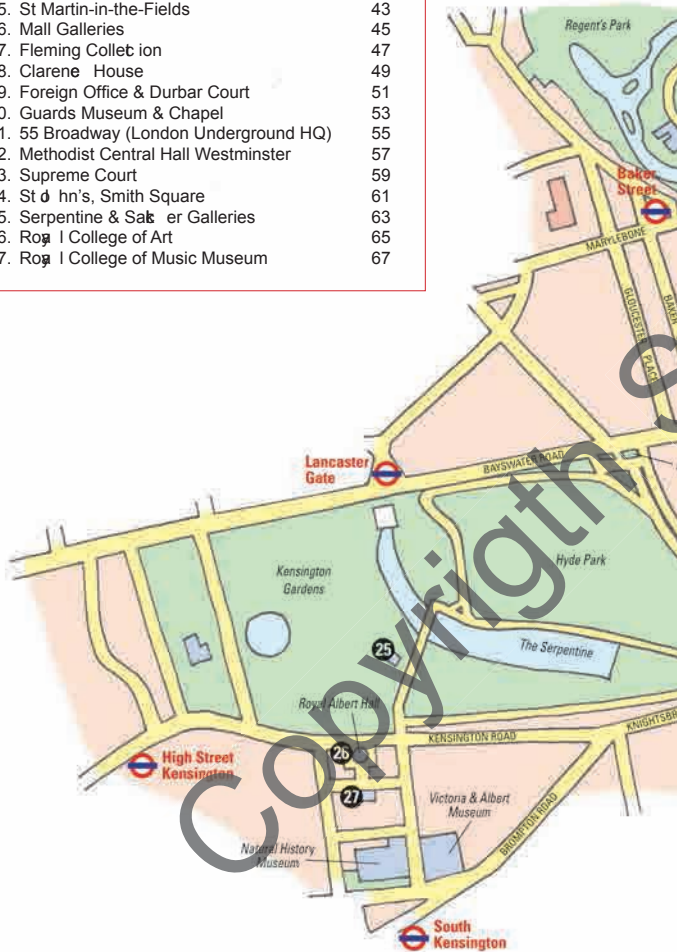
Graeme Chesters & David Hampshire
December 2012



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CHAPTER 1

CITY OF WESTMINSTER



AT A GLANCE

Address: Inner Circle, Regent's Park, NW1 ☎ 020-7486 7905,
🌐 www.londongardensonline.org.uk and www.openairtheatre.org.

Opening hours: Daily, 5am to dusk; garden café, 10am to 4pm (winter),
10am to 9pm (summer).

Cost: Free. Theatre tickets from around £20 to £50 (see website).

Transport: Baker St or Regent's Park tube station.



QUEEN MARY'S GARDENS & OPEN AIR THEATRE

Queen Mary's Gardens – tucked away in the Inner Circle of Regent's Park – contain London's largest and best formal rose garden, and are a honey pot for garden lovers (and bees) in spring and summer, when tens of thousands of plants are in bloom. The gardens – named after the wife of George V – were laid out in 1932 on a site that had originally been used as a plant nursery and was later leased to the Royal Botanic Society. There are still some of the original pear trees in the gardens, which supplied fruit to the London Market in the early 1800s. Queen Mary's Gardens are most famous for their beautiful rose garden, containing almost every species in existence.

The rose garden contains 400 different varieties of roses in separate and mixed beds, and a total of some 30,000 rose plants, plus around 30,000 other plants including the national collection of delphiniums and 9,000 begonias – a total of over 60,000 plants in landscaped beds surrounded by a ring of pillars of yew and rambler. The planting was renewed by landscape architect, Colvin and Moggridge, in the '90s and is arranged in a design which is in harmony with the circular site and adds a 'sense of mystery'. Within the rose garden is a small lake filled with ornamental ducks and carp, in the centre of which is an island rockery.

Queen Mary's Gardens play host to the Open Air Theatre, a permanent venue (now in its 80th season) with a theatre to four on each summer season. Each season typically consists of a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a second Shakespeare play, a musical and a children's show, performed in rotation. The theatre boasts one of the longest 'bars' in any theatre in London, stretching the entire length of the seating, which also serves full meals from an hour and a half before performances begin, as well as during the interval. A BBQ is also provided plus a picnic lawn with tables where the audience can enjoy their own food.

The park also contains the Garden Café, serving teas, coffees, lunch and summer suppers. The perfect spot to round off the perfect day.

The Inner Circle contains the beautiful Triton Fountain – at the northern end of the central walk – designed by William McMillan RA (1887-1977) and donated in 1950 in memory of Sigismund Goetze (1866-1939) by his wife.

“ A fragrant theatrical experience... ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: 64 Wimpole Street, W1G 8YS (☎ 020-7563 4549, www.bda.org/museum).

Opening hours: Tue and Thu, 1-4pm.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Oxford Circus or Bond Street tube station.



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BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION MUSEUM

The British Dental Association (BDA) Museum tells the absorbing – and often painful – history of dental care in the UK. From 19th-century dental floss to toothache cures, from hand drills to toothpaste advertisements, there's more to discover than you may imagine. With over 30,000 items, the museum has the largest collection of material relating to the history of dentistry in the UK, dating from its time as a gruesome public spectacle to the complex procedures and treatment of today.

The BDA Museum began life in 1919, when Lilian Lindsay (the first woman to qualify as a dentist in the UK and the BDA's first female president in 1946), donated several old dental instruments to the association that she had been storing in a box under her bed! The museum was developed primarily for the education of BDA members, but in 1967 (when it moved to its present home) it opened its doors to the general public. In autumn 2005 the museum was redesigned with the aim of making it more accessible to the public, as well as dentists. The collection includes dental instruments and equipment, furniture, photographs, archives, and fine and decorative art.

The torment of toothache is something we have in common with our ancestors, although those living in Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome may not have had as many activities as we have today due to the lack of sugar and processed food in their diet. However, their teeth were worn down by the coarse food they ate, which required much more chewing.

Until the 17th century, the drawing of teeth was done by barber-surgeons, tooth drawers and 'tooth operators'. The term 'dentist' didn't appear until the 18th century, when the French dentist Pierre Fauchard published his treatise *Le Chirurgien Dentiste* in 1728. This set out for the first time everything that was known about dental disease, with full case histories and illustrations of how to deal with them.

We have come a long way since then – as the museum illustrates – and the last century has seen an explosion of new materials, techniques and technology, along with a better understanding of dental disease and its prevention.

An absorbing museum (with a small shop) that – hopefully – won't give you nightmares.

“ A pain-free visit to the dentist ”

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AT A GLANCE

Address: 7 Margaret Street, W1W 8JG (☎ 020-7636 1788,
 🌐 www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk).

Opening hours: Daily, 7am to 7pm. See website for services times.

Cost: Free (but donations are welcome).

Transport: Oxford Circus tube station.

ALL SAINTS MARGARET STREET

All Saints Margaret Street is a stupendous (Grade I listed) Anglican church built in the High Victorian Gothic Revival style, celebrated for its architecture, style of worship and musical tradition. It was designed by prolific church architect William Butterfield (1814-1900) and built between 1849 and 1859 at a cost of £70,000.

Butterfield departed considerably from medieval Gothic practice, using red brick for the building – long out of fashion in London – with the walls banded and patterned in black brick and the spire banded with stone. The interior is richly patterned, with inlay of marble and tile. The east wall of the chancel is covered by a series of paintings on gilded boards, the work of Ninian Comper (1864-1960) in 1909, and a restoration of earlier work by William Deane. The Lady Chapel is also by Comper.

The church's style of worship is Anglo-Catholic, that is 'the Catholic faith as taught by the Church of England', offering members and visitors a traditional style of liturgy as advocated by the Oxford Movement of the mid-19th century, including ritual, choir and organ music, vestments and incense.

All Saints is also noted for its musical tradition. The organ, built in 1910, is a four-manual Harrison and Harrison instrument with 65 speaking stops. Until 1968, the music was provided by a choir of men and boys, who were honoured to sing at the coronations of Edward VII, George V and VI, and Elizabeth II. (William Lloyd Webber, father of composer Andrew and Elizabeth, was the Director of Music from 1939-1948.) When the choir school (which counted Laurence Olivier as an alumnus) closed in 1968, a professional adult choir was introduced. The repertoire for choir and organ stretches from the Renaissance to the 21st century, and includes several pieces commissioned for the building.

All Saints has been described as a 'sausage masterpiece' (attributed to K Theodore Hoppen) and an 'ogasm' (Ian Nairn), who said that 'the building could only be understood in terms of compelling, overwhelming passion'. One of the great monuments of Victorian art.

"It is the first piece of architecture I have seen, built in modern days, which is free from all signs of timidity or incapacity... it challenges fearless comparison with the noblest work of any time. Having done this, we may do anything: there need be no limits to our hope or our confidence."

John Ruskin (1819-1900)

“ Butterfield's masterpiece will amaze and delight you ”

**AT A GLANCE**

Address: 16-18 Ramillies Street, W1F 7LW (☎ 020-7087 9300, www.photonet.org.uk).

Opening hours: Mon to Sat, 10am to 6pm (Thu until 8pm), Sun, 11.30am to 6pm.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Oxford Circus tube station.

**PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY**

The Photographers' Gallery is the largest public gallery in London dedicated to photography. From the latest emerging talent, to historical archives and established artists, it's *the* place to see photography in all its forms. It was the first independent gallery in Britain devoted to photography, founded by Sue Davies in 1971 at 8 Great Newport Street in a converted Lyon's Tea Bar. Nine years later the gallery expanded to include an additional gallery space at 5 Great Newport Street, thus occupying two separate sites on the same street. In December 2008, the gallery moved to a nearby building on Ramillies Street, a former warehouse built in 1910, where a major redevelopment was begun in 2010.

Designed by award-winning Irish architects O'Donnell+Tuomey, the gallery features three dedicated floors of gallery spaces. Situated at the heart of the building, between two of the exhibition floors, is the studio floor, which hosts a range of talks, events, workshops and courses, as well as a *camera obscura*, the study room, and Touchstone – a changing display of a single photographic work. Complementing the exhibition and education floors are a new bookshop, a print sales room and a café/bar, all at street level.

The Photographers' Gallery has been instrumental in establishing photography's important role in culture and society. It has provided a focus for the medium in London and was the first public gallery in the country to exhibit key names in international photography such as Juergen Teller (fashion), Robert Capa (photojournalism), Sebastião Salgado (documentary) and Taryn Simon (contemporary art), while also promoting the work of UK-based photographers such as Martin Parr, Zineb Sedira and Corinne Day.

One of Europe's foremost galleries dedicated to photography, The Photographers' Gallery awards the high-profile annual Deutsche Börse Photography Prize, worth £30,000 in 2012. Past prize winners include Andreas Gursky (1998), Shirana Shahbazi (2002), Robert Adams (2006), and Sophie Ristelhueber (2010). There's also an annual graduates' exhibition – FreshFacedandWildEyed (FFWE) – which celebrates the breadth and dynamism of photographic work produced by recent graduates across the UK.

The Photographers' Gallery occasionally displays work from unexpected sources, for example its exhibition of photographs from The London Fire Brigade archives and a presentation of studio portrait photography by Harry Jacobs, a high street studio photographer who worked for over 40 years in south London.

A wealth of inspiration for everyone from phone snappers to professionals.

“ A picture perfect gallery for the 21st century ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: House of St Barnabas, 1 Greek Street, Soho Square, W1D 4NQ (☎ 020-7437 1894, 🌐 www.hosb.org.uk).

Opening hours: Tours – between 9am and 11am on Tue and Thu – contact HOSB for information. The house can also be hired for events.

Cost: Contact HOSB.

Transport: Tottenham Court Road tube station.



THE HOUSE OF ST BARNABAS-IN-SOHO

The House of St Barnabas in Soho (Grade I listed) is a Georgian building with one of the finest Rococo plasterwork interiors in London. The house was completed as a shell in 1746 and sold to the Bedford family, wealthy plantation owners and politicians in America and England. It was Richard Bedford who commissioned the interior design, completed in 1754. As Soho became less fashionable at the end of the Georgian era, the house became the offices of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1811 and the famous civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette worked here.

In 1862 the House of Charity – founded to help homeless people in Victorian Society – moved into the house. The charity was founded in 1846 by Dr Henry Monro, a physician from Bethlem Hospital (see page 309) in Southwark, and Mr Roundell Palmer, a barrister who became Lord Chancellor of England. One of the first tasks of the charity was to build the magnificent Chapel of St Barnabas (designed by Joseph Clarke) built on the site of the Georgian stable yard. Daily urban attendances were expected of hostel occupants, hence the chapel, which is still in use today.

The house boasts an array of stunning 18th-century period features; bandeliers, silk lined walls and delicate Rococo plasterwork plus a lovely, secluded private garden – one of only two in Soho – surrounded by iron red walls. The house has been restored to its original glory by designer Russell Sage, creating a distinct and stylish environment, with a perfect mix of faded grandeur and witty English eccentric details.

Between the house and the chapel lies the courtyard, also known as the 'secret garden', with an association with Charles Dickens. Research published in 'The Dickensian' in 1963 suggests that the historic rooms and gardens of the house were the fictitious lodgings of Dr Manette and Lucy in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The House of Charity was renamed the House of St Barnabas-in-Soho in 1961, and provided refuge and accommodation for homeless people in and around Soho for 160 years, until closing as a residence in 2006, and being re-launched as a venue and Life Skills Centre.

Outside the house attached to the railings is the 'Penny Chute' – still in use today – where coins fall down a pipe to the alms box in the kitchen below.

“ The most beautiful (ex) hostel in the world ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Catherine Street, WC2B 5JF (☎ 020-7850 8790, tours 0844-412 2705, 📧 www.royaldrurylanetheatrelondon.com and www.reallyuseful.com/theatres/theatre-tours).

Opening hours: Tours (1 hr) Mon-Wed and Fri, 2.15 and 4.15pm, Thu and Sat, 10.15 and 11.45am.

Cost: Tours – adults £9, Children £7, groups (min. 10) £6.50 per person. For shows see website.

Transport: Covent Garden tube station.



THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE

The Theatre Royal Drury Lane (Grade I listed) is one of London's most historic and splendid theatres. The building you see today is the most recent in a line of four theatres at the same location dating back to 1663, the first of which was built at the behest of Thomas Killigrew in the early years of the English Restoration. Actors who appeared at the 'Theatre Royal in Bowdler Street' included Nell Gwyn (who met Charles II here) and Charles Hart. It was destroyed by fire in 1672 and replaced by a larger theatre designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Renamed the 'Theatre Royal in Drury Lane', it opened in 1674 and survived for almost 120 years, during which its management included Colley Cibber, David Garrick (for 29 years) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (whose play, *The School for Scandal*, received its first performance here in 1777).

In 1791, under Sheridan's management, the building was demolished to make way for a much larger theatre (seating 3,600) which opened in 1794, but survived for just 15 years before burning down in 1809. The building that stands today was designed by Benjamin Wyatt and opened in 1812. It was renowned for its spectacular Victorian melodramas and pantomimes, but since the 1920s its history has mirrored the development of the modern musical. From the original London productions of American musicals *Rose Marie*, *The Desert Song* and *Show Boat*, through Lerner and Loewe's romantic operettas and Rodgers and Hammerstein's groundbreaking post-war shows, to *The Producers* and *The Lord of the Rings*. *My Fair Lady* held the record as the theatre's longest run for many years, though Cameron Mackintosh's record-breaking production of *Miss Saigon* – ten years and 4,263 performances – is the current record holder.

The theatre has been graced by actors as diverse as Shakespearean Edmund Kean, bandleader Clara Fisher, comedian Dan Leno, Noël Coward and the comedy troupe Monty Python (who recorded an album here). Today, it's owned by composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group and mostly stages popular musical theatre.

Visitors can take a 'Through The Stage Door' tour hosted by professional actors, who take you on a memorable journey through the theatre's history, meeting famous characters such as Garrick, Sheridan, Grimaldi and Nell Gwynne along the way.

The theatre has two royal boxes – built for George III and the Prince Regent (who loathed each other) – and both the National Anthem and Rule Britannia were first performed here.

“ The theatre that refused to die ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: The Strand, WC2A 2LL ☎ 020-7947 6000, tours 020-7947 7684, 🌐 www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals/courts/rcj/index.htm, ✉ rcjtours@talktalk.net.

Opening hours: Tours (2 hrs), first and third Tuesday of each month, 11am and 2pm, plus other dates for groups.

Cost: Tours – Adults £12, concessions £10 (aged 60 and over), children £5 (under 14), groups £10 per person (minimum 10 people).

Transport: Temple tube station.



ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE

The Grade 1 listed Royal Courts of Justice (RCJ), commonly called the Law Courts, is a vast, imposing building housing the Courts of Appeal and the High Court of Justice of England and Wales. It's one of the last great wonders of Victorian neo-Gothic revival architecture, designed by George Edmund Street RA (1824-1881), a solicitor turned architect. Built in the 1870s, it was officially opened in December 1882 by Queen Victoria. The finished building contained 35 million Portland stone bricks, over 3.5mi (5.6km) of corridors and some 1,000 clocks, many of which had to be wound by hand.

Entering through the main gates in the Strand, you pass under two elaborately carved porches fitted with iron gates. The arches over the outer porch consist of heads of the country's most eminent judges and lawyers. Over the highest point of the upper arch is a figure of Jesus, lower down (to the left and right) are figures of Solomon and Alfred the Great, while Moses is at the northern front of the building. Also at the northern front, over the judges' entrance, are a stone eagle and dog representing litigants fighting in court.

The building is a Victorian interpretation of 13th-century Gothic architecture, with imposing Portland stonework, beautiful mosaic marble floors, stunning stained glass windows, elaborate carvings and oak wood panelling. The walls of the magnificent Great Hall – reminiscent of a cathedral – are lined with portraits of past Lord Chancellors and bearers of the Great Seal. The building also houses the Costume Display Gallery which celebrates the evolution of legal costumes throughout history, as well as the Painted Room and Bear Garden, which Queen Victoria allegedly named as such because she used the crowds of litigants and lawyers here reminded her of a bear pit.

Public tours of the Royal Courts are available (see opposite) and visitors are also invited to watch civil trials (criminal trials take place at the Old Bailey down the road), although there may be restrictions depending on the actual cases being tried.

The RCJ took over eight years to complete, due in part to a stonemasons strike during which masons were brought from Germany to keep work going, and housed within the building to protect them from the wrath of their striking English counterparts. Supplies came in through a secret underground tunnel.

“ A marvel of Victorian Gothic architecture ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Two Temple Place, WC2R 3BD (☎ 020-7836 3715, 🌐 www.twotempleplace.co.uk and www.twotempleplace.org).

Opening hours: Periodic exhibitions, Mon-Sat (except Tue), 10am to 4.30pm, Sun noon to 5pm (hours may vary – check website).

Cost: Free.

Transport: Temple tube station.



TWO TEMPLE PLACE

Two Temple Place, known for many years as 'Astor House', is a masterpiece of irreverent elegance and fun – built in 1895 for William Waldorf Astor (1848-1919), later first Viscount Astor. It was built on reclaimed land following completion of the Victoria Embankment in 1870 and designed by John Loughborough Pearson (1817-1897) and his son Frank (1864-1947). Temple Place is both an architectural gem and a treasure house of exquisite works by the likes of William Silliker Frith (1850-1924), Sir George Frampton RA (1860-1928), Nathaniel Hitch (1845-1938) and Thomas Nicholls († 825-1900).

The building has just two floors and a lower ground floor, and is broadly of Tudor design, built of Portland stone. It has splendid carvings on the exterior stonework by Nathaniel Hitch († 845-1938) and above the parapets is a superb gilded weather vane in beaten copper depicting Columbus' arrival at *Santa Maria* by John Starkie Gardner (1844-1930). The enchanting bronze lamp standards flanking the base of the balustraded entrance steps are a foretaste of the riches within.

Palatial outside, inside it's a showcase for Britain's finest 19th-century craftsmen. Unfettered by the consideration of finance (it cost £250,000 to build in 1895, equivalent to £25m today), emboldened by the freedom of expression granted to him, and with materials and craftsmen of the highest quality, Pearson was able to create a building worthy of its distinguished owner. From the splendid marble floor and imposing staircase in the grand hall and gallery (with its glorious stained glass and coved and panelled ceiling), to the great hall with its hammer beam ceiling, gilded carvings, silver gilt panels and huge stained glass windows, Temple Place is a masterpiece.

A widower, Lord Astor used it as his London home and as the Astor Estate Office until his death in 1919, when it was sold by the Astor family. Since then it has been owned by various companies and is now owned by the Bulldog (Beneficial) Trust, whose HQ it is. The Trust hosts periodic exhibitions, such as *William Morris: Story, Memory, Myth* (Oct 2011 to Jan 2012) and *Amongst Heroes: the artist in working Cornwall* (Jan-Apr 2013).

However, most exhibitions pale against the backdrop of this long-hidden architectural gem, which for the splendour of its ornamentation and conception is difficult to beat. Keep an eye on the website for upcoming exhibitions.

Two Temple Place is postmodernism before its time, a Disney Gothic that's a thrill to visit – it's not to be missed!

“ A Gothic Revival extravaganza and treasure house ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Strand, WC2R 1ES (☎ 020-7836 3126,
🌐 www.stmarylestrand.org).

Opening hours: Visitors, Tue-Thu, 11am to 4pm and Sun, 10am to 1pm.
See website for service times.

Cost: Free (but donations are welcome).

Transport: Temple tube station.



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ST MARY LE STRAND

St Mary le Strand (Church of England) is a tiny, elegant 18th-century Baroque church – one of only two London churches standing on a traffic island (the other being St Clement Danes) – situated on the Strand, one of the city's principal and most ancient thoroughfares. It was the second London church called St Mary le Strand – the first was thought to date to the 12th century. It was demolished in 1549 by Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset (and eldest brother of a later Seymour) when Lord Protector of England – beheaded for his sins in 1552 – the rubble was recycled to build Somerset House.

St Mary was the first of the 50 new churches built in London under the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches – the so-called 'Queen Anne Churches'. Designed by architect James Gibbs (a Roman Catholic who trained in Rome) and begun in 1714, it was completed in September 1717, although it wasn't consecrated until 1st January 1723. It was designed as an Italianate structure with a small campanile over the west end and no steeple, but was later altered against Gibbs' wishes. The extravagant Baroque ornamentation of the exterior was criticised at the time, and matters weren't helped when one of the decorative urns surmounting the exterior of the church fell and killed a passer-by in 1802.

The interior is richly decorated with a plastered ceiling in white and gold, inspired by the churches Gibbs had seen in Rome. The walls were influenced by Michelangelo, while the steeple shows the influence of Sir Christopher Wren. The church is built to an extremely lavish standard and faced with a red stone inside and out. The woodwork is by John Simmonds; note the excellent carving on the panelling in the chancel, the door cases to the eastern vestries and the altar rails.

The church narrowly escaped destruction twice during the 20th century – it was almost demolished at the start of the century to widen the Strand (the graveyard was sacrificed instead), and was badly damaged during the Blitz. Since 1982, St Mary le Strand has been the official church of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS or Wrens).

Bonnie Prince Charlie is alleged to have renounced his Roman Catholic faith in the church to become an Anglican during a secret visit to London in 1750, and the parents of Charles Dickens, John Dickens and Elizabeth Barrow, were married here in 1809.

“ Where Bonnie Prince Charlie became an Anglican? ”

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AT A GLANCE

Address: King's College, Strand, WC2R 2LS (☎ 020-7836 5454, 🌐 www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/principal/dean/chaplaincy/strand/chapel/index.aspx).

Opening hours: During college hours. See website for services.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Temple tube station.



KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL

The King's College Chapel (Grade I listed) is a magnificent example of Victorian architecture, designed by the eminent architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) and completed in 1864. A century and a half later, the Chapel continues to provide a spiritual focus for King's community and a peaceful space at the heart of the college.

King's College was founded by King George IV and the Duke of Wellington in 1829 as a university college in the tradition of the Church of England, and became one of the two founding colleges of the University of London in 1836. Today, King's is a multi-faith, research-led, teaching institution with over 16,000 students and 5,000 staff, catering for all faiths and beliefs.

When the original college building (Grade I listed) by Robert Smirke was completed in 1831 it included a chapel. However, it was considered too low church and plain, and in 1859 the council asked Sir Gilbert Scott to design a more impressive chapel, and his scheme – on the lines of an ancient Christian basilica – was accepted.

The beautiful Scott chapel is situated on the first floor directly above the Great Hall, reached by an impressive double staircase from the main entrance. Scott had to overcome a number of structural difficulties and used a lightweight construction system for the arcade and upper nave walls that concentrated the loading above the iron columns on the floor below. The wall is fabricated in iron with paired ornamental cast iron columns and an applied timber frame above.

Among the many highlights are the organ by Henry Willis, dating from the 1860s, reconstructed by his grandson in the 1930s; the lovely angel designs on the largest pipes were only revealed during restoration. The lower walls of the chapel have a ribbed position using a painted tile motif, also discovered during restoration work and faithfully recreated, while the west wall contains the original tile design. The chapel also houses a wealth of poignant memorials.

Regular services are held in the chapel representing many different traditions, all of which are open to the public. The chapel choir sing at the Wednesday communion service and biblical song on Tuesdays at 5.30pm.

A wonderful, spiritual building, reflecting the college's motto: *Sancte et Sapienter* (with holiness and wisdom).

The chapel was restored in 2000-01, when Scott's original decorative scheme was substantially reinstated, despite significant changes made in the 1930s and the post-war period.

“ A 'secret' Gilbert Scott masterpiece ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Savoy Hill, WC2R 0DA ☎ 020-7836 7221,
📧 www.duchyoflancaaster.co.uk/duties-of-the-duchy/the-queens-chapel-of-the-savoy).

Opening hours: Daily, except Monday – but check it isn't closed for renovation work. Public services are held on Sundays and Wednesday lunchtimes, except in August and September (see website for times).

Cost: Free.

Transport: Temple tube station.



SAVOY CHAPEL

The Savoy Chapel (or the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy) is a charming 15th-century chapel, dedicated to St John the Baptist, with a delightful garden. The chapel has always been royal property as part of the Savoy Hospital complex and is owned by the monarch as part of the Duchy of Lancaster, as a peculiar (not falling within a bishop's jurisdiction) with its bishop appointed by the Duchy. It was made the chapel of the Royal Victorian Order in 1937.

The original chapel was within Peter of Savoy's palace, and was destroyed along with it in the Peasant's Revolt in 1381. The current chapel building was constructed in the 1490s (completed in 1512) by Henry VII as a side chapel off the Savoy Hospital's (for homeless people) nave, which was secular rather than sacred, and housed 100 beds. The hospital was in ruins by the 19th century and the chapel was the only part to survive demolition.

The chapel has been the host to various congregations, notably that of St Mary le-Strand when it had no other building of its own from 1549-1714. Also the German Lutheran congregation of Westminster (now at Sandwith Street and Thanet Street, near St Pancras) was granted royal permission to worship here, when it split from Holy Trinity (the City of London Lutheran congregation, now at St Anne and St Agnes). The new congregation's first pastor, Irenaeus Crusius (previously an associate at Holy Trinity), dedicated the chapel as the Marienkirche or the German Church of St Mary-le-Savoy on the 19th Sunday after Trinity in 1694.

As an Anglican church, the chapel was known in the 18th century as a place where marriages without banns might illegally occur, and was referred to in E. J. Waugh's book *Brideshead Revisited* as 'the place where divorced couples got married in those days – a poor little place'. Most of the stained glass windows in the chapel were destroyed in the London Blitz during WWII, although a triptych stained glass memorial window survives. Depicting a procession of angelic musicians. It's dedicated to the memory of Richard D'Oyly Carte (who was married in the chapel in 1888) and was unveiled by Sir Henry Irving in 1902.

The chapel's interior was restored to its former splendour in 1999 in honour of HM the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Being the property of the Queen, any expenses incurred by the chapel are borne by the monarchy.

“ A glorious, hidden 15th-century chapel ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: 8 John Adam Street, WC2N 6EZ ☎ 020-7930 5115,
🌐 www.thersa.org).

Opening hours: Weekday tours by appointment.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Embankment tube station.



ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS

The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is the intellectual and social home of some of the greatest thinkers and social activists of the past 250 years. The RSA – or to give it its full name 'The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce' is a British multi-disciplinary institution. Founded in 1754 and granted a royal charter in 1847, its patron is HM Elizabeth II and HRH The Princess Royal is president.

Among its eclectic roll of famous (past and present) members are Charles Dickens, Adam Smith, Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx and William Hogarth, while RSA Medal winners – the 'Albert Medal', the 'Benjamin Franklin Medal' and the 'Bicentenary Medal' (all still awarded today) – include Nelson Mandela, Sir Frank Whittle and Professor Stephen Hawking. Today, the RSA has over 27,000 fellows in 70 countries worldwide – fellowship is bestowed upon those who have achieved (or demonstrated the potential to achieve) a contribution to society in a cultural or arts-related sphere.

The RSA's ambitious mission expressed in its founding charter was to 'embolden enterprise, enlarge science, refine art, improve our manufacturers and extend our commerce', but also encompassed a desire to alleviate poverty and secure full employment.

The Royal Academy of Arts was formed as the RSA's spin-off organisation in 1768 by Sir Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds, two early members of the RSA, as a result of its first exhibition of contemporary art. The RSA's launching of the modern world's first public examinations in 1882 led to the RSA Examinations Board (now part of the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations Board).

The home of the RSA was designed by the Adam Brothers in 1774 as part of their innovative Adelphi scheme, and expanded into adjacent buildings in later years (2-6 John Adam Street and 18 Adam Street). The original building includes the Great Room, featuring a magnificent sequence of paintings by Irish artist James Barry, titled *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*. The first occupant of 18 Adam Street was the Adelphi Tavern – mentioned in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* – where the former private dining room contains a magnificent Adam ceiling.

The RSA arranges weekday public tours of the splendid RSA House by appointment.

The RSA was also responsible for devising the 'blue plaques' scheme in 1866 to commemorate the links between famous people and buildings by placing plaques on their walls, which since 1986 has been operated by English Heritage.

“ The spiritual home of Britain's greatest artists and thinkers ”