



The IPA Whitehall Walk

This walk gives IPA members a free walk through the heart of central London. Information is from open access websites or is the local knowledge of IPA members.

This walk provides some history and information about key sights on the route. It can be adapted to suit visitors' interests. There is particular mention of sites of interest to people with a policing background. The walk takes about an hour and a half.

Meet in Trafalgar Square. Stop on the square itself away from the traffic noise preferably looking down Whitehall towards Big Ben.

We are going to walk through an area full of royal and government power. London has witnessed centuries of tension between the power of kings and parliament. The walk will show us some police landmarks and some iconic sights all in one area of London.

Trafalgar Square is often considered to be the very centre of London: a city of 9 million people. It is the place people come to protest; to see in the New Year; and to celebrate together.

The square was created in the early 19th century and is named after the Battle of Trafalgar: a decisive sea battle between the British and the French on 21st October 1805. The British victory confirmed the British Navy's worldwide supremacy at that time and was achieved largely through Admiral Horatio Nelson's leadership. Nelson was shot by a French musketeer and died shortly before the battle ended. He became a great British hero. **Nelson's Column** in the centre of the square was erected in his memory.

The column is 169 feet 3 inches (52.59m).

The National Gallery faces the square. It contains many important paintings. Its collection belongs to British public, and entry to the main collection is free of charge.

The Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is an annual gift to the people of Britain from Norway as a token of gratitude for British support to Norway during the Second World War. It is sent from Norway every December and stands in front of the National Gallery.

Trafalgar Square has statues on three corners but the money ran out before a statue was erected on the last one. The fourth plinth remained empty until the idea of a changing statue was established in 1999. The statue is changed about every 2 years.

Can you find the site of **London's smallest police station**? It is really more like a sentry box in the base of the lamp at one corner of the corner of the square (nearest Northumberland Avenue).

At the end of World War I, a temporary police box just outside Trafalgar Square tube station was due to be made permanent. However, due to public objections this was scrapped and instead it was decided to build a less “objectionable” police box. The venue? Inside an ornamental light fitting...

Once the light fitting was hollowed out, it was then installed with a set of narrow windows to give a view across the main square. A direct phone line to Scotland Yard was installed in case reinforcements were needed in times of trouble. Whenever the police phone was picked up, the ornamental light fitting at the top of the box started to flash, alerting any nearby officers on duty that trouble was near.

The name of the **church in the square is St Martin-in-the-Fields** which shows how close the country was to the city historically. This eighteenth century church is famous for its concerts and music which support its pioneering work with London's homeless people.

While this is the centre of modern London, we are in fact in the City of Westminster, the home of kings and royal power. The City of London is to the east down the River Thames.

The last sight to consider is the **statue of King Charles I on horseback** looking down Whitehall. We will be meeting Charles several times during our walk down Whitehall so it is worth knowing a bit about him. Charles I was King of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1625 until his execution in 1649. Charles quarrelled with the English Parliament, which sought to curb his royal powers.

From 1642, Charles fought the armies of the English and Scottish parliaments in the English Civil War. He surrendered in 1645 and was tried, convicted, and executed for high treason in January 1649. The monarchy was abolished and the Commonwealth of England was established as a republic. The monarchy was restored to Charles's son, Charles II, in 1660.

This bronze statue was commissioned by Charles I in 1633. After the Parliamentary victory in the English Civil War the statue was sold to a metalsmith in the Holborn area by the appropriate name of John Rivet. Rivet received instructions from Parliament to break down the statue, but instead he hid it on his premises. At the restoration of the monarchy, it was placed on this spot so it has been here longer than Trafalgar Square itself.

A short detour though Admiralty Arch shows a view up The Mall to **Buckingham Palace**, the London home of His Majesty, King Charles III. On the corner of The Mall and Horse Guards Road Is The **National Police Memorial**, commemorating about 4,000 police officers killed in the course of their duties in the United Kingdom.

In 1984, following the shooting of Pc Yvonne Fletcher, film director Michael Winner founded the Police Memorial Trust. Initially the trust concentrated on erecting smaller monuments at the points where officers had died on duty. From the mid-1990s, the trust also lobbied and raised funds for a single, larger scale memorial to commemorate all police officers who had died in the course of their duties. Winner

stated that "Memorials to soldiers, sailors and airmen are commonplace, but the police fight a war with no beginning and no end".

Walk back to Trafalgar Square and turn right into Whitehall. Stand near the Trafalgar Theatre to read the next bit.

We are now going to head down **Whitehall**. This road runs south from Trafalgar Square towards Parliament Square. The street is recognised as the centre of the Government of the United Kingdom and is lined with numerous departments and ministries, including the Ministry of Defence, Horse Guards and the Cabinet Office. Consequently, the name "Whitehall" is used as shorthand for the British civil service and government, and as the geographic name for the surrounding area.

Whitehall is named after the **Palace of Whitehall**, the home of kings for centuries. Very little remains of it now. As with most of London, fire and bombings and redevelopment means that what we see is fairly recent but the old streets and names remain.

Walk down Whitehall and cross over the road to The Clarence pub at the junction with Great Scotland Yard. Have a look across Whitehall to see the seahorses on the Old Admiralty buildings.

Great Scotland Yard It is said that the Kings of Scotland had part of Whitehall Palace for their use when they visited London, and this is said to be the origin of the street name "Great Scotland Yard".

The last member of the Scottish royal family who stayed here was Margaret, Queen of Scotland, wife of James IV of Scotland and sister to King Henry VIII. She returned to England and lived here after her husband's death at the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

In the 1860s **3-5 Great Scotland Yard** became the home of the police. "Scotland Yard" has come to be used not only as the name of the headquarters building, but also for both the Metropolitan Police Service itself and police officers, especially detectives, who serve in it.

The force moved from Great Scotland Yard in 1890. The police station that was on the site is now gone. There is now a luxury hotel here.

Sherlock Holmes would not have known this building. Partly because it wasn't built until 1910 and partly because he is a fictional detective!

The Mounted Branch of The Metropolitan Police have a stable in this street.

Back into Whitehall and walk down the road opposite Horse Guards Parade to:

The Banqueting House is the last remaining part of Whitehall Palace. A bust of Charles I is over the doorway to the Banqueting House.

Charles was carried through Whitehall on the way to his trial at Westminster Hall. Whitehall itself was a wide street and had sufficient space for a scaffold to be erected for the King's execution at the Banqueting House. The king made a brief speech here

before being beheaded. Being a January day, he insisted on wearing a vest to prevent people thinking he was shivering with fear.

But of course, everyone is now distracted by the horses at **Horse Guards Parade**. Go and have a look at them!

Now have a look at the 'The Women of World War II' monument in the middle of the road: It remembers the 7 million women who contributed to the war effort.

This huge, bronze monument was unveiled in 2005 and complements the older Cenotaph we will see further along the road. Around the outside, you can see 17 different sculpted uniforms and helmets. These uniforms represent hundreds of vital jobs undertaken by women. Unlike men, most women were not on the front line, and instead worked on the land, they were called up to be mechanics, engineers, munitions workers and air raid wardens. Women drove buses and fire-engines. There were also over 640,000 women in the armed forces. When the war ended and the men returned to their jobs, women were forced to quietly hang up their uniforms and resign; they were expected to return to their lives before the war, often in more domestic roles.

Downing Street The Prime Minister lives at No.10 Downing Street. You can just about see the famous front door if you are able to get to the front of the security gate.

In the 1950s, builders discovered that the black colour of the brickwork was misleading; the bricks were actually yellow. The black appearance was the product of two centuries of pollution. To preserve the 'traditional' look, the newly cleaned yellow bricks were painted black.

For most of its history, Number 10 was accessible to the public. Early security consisted of two police officers: one stood guard outside the door; the other was stationed inside to open it. When Margaret Thatcher's was prime minister, terrorist threats led to guarded gates being added at both ends of the street. Visitors could then be screened before approaching the door.

Despite the added security measures, on 7th February 1991, the Provisional IRA used a van they parked in Whitehall to launch a mortar shell at Number 10. It exploded in the back garden, while the prime minister, John Major, was holding a Cabinet meeting. This led to the addition of guardhouses as well as other less visible measures. Each guardhouse is staffed by police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service's Diplomatic Protection Group (DPG).

Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office is the title of the official resident cat at 10 Downing Street. There has been a resident cat in the British government employed as a mouser and pet since the 16th century, although modern records date only to the 1920s. The current post holder - Larry - has captured the hearts of the Great British public and the press teams often camped outside the front door.

Further along Whitehall, stop at the Cenotaph. It was unveiled in 1920 as the United Kingdom's national memorial to the dead of the First World War. It was rededicated in 1946 to include those of the Second World War, and has since come to commemorate British casualties from later conflicts.

The word *cenotaph* is derived from Greek, meaning 'empty tomb'. Most of the dead were buried close to where they fell: the Cenotaph symbolises their absence. The original temporary Cenotaph was erected in 1919 for a parade celebrating the end of the First World War, at which more than 15,000 servicemen saluted the monument. More than a million people visited the site within a week of the parade.

Calls for the Cenotaph to be rebuilt in permanent form began almost immediately and it became the focal point for the National Service of Remembrance held annually on Remembrance Sunday, the closest Sunday to 11th November.

Walk on to reach King Charles Street. Another reference to Charles I, though this street was created in the 19th century to house offices which included the India Office, the Colonial Office and the Home Office.

At the far end of King Charles St are the Cabinet War Rooms but, as there's nothing to see above ground, stay on Whitehall to read the next bit: The Cabinet War Rooms are a historic underground complex that housed the government command centre throughout the Second World War.

Construction of the Cabinet War Rooms, located beneath the Treasury building began in 1938. They became fully operational on 27 August 1939, a week before Britain declared war on Germany. The War Rooms remained in operation throughout the Second World War, until August 1945 after the surrender of Japan.

Churchill visited the Cabinet War Room in May 1940 and declared: 'This is the room from which I will direct the war'. Churchill's office-bedroom included BBC broadcasting equipment; Churchill made four wartime broadcasts from the Cabinet War Rooms. Although the office room was also fitted out as a bedroom, Churchill rarely slept underground, preferring to sleep at 10 Downing Street despite the danger of bombs.

Now walk into Parliament Square. Try to find a quiet spot to read the next bit. There is a phone box on the pavement just around the corner from Whitehall which provides a good photo opportunity and is a few feet away from the traffic noise.

Look across the square to **The Palace of Westminster**. This serves as the meeting place for both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Informally known as the **Houses of Parliament**, the Palace lies on the north bank of the River Thames: a reminder that the river was the main thoroughfare for much of London's history.

Though the site of the Palace has been here since the Middle Ages, a fire in 1834 destroyed both Houses of Parliament along with most of the other buildings in the palace complex. The oldest part of the complex is **Westminster Hall**, (the building you can see with the large roof). It was the setting for the lying in State of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022.

Immediately after the fire, King William IV offered the almost-completed Buckingham Palace to Parliament, hoping to dispose of a residence he disliked but the gift was rejected.

The Elizabeth Tower, often referred to by the name of its main bell, **Big Ben**, has become an iconic landmark of London and of the United Kingdom in general, and an emblem of parliamentary democracy. In the bombing raids of 1941 it took a hit by a small bomb. All the glass on the south dial was blown out, but the hands and bells were not affected, and the Great Clock continued to keep time accurately.

This clock is used to time the New Year celebrations. Similarly, on Remembrance Day, the chimes of Big Ben are broadcast to mark the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month and the start of the two minutes' silence. Big Ben can also be heard striking the hour before some news bulletins on BBC Radio (6 p.m. and midnight, plus 10 p.m. on Sundays) and the BBC World Service, a practice that began on 31 December 1923. The sound of the chimes is sent live from a microphone permanently installed in the tower and connected by line to Broadcasting House.

We meet our old friend Charles I here. Charles entered the House of Commons with an armed guard on 4th January 1642 determined to arrest rebellious parliamentarians. They had already fled and he had to retreat. His action contributed to the civil war of the king's forces against parliamentary troops. The war lasted until 1648 when Charles was imprisoned by the parliamentary side. He was tried for treason in **Westminster Hall** in 1649 though the king refused to acknowledge the authority of the court.

Looking across the square we can see **Westminster Abbey**. The abbey has been the coronation church since William the Conqueror's coronation in 1066. It has the tombs of 17 monarchs. The church we see today was begun by Henry III in 1245. It's one of the most important Gothic buildings in the country and has the medieval shrine of the Anglo-Saxon saint and king, Edward the Confessor, at its heart.

Parliament Square has many statues of politicians. But a particular police memorial to see is at the gate of the Palace of Westminster. **Walk over to it now.**

Pc Keith David Palmer, GM was a 48 year old police officer who was posthumously awarded the George Medal, the second highest award for gallantry "not in the face of the enemy". Though unarmed, he stopped a knife-wielding terrorist from entering the Palace of Westminster during the 2017 Westminster attack; he died from wounds he received. In the Queen's 2017 Birthday Honours, Pc Palmer was awarded the George Medal "for confronting an armed terrorist to protect others and Parliament". In recognition of his sacrifice, the Metropolitan Police Service retired his shoulder number (4157U) and stated that it would "not be reissued to any other officer".

Westminster Bridge tube station is interesting for Harry Potter fans. As with many other London sights, it appeared in the film 'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix'. Harry Potter and Arthur Weasley travel through London via Westminster Tube Station. Arthur Wesley struggles with the Oyster card system.

Now walk onto Westminster Bridge and find a spot to look west at the Houses of Parliament and then east down the River Thames.

The London Eye, or the **Millennium Wheel** is Europe's tallest cantilevered observation wheel and is the most popular paid tourist attraction in the United Kingdom with over 3 million visitors annually.

Now walk back to the north bank and walk down **The Embankment** along the river to the front of **New Scotland Yard**. This is the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Service, the territorial police force responsible for policing Greater London's 32 boroughs, (but not the City of London, which has its own police force). In November 2016, the MPS moved to this headquarters, which continues to bear the name "New Scotland Yard," the fourth location to do so.

Have a look at the pool of water with the eternal flame commemorating officers of the Metropolitan Police Service who have died in service.

Don't miss the bust of Sir Robert Peel known as the Father of Modern Policing. It was in 1829 that Peel established the Metropolitan Police Force for London. The 1,000 constables employed were affectionately nicknamed 'Bobbies' or, somewhat less affectionately, 'Peelers' after their founder. Although unpopular at first, they proved very successful in cutting crime in London, and, by 1857, all cities in Britain were obliged to form their own police forces.

The bust is framed with his words, 'The Police are the public and the public are the police'.

The famous rotating sign for New Scotland Yard ends this tour.