



Cheyne Walk - Chelsea

Cheyne Walk has had a long and illustrious history; even before today's homes looked over the river, this area of Chelsea has been home to the great and the good. In fact the first residents who walked the riverside path were kings and queens who built large palatial homes, giving Chelsea the name 'the village of palaces'. Prior to the building of the embankment in the 1870s and before the Kings Road became the popular shopping street of Chelsea, this riverside spot was in fact the heart of Chelsea.

The early riverside village

The village of Chelsea developed as a small rural community around the banks of the river, clustered around All Saints, now the Old Church, along the banks of the Thames. The river was a vital part of the village, providing a livelihood for the local working people. It was the clean air and fields of Chelsea that lured the nobility and aristocracy from dirty, smoggy London during the 16th and 17th centuries and a number of large mansions were built up along the banks of the river. The river also offered a convenient route into the city, which was quicker than travelling along the often dangerous and rough roads by carriage.

Beaufort House

One of the most significant early palaces was built for Sir Thomas More in 1520 and later became known as Beaufort House. Beaufort House formerly sat to the south of the Moravian graveyard, west of Beaufort Street. The house had a number of owners including Lord Burghley, his son Lord Salisbury, and the Duke of Buckingham. It was sold to Henry, Marquess of Worcester, who became the Duke of Beaufort in 1682, where it obtained its name. Sir Hans Sloane bought the house in 1736, but demolished it three years later. The gateway entrance to the house, designed by Inigo Jones, did survive but was moved to Chiswick House, where it remains today.

Lindsey House

Lindsey House, built in the 17th century, still sits along Cheyne Walk today. The house was built by Robert, Earl of Lindsey in 1655 and was later the home of Count Zinzendorf from Saxony, who established a Moravian or United Brethren religious group here and lived at Lindsey House in 1751. The house was divided up into separate houses in 1775 and became 98-100 Cheyne Walk. Sir Marc Isambard Brunel (1769 -1849) and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) both lived at 98 Cheyne Walk from 1808 to 1825.

Henry VIII's New Manor House

Henry VIII's new manor house - sometimes called Chelsea Palace - was built as a wedding present for Catherine Parr in the 1540s. It formerly sat on the east of Oakley Street approximately where 19-26 Cheyne Walk are today. The manor house was the home of Elizabeth I when she was a child and later became the home of Lady Jane Grey. John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland and father-in-law to Lady Jane Grey also lived in the Manor House, before the Duke was charged with treason and beheaded in 1553. The New Manor House was later occupied by Anne of Cleves, who was the last royal resident, before it became the home of the Duke of Hamilton in 1639. The Manor House was sold to Charles Cheyne in 1660 and the 2nd Lord Cheyne sold the house to Sir Hans Sloane in 1742 where he lived until 1753, before it was pulled down in 1755.

Chelsea Old Church

It is believed there has been a church on the banks of the Thames in Chelsea since Anglo-Saxon times. It was first recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 and the name 'All Saints' first appeared in records in 1175. The parish church of Chelsea came to be known as St Luke's and the first building is believed to have been established during the reign of Edward II in the 14th century. The Lawrence and More chapels were added soon afterwards and Sir Thomas More rebuilt the chapel in his name in 1528. By 1667 a large section of the medieval church had deteriorated and was deemed too small. It was subsequently demolished and rebuilt, however the original chapels were preserved. The church did not significantly alter from the 17th to the 19th century and retained many of its treasured old monuments and memorials. It became known as Chelsea Old Church when the new St Luke's was built on Sydney Street in 1824. In April 1941 the Old Church was almost completely destroyed by enemy action but was fortunately sympathetically restored in the same style.



Early Cheyne Walk

In the early 1700s the isolated palaces that sat by the river were beginning to disappear, either through rebuilding or development of lands and in 1717 Sir Hans Sloane leased land in Henry VIII's 'Great Garden' for building, which was the beginning of Cheyne Walk. The village of Chelsea became a well-established and thriving local community by the banks of the river. Riverside taverns also played a vital role in the early village community in Chelsea; they became the centre of society for villagers and working people. Local historian Reginald Blunt confirmed that at one time there was a tavern every eighty yards between Battersea Bridge and the Royal Hospital.

It was during the early 18th century that many of the tall Georgian town houses were built along the Chelsea riverside and these make up some of the oldest houses along Cheyne Walk today. The most continuous surviving stretch of 18th century buildings is between Oakley Street and the beginning of Royal Hospital Road. At this time the street name 'Cheyne Walk' did not extend past the Old Church, it was only after the Embankment was built in the 1870s that the name was applied to the length of the road from Cremorne Road to Royal Hospital Road.

Chelsea Embankment

The construction of the embankment of Chelsea Reach along to Battersea Bridge began in 1871 under chief engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works, Joseph Bazalgette and was completed by 1874. The Chelsea Embankment greatly altered the village identity that had stood by the banks of the Thames for over five hundred years. This change meant that the old wharves, old streets and waterfront taverns began to close or alter and began to create more of the Chelsea we know today.

Cheyne Walk – the centre of Chelsea

Today, Cheyne Walk consists of a mixture of architecture, as each era has added its style to this prominent street, while still maintaining elements of earlier domestic building. Fortunately, there are still examples of each era of architectural style. As Cheyne Walk was the centre of Chelsea village life for many years, it has been the home to many illustrious residents of the past, including George Eliot, David Lloyd George, William Holman Hunt, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and James Whistler. Below is an overview of the many notable residents who have called Cheyne Walk home.

Nos. 1-13 Cheyne Walk

No.1 Cheyne Walk was home to actor-manager **Seymour Hicks** in 1937. The house was rebuilt in 1887-88 on the site of one of the early 18th century houses. No.2 is an example of one of the remaining 18th century houses, built around 1717 but re-fronted in 1879. It was home to actor **John Barrymore** in 1924-25. No.3 Cheyne Walk was also built around 1717 and residents have included **Admiral William Henry Smith**, vice president of the Royal Society and a founding member of the Royal Geographical society; **Sir John Goss**, organist at Chelsea Old Church and St Paul's Cathedral; and Rolling Stones guitarist **Keith Richards**.

No.4 was built around 1718 and retains a fine ornate Georgian doorway. It was the home of painters **William Dyce** in 1846-7 and **Daniel Maclise** in 1861-70, and author **George Eliot** died here in 1880. No.6 was also built around 1718 and **Sir Arthur Sullivan**, partner of famous musical partners Gilbert & Sullivan lived here as a boy in the 1840s. Nos.7-12 Cheyne Walk are great examples of the late 19th century style of Richard Norman Shaw. No.10 was the home of former Prime Minister **David Lloyd George** in 1924-25 and later caricaturist, **Gerald Scarfe**. No.13 Cheyne Walk was the home of composer **Ralph Vaughan Williams** from 1905 till 1929 where he completed his symphony, *The Lark Ascending*.

Nos. 15-31 Cheyne Walk

Nos.15-18 Cheyne Walk are further examples of early Georgian architecture built around 1717. No.15 was the home of artist **Cecil Gordon Lawson** as well as engraver, **Henry Thomas Ryall**. Queens House, No.16, is particularly noteworthy as a beautifully preserved Georgian townhouse with an additional bay window designed by Edwin Lutyens. The name Queens House is based on a rumour that it was formerly the home of Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II. The rumour originated from the initials RC on the gateway in front of the house, thought to be in her honour, but they were actually for Richard Chapman for whom the house was originally built in 1717. **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** lived here with his brother William from 1862 to 1882, poet **Algernon C. Swinburne** and writer **George Meredith** also lived here with their friend Rossetti. It was at No.16 that Rossetti annoyed his neighbours by keeping a menagerie of unusual animals including wombats, parrots, an armadillo and peacocks.



No.17 was home to musician **Thomas Atwood**, a student of Mozart's, who later became organist at St Paul's Cathedral. No.18 became the famous Don Saltero's coffee house. Nos.19-26 are almost a complete terrace, built in 1760, on the site of Henry VIII's Manor House. No.21 was home to author, **Henry James** and later became the home of artist and writer **Percy Wyndham Lewis** in 1935-36. Renowned artist **James Abbott McNeill Whistler** was fond of Chelsea and lived in a number of homes along Cheyne Walk including No.21 in 1890, No.101 in 1863-66, No.96 in 1866-78, and finally No.74 in 1902-03. Local artist **Walter Greaves** was born at No.31 in 1846.

Nos. 38-94 Cheyne Walk

No.38 and 39 Cheyne Walk were designed by C.R. Ashbee, who was actively involved in the new Arts and Crafts movement in the late 19th century. These are the only two of the original eight of his houses that remain, with No.38 originally built as a studio house for artist **C.L. Christian**. No.48 was the home of **Mick Jagger** and **Marianne Faithfull** from 1968. Artist **William Holman Hunt** lived at No.59 from 1850-53.

No.72 Cheyne Walk was home to sculptor **Jacob Epstein** before World War I and architect **C.R. Ashbee** lived at No.74. Artist **Charles Condor** lived at No.91 in 1904 and author **Elizabeth Gaskell** was born at No.93 in 1810, where her mother died a week after the birth. Nos. 91-94 Cheyne Walk were all built during the 1770s.

Crosby Hall to 119 Cheyne Walk

Crosby Hall was originally located in Bishopsgate in the city and built in 1466 for city merchant, Sir John Crosby. It features in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, who owned it in real life when he was Duke of Gloucester. It was brought to Chelsea brick by brick in 1910. At one time Crosby Hall was in fact owned by Sir Thomas More, the former owner of the gardens on which it was built.

Nos.98-100 Cheyne Walk were formerly Lindsey House, which was divided into separate houses in 1775. There have been a number of famous residents at the house, including **Sir Marc Isambard Brunel** and his son **Isambard Kingdom Brunel** in 1808 to around 1825. **Walter Greaves** lived at No.104 from 1855-97 where his father owned a boat business. Poet **Hilaire Belloc** also lived at No.104 in 1901-05. Artist **Philip Wilson Steer** lived at No.109 from 1898 until his death in 1942 and **J.M.W. Turner** lived at No.119, as did **Ian Fleming** in 1923-26.

Carlyle Mansions

Carlyle Mansions was built in 1886 and named after Chelsea's most prominent author, Thomas Carlyle. The mansion block is built in the Queen Anne architectural style that became very popular in the late 19th century, featuring red brick, decorative floral panels and ornate white door surrounds.

Writer **Henry James** lived at No. 21 Carlyle Mansions from January 1913 until his death in 1916. **T.S. Eliot** moved to No.19 Carlyle Mansions in 1946, shortly after his successful *Four Quartets* was published. He shared the flat with his editor John Hayward before he married his secretary Valerie Fletcher in 1957. **Ian Fleming** lived at No.24 Carlyle Mansions from August 1950 to March 1953 and it was here that Fleming started his famous James Bond books, completing his first draft of *Casino Royale* in early 1952.

Carlyle Mansions has had a number of other well known residents, including artist **John Singer Sargent**, film composer, **Richard Addinsell** at No.1, actor **Gordon Harker** in No.11 and historian **Arnold Toynbee**. **Erskine Childers**, Irish author of *The Riddle of the Sands* lived at No.10 and another writer, **Somerset Maugham** lived at No.27.