

Queen Square and nineteenth-century reforming institutions: a talk by Deborah Colville and Rosemary Ashton at the Mary Ward Centre, Queen Square, 12 May 2009

Part 1: Hospitals, charities, and an outline of art and education in Queen Square (Deborah Colville)

The Bloomsbury Project was set up to investigate the local repeating pattern of established Georgian residential development being taken over by reforming institutions, particularly educational and medical ones. Queen Square and its institutions represent a microcosm of nineteenth-century Bloomsbury. I am going to outline the nineteenth-century history and development of institutions in Queen Square, and show how in some ways—and again this is characteristic of the Project's findings as a whole—there has been a remarkable continuity between that past and our present.

Queen Square is notable in particular for its hospitals, including the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic, the Alexandra Hospital for Hip Disease in Childhood, the Italian Hospital, and, beginning on Great Ormond Street but later extending into Queen Square, the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, and Great Ormond Street Hospital itself. These hospitals were reforming in several different ways. The National Hospital was the first institution devoted to the paralysed and epileptic, and it was also founded by lay people, the Chandler siblings, who were thinking of a hospital essentially from the patients' point of view. It was pioneering in its use of physical treatments for neurological disorders, and it was one of the first hospitals to employ male nurses. The Italian Hospital was founded by an Italian businessman, who was also thinking from a practical point of view, in this case about the difficulties encountered by non-English-speaking Italian patients seeking medical treatment.

The Homoeopathic Hospital was at the centre of the nineteenth-century dispute over the status of homoeopathic medicine, a dispute which is still continuing. As recently as April 2007 this hospital was under attack again by

members of the medical establishment, despite now being part of University College London Hospitals NHS Trust; one eminent surgeon said “Homeopathy is no better than witchcraft”¹, and urged the Trust to consider what other uses it might have for the Homeopathic Hospital’s buildings. And Great Ormond Street was the first hospital in Britain to be founded exclusively to treat children as in-patients, followed swiftly by the House of Relief for Children with Chronic Disease of the Joints, later the Alexandra Hospital. This was the first of London’s hospitals to be founded by nurses: Catherine Wood, the senior nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital, and her colleague Jane Perceval (grand-daughter of the assassinated Prime Minister Spencer Perceval).

All these institutions, moreover, embodied the nineteenth-century transformation of hospitals, which went from being essentially charities for the sick poor to professional, research-active medical institutions. Professor Anne Hardy, co-investigator on the Bloomsbury Project, has established that specialist hospitals were particularly reforming, indeed rebellious, within their nineteenth-century context: despite scepticism and resistance within the medical establishment, the new way of treating disease by observing and treating multiple cases of the same thing became so successful that by the end of the century, the general hospitals were starting to incorporate specialist wards.

All the major hospitals in Queen Square followed the same trajectory, beginning with the addition of six to ten beds to a Georgian residential house, followed by expansion into a neighbouring house or houses on the same basis, until finally they all reached a critical point where the need for more space, combined with new ideas about hospital design and clinical needs, led to the construction of a purpose-built edifice to replace the original houses.

¹ Michael Baum, quoted in The Observer, ‘Royals’ favoured hospital at risk as homeopathy backlash gathers pace,’ 8 April 2007.

Summary information about hospitals in this paper is taken from the Bloomsbury Project’s website.

The National Hospital opened in 1860 in no. 24 Queen Square. Here it is in 1866, when it had expanded into no. 23 as well, and had 36 beds. It had also expanded into the other neighbouring house, no. 25, by 1879. By 1881 it had 83 in-patients, in buildings in Queen Square and adjacent Powis Place. Its buildings were then all demolished in the 1880s and replaced by a grand purpose-built hospital.

The Alexandra Hospital for Poor Children with Hip Disease was founded at no. 19 Queen Square in 1867, and expanded into nos 18 and 17 in 1872 and 1873 respectively, as well as the adjacent 1 Queen Square Place (also known as Brunswick Row) in the 1880s. In 1881 it had forty-nine in-patients. In 1899 it demolished all its properties and rebuilt the hospital as Alexandra House, where it remained until 1920; this building is now occupied by the National Hospital.

The Italian Hospital was founded in 1884 in no. 41 Queen Square, one of founder John Ortelli's houses, and later expanded into no. 40; both these houses were demolished and replaced by a purpose-built hospital in 1898–1899, designed by Thomas Cutler, resident of no. 5 Queen Square. The Italian Hospital building is now part of Great Ormond Street Hospital. But when the Italian Hospital closed, the revenue from the sale of the building in Queen Square went into the formation of a charity, the Italian Hospital Fund, which continues to help provide those of Italian descent with medical care.

The Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital moved from Soho, where it had been established in 1849, to the three houses at the end of Great Ormond Street, adjacent to Queen Square, in 1859, demolishing them to replace them with a purpose-built hospital in 1895; it demolished nos 34–36 Queen Square in 1909 to extend its premises, although much of its building is now actually occupied by Great Ormond Street hospital. A plan of Queen Square in 1870 shows how its institutions are still confined within the residential design, but this had all changed by 1900. Our investigations of hospital archives are still at an early stage, and indeed some of the records, most notably those of the Italian Hospital, are missing. But we know what we will in particular be

looking for information about the transition from makeshift and temporary accommodation in Georgian townhouses to purpose-built hospitals. All of Queen Square's hospitals, when they demolished their original homes and built hospitals by design, were affirming the success of the revolution in healthcare in the nineteenth century—the institutionalisation of specialist medicine had been achieved.

But there was one hospital that fell by the wayside. The National Hospital is usually described as being the first of the hospitals to be established in Queen Square, in 1859. Actually, the Post Office Directory of 1851 lists an intriguing “Private Spinal Institution” at no. 31 Queen Square. This was, we find from Low's Charities of London, a private institution “for the development of the mode of treatment pursued by Mr Joseph Amesbury”. It seems as if the Post Office Directory was out of date, as according to Low, the hospital had moved by 1850 to 26 Judd Place West (on the Euston Road) and changed its name to the Hospital for Spinal Deformities. Amesbury was a surgeon and author on orthopaedics, married with a large family by the time of the 1841 census, when he was living near Cavendish Square. He later moved to Fitzroy Square.

But in 1837 he lived at 54 Burton Crescent, Bloomsbury, and he took out patents on “certain apparatus for the relief, or correction of stiffness, weakness, or distortion in the human spine, chest, or limbs”. He subsequently founded the Spinal and General Orthopaedic Association to treat spinal disease with his machines and with a medical staff paid for by the sufferers themselves. The BMJ criticised him for running what they called a “joint stock company”, a charge he indignantly rebutted². The Spinal and General Orthopaedic Association failed, but it is not clear how many patients were treated in the 1840s at no. 31 Queen Square, or whether this was using the Amesbury apparatus. What does seem to be clear is that Amesbury was also basing his practice on extensive clinical experience of a particular kind of fracture. Perhaps he was ahead of his time.

² BMJ, 3 January 1857

In addition to its hospitals, Queen Square also played host to a significant number of charitable and benevolent foundations in the nineteenth century. Some of these were in their activities very similar to hospitals, and again, often began in a small way within a domestic home. Louisa Twining, long-time resident of no. 20 Queen Square, took in epileptic and incurable women patients in her own home, under the name St Luke's Home for Epileptic and Infirm Women, during the 1860s and 1870s, and she also ran a home for aged and incurable women at no. 21 Great Ormond Street, and a home for the training of workhouse girls at no. 23 Great Ormond Street, at the same time.

In 1881 a Home for Youths at no. 41 Queen Square housed thirty mostly teenage boys who were employed as clerks, servants, and in various trades. By the beginning of the twentieth century, this house, no. 41 Queen Square, had become the Italian Hospital, but there was a new home for working boys at no. 16 Queen Square, called Rossie House. This was not just a home for working boys, but one of the "Homes for Working Boys", an organisation established by Tom Pelham, Arthur Kinnaird, and Quintin Hogg in 1870, to save boys from the temptations of common lodging houses. This organisation merged with the Fellowship of St Christopher in 1967 and is still going as St Christopher's Fellowship (www.stchris.org.uk). The Rossie House home had been at no. 35 Lamb's Conduit Street until about 1902, when it had moved to Queen Square.

Nos 25 and 26 Queen Square were in 1851 an Industrial Home for Gentlewomen, providing a home, employment, and support for the widows and daughters of the middle-classes fallen on hard times; this moved here from Harpur Street, Bloomsbury, and was still here in 1863, when the neighbouring house, no. 26, was a Turkish Bath, one of the very first in London and then seen primarily as a remedy for medical complaints (there was another one in the National Hospital in the 1860s).

One now very obscure and apparently defunct charitable institution in Queen Square was the Bessbrook Home. Bessbrook Homes for Sandwich Men, an organisation founded in 1893 by G. P. H. Maynard and James Keates, opened

a home at no. 39 Queen Square in the same year. This took in men who already worked as sandwich men, carrying advertising boards, a seasonal job paid at the rate of 3/- or 3/6 a day, and not done during the summer, when the men all left London to do seasonal agricultural work such as hop-picking. The home also took in homeless men who had been long out of work and provided them with employment as sandwich-men for 2/- a day, delivering circulars for 3/- a day, or addressing envelopes at a rate of 3/6 per thousand. Many of these men had held good jobs such as clerkships, but simply could not find work.

The home in Queen Square apparently housed fifty men when it was visited for the Booth poverty survey update in May 1894. It even became self-supporting. Indeed, James Keates's brief obituary in *The Times* says that the home in Queen Square was so successful that he was able to open two other branches. Sandwich-men were notoriously prone to drunkenness, and were helped to become sober at the home in Queen Square, perhaps encouraged by the presence from the 1860s until the early twentieth century of the famous Shirley's Temperance Hotel next door but one at no. 37 Queen Square (where York House now stands). The novelist Thomas Hardy was one of its guests in 1888, and it also housed medical students from nearby University College.

Charitable assistance in the Square also extended to those with physical disabilities. The Alexandra Institute for the Blind, established by Edward Moore in 1865, ran a home for adult blind women at no. 6 Queen Square from 1869. In 1871 this had 14 blind or partially blind residents, mostly employed in sewing and knitting. This was not the first time that blind people had been employed in Queen Square. The London Society for Teaching the Blind to Read had a school with resident blind pupils not only learning to read using an early form of raised type, but also practising crafts, at no. 38 Queen Square between 1842 and 1848. This institution is also still going; it's now the Royal London Society for the Blind, although the Alexandra Institute for the Blind seems no longer to exist.

The Alexandra Institute for the Blind had moved into 6 Queen Square in 1869; before that date, both this house and no. 31 Queen Square had been occupied by St Margaret's Home and Industrial School for Girls, a Catholic charity. I have said that Queen Square was typical of nineteenth-century Bloomsbury in its institutionalisation, but one feature which was relatively unusual was the happy co-existence of several religious charities, and institutions run by religious orders, of totally different and opposing belief systems in the Square. The Catholic St Margaret's Homes were followed by the Society of St Vincent de Paul, another Catholic charity, basing itself at no. 31, where it also ran the Aged Poor Society in the late 1870s. (There was a Catholic hospital around the corner in Great Ormond Street from 1856 to 1897.)

The Anglican order of the Sisters of St Margaret of East Grinstead ran a hospital in their convent (also known as St Katherine's) at no. 32 Queen Square from 1873, later expanding into no. 33 as well. Ironically these sisters, one of the first orders of Anglican nuns established in England since the Reformation, all joined the Catholic church in the early twentieth century! Dr Williams's Library, the country's foremost collection of nonconformist literature, occupied no. 8 Queen Square from 1865–1873. From 1858 to 1864 the English Presbyterian College, a training college for nonconformist ministers, occupied no. 29 Queen Square, moving in 1864 to Queen Square House at the northeast end of the Square, where it stayed until 1899. This institution also still exists, and is better known as Westminster College, Cambridge. As it moved out of Queen Square House, the Jews' College moved in. It stayed for thirty years; having previously occupied Dickens's old house in Tavistock Square. This is now the London School of Jewish Studies, Britain's only Jewish institute of higher education.

Queen Square's educational institutions will be dealt with in more detail in the second part of this paper, so I will simply outline them. Most of the educational institutions which occupied Queen Square in the nineteenth century were aimed at the poor, or at women, or both. The Ladies' Charity School (established 1701), moved into no. 22 Queen Square around 1859. The Ladies' Charity School trained poor girls for domestic service and although the

institution had begun as a day school, by the time it moved to Queen Square it was residential. The women and girls lived on site, almost fifty of them in the 1881 census.

The Working Women's College was founded in 1864 at no. 29 Queen Square, proudly single-sex, it was "the only institution in London devoted exclusively to the improvement and culture of working women", although it was forced to become co-educational a decade later as the College for Men and Women. It stayed at no. 29 Queen Square until 1901. The College of Preceptors, founded in 1846 as the Society of Teachers, which is covered in more detail in the second part of this paper, was at no. 42 Queen Square from the 1840s until 1882, when it moved to Bloomsbury Square. And the amazingly successful Female School of Art, also covered in more detail in the second part of this paper, was at no. 43 Queen Square from 1861 until the early twentieth century.

At almost exactly the same time, arts and crafts were being revolutionised over at no. 26 Queen Square, the home of William Morris's Firm, from 1865–1881. Everything was here: office, showroom, workshops, a kiln, and the Morris family also lived here until 1872. The firm produced furniture, wallpaper, tapestries and fabrics, and illuminated manuscripts on this site. Over at nos 32–33 Queen Square, the East Grinstead sisters I mentioned earlier who ran a hospital also took in pupils for their School of Ecclesiastical Embroidery here from the 1870s until their departure from Queen Square in the early twentieth century. Ecclesiastical embroidery was not, as is sometimes unsympathetically considered to be, a way of keeping girls harmlessly occupied, but a highly skilled craft requiring years of practice to perfect, and able to earn its practitioners up to £50 per annum. As well as taking on trainee embroiderers, the nuns also seem to have taken in boarders; the now-forgotten author on women's rights Emma Hosken Woodward was living here temporarily in 1881³. Finally, the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women hired rooms in Queen Square in 1860 to teach book-keeping and law-copying; one of the pupils taught here, Mary Harris Smith, eventually became

³ See 1881 census.

the first female chartered accountant, and the institution is still going strong as the Society for Promoting the Training of Women.

Not all of these institutions flourished into the twenty-first century, as we have seen, and not all of them remained in Queen Square. But for those which lasted, and which had the capacity to expand on site, there was, crucially, very little to stop them. Unlike the surrounding estates, in particular that of the Duke of Bedford to the west, or the Foundling Hospital to the east and north, Queen Square enjoyed the advantages in the nineteenth century arising out of decisions made in the late eighteenth century, when the main ground landlords, the Curzons of Kedleston, sold the freeholds of a large number of the Square's houses, along with four in Brunswick Row and seven in Great Ormond Street. This meant that the successful institutions, in particular the National Hospital, did not encounter the kind of systematic resistance posed elsewhere by a large landowner mindful of his estate's residential character. The National Hospital bought up so many of the freeholds on the east side of the square for their expansion that eventually they were able to justify the recent demolition of the sole remaining eighteenth-century house on that side, the Grade II listed no. 33 Queen Square. It was inconveniently juxtaposed between the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery to the north and the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital to the south, now both part of University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and the need to amalgamate administrative functions and unify the site took precedence over this quirky survival. Almost all of this vast hospital site is now owned outright by the Trust.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Queen Square had become firmly established as a centre of medical excellence, as a focus of adult teaching and of the professional training of women, and of the arts and crafts movement, the latter two being combined in the Female School of Art, still at no. 43. The square was also still partly residential, but the solicitors and barristers who had lived here in the 1840s had been replaced by surgeons, artists, novelists (the Christian mystic novelist Laurie R. King shared no. 2 Queen Square

with the journalist and author Edith Stewart Drewry), and architects⁴. It was the influence of two architects which brought the Art Workers' Guild to the Square. Founded in 1884 as mainly a networking association, its previous connections to Queen Square had been through William Morris, its Master in 1892, and through its involvement with the reform of art education in the 1890s, through which the Female School of Art was eventually subsumed into the Central School of Arts and Crafts. But in 1914 the Guild bought the freehold of no. 6 Queen Square, largely because of the efforts and encouragement of the architects Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer, who had an office in no. 6, and knew that its freehold was up for sale. There is more about Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer in the second half of this paper.

Part II: The College of Preceptors, the Female School of Art, and the Passmore Edwards Settlement (Rosemary Ashton)

I'd like to start here in this very building, numbers 42 and 43 Queen Square, since two important educational institutions were located here in the 19th century: the College of Preceptors, located in No. 42 from its founding in 1846 until 1882, when it was in Bloomsbury Square; and the Female School of Art, which moved into No. 43 in 1861 from its previous location in Gower Street.

I'll talk a little about both these institutions, which we are still in the process of researching for our Bloomsbury Project, then will move away from Queen Square temporarily to look at the very interesting and important forerunner of the Mary Ward Centre itself, namely the Passmore Edwards Settlement, begun in Gordon Square in 1890, continued on Tavistock Place from 1897 to 1982, when it moved, now called the Mary Ward Centre, to its current Queen Square home. I'll also mention another college, the shortlived Gordon College, which as its name suggests was intended to be opened in Gordon Square, but which – for reasons which the Bloomsbury Project will illuminate at several points – had to find alternative accommodation, which it did in 1868 in ever-hospitable Queen Square.

⁴ See 1901 census

Characterisations of Queen Square from its beginnings stress the pleasant aspect of the place. In 1759, when the square was already about 50 years old, the author of a 'Foreigner's Guide' to London described it as 'pleasantly situated at the extreme part of the town' (there being in 1759 nothing but fields to the north and east) with 'a fine open view of the country' and 'handsomely built' houses.⁵ By April 1852, when the Hospital for Sick Children was newly opened, Charles Dickens and Henry Morley in their newspaper *Household Words* welcomed the hospital's appearance in a location which was still noted for being a little out of the way, though for slightly different reasons – to do with social status rather than physical geography. The area to the north and east of the square had now been built on, by landowners including the Foundling Hospital Estate; one consequence of this was that Queen Square itself, having been coveted for its complete openness on the north side and its uninterrupted view up to the villages of Hampstead and Highgate and therefore attractive as a residential area for grand people during the 18th century, was by now partly deserted by such people, who had moved westward to the recently developed fashionable quarters of Belgravia and Regent's Park. In 1852 Dickens and Morley describe the square from the sociological point of view as seeming 'very far out of the way', 'a suburb left between the New Road [i.e. Euston Road] and High Holborn', a square 'dozing over its own departed greatness'. In this article, called 'Drooping Buds', written to support and advertise the new Great Ormond Street Hospital, the authors express the hope that 'these deserted pavements' will be deserted no longer, as people turn their steps towards the Children's Hospital, desiring to give generously to the 'great useful work' it will undoubtedly do.⁶

Noted for its hospitals and charitable institutions from the 18th century, many founded in houses already inhabited by the doctors and benefactors who set them up, Queen Square became associated in the 19th century with other kinds

⁵ The *Foreigner's Guide: or a Necessary and Instructive Companion both to the Foreigner and Native, in their Tours through the Cities of London and Westminster* (Amsterdam, 1759), quoted in John Cordy Jeaffreson, *A Book about Lawyers* (London, 1866), p. 19.

⁶ Dickens and Morley, 'Drooping Buds', *Household Words*, 3 April 1852, reprinted in *The Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens: Household Words 1850–1859*, 2 vols. (London, 1969), I, 404, 408.

of progressive ventures – in education and training. The College of Preceptors, established at number 42 in 1846, was the first professional body for teachers, founded as the Society of Teachers with the purpose of creating and maintaining professional standards. Like the Medical Council, established a little later (in 1858), it aimed to offer a council and a register of bona fide members of the profession, in order to exclude unqualified people – the equivalent in education of quacks in medicine. Teachers were to be tested, as were their pupils; though as with other reforming measures the College had to battle against entrenched interests and in later years the differing interests of private and state education, it contributed towards making teaching a proper profession; its archives, which we are still to consult, are now in the Institute of Education, its modern-day successor, also in Bloomsbury.⁷

In 1861 the Female School of Art moved into number 43, next door to the College of Preceptors. It had been founded as the Female School of Design in 1842, as an adjunct in Somerset House to the government School of Design set up in 1837 to train male designers and ornamenters to be employed in manufacture. The men were working-class artisans, but when the Director, the well-known artist William Dyce, was asked to establish a female equivalent, it was understood that middle-class females were intended, for example those whose fathers had died without leaving provision for them and who had to find respectable employment in order to survive. A typical early student was Eliza Turk, whose father's banking business crashed, leading her to turn her erstwhile leisure pursuit of painting into a serious paying occupation.⁸ The well-known writer on art, Anna Jameson, pointed out in mid-century that with about half a million more women in the British population than men, there was a crisis – 'how are they all to find husbands, or find work or honest maintenance? The market for governesses is glutted.'⁹

⁷ See Richard Willis, *The History of the College of Preceptors in Victorian England*, e-book.

⁸ Ellen C. Clayton, *English Female Artists*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), III, 147-8; quoted in F. Graeme Chalmers, 'Fanny McIan and London's Female School of Design, 1842-57', *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 16 (winter 1995-6), 3.

⁹ Quoted in F. Graeme Chalmers, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Much of the information that follows is derived from this article.

The School was a success, but like most innovative ventures, its progress was marked by controversy. The governors were all men, and Dyce was in overall charge, so the first female principal, an exhibited artist called Fanny McIan, found herself often in dispute with her superiors. The chief difference was between the governors, who insisted that the female students be taught the arts of ornamenting and japanning, so that they could be employed by manufacturers, as their working-class male equivalents were, and McIan, supported by many of the female students and their parents, who were keen to allow the teaching of fine art, painting in oil, with a view to some students becoming, like Fanny McIan herself, successful painters. Clashes occurred at the annual reporting stage; in 1848 the Female School was removed from Somerset House to cramped quarters above a soap-dealer's shop on the other side of the Strand, an area notorious for pornographic bookshops, old clothes shops, and unsavoury pubs.¹⁰ As so often Dickens, dubbed by Walter Bagehot a 'special correspondent for posterity', entered the argument in *Household Words*, noting in March 1851:

If a paternal Government had studied to select one of the worst possible places for such a school, they could not have more completely succeeded... as to the suitability of its locality for respectable young females, I may ... venture to state... that it is in the close vicinity of several gin-shops, pawn-shops, old rag and rascality shops, in some of the worst courts and alleys of London.¹¹

The school was moved again, at the end of 1852, to the more suitable Gower Street, where it advertised its evening classes in 'elementary drawing for females' on Monday and Wednesday evenings at a cost of 10 shillings for a six-month course, to begin in January 1853.¹² At this time Henry Cole had taken over as head of the Department of Practical Art, which opened the National Art Training School in South Kensington. Pupils of the Female School of Art, as it now became known, were sent to South Kensington for examination, but

¹⁰ For a picture of the Strand at mid-century, see Rosemary Ashton, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London, 2006).

¹¹ *Household Words*, 15 March 1851, p. 581.

¹² See *Leader*, vol. 4 (29 January 1853), 118.

the school itself continued at 37 Gower Street until 1860, when it was hit by the withdrawal of the government's annual £500 subsidy.

Some confusion arises out of the names here: the foundation in 1853 of the Department of Science and Art, arising out of the successful Great Exhibition of 1851, led to some parts of the School of Design moving to South Kensington shortly after that, but the Female School of Art remained in Gower Street and then Queen Square. It was known by many names, including – sometimes – the Female School of Design, the Gower Street School (to distinguish it from the Female School in Kensington),¹³ the Queen Square School of Art, and even the Government District School of Art for Ladies - it was so described in 1878 by Edward Walford in his book *Old and New London* (IV, 555). That the confusion still persists even among scholars is evident from the fact that different entries in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* say different things on this point; for example, the entry on the book illustrator Helen Allingham says she studied at the Female School of Art in Bloomsbury, i.e. here in Queen Square, while entries on other female art students say Helen Allingham was a pupil at the Female School of Art in South Kensington.

On the announcement of the withdrawal of the £500 government subsidy in 1860, a number of individuals and groups rallied round the Female School of Art. The weekly newspaper *The Leader*, and other periodicals including the *Art Journal* and *The Builder*, gave valuable support in print to the School as it struggled to remain financially viable. *The Leader* declared in an article in March 1860 (by which time Louisa Gann had taken over from Fanny McIan as Principal) that in its eight years in Gower Street the school had trained 700 students, its current number being 118, of whom 77 were studying 'with the view of ultimately maintaining themselves'. The newspaper stressed that these were often the daughters of clergymen and doctors, some of whom had been enabled to 'live independently by means of private teaching'. 'There can be no doubt as to the usefulness and success of the school.'¹⁴ Bazaars and a grand fête were held to raise funds, and in 1861 the Female School of Art

¹³ See Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London, 1987), p. 49.

¹⁴ *Leader*, vol. 1 second series (15 March 1860), 256-7.

moved to Queen Square, gaining a Royal Charter when the Queen became Patron in 1862, followed by Princess Alexandra in 1863.¹⁵ Its President was Anthony Thorold, Rector of St Giles-in-the-Fields. Many students were able to exhibit their paintings, and the art press continued to support the School with favourable reviews. In 1908 the School came under the control of the London County Council and was subsumed into what was then the Central School of Arts and Crafts on Southampton Row, later renamed Central St Martin's College of Art and Design, which is now a part of the University of the Arts London.

Towards the end of the 19th century there was an important movement in Bloomsbury to offer play and educational pursuits to the poorer children of the area. To look at the establishment of the Passmore Edwards Settlement we must once more move away from Queen Square temporarily, leaving it with its Homeopathic Hospital, its Hospital for Sick Children, its many specialist hospitals, including the recently founded Italian Hospital – next door to us here – its charitable institutions, and its establishments for the education and training of working men and women. We move to Gordon Square, built by the great speculative builder Thomas Cubitt from the 1820s to the end of the 1850s, the period which marks the second great spate of street and square development in Bloomsbury as elsewhere (the first being the squares and crescents of James Burton from around 1800).

Gordon Square, like its neighbouring squares built in the preceding decades, was inhabited by lawyers, doctors, well-off merchants, and – increasingly – by academic staff and students of University College London, which had been opened on Gower Street in 1828 as London's first university, dedicated to expanding the higher education curriculum to include modern languages and literatures, geography, architecture, and the medical sciences, and dedicated also to offering a university education to young men who were not practising Anglicans. (Young women were admitted to some classes quite early on, but not to degrees until 1878.) As the university grew in numbers of students and gradually became accepted as a force for education and culture - after routine

¹⁵ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 66.

attacks in its early years by the Tory press, which called it the ‘godless’ institution of Gower Street and the ‘radical infidel college’,¹⁶ because it had no religious tests and no chapel and excluded theology from its curriculum – its governors began to think that a hall of residence on the model of an Oxbridge college might be desirable for students coming from outside London.

A number of wealthy Unitarians connected with UCL raised the money to build University Hall on the west side of Gordon Square, backing on to UCL land. UCL’s professor of architecture, Thomas Donaldson, designed the building, and it was opened in 1849. Difficulties over whether to hold daily prayers and if so, of what denomination, and more than one unlucky choice of principal in the early years meant that the Hall struggled to attract residents. It was put to split use from 1853, when Manchester New College, the country’s foremost institution for training dissenting ministers, shared the premises until 1890. In that year Manchester New College moved to Oxford, at which point the trustees of Dr Williams’s famous library of nonconformist books bought the building.¹⁷ The Library immediately rented some of its rooms in the building, still called University Hall, to a new educational venture. Its founder was John Passmore Edwards, born in Cornwall in 1823 to poor parents, who had taught himself from cheap books and had risen to become a wealthy newspaper proprietor in London. He was now putting some of his money into educational projects in London and Cornwall, chiefly by endowing public libraries. In 1890 he established with Mary Ward a settlement for the education of local working people and the safe play of poor children in Bloomsbury. The Passmore Edwards Settlement, as it was known, started in a couple of rooms in University Hall, then moved to a hall in nearby Marchmont Street, and from 1897 operated in a specially designed building on Tavistock Place, the building now known (confusingly, given the name of the building we are in now) as Mary Ward House.

Mary Ward – granddaughter of Dr Arnold of Rugby, niece of Matthew Arnold, and author of one of the best-selling novels of the nineteenth century, Robert

¹⁶ See William Mackworth Praed’s comic poem, ‘The London University’, *Morning Chronicle*, 19 July 1825.

Elsmere (1888) – used her considerable powers of persuasion to liaise between the landlord, the eleventh Duke of Bedford, and Passmore Edwards.¹⁸ She got the former to donate the land and the latter to put up the £14,000 it took to erect the building, which was designed in Arts and Crafts style, both functional and aesthetic, by two young Bloomsbury architects, A. Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer, who were themselves residents at University Hall in Gordon Square. The new Settlement building in Tavistock Place, with lodgings for residents - mainly young lawyers and architects – who lived there free in return for lecturing and organising events in the evenings and at weekends, brought education to those who could not aspire to study at nearby University College and who lived in the increasingly occupied smaller streets to the east of the elegant squares on the Bedford estate, the part of Bloomsbury reaching over to Gray's Inn Road with its meaner streets and crowded buildings.

The Passmore Edwards Settlement represented the beginnings of the play centre movement, with gymnastics, dance, and singing on the children's curriculum. (As if to prove our suspicion that almost all reforming movements had their beginnings in Bloomsbury, the kindergarten movement was also started in Tavistock Place, opening in 1853 in the home of a political and religious exile from Germany, Johannes Ronge, and his wife Bertha.) Facilities for adults included free legal advice, classes in academic subjects, chess, art, and cookery, a library, and access to lectures in the Great Hall. There was a coal club and a mother-and-toddler club. In 1899 the Settlement opened the first school for disabled children in the country.

By the time Passmore Edwards helped establish the Settlement, he was himself a Bloomsbury resident, as Mary Ward had been for ten years; he lived in Bedford Square and she – until 1892 - in Russell Square. When Mary Ward and Passmore Edwards were discussing where to set up their organisation after leaving Gordon Square and Marchmont Street, one possibility was to occupy a house in Russell Square. Passmore Edwards

¹⁷ See Survey of London, vol. XXI.

objected to this; it would be, he wrote in November 1894, ‘kid-glovish and Russell-Squarish’.¹⁹ The site on more demotic Tavistock Place was found and an architectural competition held for the new building, which opened late in 1897. At the gala opening in February 1898, John Morley, MP, and others spoke of the social and co-operative nature of the venture in an area where most residents were reasonably well off, but which also touched on a region of ‘deplorable poverty’ just to the east. The Tavistock Place location (as opposed to kid-glovish Russell Square) put the Settlement at just the right point, as Mary Ward noted, namely ‘where poor London touched well-to-do London’.²⁰

The Settlement was renamed Mary Ward House after her death in 1920, and the work continued until 1982, when operations moved to the current site, numbers 42 and 43 Queen Square.²¹ The current prospectus of the Mary Ward Centre pays tribute to Mary Ward and Passmore Edwards and the spirit of their pioneering establishment: ‘Our aim remains the same as in 1890 – “to promote public education and social service for the benefit of the community”’. The combination of academic and practical subjects begun in 1890 persists and has been extended – at the Mary Ward Centre you can now study subjects ranging from adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to history and politics, from aesthetics to human rights, from nutrition to dance, art, yoga, and creative writing. The free legal advice service for local residents still persists too. All this demonstrates an astonishing longevity for an educational movement – one that does what is now universally and fashionably called ‘widening participation’ - which dates back to the 19th century and represents a modern continuation of one of the best legacies of the Victorian age.

As a coda to this talk, I must just make brief mention of an aspect of Queen Square which made it in some ways more open to educational ventures even

¹⁸ For Mary Ward, see John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford, 1990).

¹⁹ John Passmore Edwards to Mary Ward, 3 November 1894, MS Mary Ward Centre papers, London Metropolitan Archives.

²⁰ *The Times*, 14 February 1898.

²¹ See John Sutherland, *The Mary Ward Centre 1890-1990* (1990), for a brief but illuminating history of the Settlement.

than Gordon Square, located just behind UCL. The largest landlord in Bloomsbury was the Duke of Bedford, whose land extended roughly from Great Russell Street in the south and Tottenham Court Road in the west almost to Euston Road in the north and to just beyond Southampton Row in the east. Arrangements had to be made with successive dukes about what was suitable housing on their lands. And successive dukes kept an iron grip on the desired character of the properties and inhabitants. There were to be no shops or pubs on most of the streets and squares, and no small trades carried on in the mews behind. No brass plaques should go up on doors advertising lodgings or even professions. By this means, that part of Bloomsbury was kept respectable, while other parts – pockets on the Foundling Estate and the small streets immediately east of Southampton Row (and north of Queen Square) became vulnerable to overcrowding and disorder, as is shown in Charles Booth's poverty maps of the 1890s.

One professor at UCL, Adolf Heimann, who held the chair of German from 1848, fell foul of William, the eighth Duke of Bedford, in 1868. Heimann and his family (his wife was a close friend of Christina Rossetti) had moved into a large house on the south side of Gordon Square in 1853. They had students as lodgers in some of their nine bedrooms to help cover the cost of the house, but by 1868 Heimann was hoping to establish a private residential college, to be called Gordon College, in his house. The Duke of Bedford objected. As Heimann's friend William Michael Rossetti noted, the Duke's objection was that it would 'deteriorate the property by bringing houses down from the private to the professional rank'.²² In the end Heimann opened his 'Gordon College for Ladies' to learn German at number 4 Queen Square in a house not owned by the punctilious Duke of Bedford.²³ It is not clear how long this college lasted – probably not long. But the case demonstrates afresh the character of Queen Square as a location which was in the 1860s – 150 years after its development - welcoming to those who wished to use one of its fine buildings for an educational, social, or charitable purpose. And it still is.

²² See *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, ed. Antony H. Harrison, 4 vols. (Charlottesville and London, 1997-2004), I, 313-14.

²³ See Heimann's advertisement in *The Times*, 15 October 1868.