



## **No.409 Fulham Road – Chelsea**

No.409 Fulham Road has formerly been the home of one of the country's most prominent sculptors during the latter 20th century, Uli Nimpf, who was responsible for the statue of Prime Minister David Lloyd George that stands opposite Winston Churchill in the Members' Lobby of the House of Commons. It also appears that the house was home to one of the early women MPs, Mary Pickford, who became the conservative MP for Hammersmith North in 1931.

### **Market Gardens and Little Chelsea**

Up until the early 19th century, this part of Chelsea was predominately covered in market gardens and fields, with only a small collection of cottages and houses. In fact, this part of northern Chelsea was a small village known as 'Little Chelsea' separated from the main part of Chelsea by the banks of the Thames. Greenwoods map from 1824-6 shows the location of No.409 Fulham Road as a field, with the village of Little Chelsea to the east, where the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital is today.

### **New Victorian homes**

Building development began to spread across the area from the 1830s and 40s, with No.409 Fulham Road completed in around 1846. Large parts of Fulham Road and the surrounding streets began to be covered in new grand early Victorian terraced homes. Although, this was not part of a large coordinated development, but rather plots were developed in small sections. When first built, this section of Fulham Road was originally named 'Lansdowne Villas', with No.409 formerly No.10 Lansdowne Villas. It is not clear who was responsible for the building of the house, but the first recorded owner was a Mr. William Harding, who also owned all the houses in the row, Nos.1 to 11, except No.3 Lansdowne Villas. However, a later sales notice in *The Times* in 1853 records the row of houses in Lansdowne Villas were the property of George William Traill.

### **Victorian dentist**

The first recorded occupant of the house was Mr. George Ash, who was recorded in the parish rate books in the late 1840s, but in the 1851 census we get a clearer picture of George Ash and his family in the house. At the time of the census, George Ash was 49 years old and practicing as a dentist. He was in the house with his wife, Catherine and their five children, Anne, William, Maria, George and Henry, as well as a one live-in house servant. The Ash family continued to live at No.10 Lansdowne Villas through the 1850s and 60s, while George Ash continued as a dentist, in a time when dentistry was still a rough profession. Anaesthetic was introduced from 1846 and a clockwork drill was invented in 1864, while an official register of Dentists was only established by the Royal College of Surgeons in 1872.

### **House numbers and Mr. Williams**

In 1862, the street name and house numbers were reorganised by the Metropolitan Board of Works and No.10 Lansdowne Villas became No.409 Fulham Road. By the time of the 1871 census the Ash family had moved on and the house was home to Mr. William Williams, a banker's clerk, recorded as 60 years old, with his wife, Helen and one domestic servant. By the time of the 1881 census Mr. Williams was recorded as 74 years old and working as a 'corn clerk with general merchant', but he was also recorded as deaf. His wife had passed away and he was only in the house with one general servant.

### **Stock brokers and Physicians**

Mr Williams passed away in 1886 and No.409 Fulham Road was taken by Mr. John Jones, at times also recorded as Thomas Jones. The 1901 records 'Thomas Jones', 56 years old and 'living on own means'. He was in the house with his wife, Georgina, as well as his daughter, Lilian and son-in-law, Edward Weston, a stock broker. The Jones family continued in the house until 1904 when it became the home of Charles Lowe, but by 1907 No.409 was the home of physician and surgeon, Charles John Hope Gunning. However, Dr. Gunning also only stayed a short time, as by 1910-11 the house was home to Bessie Humphries. The 1911 census shows she was living in the 10 bedroom house entirely alone.



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## **Daughter of a royal doctor and early female MP**

The early 20th century saw a few changes in the house, as it appears that in the early years of World War I, Bessie Humphries began renting out rooms, and by the early 1920s it was home to Miss Laura Henrietta Brown, who was also renting out rooms in the house. Miss Brown was the daughter of Henry Brown, surgeon and apothecary in Ordinary to the Royal Household at Windsor from 1833 to 1868. The electoral registers during the 1930s show that the house was shared by a number of women, including a Mary Pickford, but this is unlikely to have been the Hollywood film star and co-founder of the film studio United Artists, but it is possibly the former MP for Hammersmith North. Mary Pickford was recorded in the house in 1930 and 1931 and it was in this year that she won the seat in Hammersmith as conservative candidate. Mary Pickford died suddenly in 1934 at the age of 49.

## **Uli Nimptsch - Sculptor**

After the war years, No.409 Fulham Road became the home of sculptor Uli Nimptsch and his wife Ruth and their son, Peter. Uli Nimptsch was German born and studied in Berlin, as well as in Rome and Paris, during the 1920s and 30s. He moved from Nazi Germany to England for the sake of his Jewish wife, Ruth (née Steintal) in 1939 and records show Uli (full name Julius) Nimptsch and his family settled in Fulham Road from 1948.

Uli Nimptsch was most noted for his female nude sculptures in a naturalistic style, but he did also work on biblical and classical mythology, as well as portrait busts, including Paul Oppé and Brendan, Viscount Bracken. However, it was his commission to create an over life size sculpture of former Prime Minister, David Lloyd George for the Houses of Parliament that has given him the most recognition. The sculpture was completed in 1963 and stands prominently by Churchill Arch in the Members' lobby to the House of Commons, opposite that of Sir Winston Churchill. A foot on each statue is noticeably worn, as it is the custom for MPs to rub the foot for luck as they walk past. Uli Nimptsch has a number of works held in key galleries across the UK, including The Tate Collection, The British Museum and the Royal Academy. Nimptsch regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy and was elected an RA in 1967. Uli Nimptsch lived at No.409 Fulham Road until he passed away in 1977.

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Historian  
August 2010

Image: Uli Nimptsch working on the  
statue of Earl Lloyd George  
The Illustrated London News  
December 29, 1962

