



Bloomsbury & King's Cross Walk

1 BEDFORD ESTATE

- 1a - Gatekeeper's Lodge
- 1b - Tavistock Court Art Deco Frieze
- 1c - British Medical Association

2 FLAXMAN COURT

- 2a - Woburn Walk
- 2b - Callard & Bowser Toffee Factory
- 2c - Grafton Mansions
- 2d - Plaque (Flaxman Court)
- 2e - Cartwright Gardens

3 EAST END DWELLINGS CO.

- 3a - Judd Street
- 3b - Queen Alexandra Mansions
- 3c - Skinners' Arms Pub
- 3d - School Building Plaque
- 3e - Tonbridge Street, East Side
- 3f - Tonbridge Houses
- 3g - Argyle Walk

4 CUBITT'S CALTHORPE ESTATE

- 4a - Calthorpe Project Community Garden

5 LLOYD BAKER ESTATE

- 5a - Granville Square
- 5b - Lloyd Square

6 NEW RIVER ESTATE

- 6a - Percy Arms Pub Building
- 6b - Lenin Blue Plaque

7 IMPROVED INDUSTRIAL DWELLINGS CO.

- 7a - Cobden Buildings
- 7b - Derby Lodge
- 7c - Railway Bridge

8 KING'S CROSS

- 8a - King's Cross Arches
- 8b - Great Northern Hotel
- 8c - King's Cross Concourse

9 REGENT QUARTER

10 KING'S PLACE

- 10a - London Canal Museum

11 GRANARY SQUARE

- 11a - Central St Martins

12A KING'S BOULEVARD

- 12B CAMLEY STREET NATURAL PARK

13 ST. PANCRAS STATION

- 13a - The Gymnasium
- 13b - Stanley Buildings
- 13c - Renaissance Hotel
- 13d - Barlow Train Shed
- 13e - Interior of St. Pancras (Lower Floor)
- 13f - Interior of St. Pancras (Platform Level) & Sir John Betjemen Statue
- 13g - British Library
- 13h - British Library Piazza

14 LCC OSSULSTON STREET ESTATE

- 14a - Pullman Hotel

15 PEABODY HERBRAND STREET ESTATE

- 15a - Peabody Estate
- 15b - LCC Estate
- 15c - Mary Ward Centre

0 250 metres

2015 ©OpenStreetMap Contributors

Further Reading

Maps

The developments in Kings Cross and Bloomsbury can be seen to unfold on historical maps of the area.

National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/os/> provides free access to OS 6 inch to 1 mile maps from the 1840s to the 1950s, and also to 60 inch to 1 mile (1:1056) plans for 1890s London.

MAPCO <http://mapco.net/london.htm> provide a free online version of Stanford's Library Map of London, 1872 <http://london1872.com/> and numerous other historical London maps.

Other maps, books and original archives can be consulted at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, Holborn Library, 32-38 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8PA (which also includes a shop selling an extensive range of local history publications and maps): www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/local-history

On King's Cross/St Pancras

Bradley, Simon (2011) *St Pancras Station* (Profile)

Campkin, Ben (2013) *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (IB Tauris)

Edwards, Michael (1992) 'A microcosm: redevelopment proposals at King's Cross' in Andy Thornley (ed) *The Crisis of London* (Routledge), pp.163-84

Hunter, R. and Thorne, R. (eds) (1990) *Change At King's Cross from 1800 to the Present* (Historical Publications)

Simmons, Jack (with a new chapter by Robert Thorne) (2003) *St Pancras Station* (Historical Publications)

For an assessment of the continuing transformation of King's Cross, see Rowan Moore's essay in The Observer (12th Oct. 2014): www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/12/regeneration-kings-cross-can-other-developers-repeat-trick

On Bloomsbury

Ashton, Rosemary (2012) *Victorian Bloomsbury* (Yale University Press)

Olsen, Donald (1982) *Town Planning in London: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (Yale University Press)

Tames, Richard (1993) *Bloomsbury Past* (Historical Publications)

See also the Bloomsbury Project Website: www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/ which, as well as containing lots of gazetteer-type information about buildings, streets, institutions and people, also has a collection of papers given at Bloomsbury Project conferences: www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/articles/events/conferences.htm

On apartment buildings and social housing

Dennis, Richard (2008) 'Mansion flats and model dwellings' in *Cities in Modernity* (Cambridge University Press)

Tarn, John (1973) *Five Per Cent Philanthropy* (Cambridge University Press)

Another valuable source of factual information is:

Hibbert, C., Weinreb, B. Keay, J. and Keay, J. (eds) (2008) *The London Encyclopaedia* (3rd edn) (Macmillan)

Walk information

Distance: 3.7 miles / 6 km • Time to complete walk: 3 hours

The walk starts and finishes at Tavistock Square, a ten minute walk from Euston Underground and mainline station.

An optional audio commentary by Richard Dennis also accompanies this walk, and can be downloaded as an MP3 from the Ramble London website. The walk includes an optional visit to Camley Street Natural Park. Entry is free and hours are 10am-4pm in winter/10am-5pm in summer. The park is owned by the London Wildlife Trust. www.wildlondon.org.uk/reserves/camley-street-natural-park

The focus of this walk is the connections between past and present in an area which evolved from an 18th-century urban fringe, to 19th-century suburb to the 21st-century inner city.

The walk explores how much of Bloomsbury and Kings Cross as we see it today developed in the 19th-century. It identifies the key processes which shaped the cityscape, from the system of land ownership to the efforts of philanthropists who built housing affordable for the city's working poor. It recognises, too, the work of key figures like the brothers Thomas and Lewis Cubitt whose buildings have endured and become landmarks in their own right. It shows how the area was a place in tension, with speculative builders assembling what they intended to be housing for fashionable Londoners as slums developed in neighbouring streets.

The optimism of the late 19th-century fell away as wealthy Londoners abandoned Bloomsbury for the West End. UCL took on much of the area's housing for offices and student accommodation; meanwhile, as other streets fell into serious disrepair, the area gained a reputation for crime.

However, optimism returned in the late 20th-century and the walk concludes by visiting the substantial redevelopments at Kings Cross and St Pancras that restored the area's architectural heritage.



Ramble London is a project celebrating the contribution of Richard Dennis, who joined UCL in 1974 and retired as Professor of Historical Geography in 2014. Continuing his research as Professor Emeritus, Dennis investigates the modernisation of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

A passionate communicator, Dennis used walking tours to engage students in teaching beyond the lecture theatre. The Ramble London project aims to bring his research and teaching beyond the university and out to a wider public. As the project develops, additional walks will be developed by other members of UCL Geography academics, allowing everyone to access the latest in urban social science research.

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF

BLOOMSBURY & KING'S CROSS

History, Redevelopment & Regeneration



©Alexandra Gomes



Ramble London
UCL Department of Geography
University College London
26 Bedford Way
LONDON. WC1H 0AP

For more information, visit Ramble London

www.ucl.ac.uk/ramble-london

Follow us on twitter @UCLGeography



Walk with me, reader...

www.ucl.ac.uk/ramble-london

BLOOMSBURY & KING’S CROSS

History, Redevelopment & Regeneration

1 The Bedford Estate Built to be a fashionable residential area, the area gets its name from the land’s freeholder, the Duke of Bedford, and most buildings date from the 1830s and 1840s. It was gated to prevent undesirable traffic, particularly deliveries from the mainline stations en route to the West End, interrupting its gentility. The small house on Endsleigh Street’s west side is a former gatekeeper’s lodge **[1a]**. Parcels of land were issued on 99 year leases and most were renewed upon expiry. Where leases were surrendered, buildings were demolished and the land redeveloped. Tavistock Court **[1b]**, built by the National Free Churches Council in 1935, is one of those redevelopments – note its art deco frieze. Similarly, Tavistock House, home of the British Medical Association **[1c]**, was built on the site of terraced houses following leasehold expiry.

2 Flaxman Court In its core, the Bedford Estate was residential only. Its shopping district, at its edge on Woborn Walk **[2a]**, was designed by the leading builder of the time, Thomas Cubitt. In the 1800s, rich abutted poor in this part of London. Working class employment was provided in Callard & Bowser’s toffee factory **[2b]**; Grafton Mansions **[2c]** was home to lower middle class clerks. Only the narrowest of passages linked the Bedford Estate and the poorer streets to the east. Flaxman Court was built, as the plaque **[2d]** shows, by St Pancras Borough



St Pancras Borough Council plaque, Flaxman Court

Council on the site of a notorious slum. Charles Booth, who surveyed London poverty in the late 1800s, marked the slum in his lowest category, which described residents as of the ‘lowest class, vicious, semi-criminal’. The street was given the name Flaxman Terrace to commemorate the neoclassical sculptor, John Flaxman (1755-1826). Cartwright

Gardens **[2e]** were formerly Burton Crescent after their builder, James Burton. Following murders on the street, its name is said to have been changed to disassociate it with that memory.

3 The East End Dwellings Company The Tonbridge Estate was built on land purchased by Sir Andrew Judd in 1553 as an investment to finance the Tonbridge School in Kent. Judd is memorialised in both the name Judd Street **[3a]** and the pub The Skinner’s Arms **[3c]** – Judd’s profession was a skinner, a dealer in skins and furs. Street names like Mabledon, Bidborough, and Hastings echo places in Kent and East Sussex near the market town of Tonbridge. The buildings in this area are more recent than those of the Bedford Estate and tend to be flats. Queen Alexandra Mansions **[3b]**, were built in 1912-1914 by the Central London Building Company Ltd. The company’s owner, Abraham Davis, also ran the London Housing Society which built the more modest working class flats on Hastings Street’s south side. Working class flats were usually called ‘Buildings’ or ‘Houses’, while middle class flats were distinguished by being called ‘Mansions’.

Argyle Primary School **[3d]** dates from 1880; the year on the plaque, 1902, is when the building was enlarged. The London School Board, or LSB, was the body responsible under the 1870 Education Act for building and running schools in inner London. The school has three separate entrances, labelled Girls, Boys and Infants.

The Tonbridge Street flats illustrate efforts to house the working poor. Formerly a slum, the land was cleared and the current buildings constructed by the East End Dwellings Company. This was one of several 5% philanthropy house building companies – privately financed but with shareholder returns capped at 5% to keep rents low. Air circulation was considered important, and the flats on Tonbridge Street’s east side **[3e]** and dating from the early 1890s, had semi-internal staircases leading to balconies where front doors were located. This design was intended to improve ventilation. In later buildings, like Tonbridge Houses **[3f]** opposite, this design was considered unnecessary. Though also for the working classes, these newer flats were higher status and had their own kitchens and bathrooms.

When the area around Argyle Square was developed in the 1820s and 1830s it had up-market pretensions even though the streets to the south were already turning into slums. Note the awkwardly tight corner where Whidborne Street leads onto Argyle Street to discourage access, and how, progressing along Argyle Walk **[3g]** the houses to the north turn their backs on the workers’ housing to the south. Like that between Woburn Walk and Flaxman Terrace, this marks another property boundary with an associated social divide.



Argyle Walk

4 Cubitt’s Calthorpe Estate Ampton Street, Frederick Street and nearby houses on Gray’s Inn Road formed Thomas Cubitt’s earliest building project, memorialised in the road name Cubitt Street. Cubitt was the leading speculative builder in early 19th-century London. Sometimes he operated as a developer, laying out streets and services and leasing the land. Usually, and especially in Bloomsbury, he was a contractor, benefiting from economies of scale by constructing houses with standard parts produced by his own specialist workers. For example, in workshops on Gray’s Inn Road and now the site of a community garden **[4a]**, his carpenters prefabricated doors and windows. Note the ornamental details and the use of plasterwork or stucco. Stucco was used to hide poor quality brickwork and could be painted – white was common, though this would soon show the grime from smoky chimneys, but occasionally in more fashionable colours.

5 Lloyd Baker Estate. Wharton Street, laid out in 1832, contains suburban style villas, while Granville Square uses the conventional terraced urban style. The houses’ small back yards tell much about Victorian attitudes to public and private space. For the Victorians, large private gardens were considered unnecessary and well-maintained communal gardens squares were favoured – though entry was limited to occupiers of the houses facing them. However, Granville Square was dominated by a church until its closure in 1936 due to structural problems.

Granville Square **[5a]** was the model for Arnold Bennett’s ‘Riceyman Square’ in his novel *Riceyman Steps* (1923). The novel depicts the place’s deterioration from the “genteel” to “decrepit, foul and slatternly” – very unlike today! The steps themselves are located in the Square’s south-west corner and lead to Kings Cross Road. Lloyd Square’s **[5b]** awkward shape reflects the boundary between the Lloyd Baker and New River Estates.

6 New River Estate The New River was constructed between 1604 and 1613 to bring drinking water from the River Lea near Ware in Hertfordshire to Clerkenwell. From Clerkenwell, it could be distributed to the customers of the New River Company. In building the New River, the company became a major landowner in Islington, hence the development of the New River Estate in the early 19th-century. Robert Percy Smith was Governor of the New River Company from 1827 to his death in 1845. His name is remembered in Great Percy Street, whose houses date from around 1840, and in the former Percy Arms pub **[6a]** (now a private residence) built a decade later. The area was bombed in World War 2, and some rebuilding was in a 19th-century style. This includes, at 16 Percy Circus, the site of a building occupied by Lenin and marked with a blue plaque **[6b]**.



Blue plaque: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924) founder of the U.S.S.R., stayed here in 1905

7 Improved Industrial Dwellings Company Cobden Buildings **[7a]**, a five-storey block of Victorian flats on the north side of King’s Cross Road, was a dry run for the wider use of this design in Derby Lodge **[7b]** on Wicklow Street. The design was first prototyped in a two-storey set of ‘model cottages’ commissioned by Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert, and erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. After the exhibition they were rebuilt in Kennington Park, south London, where they stand today. Cobden Buildings were built in 1865 by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, with philanthropic aims like the later East End Dwellings Company, and housed what were called then the ‘respectable poor’ – those who were artisans, policemen, and even junior clerks and schoolteachers. The design reflected sanitation concerns of the era. Though built with internal bathrooms and kitchens, the poor were not trusted to keep these clean so they were built in saw-toothed extensions at the back of the blocks with large windows to generate draughts and sweep germs away.

After Derby Lodge, the street crosses the railway **[7c]**. This was part of the first section of the London Underground from Paddington to Farringdon, which opened in 1863. Its use of steam locomotives until 1905 required as few tunnels as possible so the line sat in deep cuttings to permit ventilation.

8 King’s Cross The area of King’s Cross, previously called Battlebridge, derives its name from a short-lived monument to King George IV, erected in 1830 and demolished in 1845, on the junction of Pentonville, Gray’s Inn and Euston Roads. Kings Cross’s negative reputation, which has only recently begun to fade, is rooted in its past.

It was the site of the Great Dust Heap, where bones from butchers and ashes from coal fire ashes were dumped, the Smallpox Hospital, and the London Fever Hospital.



Mainline railways were forbidden from entering inner London, and there was also a prohibition against unified central stations, hence the string of termini along Euston Road. The elegant, functional simplicity of King’s Cross station (1852) and its arches **[8a]** (when built, one was for arrivals and the other for departures) was the design of another Cubitt brother, Lewis Cubitt. Adjacent is the equally plain shell of the Great Northern Hotel **[8b]**, now linked to the station by a spectacular new domed concourse **[8c]**. Compare these with the extravagant Victorian Gothic of St Pancras’ Midland Hotel (1873) (now the St Pancras Hotel) and the technological marvel of William Barlow’s train shed (1868), the roof over the platforms which, when it was built, was the biggest single-arch span in the world. The height difference is important too. Whereas Great Northern chose to burrow under the Regent’s Canal immediately to the north, Midland decided to bridge it; consequently the former terminates at street level and the latter high above. The space beneath the platforms at St Pancras proved ideal for the storage of beer barrels delivered from Burton-on-Trent, which in 1880 boasted 30 breweries and at one time supplied a quarter of all beer sold in Britain. With the renovation of St Pancras Station in the early 21st-century, this vast undercroft became a shopping centre.

9 Regent Quarter In the late 19th-century, this was an area of foundries, varnishers and lead works. It remained a zone of warehouses and heavy industry until its transformation during the King’s Cross redevelopment.



Regent Quarter plaque

10 Kings Place Canals were the precursor to railways for moving heavy goods – for more on this visit the Canal Museum **[10a]**. The Regent’s Canal linked the Thames at Limehouse with the Paddington Basin Grand Junction, the hub connecting London canals with the rest of the UK. The area is now home to Kings Place, whose subterranean arts centre is lower than the canal.

11 Granary Square Now a square, the land was once the unloading ground for goods carried by canal. The goods yard’s former buildings have been converted, some into restaurants and bars and others into the Central St Martins campus **[11a]**, part of London’s University of the Arts. Several gasholders were erected in this area by the Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company in around 1880 to hold gas manufactured from coal. Their cast iron frames are of heritage value and, having been dismantled and renovated by a company based in Yorkshire, will be returned when the redevelopment is complete. One will border a park opening in late 2015, and three others will contain flats.



King’s Boulevard

12A Kings Boulevard or 12B Camley Street Natural Park If time is limited, follow the new Kings Boulevard to the end. Otherwise, pause at Camley Street Natural Park. This small nature reserve was built on the site of railway coal drops, interchanges for transferring coal from rail to barge or road. The route converges near Battlebridge Square.

13 St Pancras Station With cobbled streets, model dwellings and gasholders, before redevelopment Kings Cross was a favourite location for period dramas and film noir – including *The Ladykillers* (1955), *Chaplin* (1992) and Ian McKellen’s 1930s setting of *Richard III* (1995). The Gymnasium **[13a]**, now a restaurant, was built in 1864-65 for the German Gymnastics Society (there were over 16,000 German-born in London in 1861) and was claimed to be the first purpose-built gymnasium in England. Where modern office buildings now stand were blocks of workers dwellings. All have been demolished apart from a fragment of Stanley Buildings **[13b]**, now converted into offices.

In St Pancras Station, the shopping arcade **[13e]** is in the area formerly used to store beer (see above). At platform level on the south end is a statue of Sir John Betjeman **[13f]**. Betjeman was poet laureate from 1972 until his death in 1984. He was also a founder member of the Victorian Society (1958) and a passionate defender of Victorian architecture and railways. Today, he is best known for his BBC film, *Metro-Land* (1973), celebrating the suburbs along the Metropolitan Line, north-west of London. But he also published *London’s Historic Railway Stations* (1972) and played a critical role in ensuring the preservation of St Pancras Station which was threatened with demolition following redevelopment of nearby Euston Station in the 1960s. The larger and much-maligned sculpture of a couple embracing, by Paul Day, intended to signify a ‘meeting place’ under the clock. More interesting than the couple is the frieze around the base of the sculpture which depicts a variety of railway-related scenes and encounters. Above is Barlow’s glass roof **[13d]** with its celebrated span.



Statue of Sir John Betjeman

The St Pancras Renaissance Hotel now extends from the front of the building and along Midland Road **[13c]**. Opposite and through the gates is the British Library piazza **[13g]**. The foyer, exhibition space and bookshop **[13h]** in the main building is open to all. The Library moved to the site in 1997, having previously been accommodated in the British Museum. Successive editions of large-scale maps show that the

Library replaced the extensive Somers Town Goods Depot, built by the Midland Railway in the late 1870s; and that in turn replaced a warren of small residential streets.

14 Ossulston Street Estate This estate, with its impressive blocks of council flats and inner courtyards, was opened in 1929 by the London County Council and inspired by workers’ housing in Vienna. The modern Pullman Hotel **[14a]** on Euston Road was formally the offices of Camden Borough Council.

15 Peabody Herbrand Street Estate Originally called Little Coram Street and entered through an arch at its north end, Herbrand Street contains two types of workers housing. The earlier is that built by Peabody on the east side **[15a]**. Opened in 1885, it originally contained more than 200 so called ‘associated flats’ where adjacent dwellings shared toilet and washing facilities. These were arranged in eight blocks facing a central courtyard which served as children’s playground. Access to the estate was under the paternalistic surveillance of the Superintendent, whose flat overlooked the entrance from the street. Opposite are the three parallel blocks of the London County Council estate **[15b]**. The blocks, Thackeray, Dickens and Coram, are named after three of the neighbourhood’s great figures. William Thackeray and Charles Dickens were both novelists, Thackeray having lived in Great Coram Street between 1838 and 1843, and Dickens who lived first on Doughty Street (where the Dickens Museum is now) in the late 1830s and then in Tavistock House (the site of the British Medical Association) in the 1850s. Thomas Coram, who lived near Leicester Square, established the Foundling Hospital on the site now occupied by Coram’s Fields.



LCC Estate - Thackeray, Dickens and Coram Houses

On Tavistock Place is the Mary Ward Centre **[15c]**. Mary Ward was a Victorian novelist, known then as Mrs Humphry Ward, famous for her best-seller, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), and for her opposition to votes for women. Living in Russell Square, she founded the Passmore Edwards Settlement, renamed the Mary Ward Settlement after her death. Settlements were philanthropic institutions aimed at ‘improving’ and educating the poor – the most famous was Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel. The building in Tavistock Place, opened in 1898, is one of the finest arts and crafts buildings in London. Now it is a conference and exhibition centre, but the work of the settlement continues as an adult education and legal centre in nearby Queen Square. In 1894, in her novel *Marcella*, Mary Ward set scenes in Brown’s Buildings, a thinly disguised version of the Peabody Estate in Herbrand Street.

The walk finishes in Tavistock Square.