

# LSE in time

THE SOCIETY OF AUTHORS, ON BEHALF OF THE ESTATE OF BERNARD SHAW

◀ In December, LSE posted an interactive Timeline on its website and asked for posts on characters, events or even an “impact” that should be recorded and honoured. **Maddy Wall** offers a selection of these varied posts.



1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

## ➤ An unsung heroine of LSE – Charlotte Payne Townshend

Accounts of LSE's early years are dominated by the four people staying at Borough Farm in August 1894 when Sidney Webb first outlined a “London school of economics and political science”. Charlotte Payne Townshend is often overlooked, but she had a vital role during LSE's early years.

Townshend was an Irish heiress who joined the Fabian Society after meeting Beatrice and Sidney Webb in 1895. That year, she was invited to holiday with the Webbs, Graham Wallas and George Bernard Shaw in Suffolk, becoming particularly close to Shaw. After the trip, Beatrice wrote of Charlotte:

“By temperament she is an anarchist – feeling any regulation or rule is intolerable – a tendency which has been exaggerated by her intolerable wealth. Sweet tempered, sympathetic and genuinely anxious to increase the world's enjoyment and diminish the world's pain.”

A generous donor of her time and money, Charlotte secured LSE's first home at 10 Adelphi Terrace in 1896, making it affordable by sub-letting the top two floors and leaving the rest of the building for the School. A member of the School's Advisory Board, which in 1901 applied to the Board of Trade to become a company, she also served as a governor and was a regular source of funding. She donated £1,000 towards the Library's establishment and was one of its first trustees alongside R B Haldane.

Following the Suffolk holiday, Shaw and Charlotte grew ever closer and in 1898 they married at the Covent Garden Registry Office, spending their

honeymoon in Hindhead, where Charlotte supported Shaw as he recovered from necrosis of the bone.

Charlotte continued to serve as a governor after LSE's final move to Houghton Street and established a trust for a research studentship. Her last major donation was £1,000 for general literature, which was the seed of the Shaw Library, now in the Old Building. So the next time you have a quiet sit in a Shaw Library armchair or enjoy a concert in the Founders Room, remember Charlotte Shaw and her steady, self-effacing support for LSE.

## ➤ Poetry for a nation – Minnie Louise Haskins

In his 1939 Christmas broadcast to the Empire, George VI quoted the preamble to an obscure poem which included the lines: “Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.” It struck a chord with a nation facing the uncertainty of war, and the author of the 1908 poem, *God Knows*, was soon revealed as Minnie Haskins, a retired LSE academic.

Born near Bristol in 1875, Haskins studied informally at the city's University College while volunteering for the local Congregational Church. By 1903, she was working in Lambeth for the Springfield Hall Wesleyan Methodist mission and four years later travelled to the Zenana mission to women in Madras. In 1912, she published a volume of poetry to raise funds, including *God Knows* with the preamble which would be broadcast to the nation decades later.

Returning to England in 1915, Haskins ran a munitions workers' hostel in Woolwich before supervising labour management in an east London factory. She also found time to publish a second volume of poetry, *The Potter*, in 1918. That year, Haskins came to LSE to study for the Social Science Certificate under Agatha Harrison, the first British academic devoted to industrial welfare. From 1919 to 1939 she was a tutor in the Social Science Department, where the senior tutor described her as “a woman of unusual capacity and character”. Closely involved with the establishment of the Institute of Industrial Welfare Workers, now the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, in 1921 Haskins published *Foundations of Industrial Welfare*, while still writing novels and poetry.

After retiring once in 1939, Haskins returned to LSE during the second world war, leaving for a final time in 1944. She died in Tunbridge Wells in 1957, but her words live on inscribed on the George VI memorial chapel in Windsor and in a window at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy. Her poem was also read at the funeral of the Queen Mother in 2002.

## ➤ A life of service – Sir John Burgh

The young Karl Hans Schweinburg arrived in Britain from Vienna just months before the outbreak of the second world war, separated from his family and unable to speak the language. Over the next 50 years he became a highly respected figure in British politics, being appointed Director-General of the British Council in 1980, then knighted two years later. And

Charlotte Shaw



*"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."*

Minnie Louise Haskins (pictured left)



Sir John Burgh



Dalai Lama



Aung San Suu Kyi



1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

the remarkable journey of Sir John Burgh, as he was then known, took its first turn into public life at LSE.

After working in air munitions during the war's final years, Burgh came to study economics at LSE in 1946, following the School's return to London from its wartime base in Cambridge. Under the influence of Professor Harold Laski, he soon changed courses to study government and won a scholarship to become a full-time student.

The post-war campus was a tad dingy, but the company at LSE was lively. With his friend Bernard Levin, Burgh became part of The Seminar, a group which met each week to discuss politics. He was also elected Student Union president in 1949. Burgh enjoyed university life, and remained involved with the School after graduating, as chair of the Library Panel and as a governor from 1980 to 2004, serving as Chairman of Governors in 1985 during a testing time for universities with questions over budgets and academic tenure.

After graduating in 1950, Burgh worked for Barbara Castle at the Board of Trade on controversial proposals addressing industrial relations which often faced strong opposition from trade unions. Other public roles followed, and in 1980 he was appointed Director-General of the British Council, which he led through a difficult period of budget cuts while retaining the support of his staff. His expert knowledge of government was of great help to LSE during his long service as a governor; other roles, such as lead judge of the Bernard Levin award for aspiring journalists, meant that Burgh's powerful intellect continued to contribute to the School long after his studies ended.

He died of pneumonia in 2013.

## Two Nobel Peace Prize winners in two days

On consecutive days in June 2012, LSE hosted two high-profile statespeople: Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese democracy campaigner, who had spent much of her life under house arrest, was visiting the UK for the first time in 24 years and made her trip's first public speech at LSE. There was a standing ovation from the Peacock Theatre audience, with live coverage across many news channels. LSE Director Judith Rees reminded everyone that it was Aung San Suu Kyi's 67th birthday, a double celebration as it was a birthday in freedom. The crowd sang "Happy Birthday" and Professor Rees noted: "It's a tribute not just to you but to all those who have campaigned for freedom in Burma." There was also a surprise present – a photograph of her late father taken in London in 1947 – and an LSE baseball cap, a traditional gift for visiting leaders, which she put on immediately. The event ended with a student asking Aung San Suu Kyi how she had continued campaigning. She answered: "It's all of you, and people like you, who give me the strength to continue. And I suppose I have a stubborn streak in me."

The following day, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited LSE to open a conference exploring tolerance. Spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, in 2011 Tenzin Gyatso completed the democratisation of the Central Tibetan Administration by devolving all his political authorities to the elected leadership. He was awarded

the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 in recognition of his opposition to violence in the Tibetan struggle and his work internationally for peace and human rights. He spoke to another packed audience about overcoming intolerance, saying: "Everyone has every right to happiness", before also receiving the customary LSE baseball cap.

Two days, two towering figures of the modern era, and thousands of people who will remember what was said for the rest of their lives: days like those remind us that LSE is quite unlike anywhere else. ■



**Maddy Wall** is an assistant press officer at LSE.

To see the other posts which have made it onto the Timeline, and to add your own account of a character, event or "impact" which you think should be recorded for posterity, visit the website at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory>. If you would like support in writing a post, the LSE Archivist, Sue Donnelly, will be on hand at this year's LSE Alumni Reunion Weekend from 11 to 12 July.