

People and places

The Freud Exhibition

THOMAS FAHY, Lecturer in Psychiatry, The Maudsley Hospital, London SE5 8AZ

The 50th anniversary of Freud's death on 22 September 1939 was commemorated with the opening of an exhibition at 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead where Freud spent the last year of his life. The exhibition features a collection of panels with contemporary photographs, press clippings and correspondence compiled and attractively presented by the museum staff. They construct a narrative account of Freud's escape to England and of his last year. The emphasis is on the human story of persecution, freedom in exile and death which regardless of one's views about psychoanalysis, make a visit to the museum a moving experience.



The Freud Museum, London NW3: Freud's home from September 1938 until his death a year later.

The panels are accompanied by text from Freud's letters to his family. In a quote from a letter to Ernst, Freud he makes it clear that he was not simply washed up on England's shore, but that he chose to come here to "end my life in freedom". Photographs of his arrival in the UK are accompanied by press descriptions. The *Daily Mail* reported, "He is 82 and very frail, though strong in spirit with a keen glint in his dark eyes and a pugnacious way of thrusting out his firm white beard". Freud was evidently surprised to find himself a celebrity in his new home, where he was pestered by letters "from autograph hunters, cranks, lunatics and pious men who send tracts and texts from the Gospels which promise salvation and attempt to convert the unbelievers". Newspapers reported his movements with affectionate bemusement. A lengthy report describes Freud's visit to his beloved dog Lun, who spent six months in quarantine in Ladbroke Grove. A gossip columnist joked that

there were so many refugees in Hampstead that German-speaking policemen were being posted to the area.

Also on display are letters from Jews pleading with Freud not to publish *Moses and Monotheism*, and correspondence from H. G. Wells who had started a movement for Freud to obtain UK citizenship. In his reply to Wells, Freud wrote that he had long held an infantile wish to become an Englishman, which "like all infantile desires, needed to be considered long and hard before being acted on". For worshippers (rather than the simply curious) there are relics of the great man including prescription forms, a pill box and a skull X-ray demonstrating the destructive effects of the malignancy which was to result in his death.

The exhibition begins a busy year for the Freud museum, which has included organising an international travelling exhibition of Freud's exquisite antiquities which will be in the USA until 1991. The museum also soon plans to publish an annotated version of Freud's *Brief Chronicle*, the diary he kept during the last ten years of his life.



Freud's couch. It was on this couch that his patients rested while relating their life experiences.