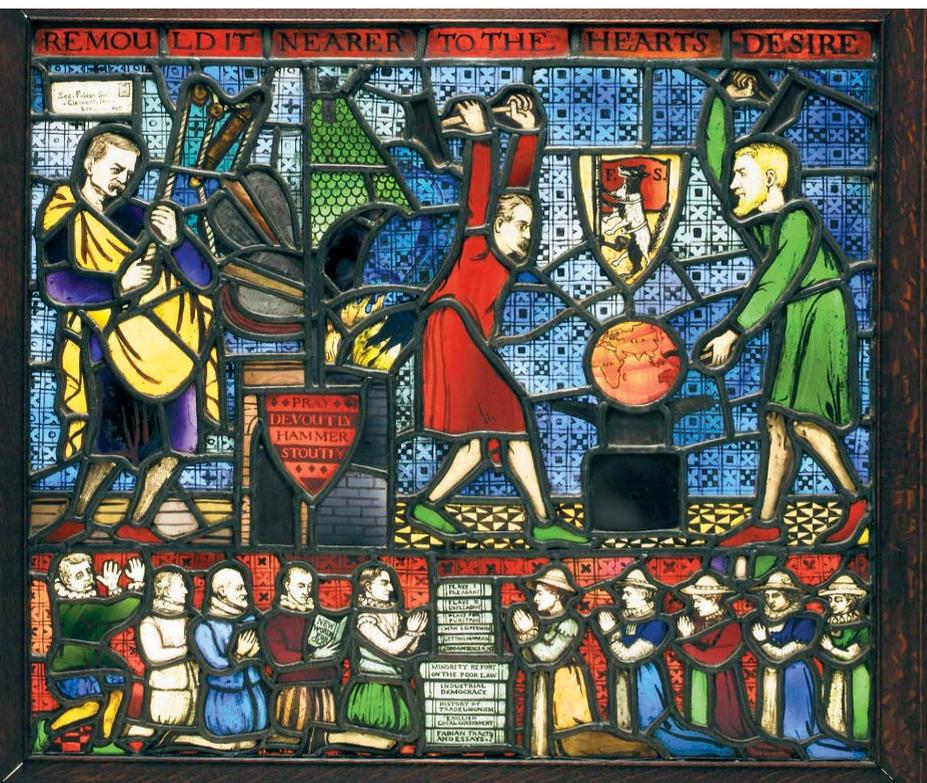


# The Fabian window



A piece of Fabian history was installed in the School this April.

Prime minister Tony Blair officially unveiled the window, originally commissioned and designed by George Bernard Shaw, which will sit alongside the famous Nicholson picture of Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the Shaw Library.

The Fabian window was made by stained glass artist Caroline Townshend in 1910, commissioned by Shaw, a founder member of the Fabian Society. It shows Shaw, Sidney Webb and ER Pease, secretary of the Fabian Society, helping to build 'the new world'. The figures are in Elizabethan dress which was to poke fun at Pease who evidently loved everything medieval.

The Fabian Society's coat of arms is shown as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The people grouped at the bottom were leading members of the Society, most of them members of the Fabian executive, with on the far left, HG Wells, who is seen 'cocking a snook' – evidently a reference to his unsuccessful battle with Shaw and Webb for control of the Society. Third from the left is Aylmer Maude, well known for being a translator of Tolstoy, and, on the far right, Caroline Townshend, who produced the window.

The window was unveiled at Beatrice Webb House, near Dorking, when the house was formally opened as a conference venue on 13 September

1947 by the then prime minister Clement Attlee (an LSE lecturer 1912-23).

The window was subsequently stolen from the house in 1978 and surfaced in Phoenix, Arizona, soon after, but then disappeared until it suddenly reappeared for sale at Sotheby's in July 2005. The Webb Memorial Trust purchased it and they have now loaned it long term to LSE.

## The Fabian Society

The Fabian Society is Britain's leading centre left think tank and political society. Founded in 1884, early members included George Bernard Shaw, the Webbs, Emmeline Pankhurst and HG Wells. The Society joined with trade unionists in 1900 to found the Labour Party, to which it has remained affiliated ever since. Fabian pamphlets first proposed a minimum wage in 1906, the National Health Service in 1911, and the abolition of hereditary peers in 1917.

Today the Fabian Society has a national membership of over 6,000 plus 65 local societies around the UK. The theme of the first Fabian pamphlet, *Why are the Many Poor?*, remains central, with current research focused on ending child poverty and narrowing inequalities in life chances. See [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)

## Fabian and Labour archives at LSE

During the early years of the Labour Party, the famous socialist couple Sidney and Beatrice Webb believed that working with the Liberals and Conservatives was the most effective way to create a fairer society. However, by the 1910s they had abandoned this idea of 'permeation' and started to work more closely with the Labour Party. As Beatrice wrote in her diary in December 1912: '...the Labour Party exists and we have to work with it. A poor thing, but our own.'

Sidney Webb helped draft Labour's constitution, including 'Clause 4'; he was Labour MP for Seaham, 1922-29; and, he served in the first two Labour governments, 1924 and 1929-31. In the 1930s the couple distanced themselves from the Labour Party and concentrated on writing, speaking and broadcasting.

The Webbs' archive at LSE, the Passfield papers (so named as Sidney was created Lord Passfield in 1929) contains 126 boxes of material relating to the Webbs' political, professional and personal lives.

## The Webb Memorial Trust

The Trust was established in 1944 as a memorial to Beatrice Webb. Trustees at the time included Walter Citrine, Richard Tawney and Harold Laski. The Trust's first act was to obtain a substantial mortgage from the Transport and General Workers Union to purchase a large Victorian country house near Dorking in Surrey and rename it Beatrice Webb House. It became a resource to further the education and organisational skills of bodies involved in the Labour movement and was widely used by the Labour Party, the Fabian Society and trade unions for weekend and summer schools for around 30 years.

Following considerable decline in the demand for such facilities, the Trust was obliged to sell the property in 1986. The proceeds were invested and have been used to fund a number of projects both in the UK and in Eastern Europe to promote economic and social justice and democratic structures. Over the next three years the Trust will be funding a major resource project looking at changes in government policy over the last 60 years aimed at reducing deprivation, identifying what has worked and what has not, and suggesting what now needs to be done. The project will report in 2009, the 100th anniversary of the publication of Beatrice Webb's *Minority Report to the Poor Law Commission*. ■

Installation of the Fabian window was made possible through alumni donations to the Annual Fund, see [www.lse.ac.uk/lseannualfund](http://www.lse.ac.uk/lseannualfund)

Others involved in the project included Laraine Clark, Nicholas Poole-Wilson, Alan Revel, Julian Robinson, Claire Willgress, Giles Wright. The window was installed by Molyneux Kerr Architects and Barnard and Carter Builders.