

**British Land was formed in 1856.  
We are the oldest property investment  
company in the UK, and one of no more  
than a dozen limited liability companies  
in existence in 1856 that continue in  
business today.**

Another great institution that was born 150 years ago is the National Portrait Gallery. British Land has long been an enthusiastic supporter of the visual arts and we are delighted to be sharing our celebrations with such a dynamic and internationally revered organisation. Our first acquisition was a parcel of land in Marylebone; the National Portrait Gallery's was nothing less than the 'Chandos' portrait of William Shakespeare, the bequest of the Earl of Ellesmere.

In time, many people who were themselves born in 1856 achieved fame and were commemorated in the Gallery's permanent collection. Among them are Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the father of psychoanalysis; George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), the Nobel Prize-winning playwright; Keir Hardie (1856-1915), the first socialist MP, who campaigned to enfranchise the working classes; and Sir Joseph John Thomson (1856-1940), whose discoveries in subatomic physics led to the development of television and computers. Their work was often a reaction against the prevailing ethos and their lives are in many ways a bridge between the lost world of mid-Victorian Britain and our own everyday realities in the age of New Labour and digital technology. In our Annual Report & Accounts we mark the special significance of the year 1856 by paying tribute to their extraordinary achievements.