



Press Information: For Immediate Release

Famous Figures from Chinatown's History

Chinatown is an integral part of London's history: haunt of Boswell and Reynolds, birthplace of the post office, first site of Ronnie Scott's, host to immigrant communities from the Huguenots to the Maltese and now London's vibrant Chinese quarter. Here's a look at five people who've featured prominently in Chinatown's history.

Edmund Burke: statesman, political theorist and philosopher

Burke served for many years throughout the 18th century in the British House of Commons as a member of the Whig party, and is chiefly remembered for his support of the American colonies in the dispute with King George III that led to the American Revolution and for his strong opposition to the French Revolution. Burke also published philosophical work on aesthetics, founded political review *The Annual Register* and is often regarded as the father of Anglo-American conservatism. He lived at 37, Gerrard Street.

John Dryden: poet

John Dryden was an influential 17th century poet, literary critic, translator and playwright who dominated the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as the Age of Dryden. He lived at 43, Gerrard Street and is buried in Westminster Abbey's famous Poet's Corner.

The Detection Club: authors

The Detection Club was a group of famous 1920s murder-mystery authors that included Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, G.K. Chesterton, Freeman Wills Crofts, Arthur Morrison, and Ronald Knox. The club would meet at 31 Gerrard Street for dinners and to help each other with technical aspects in their individual writings. Members of the club stuck to a code of ethics in their writing which obliged them to give the readers of their books a fair chance at guessing the guilty party.

Sir Joshua Reynolds: artist

Reynolds, the most important and influential of the 18th century English painters, lived on the site of the modern-day Swiss Centre in the 18th century. He specialised in painting flattering portraits of dignitaries – many of which can be seen in the nearby National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square.

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Kate Meyrick: hostess

Kate Meyrick became a notorious figure on the London nightclub scene after arriving from Ireland at the end of the First World War. She opened 43, a late night jazz club at 43 Gerrard Street which was hugely popular with the raffish end of high society. Meyrick was prosecuted several times for breaching the licensing laws (and once for bribing policemen to ignore those same laws) but she was most notorious for authoring a book, *Secrets of the 43*, which exposed the activities of some of her famous clientele and was banned immediately upon release.

For further information or to arrange a guided tour, please contact Ed Fleming or Chris Pilbeam

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