

NEW VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



NEW GUIDES AWARDED THEIR BLUE BADGES



New guides wearing their blue badges at the awards ceremony

Guides from the 2018 - 2020 London training course were awarded their blue badges at a ceremony held in late September at Above the Stag in Vauxhall.

Amy Wang represented APTG at the event and presented the prize for the best site exam to **Jennifer El Gammal**. Other prize winners were **Karen Dawson** (best written exam), **Will Mitchell** (best coach exam) and **Katie Alcock** (Katrine Prince prize for best new guide in London).

APTG congratulates all those who have passed their exams and have finally received their blue badges. We hope that they will all join us in the Association of Professional Tourist Guides.

Several long-standing Branch Council (BC) members will be standing down at the end of this year. We are therefore asking for expressions of interest from any members who might be open to helping guide the APTG into the future.

All BC members are working guides who volunteer their time to serve the membership. Without an active BC none of the great services that members receive can happen. These services are often taken for granted - the upkeep of the website, the CPD

programme, new member recruitment, debt chasing and our programme of events.

We are looking for members of all skills and backgrounds. It does not matter if you have been qualified for less than a year or for forty years.

If you want to help, we would like to hear from you! Please email the office at aptg@guidelondon.org.uk if you wish to offer your services.

BRANCH COUNCIL

Danny Parlour - Chair

Aaron Hunter - Secretary

Alfie Talman - Treasurer

Maria Gartner - Languages

Dani Harte - CPD

Owen Joseph - Fees

Edwin Lerner - Guidelines

Nan Mousley - Membership

Lottie Thurlow - Events

Amy Wang - Mandarin

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you to those of you that could attend the October Members' Open Meeting. We had a really good discussion about the possibility of the installation of a free Google Translate plug-in to our main website - although it now looks like we won't install it. If you weren't able to make it to the meeting I'd strongly recommend that you take the time to catch up with it and watch it back. You should have an email from the office containing the Zoom link.

We've had our current website since 2014. We put a tender out for a new Digital Marketing Manager and selected Ursula Petula Barzey from Moxee Marketing, who we employ for six days each month. Ursula looks after all of our social media and assists with social media projects such as the Guide London A-Z project. She is always keen to dedicate her time to areas that provide most members with the biggest bang for our bucks!

We're super grateful to have Ursula on board. Her time was not increased when we approved the French project in 2018, which I think was regrettable. Nonetheless Ursula has been absolutely fantastic and has worked many extra unpaid hours. This is something she should not have had to do but she's so passionate about Guide London and enjoys working with many of us, especially the A-Z team. Thank you to the team working with Ursula and giving her so much of your time and help. Our website has grown significantly since 2014 as have the tour leads - and then there's the French project.

In 2019 the website provided members who updated their availability with over 400 tour leads a month. This plummeted to around 50 leads in 2020. Most of these were for virtual tours but leads, mostly in-person/face to face, are now significantly climbing month on month. September tour leads were 134 - 20 more than August 2022.

So please, if you haven't already, check your guide settings and make sure you have all the right tours that you do selected, update your guide profile bio, including all the different tours and tour services that you provide, and update your calendar up to twelve months from now. Recently I've received tour enquiries for March, June and even December 2022.

As we add more to our website the cost of running it naturally goes up. Maintenance costs are going up, yet what we pay into the membership each year has not. Keep that in mind. Thanks to our Treasurer Alfie Talman we have now revived the dormant APTG Ltd account. The sky is the limit commercially. How exciting! We have a tiny but growing income from our YouTube channel, plus the Tiqets commission incentive (see the Partnerships section of the Members Area).

Thinking of how strong our website is and how much the costs are going up, I think at some point in 2022 we need to dedicate a couple of meetings to discussion of the overall income of APTG, as the current model is not sustainable. Currently members only pay £100 direct to APTG per year. That is incredibly good value for all the services provided: such as social events, CPDs, website and tour leads! Imagine how much more we could do if we paid more into the organisation: an increase in tours leads and much more besides. Anything extra we pay would be returned in leads. All I know is, if APTG was on the stock market, I would completely invest in it. It would be a no brainer.

I encourage you to think carefully about this and let's talk about it in 2022. Thank you for reading, and see you next month for the APTG AGM and Christmas party!

Danny Parlour

WEBSITE TRAFFIC

The website traffic continues to bounce back and for September it achieved **22,150** unique visitors. The majority of traffic (59%) continues to be in the blog section.

WEBSITE LEADS

After removing duplicates, spam, internal messages, etc., the website generated **132** leads in September. The majority of the leads were for GuideMatch - Individual Tours. We received requests for 24 different tours, mostly in-person.

Top tours requested in September were:

- Tower of London (9 leads)
- Westminster Abbey (9 leads)
- James Bond (7 leads)
- Classic London (4 leads)
- Architecture - Modern & Contemporary (4 leads).



WEBSITE - DEVELOPMENT

There were no major developments in September, just a fix to ensure that the correct image for each page/blog post pulls through on social media.

BLOG CONTENT

New blog posts on the website:

- London A - Z: 'M'* by Mark Conroy
- London A - Z: 'N'* by Tomasz Haber
- London A - Z: 'O'* by Nigel Haynes
- London A - Z: 'P'* by Hamish Carroll

A Tour of Tate Modern by Rick Jones (see pages 4/5)

No blog posts were added to the **French Website** in September. French pages have garnered 4,745 page views, just 1.84% of the total. This is because the majority of pages are tours not blog posts, the main driver for the English site.

MEMBERS' OPEN MEETING AND AGM

Around forty guides attended the October Members' Open Meeting in which the use of a Google Translate plug-in on the Guide London website was discussed.

The **Annual General Meeting** of APTG is on **14 December**. This will be an all day meeting starting at 11am. All members will be sent an agenda and Zoom link nearer the date.

A **Christmas Party** will be held this year - date to be advised. Keep an eye on weekly emails and next month's Guidelines.

A MESSAGE FROM BENEVOLENT FUND

Despite the encouraging signs of a revival in the tourism market, it will be some time before the sector recovers fully from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile many guides whose incomes have been devastated by the restrictions imposed on our ability to work continue to struggle financially. Some have been affected by the drawing to an end of assistance from the government in the form of SEISS grants, or removal of the temporary increase to Universal Credit payments. Others have been excluded since the start of the crisis from any form of government support and are likely to experience financial hardship for the foreseeable future. Recently qualified guides have sometimes incurred significant costs training to enter a profession which has not been able to reward them with the earning opportunities normally available to recoup their expenses.

No one needs to face this unprecedented challenge alone. The Benevolent Fund is administered by volunteer guides and exists solely to alleviate the situation of any colleague who finds themselves in critical need or hardship. If this applies to you, or a colleague you know, we strongly urge you to reach out to us in complete confidence by contacting a member of the committee. You can find our details on the Benevolent Fund website or in the Members Area of the Guide London website (addresses below). The committee will consider any genuine request for assistance. Please don't suffer in silence - we want to help if we can.

touristguidesbenevolentfund.com
guidelondon.org.uk/members-area/

ODE TO A BLUE BADGE GUIDE

Richard Smart met London street poet Luke Davis near Tate Modern. Luke wrote this poem for guides:

*Now, what you need, is an initiate, someone
 Who holds the keys to the city, who can show you
 The inner sanctum of this grand fourfold temple,
 Take you past the gatekeepers
 And inside where the secrets are.*

*You need someone who is on intimate terms with
 The stones, with the ghosts, with the stories,
 Who can introduce you to the spirits that guide its
 history.*

*Who can explicate its tangled histories and its myths –
 Someone who knows LONDON is inhabited not
 Just by people of flesh and blood but by its stories,
 Its fictional characters,*

*Its pilgrims setting off to Canterbury
 From a tavern here to Southwark to Shakespeare's
 Players playing by the Thames.*

*You need, in short, a guide - a Virgil
 To guide you through these hells and heavens
 To show you all of London.*

(Copyright **Richard Smart**.)

LONDON WRITING COMPETITION

The London Society has set up a writing competition in which entrants are invited to say why they love London. The theme is 'Recovery and Resilience'.

Entries are limited to 500 words and must be submitted by 31 November. Cash prizes will be given to entries that the judges consider the best in each category.

Full details at: www.londonsociety.org.uk/loveletters

MONOPOLY, MUSEUMS, MURALS: APTG'S NEW CPD PROGRAMME

The popular APTG CPD programme has restarted in-person tours. Highlights include Steve Szymanski's Monopoly walk, Angela Morgan on street art in Brixton, Ruth Polling's Unknown Warrior walk, Simon Whitehouse on Oscar Wilde, Katie Wignall on City Parks and Rosie Pollard on Battersea. There have been visits to Rotherhithe, Richmond and 'Royal Docks Redux' plus tours of the National Gallery in French and Spanish. Non-English CPDs also included a tour of James Bond's London in German.

For full details of CPDs and to book tickets go to the Members Area of the Guide London website: guidelondon.org.uk



Steve Szymanski's Monopoly tour (left)



Rosie Pollard and guides in Battersea (left)



Angela Morgan's Brixton walk (right)

A TOUR OF TATE MODERN

Rick Jones on the highlights of the most visited modern art gallery in the world

Much of the free collection at Tate Modern was changed during the pandemic. Artworks were replaced, removed, re-positioned. Visitors now circumambulate the galleries in one direction only. Here is what I offer as a tour of the highlights.



Bonnard (l)
and Grant (r)



We begin on the second floor in The Artist's Studio with Pierre Bonnard's *Le Bol de Lait* (1919). The artist was one of the nabis (prophets) who said 'before it is a horse or nude, a picture is a flat surface with colours in a certain order'. The sunlight and the window frame present geometric shapes. The brain interprets three dimensions. Modern art undid the trick and returned to two. On the right is Duncan Grant's *Interior at Gordon Square* (1917) in which the rectangles have fully taken over. Grant was in the Bloomsbury Group of arty intellectuals who met at that address to discuss art, science, politics and sex.

In the first decade of the 20th century the fauves (wild beasts) led by Henri Matisse, reacted against impressionism in vibrant colour and violent forms. His *Le Dos* (1909-1930) – four sculptures of a woman's back – is across the room. They progress from hard-etched surfaces to stark simplicity. Matisse was still bewildering viewers through colour late in life and in *L'Escargot* (The Snail, 1953) he deliberately juxtaposes primary and secondary hues for the jarring effect – red against green, blue versus orange, yellow meeting pink. Unable to wield a brush in his dotage, he turned to collage and called it 'painting with scissors'!



Matisse's famous *L'Escargot* collage

The fauves were a sensation but the fickle Parisian public then discovered Pablo Picasso who found a new direction in Cubism. In the centre of the room, his *Head of a Woman* (1909) is a sculpture modelled by his volatile lover Fernande Olivier. Fragmented facets become multiple simultaneous viewpoints, matched in two-dimensions by the work of fellow Cubist Georges Braque on the wall nearby. *La Mandore* (1909) depicts a lute-like instrument whose vibrating strings seem to pixelate the image.



We enter the Surrealists' gallery. Ahead is Picasso's 1925 *Les Trois Danseuses* (left), which was an inspiration through its nightmare anguished faces and contorted bodies. Picasso designed for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes so the dancers are professionals in the savage choreography perhaps of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Adjacent is the comical dream image of Joan Miro's *Head of a Catalan Peasant* (1925) with a sense of the absurd in the straggly beard, wide eyes and rustic hat. In the same corner is one of the most beautiful forms in Tate Modern, Henry Moore's *Composition* (1932), a voluptuous head and shoulders welling up from the sculptor's vivid subconscious.



Dali (l) and
Magritte (r)



Opposite is Salvador Dali's *Autumnal Cannibalism* (1936) in which two faceless figures eat each other in a landscape recognisably the artist's home. The Spanish Civil War began that year. Near it hangs *L'homme au Journal* (1928) by Belgian Surrealist Rene Magritte, pervaded by a dreamlike silence, stillness and absence. The sense of loss in 1920s Europe was an incurable ache.

Abstract art attained ideal form in Dutch painter Piet Mondrian whose *Composition C* (1935), rectangles with heavy outlines and primary colours, has become a fashion icon. Dutch art makes a triumvirate of Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Mondrian.

The thrill of the twentieth century was felt by the Futurists, an Italian movement whose members would be devotees of Mussolini. *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) by Umberto Boccioni delights in the sensation of speed and mechanisation. Boccioni wrote in the Futurist Manifesto of 'a new beauty, a roaring car running like a machine gun.'



The reaction to the Second World War, Art after Catastrophe, is focused on Jackson Pollock's *Number 14* from 1951. His work 'has fire, is unpredictable, undisciplined, spills out of itself in mineral prodigality not yet crystallised'

said one critic. He rolled naked and drunk in the spilled, wet paint and wielded brushes tied to long poles. It was 'action art' or 'all over painting'. Pollock died in a car crash in 1956.

Artists, confused that their traditions had led only to the destruction of war, turned to chance as an element in painting. *Cage I-VI* (2006), by German painter Gerhard Richter was created with a canvas and a squeegee mop. No delicate brushstrokes here! The works are named after composer John Cage who wrote random music and one piece (4'33") of complete silence except for the accidental sounds in the concert hall. Richter, an East German who fled to the west weeks before partition in 1961, is one of the richest people in Germany through his art.

Can you invent a colour? the caption next to Yves Klein Blue asks. The artist Yves Klein did so here. Paints are chemicals and chemical companies define their hues in scientific coordinates and names - avocado green, burnt umber, raw sienna, magnolia. Opposite is a series of square canvases called *The History of Painting* by the British artist Maria Lalic. Each represents an era and is painted in a mixture of the pigments then available. Cave Yellow comprises the charcoal, earth and chalk at cave dwellers' disposal.



Monochrome and colour are adjacent in Andy Warhol's 1962 *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (above). The lips are taken from a still for the film *Niagara* in which the unknown Monroe was given top-billing and began her stratospheric rise. The lips are replicated a hundred times on each canvas. In colour, they are silk-screened in lipstick-red while a background of pink is superimposed in rough painting round them, the obvious human touch contrasting with the mechanistic repetitions.

The British Library (2014) by the Nigerian Yinka Shonibare CBE comprises 6,000 shelved books with the names of British immigrants in gold lettering on the spine – Didier Drogba, TS Eliot, Ruth Praver Jhabvala. The books are covered in African coloured fabrics, though their history is Indonesian. Dutch colonists mechanised the weaving process and flooded Africa with them as we come to a sequence of galleries in which art and politics intertwine.

British artist Richard Hamilton painted *The Citizen* in 1983 inspired by the IRA dirty protest in Ulster's Maze Prison. The British government refused terrorists political prisoner status so they wore blankets and daubed their cells with excrement. Though apolitical, Hamilton was struck by their Christlike appearance and the similarity of the walls to cave-paintings.

Hamilton appears in the next room in the video *Information Action*, a six-hour artistic question-and-answer session led by Joseph Beuys at London's Tate Gallery in 1972. Hamilton presses Beuys about a previous Action explaining art to a dead hare. The excerpt lasts half an hour. It is followed by Beuys' monumental sculpture *Lightning with Stag in its Glare* (1985), a statement about the primal energy of the earth.

Actions to Beuys included teaching and the blackboards he filled became artworks exhibited here. In the video, fellow artist Gustav Metzger, a Kindertransport immigrant to Britain in 1939, challenges Beuys on his failure to grasp alternative technologies. A room devoted to Metzger's auto-destructive art follows. In the preparatory models for *Stockholm June* (1972), toy cars are displayed first in car-park order and second in a destructive tumble as a result of the corrosive power of exhaust fumes. A pupil of Metzger was Pete Townshend who destroyed guitars on stage as a member of the rock group The Who.



Pop Art was a product of the 1950s in Britain and the USA inspired by consumer artefacts, photos, adverts and cartoons often blown-up to enormous size and painted in garish colours. Roy Lichtenstein's *Whaam!* (above left) announces itself with a burst of warplane gunfire in a giant painted image from the 1962 comic All American Men of War. This is not an enlarged photo-image but an oil-on-canvas artwork.

Next to him is the British Pop Artist Eduardo Paolozzi who was obsessed with man's relationship with machines and designed fantasy machines in art like his aluminium *Mechaniks Bench* (above right). He aimed to eliminate arty qualities. 'The battle is to try to restore these anonymous materials into a poetic idea.' He lived and worked in Edinburgh except for three years in Paris after the war when he met Paul Klee and Alberto Giacometti.



Finally we return to the start of the twentieth century with Marcel Duchamp's 1917 *Fountain* (left), a porcelain urinal which the artist entered for an exhibition. It was the first 'ready-made' or 'found object' and kick-started the debate about what exactly art is which has continued unresolved throughout the modern era. With this last statement, Tate Modern puts all the arguments into context.

Rick Jones (who took the photographs)

LEOTARD - MAN IN TIGHTS

Angela Morgan on Jules Léotard, who gave his name to a famous piece of gym wear

When researching for a walk or talk we often find information that we want to share but which may not be appropriate for that project. I was preparing a walking tour for residents in Chelsea, and was able to use what I discovered - which curiously received some giggles from my mature audience!

The history of Cremorne Gardens goes back to the eighteenth century. The name is a reference to Viscount Cremorne who owned the land when it was known as Chelsea Farm. It would later become a pleasure garden from the 1840s until its closure in 1877. There were references to all sorts of entertainment - music, dancing, death defying feats such as balloon ascents (with one fatal incident), tightrope walks and a flying trapeze artist by the name of Léotard. That is where I stopped to investigate further. Leotards are worn for exercise by dancers, gymnasts and fitness fanatics; outfits that allow flexibility of movement.

Jules Léotard was born in 1842 in France. His father ran a gymnasium in Toulouse where he would practice his act over the swimming pool using a bar connected to ventilator cords. His performance was called the 'flying trapeze'. After tricks above the pool, Léotard performed a twelve minute routine in the Cirque Napoleon (now the Cirque d'Hiver) in Paris.

On 12 November 1859 he became the first person to perform a mid-air somersault and the first to leap from one trapeze to another. His co-artists were so impressed that they sponsored a banquet in his honour and a commemorative medal was struck. At the time there was no safety net. He performed above mattresses laid out on a raised runway.

In 1861, Léotard brought his act to London making his début at the Alhambra Music Hall, today the site of the Odeon Leicester Square, (below) earning the equivalent of £5000 a week in today's money. He performed above the heads of the diners. I imagine the joke - 'Waiter! There's an acrobat in my soup!'



Leotard (Wiki Commons)

Léotard would return to London several times between 1866 and 1868 performing mainly in music halls and popular pleasure gardens including Cremorne Gardens. It was during this time that the music hall singer George Leybourne, who was better known as 'Champagne Charlie' composed the lyrics for what would become a popular music hall song of the day *The Flying Trapeze* - with the time-defying lyrics:

'He'd fly through the air with the greatest of ease,
A daring young man on the flying trapeze.'

As with many stars that shine brightly, his light was snuffed out. He died in 1870 aged only twenty eight from an infectious disease, possibly smallpox.

Did Léotard create the outfit and name it after himself? He designed a skin-tight one-piece knitted garment which he called a maillot which is the French word for a tight fitting shirt. It allowed him unrestricted movement and to show off his athletic physique. No wonder he was a huge hit with women! The use of his name for similar garments was first recorded in 1886 - sixteen years after his death.



Wiki Commons

Today, leotard continues to be used to describe the one-piece stretch garment which comes in various colours and styles, commonly used in dance, sport and exercise. It is referred to without thought of its origin. But it is great to learn that a young Frenchman, who wanted to show his acrobatic skills in mid-air, created a functional garment that continues to provide comfort for those who wear it (above right).

Cremorne Gardens was closed in 1877 and much of it disappeared under various building developments. A small part remains near to the River Thames just off Lots Road. The special treat for visitors is the original Cremorne Gates (my photo, above left) that were resited here in 1997.

Angela Morgan

LADY BEEFEATERS AT THE TOWER



Newly installed
Yeoman Warder
Emma Rousell
and APTG member
Russell Nash

There are thirty two Yeoman Warders (aka Beefeaters) at the Tower of London plus a Chief Warder, three of whom are women. Moira Cameron was the first woman to join the force of retired service personnel in 2007 and she has since been joined by Amanda Clark (like Moira, ex-army) and Emma who recently joined from the RAF with Paul Langley.

CAPITAL GAINS IN PROPERTY

London's super-prime property market is roaring back to life! There are 317 properties for sale at £10 million plus in London and Middle Eastern visitors are snapping up properties, with buyers from the UAE having increased by 47%.

Bryanston is a 54 flat ultra-luxury scheme next to Marble Arch with 'air purification'. Prices start at £2.4 million.

Park Modern is a 57 flat luxury development near Hyde Park where prices start at £2.2 million for a two bedroom flat.

Lancer Square in Kensington is a 36 apartment development with prices beginning at £4.86 million for a two-bed.

80 Holland Park is Christian Candy's new scheme where prices start at £2.6m. This 25 apartment development has a 24-hour concierge, underground car parking with electric charging, a 16.8 metre pool and a gym.

Tastes have changed since the Candy Brothers launched One Hyde Park 10 years ago and the style is now more pared down and minimalist with white the primary shade, not black. Ninety per cent of the properties in Mayfair are flats and over half the homes are rented. Renting is cheaper because a purchaser paying £10 million for a property would also pay £1.6 million in stamp duty. The ultra-rich like to shield their identity but the Pandora Papers have revealed the names of hundreds of heads of state, businessmen and oligarchs.

NO TIME TO PAY

With over a million pounds a month in interest payments alone, *No Time to Die* is the most expensive James Bond film ever made. The film is, however, on the way to taking nearly a billion dollars at the box office - which it will need to break even.



The latest Bond film features the new Viper missile system, which is shown in the US (but not the UK) trailer. No missiles were fired during the making of the film - only digital ones.

TOILETS FOR TRANS AND TOURISTS

There are four hundred public toilets in London - one for every 18,000 Londoners - and they have been closing at twice the rate of the rest of the country. The London Assembly has conducted a survey which has looked at the provision of toilets for groups including trans people and tourists.

MUSEUM NEWS AND PRIZE GIVING

The **British Museum** has reported a 97% fall in visitor numbers as a result of Covid-19. Admission income fell 93% to £0.3 million in 2020/2021, down from £4.3 million with a fall in trading income of 97%. It was in fundraising that the museum saw its only upturn last year, raising £40.4 million, up from £23.7 million. Donations and legacies of £39 million were received with two large individual gifts accounting for most of the increase. A further £3.1 million was received from other trading activities and £15.8 million from charity.

The *Hokusai* exhibition is at the BM until 22 January 2022.



The Blue Boy by Gainsborough (left) and **The Red Lady** by William Hogarth will both be on display in London in the coming months. Gainsborough's painting (officially *Portrait of a Young Gentleman*) was sold to the American entrepreneur Henry Huntington in 1921 for a then world record \$728,000 and is unlikely ever to return to Britain after its display at the National Gallery between January

and May 2022. It has been described as 'the most beautiful painting in the world' and was reproduced in films featuring the Joker. Hogarth's painting of Mary Edwards will be in the exhibition *Hogarth and Europe* at Tate Britain which opens this month. It is on loan from the Frick Museum in New York.

An exhibition commemorating the centenary of the birth of **Lucian Freud** will open at the National Gallery next year. On display will be sixty Freud portraits including one of the Queen which has been described both as 'making her look like a prop forward' and as the 'best ever' painting of her. *Lucian Freud: New Perspectives* (October to January 2023).

Durer's Journeys is at the National Gallery, 20 November to 22 February 2022. (See Tim Smyth's article in next edition.)

The Museum of the Year prize of £100,000 was awarded by the Art Fund this year to Firstsite, a modern art museum in Colchester. None of the other finalists, who were each given £15,000, are London Museums although the award was presented at the Science Museum. Other finalists were: The Centre for Contemporary Art in Londonderry/Derry; Experience Barnsley; Thackray Museum of Medicine, Leeds and Timespan in Helmsdale, Northern Scotland.

The twenty fifth **RIBA Stirling Prize** for the 'most significant building of the year for the evolution of architecture' has been awarded to Kingston University Town House.

The shortlist also included 15 Clerkenwell Close, Cambridge Central Mosque, Tintagel Castle Footbridge, Key Worker Housing in Eddington, Cambridge and Windermere Jetty.

The **Tottenham Hotspur Stadium** in North London, which seats 63,000 fans, also won an architecture prize from RIBA and has been called 'a tour de force in stadium design'. It is the second largest stadium in the Premier League after Old Trafford and has a sixty five metre bar and its own micro brewery. The stadium has hosted both soccer and American football games (which some APTG members have been involved in). The award of the prize led the club's former striker Gary Lineker to tweet 'Spurs finally win a trophy.'

LONDON'S BLUE PLAQUES

Blue plaques have been around for longer than the blue badge. The scheme, thought to be the oldest of its kind in the world, began in 1865 and there are now nearly a thousand blue plaques in London. Subjects are chosen by English Heritage, who took over from the Greater London Council in 1986.

The Borough of Westminster has the most blue plaques (309) followed by Kensington and Chelsea (175) and Camden (166). Havering and Hillingdon are the only boroughs which have not yet been awarded blue plaques.

No-one will see their own blue plaque as English Heritage rules say you must have been dead for at least twenty years before your name is considered. Only two of the Beatles are remembered, therefore, with a plaque for John Lennon and George Harrison at Marsh and Parsons estate agents in Baker Street and one for Lennon at the flat at 34 Montagu Square where he lived with Yoko Ono, who unveiled it in 2010. There are no plaques yet for Amy Winehouse, whose fans will have to wait until 2031 or for David Bowie (2036).

Fourteen per cent of blue plaques are for women, an imbalance English Heritage is trying to correct with over half of new ones commemorating female subjects. The most famous is probably that of Diana, Princess of Wales (right) who is remembered at Coleherne Court on Old Brompton Road where she shared a flat with friends, one of whom unveiled it. Other women commemorated are the scientists Rosalind Franklin (Drayton Gardens, Chelsea) and Lord Byron's daughter Ada Lovelace, a pioneer of computing, who is remembered in Saint James's Square.

Four per cent of London's blue plaques commemorate people from ethnic minorities including musicians Jimi Hendrix (Brook Street, Mayfair) and Bob Marley (Oakley Street, Chelsea), who is also the subject of the new musical *Get Up, Stand Up!* A plaque for the famous nurse Mary Seacole is at 14 Soho Square and the earliest plaque for a person of colour is that of Samuel Coleridge Taylor (Dagnall Park, South Norwood) which was put up by the GLC in 1975, 100 years after he was born. Black sportsmen remembered include the cricketer and lawyer Sir Learie Constantine (Lexham Gardens, Earls Court) and the footballer Laurie Cunningham (Lancaster Road, Hackney).

Unusual people honoured with blue plaques include Luke Howard, meteorologist and 'namer of clouds' in Tottenham, and Queen Victoria's dentist Sir Edwin Saunders in Wimbledon.



Inevitably political figures are heavily represented. Winston Churchill's plaque is at Hyde Park Gate (left) where he died in 1965, and Karl Marx is honoured in Soho at 28 Dean Street. Not always popular, Marx's first plaque in Hampstead was twice vandalised until this one was put up above the Quo Vadis restaurant by the GLC in 1967.

Most blue plaques are made in Cornwall by Frank and Sue Ashworth. They are nineteen inches in diameter and bear the portcullis symbol of English Heritage, who finance the scheme with support from property developer David Pearl, who is worth over £450 million. In contrast, the original blue plaque design cost just four guineas (£4:20) which was paid to an unnamed student at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1938.

The lettering on the plaques is slightly raised and uses a serif font. The only exceptions are four plaques to people connected with London Transport, which use the Johnston font designed by Edward Johnston (Hammersmith Terrace, Chiswick). It can also be seen on the plaque for Harry Beck, designer of the famous London Underground map who lived at Wesley Road in Leyton.



Eighteen houses have two plaques including 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead, the last home of Sigmund Freud and of his daughter Anna. Another famous double-plaques house is 29 Fitzroy Square in Bloomsbury, where both George Bernard Shaw and Virginia Woolf lived - but not at the same time.

Only one person who lived in the City of London has been given a plaque and it is brown rather than blue. This is Samuel Johnson whose house in Fleet Street, where he wrote his famous dictionary, is now a museum. Brown was an easier colour to produce when the plaque was unveiled in 1876. The City now has its own scheme to honour residents.

Blue plaques highlight the historical significance of houses where famous people lived and help prevent their demolition. This was the case with the homes of Vincent Van Gogh in Stockwell (Hackford Road) and D H Lawrence in Hampstead (The Vale of Health) but it did not save the first plaque, to Lord Byron in Holles Street, Oxford Circus. The oldest surviving blue plaque is to Napoleon III in King Street, Saint James's.

Anyone can nominate a person for a plaque or find out more about those already honoured at english-heritage.org.uk.

Edwin Lerner (Photographs courtesy of English Heritage.)

Thanks to

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We LOVE getting material from members. Guidelines is your monthly magazine and it is the way we communicate with each other through the medium of hard copy. We welcome articles and photos from members but contributions may be held over and we reserve the right to edit them. Images should be high resolution – 300 ppi.

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