

= Whitehall =

Whitehall is a road in the City of Westminster , Central London , which forms the first part of the A3212 road from Trafalgar Square to Chelsea . It is the main thoroughfare running south from Trafalgar Square towards Parliament Square . The street is recognised as the centre of Her Majesty 's Government 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 a metonym for British central governmental administration , and the geographic name for the surrounding area .

The name was taken from the Palace of Whitehall that was the residence of Kings Henry VIII through to William III , before its destruction by fire in 1698 ; only the Banqueting House survived . Whitehall was originally a wide road that led to the front of the palace ; the route to the south was widened in the 18th century following the destruction of the palace .

As well as government buildings , the street is known for its memorial statues and monuments , including Britain 's primary war memorial , the Cenotaph . The Whitehall Theatre , now the Trafalgar Studios , has been a popular place for farce comedies since the mid @-@ 20th century .

= = Geography and name = =

The name Whitehall was used for several buildings in the Tudor period . It either referred to a building made of light stone , or as a general term for any festival building . This included the Royal Palace of Whitehall , which in turn gave its name to the street .

The street is about 0 @. @ 4 miles ( 0 @. @ 64 km ) long and runs through the City of Westminster . It is part of the A3212 , a main road in Central London that leads towards Chelsea via the Houses of Parliament and Vauxhall Bridge . It runs south from Trafalgar Square , past numerous government buildings , including the old War Office building , Horse Guards , the Ministry of Defence , the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health . It ends at the Cenotaph , the road ahead being Parliament Street . Great Scotland Yard and Horse Guards Avenue branch off to the east , while Downing Street branches off to the west at the southern section of the street .

The nearest tube stations are Charing Cross at the north end , and Westminster at the south . Numerous London bus routes run along Whitehall , including 12 , 24 , 53 , 88 , 159 and 453 .

= = History = =

There has been a route connecting Charing Cross to Westminster since the Middle Ages ; the 12th @-@ century historian William Fitzstephen described it as " a continued suburb , mingled with large and beautiful gardens , and orchards belonging to the citizens " . The name Whitehall was originally only used for the section of road between Charing Cross and Holbein Gate ; beyond this it was known as The Street as far as King Street Gate , then King Street thereafter . It had become a residential street by the 16th century , and had become a popular place to live by the 17th , with residents including Lord Howard of Effingham and Edmund Spenser .

The Palace of Whitehall , to the east of the road , was originally named York Palace , but was renamed during the reign of Henry VIII . The palace was redesigned in 1531 ? 32 and became the King 's main residence later in the decade . He married Ann Boleyn here in 1533 , followed by Jane Seymour in 1536 , and died at the palace in 1547 . Charles I owned an extensive art collection at the palace and several of William Shakespeare 's plays had their first performances here . It ceased to be a royal residence after 1689 , when William III moved to Kensington Palace . The palace was damaged by fire in 1691 , following which the front entrance was redesigned by Sir Christopher Wren . In 1698 , most of the palace burned to the ground owing to an accident started by a careless washerwoman .

Wallingford House was constructed in 1572 by William Knollys , 1st Earl of Banbury along the western edge of Whitehall . It was subsequently used by Charles I. During the reign of William III , it was bought for the Admiralty . The Old Admiralty Buildings now sit on the house 's site .

Banqueting House was built as an extension to the Palace of Whitehall in 1622 by Inigo Jones . It is the only surviving portion of the palace after it was burned down , and was the first Renaissance building in London . It later became a museum to the Royal United Services Institute and has been opened to the public since 1963 .

Oliver Cromwell moved to the street in 1647 , taking up residence in Wallingford House . Two years later , Charles I 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 Banqueting House . He made a brief speech there before being beheaded . Cromwell died at the Palace of Whitehall in 1658 .

During the Great Plague of London in 1665 , people boarded coaches at Whitehall , then at the edge of urban London , in an attempt to escape . The King and court temporarily moved to Oxford to avoid the plague , while Samuel Pepys remarked in his diary on 29 June , " By water to Whitehall , where the Court is full of waggons and people ready to go out of town . This end of town every day grows very bad with plague " .

By the 18th century , traffic was struggling along the narrow streets south of Holbein Gate , which led to King Street Gate being demolished in 1723 . Holbein Gate , in turn , was demolished in 1759 . Meanwhile , Parliament Street was a side road alongside the palace which led to the Palace of Westminster . After the Palace of Whitehall was destroyed , Parliament Street was widened to match Whitehall 's width . The present appearance of the street dates from 1899 after a group of houses between Downing Street and Great George Street were destroyed .

= = Government buildings = =

By the time the palace was destroyed , separation of crown and state had become important , with Parliament being necessary to control military requirements and pass laws . The government wanted to be some distance from the monarch , and the buildings around Whitehall , physically separated from St James 's Palace by St James 's Park , seemed to be a good place for ministers to work .

The Horse Guards building was designed by William Kent , and built during the 1750s on a former tiltyard site , replacing an earlier guard @-@ house erected during the Civil War . The building includes an archway for coach traffic and two pedestrian arches that provide access between Whitehall and Horse Guards Parade . The central archway is marked with " SMF " and " StMW " , and denotes the boundary between St Martin 's in the Fields and St Margaret 's church parish boundaries .

During the 19th century , as private leases ran out on residential buildings , ownership reverted to the Crown , which began to use them as public offices . The name " Whitehall " is now used as a metonym to refer to that part of the civil service which is involved in the government of the United Kingdom . The street 's central portion is dominated by military buildings , including the Ministry of Defence , with the former headquarters of the British Army and Royal Navy , the Royal United Services Institute , the Horse Guards building and the Admiralty , on the opposite side . Government buildings on Whitehall , from north to south , include the The Admiralty Buildings ( Foreign and Commonwealth Office , others ) , the Department for International Development at No. 22 , the Department of Energy and Climate Change at No. 55 , the Old War Office , the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel at No. 36 , the Horse Guards , the Ministry of Defence main building , Dover House ( containing the Scotland Office ) , Gwydyr House ( containing the Wales Office ) , the Cabinet Office at No. 70 , the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Government Offices Great George Street ( HM Treasury , HM Revenue and Customs and parts of the Cabinet Office ) .

Scotland Yard , the headquarters of London 's Metropolitan Police Service , was originally located in Great Scotland Yard off the north @-@ eastern end of Whitehall . The buildings had been lodgings for the Kings of Scotland , on part of the old Palace of Whitehall 's grounds ; by the 19th century , Little and Middle Scotland Yard had been merged into Whitehall Place , leaving only Great Scotland Yard . No. 4 Whitehall Place had become vacant by the 1820s , which allowed Sir Robert Peel to use it as the main headquarters when forming the police in 1829 . It was formally named the

Metropolitan Police Office , but became quickly known as Great Scotland Yard , and eventually Scotland Yard . The buildings were damaged in a series of bombings by Irish Nationalists in 1883 , and an explosion from a Fenian terrorist attack on 30 May 1884 blew a hole in Scotland Yard 's outer wall and destroyed the neighbouring Rising Sun pub . The headquarters was moved away from Whitehall in 1890 .

Downing Street leads off the south @-@ west end of Whitehall , just above Parliament Street . It was named after Sir George Downing , who built a row of houses along the street around 1680 leading west from Whitehall . Following a number of terrorist attacks , the road was closed to the public in 1990 , when security gates were erected at both ends . On 7 February 1991 , the Provisional IRA fired mortars from a van parked in Whitehall towards No. 10 , one of which exploded in the gardens .

Additional security measures have been put in place along Whitehall to protect government buildings , following a £ 25 million streetscape project undertaken by Westminster City Council . The project has provided wider pavements and better lighting , along with installing hundreds of concrete and steel security barriers .

Richmond House , at No. 79 , has held the Department of Health since 1987 . The building is scheduled to be a temporary debating chamber from 2020 , while the Houses of Parliament undergo a £ 7 billion refurbishment and modernisation programme .

### = = Memorials = =

A number of statues and memorials have been built on and around Whitehall , commemorating military victories and leaders . The Cenotaph was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and erected at the southern end in 1919 , commemorating victory in World War I and later used as a memorial for both World Wars . It is the main war memorial in Britain and an annual service is held here on Remembrance Sunday , led by the reigning monarch and leading politicians . In 2005 a national Monument to the Women of World War II was erected a short distance north of the Cenotaph in the middle of the Whitehall carriageway .

The Royal Tank Regiment Memorial is at the north east end of Whitehall , where Whitehall Court meets Whitehall Place . Erected in 2000 , it commemorates the use of tanks in both World Wars and depicts five World War II tank crew members . The Gurkha Memorial is to the south of this , on Horse Guards Avenue to the east of Whitehall .

Whitehall is also home to six other monuments . From north to south , these are of Prince George , Duke of Cambridge ( Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the British Army ) , Liberal Party , Liberal Unionist Party and Unionists leader Spencer Cavendish , 8th Duke of Devonshire , Douglas Haig , 1st Earl Haig ( known as the Earl Haig Memorial ) , Field Marshal Montgomery ( commander of the 8th Army , the 21st Army Group and Chief of the Imperial General Staff ) , William Slim , 1st Viscount Slim , Commander of the 14th Army and Governor @-@ General of Australia , and Alan Brooke , 1st Viscount Alanbrooke , Chief of the Imperial General Staff .

### = = Culture = =

The Whitehall Theatre opened in 1930 at the north west end of the street , on a site that had previously been Ye Old Ship Tavern in the 17th century . The revue Whitehall Follies opened in 1942 , which drew controversy over its explicit content featuring the stripper and actress Phyllis Dixey . The theatre became known for its farces , reviving a tradition on Whitehall that had begun with court jesters at the palace during the 16th century . These included several plays featuring actor @-@ manager Brian Rix throughout the 1950s and 60s , and 1981 's satirical Anyone for Denis , written by John Wells and Private Eye editor Richard Ingrams . The venue was Grade II listed in 1996 , and renamed the Trafalgar Studios in 2004 .

Because of its importance as a centre of British government , several political comedies are based in and around Whitehall . These include the BBC 's Yes Minister and The Thick of It .

Whitehall is one of three purple squares on the British Monopoly board , along with Pall Mall and

Northumberland Avenue . All three streets converge at Trafalgar Square .