

LONDON'S LITERARY HERITAGE TRAIL... Inspiring Writing and Walking

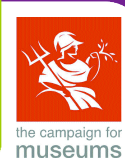
Full day

This trail can only be a taster for the great literary heritage of London. It focuses on a few writers of the past who did not just leave their writing behind but also the homes in which they lived and wrote. These very special museums reflect the character of four great writers – Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Dr Johnson and John Keats (note: Keats House is closed for refurbishment till October 2008).

The trail starts by introducing many more of London's literary heroes at the British Library near St Pancras and includes a visit to this gloriously restored St Pancras station. And at the end of the trail, there are suggestions for further exploration of London's literary scene at poetry readings and specialist libraries. Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey would be a fitting conclusion to this day of literary exploration.

- 1 British Library
- 2 St Pancras Station
- 3 The Charles Dickens Museum
- 4 Dr Johnson's House
- 5 Carlyle's House
- 6 (Keats House)
- 7 Somerset House
- 8 Royal Festival Hall

- A Royal Society of Literature
- B The Poetry Library
- C Women's Library
- D Westminster Abbey



LONDON'S LITERARY HOUSES TRAIL . . .

TRAIL SUMMARY

This trail begins at the **British Library at St Pancras**. It is now more than a decade since the famous library left the British Museum for this modern building. Before or after the British Library, step into the newly restored **St Pancras Station**. As well as the long Champagne bar there is a cheerful statue of the poet *John Betjeman* who fought for the station's survival.

For a fascinating insight into the life of popular novelist Charles Dickens, walk to Doughty Street and **The Charles Dickens Museum**. The house is preserved largely as it was during his lifetime. Continue towards Fleet Street and **Dr Johnson's House**, residence of Samuel Johnson, wit, writer and compiler of the first definitive English Dictionary.

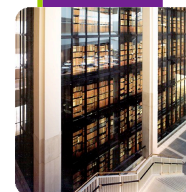
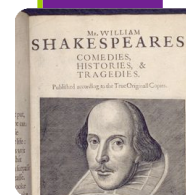
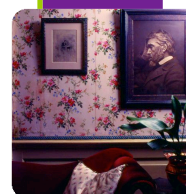
Choose from several options at this point:

Head for Chelsea by tube and **Carlyle's House**, a classic Queen Anne building that was home to the writer Thomas Carlyle from 1834 until his death in 1881. Or after October 2008, to **Keats House** in Hampstead home and inspiration for the poet Keats which is being refurbished.

Or, continue your walk towards The Strand and Somerset House to explore **poetry**: there is a programme of lunchtime readings here. Somerset House is also home to the Royal Society of Literature. Across the River is the **Royal Festival Hall**, home to the **Poetry Library**. To the East, at Aldgate is the **Women's Library**, with exhibitions, special events and walks in the area.

Conclude your literary explorations of London by visiting **Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey**.

Plan your own journey by visiting Transport for London's website www.tfl.gov.uk.



British Library
96 Euston Road NW1 2DB
www.bl.uk
0930-1800 Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri; 0930-2000 Tue;
0930-1700 Sat; 1100-1700 Sun, BH
Tel: 0870 444 1500

The Charles Dickens Museum
48 Doughty Street, WC1N
www.dickensmuseum.com
Open: 1000-1700 Mon-Sat; 1100-1700 Sun
Tel: 020 7405 2127
Admission charge
The only surviving London home of Dickens

Dr Johnson's House
17 Gough Square, EC4
www.drjh.dircon.co.uk
Open: 1100-1730 Mon-Sat (until 1700 Oct-April);
closed BH
Tel: 020 7353 3745
Admission charge
Home of the compiler of the first English Dictionary

Carlyle's House (National Trust)
24 Cheyne Row, SW3
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carlyleshouse
Open: 25 Mar - 27 Oct 1400-1700 Wed-Fri;
1100-1700 Sat, Sun, BH
Tel: 020 7352 7087
Admission charge
House of the writer Thomas Carlyle

Keats House (closed until October 2008)
Keats Grove, NW3
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries/JAS/keats_house/
Open: 1300-1700 Tue-Sat; 1300-1700 Sun, BH
Mon (check)
Tel: 020 7435 2062
Admission charge
A regency house displaying memorabilia, manuscripts and letters of Keats

Somerset House
The Strand, WC2
www.somerset.org.uk
Open: 1000-1800 daily
Admission Charge
Tel: 020 7845 4600

Royal Society of Literature
www.rslit.org

Royal Festival Hall
The South Bank Centre, Belvedere Rd, London, SE1 8XX
www.southbank.org.uk
Open: 1000-2200 daily
Tel: 020 79210664
One of the world's leading performance venues

The Poetry Library
5th Floor Royal Festival Hall
www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/about/

Women's Library
London Metropolitan University Old Castle Street, E1 7NT
www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/
Open: 0930am to 1730 Mon-Fri; 0930-2000 Thu;
1000 to 1600 Sat.
Tel: 020 7320 2222

Westminster Abbey
20 Deans Yard Westminster, SW1P 3PA
www.westminster-abbey.org
Open: 0930-1545 Mon-Sat
Admission Charge
Tel: 020 72225152
Poets' Corner is the burial and memorial place for British writers.

Images
The British Library
The Living Room, Carlyle's House
Keats House, Hampstead
Shakespeare's First Folio
Kings Library

LONDON'S LITERARY HOUSES TRAIL . . .

This trail begins at the **British Library**, close to Kings Cross/St Pancras Underground Station on Euston Road. The magnificent forecourt leads to what appears a modest brick building by the architect Colin St John Wilson. It opened in 1998 and extends 24m underground and the 624 km of shelves grow by 12km every year. As well as the research facilities used by thousands every day (in person and online), the British Library is home to an outstanding collection of documents and manuscripts. There are also regular exhibitions. In Treasures, the manuscripts of great authors of the past are on display from Shakespeare to Jane Austen with temporary displays focusing on individual authors. Check on the website for details of special events and major exhibitions. If you visit the Café here you will be sitting next to a huge glass and steel stack housing the King's Library previously at the British Museum.

Go back to **St. Pancras Station** to marvel at the restoration work unveiled in 2007 when the Eurostar service moved here

from Waterloo. In 1876, Sir Gilbert Scott completed the Gothic façade of St Pancras Chambers which added distinction to the 100m long train shed. The restoration programme has revealed the 30m high apex roof. Enjoy a drink in the longest Champagne Bar and view the endearing statue of poet, John Betjeman, by Martin Jennings who helped save the Gothic building from demolition.

Walk down the Grays Inn Road, turn into Guildford Street and then Doughty Street for **The Charles Dickens Museum**. On display is the most important collection of material relating to the great Victorian social commentator and novelist, author of 'Oliver Twist' and 'Great Expectations'.

This is the only surviving London home of Dickens (from 1837 until 1839) and it was opened as a museum in 1925. On four floors, you can see paintings, rare editions, manuscripts, original furniture and many items relating to the life of one of the most popular and beloved personalities of the Victorian age. There is

also an excellent 30-minute DVD presentation and the opportunity to book a seasonal walk through Dickensian London.

Back at Guildford Street; turn right into Gray's Inn Road and continue towards Holborn; turn left and then right into New Fetter Lane; continue until you reach Fleet Street, once famous as the home of the British newspaper industry. Here, there are directional signs for **Dr Johnson's House** in Gough Square. This house, opened as a museum in 1914, is situated in a maze of courtyards and passages that are a reminder of historic London. It is a rare find and one of the few residential houses of its age still surviving in the City of London. Built in 1700, it was the home and workplace of Samuel Johnson from 1748-1759 and it was here that he compiled the first comprehensive English Dictionary. Now restored to its original condition, the house contains panelled rooms, a pine staircase, and a collection of period furniture, prints and portraits.

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The first part of the tour finishes here. And the optional choices are set out below:

1. Visit **Carlyle's House** in Cheyne Row, Chelsea. Situated off Cheyne Walk between Battersea and Albert Bridges on Chelsea Embankment, this house is in one of the most elegant and sought-after parts of London. By Underground, take the Circle or District Line to Sloane Square, walk along the Kings Road, left into Oakley Street, right into Upper Cheyne Row and left into Cheyne Row.

Carlyle's House, owned by the National Trust, was built in 1708 as part of a terrace of London homes. Rented for £35 a year, it was the first - and only - London home of the influential 19th century writer Thomas Carlyle and his wife Jane, a place where they lived for almost 40 years.

While Carlyle's writings are not well-known today, a visit to the house is an experience, as it recreates the atmosphere of this comfortable home, the centre of an

exalted social circle. The couple played host to many of the major literary and cultural figures of the Victorian age, including Tennyson, Dickens, Ruskin and Darwin. Today, you can sit in the drawing room where Carlyle wrote books such as 'The French Revolution', inspiring some of the greatest figures of the Victorian age. At the top of the house in the attic is the study that was converted in the loft in 1853. Here, Carlyle wrote his last major work, six volumes of a 'History of Frederick the Great', which took him 12 years to complete.

Explore the surrounding streets of picturesque houses and squares. When Carlyle moved here **Chelsea** was an unfashionable village but it changed during Carlyle's residence. There are a host of blue plaques marking the famous talents who were drawn to the area. Among them are Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith and Algernon Charles Swinburne, who moved to 16 Cheyne Walk in 1862, and Henry James, who occupied nearby Carlyle Mansions. Mrs

Gaskell, James McNeill Whistler, JMW Turner and Hilaire Belloc also spent time there. Sir Thomas More was one of Chelsea's earliest and most famous champions, occupying a manor house long since demolished. His statue stands proudly outside the nearby **Chelsea Old Church**, which dates back to 1157.

2. Our second option takes us another picturesque part of London, Hampstead for a visit to **Keats House** (closed until October 2008). From Hampstead Underground Station (on the Northern Line), walk up Hampstead High Street, past the bookshops and boutiques, right into Devonshire Hill and right into Keats Grove for Keats House. Now one house, this was originally two lovely Regency semi-detached cottages, one of which was the home of the poet John Keats (1795-1821) where he spent his most productive years as a poet between 1818 and 1820.

The celebrated poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' was written under a plum tree in the garden. His fiancée Fanny Brawne

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lived in the house next door. Opened to the public in 1925, largely due to the poet's American fans, the house displays books, manuscripts, letters, prints, paintings and artefacts relating to the life of the poet.

3. Explore some **Poetry**: walk from Fleet Street towards The Strand and **Somerset House**. The current neo-classical building stands on the site of the original 16th century Palace. In the 18th C Sir William Chambers, one of the country's leading architects was commissioned to design the present day masterpiece in the Palladian style. Today most of the government offices housed here have moved out to make room for galleries and events spaces; there is even an ice skating rink in the winter and pop concerts in the courtyard in the summer. There are regular poetry readings, check the website, and the building is also home to the Royal Society of Literature which holds events here – see website.

Walk across Waterloo Bridge to the South Bank to the **Poetry Library at the Royal Festival Hall**, open throughout the day and

early evening (closed Mondays); there are some 90,000 items in the library funded by the Arts Council. The South Bank Centres organises regular literature events here and at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

4. The fourth option on this literary trail is the **Women's Library** at Aldgate East. Check the website first for current exhibitions and events. Part of the London Metropolitan University it houses the largest collection of women's writing in the UK. There are regular exhibitions, events and tours.

This is only one of many specialist libraries and public libraries in London.

*Conclude this literary day with a visit to **Westminster Abbey** to see the sculptures and memorials to Britain's poets and writers in Poet's Corner. Head for the South Transept and explore the many monuments here to well-known names and others forgotten.*

Some of the most famous to lie here include the poets John Dryden, Tennyson, Robert Browning and John Masefield.

Many writers, including William Camden, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy are also buried here. Others have memorials here but are buried elsewhere, including the poets John Milton, William Wordsworth, Thomas Gray, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Burns, William Blake, T.S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Writers such as Samuel Butler, Jane Austen, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Walter Scott, John Ruskin, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte, Henry James and Sir John Betjeman also have memorials here.

