

Carlyle Mansions – Cheyne Walk

Carlyle Mansions has been the home of many illustrious residents, in particular writers, giving it the nickname 'the writers block'. Once home to T.S. Eliot, Henry James, Somerset Maugham and Ian Fleming, the block was also frequently visited by artist, John Singer Sargent.

Building Carlyle Mansions

Built in 1886 by Messrs Sandon Brothers to the designs of Walter Seckham Witherington, the block was named after prominent Chelsea resident, Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle Mansions features ornate designs and picturesque detailing, built with strong red brick with carvings in Portland stone and brick. Most notably it features ten stone relief panels on the western edge depicting birds and flowers, which the architectural and building journal, *The Builder* in 1886 claimed were based on scenes from Aesop's fables. When completed Carlyle Mansions were described in *The Builder* as having fireproofed floors, the staircase featured "a wrought-iron grille railing...and a passenger lift by the American Elevator Company had been fitted."

The writers block

Carlyle Mansions has had many notable residents including American author of *Wings of a Dove* and *The Portrait of A Lady*, **Henry James** who lived at No.21 Carlyle Mansions from January 1913 until his death in February 1916. Poet, **T.S. Eliot** lived at No.19 Carlyle Mansions from 1946 until 1957. While living at Carlyle Mansions Eliot wrote *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), and plays *The Cocktail Party* (1949) and *The Confidential Clerk* (1953).

Ian Fleming moved to No.24 Carlyle Mansions in August 1950 and it was from here that he began the famous James Bond series of books, completing his first draft of *Casino Royale* in early 1952. Other notable authors at Carlyle Mansions have included **Erskine Childers**, Irish author of *The Riddle of the Sands* at No.10 and novelist and playwright **Somerset Maugham**, who briefly lived at No.27 Carlyle Mansions in 1904.

Other notable residents

Other residents have included composer, **Richard Addinsell** at No.1; actor, **Gordon Harker** at No.11; historian, **Arnold Toynbee**; and local historian **Reginald Blunt** at No.14. Continuing the long list of notable residents is political reformer, **Thomas Hare** during the 1890s; artist, **Mrs Florence Engelbach** at No.3; medical expert, **Richard Llewelyn** at No.14 and military heroes, **Brigadier Henry Hunter** of the Queen's Royal Regiment and **Major-General William Napier** of the Royal Artillery. Lastly, **John Singer Sargent** formerly came to the building when visiting his two sisters, Emily and Violet.