



Janet Reuter

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A whole day history and shopping in London!

The ladies who are going to England in May have a chance to spend a day shopping in London. However, this is not just about buying things, this is about history, art, textiles and fashion in some of the most unique stores in the world. So where do you start off first. **Harrods of course!**

Harrods of Knightsbridge.



The history of this famous luxury store goes back to **1849** when Charles Henry Harrod opened a grocery shop at Brompton Road in Knightsbridge, at the time a small village just outside London. Just two years later, the Great Exhibition of **1851**, which took place at Crystal Palace in nearby Hyde Park, brought many visitors to the area. Knightsbridge and Harrods new store boomed as a result of the visitors coming into this area for the first time.

As is often the case Harrod's son (also named Charles) saw great future opportunities and took over and quickly expanded the store, at the time known as 'Harrods Stores'. His business was based not on the luxury goods and clients of today, but on selling good quality at a low price to anyone who had the money to buy. The store's up-market business model would follow much later.

In **1883**, during the build-up to the busy Christmas sales season, calamity struck as a fire burnt the store down to the ground. In typical fashion, Charles turned the disaster into an opportunity to build the shop afresh, extend the departments and modernise the layout. He fulfilled every Christmas order on time using temporary premises across the road together with the hard work of his staff. His reputation and that of the store was now reaching a new higher level.

By the end of the century, Charles was the father of eight grown-up children. Despite this, there was no one able to take over the thriving business. So Charles decided to retire and the business was sold. Forty years of Harrods control of the store came to an end and a Limited Company was formed, with the first of a series of Burbidge family members in charge.

The sale proved to be yet another boost to the development of the future store. By **1912** the surrounding properties had been acquired and the shell of the present building had been built which survives to this day. The future was rosy, as a dynasty of Burbidge owners was to take the store into the future. They also installed London's first escalator, in **1898**. This was very controversial, a moving staircase was very revolutionary and a bit frightening but a great new attraction for the store. The enormous array of products became more and more impressive. The company's motto which is engraved on the building's pediment is **Omnia, Omnibus, Ubique** -Everything, for everyone, everywhere. You could purchase anything from historic eighteenth-century dinner plates or exquisite caviar to giant teddy bears. Later in **1917** a pet department was opened. This department sold all kinds of animals, from domestic to exotic pets. Some of the world's most exotic animals were sold there, such as lions, tigers, elephants, and panthers. The son of the king and queen of Albania bought an elephant in **1967** and presented it to Ronald Reagan as a gift. The department stopped selling exotic animals in **1976** and was fully closed in **2014**. However, you can still buy luxury accessories for your pets! Especially the green Harrods doggy collars and raincoats.

The success of Harrods attracted a number of other entrepreneurs to Knightsbridge, resulting in an upmarket shopping district with nearby luxury stores such as Harvey Nichols and Burberry. Sloane Street, one of the most famous shopping streets in London, is just around the corner.

Harrods food halls with 18 departments are the greatest attraction. You need only to buy a small packet of tea and you get a traditional green Harrods bag! But hopefully no longer in plastic! Harrods however, has no more Royal Warrants as suppliers to the Royal Household.

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History and Shopping Tour continued

The most beautiful store in London is **Fortnum & Mason** of Piccadilly! **History and shopping!**



The luxury store Fortnum & Mason, founded in **1707** in Duke Street, London, was the very first to realise the business potential of supplying for the needs for the rich Londoners of the time.

The story began in **1705** when Hugh Mason had a small store in St James Market and a spare room in his house, and the Fortnum family who had arrived in London as high class builders reinvigorating Mayfair in the wake of the Great Fire in **1666**, rented a room from him. William Fortnum, who was quite the entrepreneur, also took a post as Footman in Queen Anne's household. Fortnum's ingenious idea for selling Queen Anne's half used wax candles, at a profit, to the palace staff, paved the way for the beginning of a profitable and respectable business when the two men went into partnership. This partnership was

the foundation of the luxury store in Piccadilly, that we know today, although it took two more generations and a lot of clever business thinking before it really got going.

In **1761** Charles Fortnum, the grandson of William got a post as a Footman of George III and Queen Charlotte. Now there were not only candles to be sold to the staff but also food, coal, house linen and wine. It was not only St. James's Palace servants who bought from him but he sold to all the great private houses that had sprung up around the palace. The store in Piccadilly was booming and ready to take on the fast growing trade of selling to the local nobility who were keen on lavish home entertaining. Home delivery became a great success as it included all the fine essentials to make a dinner party special and very individual.

The Ready to Eat business went on developing into the 19th century and the store opened a special department to look after the needs of all the exclusive men's clubs in London. Extremely fine luncheons or dinners could also be brought in to keep the Members of Parliament and those judges and barristers working in the High Courts happy. Then there were the official royal ceremonies. Queen Victoria's review of the 6.000 troops in Hyde Park attracted many visitors and especially the Great Exhibition of **1851**. This was a vast project initiated and partly organized by Albert the Prince Consort. This event brought swarms of foreign visitors to London who wanted to have the pleasure of good food while attending these outdoor events.

Fortnum & Mason became a household name. It received great praise and free advertising from Charles Dickens who was a regular customer in the store and who ordered food hampers for all the great horse racing events that he loved to attend.

The 19th century saw the start of the **Edwardian Age**. The long and somewhat quiet Victorian time had come to an end. High society was having a splendid time. After Queen Victoria died and her son **Edward VII** took over the throne London became the most pleasure loving city in the world beating all previous records in the number of parties, great balls and picnics. Fortnum & Mason provided everything, food, wine, flowers, table wear and decorations, chefs, butlers and footmen. The store flourished even during the 1st World War. After the war the store was completely newly developed and new departments for ladies, gentlemen and children's fashions, kitchen ware, perfumes and beauty products were opened. Everything wrapped in the exclusive soft turquoise green trade mark colour, even the smallest thing is beautifully wrapped.

Today you can buy anything which is expensive and exclusive and the store has many **Royal Warrants**. It is wonderful just to visit or to take the time to enjoy a very special afternoon tea in the **Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon** opened by the Queen in **2012**. Very, very, special!!!!

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The next stop in the History and Shopping Tour is **Liberty**. This store really is the epitome of the close relationship between art, design and shopping and has a very long tradition of keeping up its extremely high aesthetic standards.



When the adventurous founder Arthur Lasenby Liberty laid plans for a London emporium filled with luxuries and fabrics from distant lands, his dream was to metaphorically dock a ship in the city streets. To this day, a voyage of discovery awaits on the good ship Liberty, with history hidden amongst six floors of cutting-edge design, and beautiful products from the world's most creative designers and craftspeople. In **1875**, Arthur borrowed **£2,000** from his future father-in-law and took a building on Regent Street, London with just three dedicated staff and plenty of ambition. "I was determined not to follow existing fashions but to create new ones." he said.

Liberty's collection of ornaments, fabric and objets d'art from around the world proved irresistible to a society intoxicated at the time by Japan and the East. Liberty was responsible for social change in interior design and dress, so much so that the Art Nouveau period in Italy is called 'Liberty Style'. Within eighteen months the loan was repaid. **Oscar Wilde** said at the time "Liberty is the chosen resort of the artistic shopper." It was a cultural haunt for the artistic and creative London society.

Arthur Liberty worked closely with the artists and designers of the Arts and Crafts movement and the Pre Raphaelite painters. It was this relationship which founded the first ranges of "Liberty Art Colours" dyed silk fabrics in **1885**. Most famously, the Victorian Liberty worked with **William Morris** who designed Liberty's best-known prints. These prints for fashion and furnishings were designed at Morris's Dovecot studios and printed or woven at Morris's Merton Abbey workshops in Wimbledon, south London. The first wave of interest in Liberty fabrics coincided with the **Artistic Dress Movement**, which saw women loosen corsets, bodices and waistlines in favour of the billowing, free-flowing styles whose influence could be seen decades later when in the 1970s hippies brought the Liberty print back into fashion and it was wonderful, I remember it so well !!!!

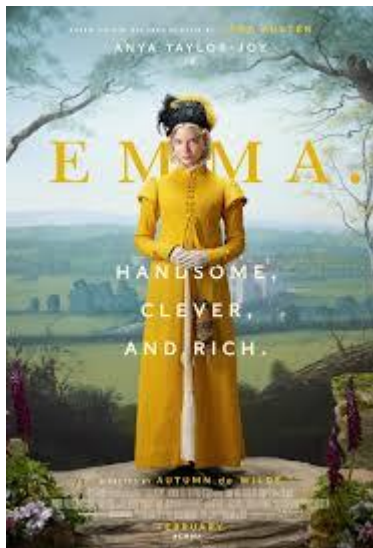
In Morris' days, art and fashion were inextricably linked, with women encouraged to seek inspiration for the new styles in Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic paintings, which in turn were filled with references to Medieval Europe and Ancient Greece. A romantic return to the past.

A realisation of Arthur's original vision of bringing a ship into the high street, followed in **1924** when the Great Marlborough Street shop was built from the timbers of two ancient 'three-decker' battle ships. Records show more than 24,000 cubic feet of ships timbers were used including their decks now being the shop flooring. The HMS Impregnable - built from 3040,100-year-old oaks from the New Forest and the HMS Hindustan, which measured the length and height of the Liberty building. The **1920s** was a time of **Tudor Revival**, this time was considered to be the most crafted English architectural style. The new shop was built around three atriums and designed to feel like a home, each atrium was surrounded by smaller rooms, complete with fireplaces and furnishings. Arthur Liberty had a furniture workshop in Archway, London, which produced Liberty Arts and Crafts furniture and the intricately carved panels and pillars found throughout the store. The craftsmen allowed his fantasy, ensuring every ornament was a one-off design. Sadly, Arthur died seven years before the building's completion and so he never saw his dream realised. But his statue stands proudly at the Flower Shop entrance to welcome customers into his emporium. The building is now a heritage listed London icon and of course offers afternoon tea to enjoy in this unique setting. This is my favourite store in the whole world!

March 2020

News about and for the English ladies

There is a bright and colourful new film to start off the Spring.



This beautiful new film **Emma** is a comedy based on the fourth novel by **Jane Austen**, published in three volumes in **1815**. Set in **Highbury**, England, in the early **19th century**, the novel centres on **Emma Woodhouse**, a precocious young woman whose confidence in her matchmaking abilities causes several romantic misadventures. Although she is convinced she will never marry, Emma believes she is an excellent matchmaker. Emma is indeed beautiful, wealthy, and clever. However, she is also spoiled, meddling, and self-deluded. Marriage and status are the two themes of **Emma** as in most of the drama in Austen's novels and revolves around who loves whom and what that means in regard to their social status. Usually it is the mother in the family who risks everything to get her daughters into a good marriage, knowing that only male relations can inherit on their fathers death. This new version is a visual triumph. The costumes are so beautifully designed to represent the fashion of the early 19th century. This was a time of the **Empire style** a sort of undress and informal fashion in the aftermath of

the **French Revolution**. At this time nobody wanted to appear to be too aristocratic, no more wigs, heavy brocades and over powdered faces! The dresses were of soft flowing silks or country cottons, high waisted with full flowing long skirts. No corsets! Short tailored jackets or floor length coats over these flimsy dresses were worn outside to keep the ladies warm and give a slightly more formal look. The film locations are like a splendid tour of Britain's highlights. The village of Highbury is really **Lower Slaughter** in the Cotswolds, where time has stood still. The house locations include **Wilton House** near Salisbury, a 16th -17th century house with a remarkable art collection. This house was used to film the interiors of Buckingham Palace for the serial *The Crown*. **Kingston Bagpaize** near Oxford was also used to film many of the interiors for the serial *Downton Abbey*. **File Place**, the home of the Gage family for over 500 years is a 15th century chateau style house remodelled in Georgian style standing in 300 acres of the South Downs in Sussex. The Elizabethan Manor, **Chavenge House** near Tetbury, Gloucestershire is also in the film. So all that is left to say is, enjoy every minute!

FANTASTIC WOMEN. SURREAL WORLDS FROM MERET OPPENHEIM TO FRIDA KAHLO, 13 FEBRUARY 2020 – 24 MAY 2020

Goddess, she-devil, doll, fetish, nymph, or wonderful dream creature.

Women were the central subject matter of Surrealist male fantasies. Female artists were mostly only accepted as models or partners of the male painters. This exhibition shows 360 works of 34 women artists who were producing their own response to the Surrealist art movement. More about this to come!



Birthdays in March

Martina Wätzold,

Bruni Wesenberg,

Uta Schöllner

Happy Birthday Ladies !!

