

LSE, the movie

The paving of LSE is almost complete. All those who thought that the round of excavations, the digging and the re-digging, the trenches outside the bookshop, the deep pits outside the Student Services Centre, were part of the School's secret search for oil, so that we could buy up the whole of the Aldwych, have been disappointed. No raw materials of mass enrichment have yet been found. But the new patio-ed LSE has reminded us how pleasant it can be to walk, and to stroll, and just to dawdle and look. A pedestrian LSE gives time for both solitary thought and sociable conversation.

And anyone who, encouraged by the pleasures of walking, strolls north into Lincoln's Inn Fields will have noticed how often it is full of large white vans with names such as 'On Screen Canteen', 'Bars for Stars' and 'Charismatic Corgis'. Together with the wavy lines of plastic cones suspending parking, and the trestle tables with salads on plastic plates, it all indicates that, once again, filming is under way. Lincoln's Inn Fields is very popular with film companies. Indeed, anyone whose knowledge of London was derived solely from the cinema would get the impression that the city is made up almost entirely of a large leafy square and a maze of Georgian, fragmentary medieval and mock Gothic courtyards, interspersed with bandstands and netball players.

But even the most conservative location managers will occasionally look a bit further afield, and those of them who, over the years, have grown a bit tired of Lincoln's Inn Fields have noticed that, in the next street, there is another enticing potential set. Between Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Aldwych lies an undiscovered wealth of locations: Clement's Inn, the Students' Union shop, the Anchorage and the Norman Foster library.

Every year from October onwards, members of the School, and visitors and returning alumni, may notice large numbers of expensively dressed, colour coordinated young people moving around Houghton Street, standing talking outside the union shop and the neighbouring pubs, moving in starling-like collective flocks of individuals at around the chiming of each hour, and even, in small surreptitious groups, grasping cigarettes



around peripheral doorways. To add a convincing student touch, some of the extras will be apparently sightless, bumping into each other as they concentrate, to the exclusion of all material obstacles, on their mobile phones. The keen eared passerby will be able to catch snatches of the script: 'I can't, I've got three presentations due in by four o'clock. I'll see you tomorrow.' Or 'Have to go now, the lecture's just starting' or 'Well, that's the last time I'm opening my mouth in her seminar!'

Every now and then two or three older extras, or possibly even older actors, since they are speaking quite a lot, will hurry through the throng, frowning and muttering, projecting a sense of serious engagement with relevant problems. You may even think you recognise one if he or she has more than a few lines. That slightly plump bloke with a bow tie, who just said 'Finish his

thesis? He couldn't even download one from the Downing Street website! Didn't you see him two weeks ago in *East Enders*? And that sharply dressed young man over there – the one looking a bit like an estate agent, and saying 'Yes, but when can you get the data out? I'm meeting them in Rome on Tuesday' – wasn't he a waiter in *Inspector Morse* last year? And what about the rather short, bouncy one – 'So I told him I couldn't possibly speak to anyone who just happened to ring me. He'd have to talk to my PEE AYE' – *Playschool* was it?

It will, of course, all be entirely fictional. Wait for a moment, and you will hear 'Action!' and they'll all repeat the scenes you have just been watching. None of them will be real. Don't be taken in. ■

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