



walk notes

Bloomsbury is an area located in central London between Holborn and Euston Road. This area was developed by the Russell family in the 17th and 18th centuries into a fashionable residential area. It is notable for its array of garden squares, literary connections (exemplified by the Bloomsbury Group) and numerous cultural, educational and healthcare institutions. It includes the brutalist Brunswick Centre and Coram's Fields.

1086 The earliest record of what would become Bloomsbury is the Domesday Book, which records that the area had vineyards and "wood for 100 pigs".

1201 The name Bloomsbury is first noted in 1201, when William de Blemond, a Norman landowner, acquired the land. The name Bloomsbury came from Blemondisberi- the bury, or manor, of Blemond. The boundaries of present-day Bloomsbury are not clearly defined, but extend beyond the original manor and across several parishes, typically between Euston Road and Holborn and from Tottenham Court Road to Gray's Inn Road.

1327-1377 Edward III acquired Blemond's manor, and passed it on to the Carthusian monks of the London Charterhouse.

1545 In the 16th century, with the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII took the land back and granted it to henchman Thomas Wriothesley and made him 1st Earl of Southampton in 1545.

1631 London's first residential square, in nearby Covent Garden, was designed by Inigo Jones for the 4th Earl of Bedford and completed by

1631, influenced by Place des Vosges and Piazza d'Arme (Livorno)

1657 4th Earl of Southampton began building **A** Southampton, (later Bedford) House on his land, north of what is now Bloomsbury Square.

1665 **B** To the south he created Southampton Square as a piazza to his mansion. (Later renamed Bloomsbury Square) He leased three sides of this forecourt of his London residence for building. North of the residence remained fields. Nos 9-13, 14 and 17 remain from the original development, although much altered.

1667 Upon the death of the 4th Earl of Southampton, his daughter, Lady Rachel Vaughan, inherited the Bloomsbury Estate. [The Southampton line dies out, resurrected in 1675 for Charles Fitzroy, illegitimate son of Charles II, subsequently Duke of Cleveland, and owner of neighbouring Tottenham Manor]

1669 Lady Rachel married William, Lord Russell, 3rd son and heir to 5th Earl/1st Duke of Bedford bringing the Bloomsbury Estate as part of her dowry.

1673 Lady Rachel's sister married Ralph, Earl of Montagu, and built **C** Montagu House next door to Bedford House, burnt down and rebuilt in 1685. Later purchased by the nation to become The British Museum.

1683 Lady Rachel's husband (William, Lord Russell) was beheaded on 21 July 1683 at Lincoln's Inn Fields for his alleged participation in the Rye House plot but posthumously pardoned. His son, Wriothesley Russell became 2nd Duke.

1685 Property speculator Nicholas Barbon saw

the possibilities of developing the 17-acre site of **D** Red Lyon fields for housing and the area was laid out in 1684. It was hotly contested by many, including nearby Gray's Inn lawyers, who complained of their loss of 'wholesome air'. A pitched battle broke out between the workmen and around 100 lawyers armed with sundry building materials, resulting in many injuries. The workmen won and the building work continued; the houses in the new square were highly successful in attracting 'men of quality' such as the very same lawyers, as well as doctors and other professionals. The surveyor Edward Hatton, in 1708, described the Square as 'a pleasant square of good buildings, between High Holborn south and the fields north'. Only the 18th century buildings to the south remain.

1706 The church of **E** St George the Martyr in Queen Square was built 1703-1706 by Arthur Tooley, as a chapel of ease to St Andrew, Holborn. It was remodelled in the early nineteenth century by J B Papworth, who added a bell-tower and two frontages to what had previously been a plain brick building, and again in 1867-69 by S S Teulon, who greatly changed the exterior, removed the galleries and added the present columns and roof.

1713 **F** St George's Gardens was one of the very first burial grounds to be established away from a church, in open fields. The land was bought in 1713 to serve the parishioners of St George the Martyr, Queen Square, and St George's, Bloomsbury, the latter yet to be built. By 1855 it had become overcrowded and closed. It is now a small park, open to the public

since 1884 with some atmospheric chest tombs remaining. The statue of Euterpe, Muse of Instrumental Music, used to decorate the facade of the Appollo Inn, on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Torrington Place.

1716-25 © Queen Square began as the garden of Sir Nathaniel Curzon's private house, but was laid out as a square in the decade up to 1725, after the church of St George the Martyr, (St. George's Holborn), had been built by public subscription in 1706. The square was originally only built on three sides, with the north left open to the countryside, with views out to the Hampstead and Highgate hills. Later in the Georgian period, the view was closed off by a terrace of houses in what is now Guilford St; even later a hotel and private blocks of flats were built into the north end of the square masking these buildings.

The square was formerly known as Queen Anne's Square, after the monarch of the time. (reign 1702-1714) Later Queen Charlotte would visit the square to tend to her sick husband George III, who was being treated there for his illness. The statue in the gardens is thought to be of Queen Charlotte. The pub on the corner near the church, called the Queen's Larder, is reputed to be where she stored food for the patient.

1730 Wriothlesley Russell, 3rd Duke of Bedford, built Bloomsbury Market, for flesh fowl and fish, to the south of what is now Bloomsbury Way. Opened in 1730, it wasn't a great success but lasted until the 1800s.

1731 North of Bloomsbury Way, ① St George's Bloomsbury is one of the twelve new churches designed and paid for under the 1711 Act of

Parliament for building Fifty New Churches, and the sixth and final London church by Nicholas Hawksmoor. It is notable for its steeple based on the Tomb of Mausolus at Halicarnassus and for the statue of King George I on the top. The site unusually has a north-south axis, contrary to the legislation. Hawksmoor's ingenious east-west design with the altar in an apse [see map] eventually won a battle with Vanbrugh's north-south design.

Soon after the church's opening, however, there were complaints about the lack of space. By 1781, the entire church had been re-oriented to make more room. The pews were shifted round 90 degrees, the altar and huge wooden reredos were moved to the north wall, and the windows behind it were blanked out.

The church remained this way until a recent restoration helped by the World Monument fund returned it to its original orientation. The large chandelier is older than the church by 50 years, coming from The Duchy of Brabant via V&A.

The nave of the church is a perfect cube, with the altar in an apse to the east. An additional area to the north is separated by twin pillars. The grand six-pillared Roman portico to the south, facing the street, was largely ornamental; the real entrance was beneath the tower to the west, behind the nave.

1745 ① Captain Coram's Foundling Hospital moved from Hatton Garden to a new purpose-built building in Lamb's Conduit Fields, since demolished, leaving behind Coram's Fields.

1753 Founding of The British Museum, based on the collections of Sir Hans Sloane, who sold them to the nation on his death for £20,000. The Museum first opened to the public in ①

Montague House in 1759, purchased for the nation. A brand-new building replaced Montague House in 1847, designed by Robert Smirke. The circular Reading Room, by Anthony Panizzi was added in 1857. The space around the former Reading Room is today the Great Court, an indoor square with a glass roof designed by Norman Foster.

1765 The lesser-known Bloomsbury Gang of Whigs was formed in 1765 by John Russell 4th Duke of Bedford.

1775 ① Bedford Square is one of the most significant and complete examples of a Georgian square in London. Its national importance is acknowledged by the grade I listed status of all the townhouses fronting the square. It marks the start of the transformation of the pastures of northern Bloomsbury into a restricted upper-middle-class suburb. The fourth Duke of Bedford (whose forebear had laid out Covent Garden piazza in the 1630s) had proposed development but died in 1771 and it was left to Robert Palmer, principal agent to the estate, who collaborated with William Scott and Robert Grews and builder Thomas Leverton. Each side of the Square formed a single terrace. The houses were plain brick with wrought-iron balconies to the first-floor windows, the door arches were decorated with Coade stone and each key stone is decorated with a human face. Houses within the terraces have consistent widths, of three windows of vertical proportions. The central house/s on each terrace are stuccoed, pedimented and pilastered. North and South incorporate two dwellings and six bays. East and West have a single dwelling of three bays and five bays. The end houses are

balustraded.

1800 In about 1800 Francis Russell, 5th Duke of Bedford, demolished Bedford House and developed the land to the north with **Ⓐ** Russell Square as the centrepiece of his early 1800s development plan for northern Bloomsbury. James Burton, the builder of many of the squares in Bloomsbury, created a link between Russell and Bloomsbury Squares in the form of a central axis along Bedford Place. Humphrey Repton, the garden designer, completed this visual link by terminating the view in each direction with statues of the Duke of Bedford (in Russell Square) and his friend the Whig Charles James Fox (in Bloomsbury Square). (By his death in 1837, Burton had built over 3000 properties, and his buildings covered over 250 acres of central London.)

1801 The origins of **Ⓜ** Brunswick Square date back to 1790 when the Governors of the cash-strapped Foundling Hospital for Abandoned Children lost their Government grant and decided to develop their estate. They commissioned builder James Burton to create a garden to the west, surrounded on three sides by town houses, beginning with the south side in 1801. The square was named after the enigmatic Queen Caroline of Brunswick, wife of George IV, the only British Queen to be tried for adultery (she won the case).

1809 A second tranche of hospital land was leased in 1809 for much the same reason, to the east of the Hospital. Again, the side adjacent to the Hospital was required to be left open, in an attempt to preserve a pleasing prospect for the increasingly urbanised Foundlings. **Ⓝ** Mecklenburg Square was named after Charlotte

of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the wife of the then King, George III. The Garden was laid out and planted in 1810.

1811 **Ⓒ** The north remained predominantly farmland until the early 19th century, when leased to James Burton, the builder who was largely responsible for developing the nearby Foundling Hospital and Bedford estates. In 1811-17 he built the elegant Burton Crescent, of which 37 houses survive today (Nos. 27-63). The name Cartwright Gardens after John Cartwright, early political rights campaigner, was adopted in 1908 to dispel its poor reputation and the gardens were opened to the public in December 2016 after a complete refurbishment in connection with the rebuilding of the university halls to its east. A set of gates has been inserted into the west side of the gardens, providing a new pedestrian link into Burton Place.

1820s **Ⓓ** Gordon Square and Tavistock Square were developed as a matching pair with the same dimensions, by Thomas Cubitt in the 1820s, some houses built as late as 1850. Tavistock Square made use of a terrace from Burton's development on the east side. The Gardens of Gordon Square were designed and laid out by the 6th Duke of Bedford who named them after his second wife, Lady Georgina Gordon.

1820s Torrington Square was built in the 1820s, but most has been built over by UCL.

1822 **Ⓔ** By the 1800s the population of St Pancras had moved south and a new church was needed. Greek Revival designs (based on two ancient Greek monuments – the Erechtheum and the Tower of the Winds, from

the Acropolis) by the local architect William Inwood, with his son, were chosen from a competition of thirty. The builder was Isaac Seabrook. The church was completed in 1822 and is notable for the caryatids on north and south which are based on the Erechtheum's "porch of the maidens".

1827 London University (now UCL) was founded in 1826 and the Wilkins Building (off Gower Street) was started on the site of Carmarthen Square in 1827.

1829 **Ⓕ** Regent Square Gardens were originally laid out for the private use of residents of the surrounding houses built from 1829, of which only the terrace on the south side of the square remains. The areas around the square were seriously damaged by a German V bomb towards the end of the Second World War, including the Regency Gothic church of 1827, modeled on York Minster and frequented by Edward Irving, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Sir Robert Peel, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and George and Ada Reith. (Now replaced by 1960s Lumen URC.)

1829-47 **Ⓖ** Woburn Square was named after the Duke of Bedford's family seat at Woburn Abbey. The houses there were built between 1829 and 1847 and are generally narrower than those of Gordon Square. The southern portion of the Square, including some of the Gardens, has been redeveloped following expansion of the University in the late 1960s.

1832 By 1832 **Ⓙ** Argyle Square had come into existence, at least on a plan, though the houses weren't completed until 1849. The name 'Argyle' is derived from the Duke of Argyle who owned property in Kentish Town, and may have been

an attempt to lift the profile of the neighbourhood by association with aristocracy.

1847 The new building for the **U** British Museum was completed, designed by Sir Robert Smirke. 1857 Circular reading room opened.

1848 The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in John Millais's parents' house on Gower Street, in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The founders were joined by William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and Thomas Woolner to form the seven-member "brotherhood". Their principles were shared by other artists, including Ford Madox Brown, Arthur Hughes and Marie Spartali Stillman. A later, medievalising strain inspired by Rossetti included Edward Burne-Jones and extended into the twentieth century with artists such as John William Waterhouse.

1853 The Early Neo-Gothic Church of Christ the King **V** on Gordon Square was designed for the Irvingites by Raphael Brandon in 1853. According to Charles Eastlake in his History of the Gothic Revival, this was "one of the grandest and most effective modern churches which have marked the Revival". The church was never completed and the spire was never added. Since 1954 it has been a Grade I listed building.

1895 Bedford Estate sold 64 buildings to The British Museum for its expansion.

1912 In 1905 Vanessa Stephen began the Friday Club and brother Thoby ran Thursday Evenings. For some this was "Cambridge in London". Thoby's premature death in 1906 brought them more firmly together and they

became what is now known as the "Old Bloomsbury" group who met in earnest beginning in 1912. The group had ten core members: Clive Bell, art critic, Vanessa Bell, post-impressionist painter, E. M. Forster, fiction writer Roger Fry, art critic and post-impressionist painter, Duncan Grant, post-impressionist painter, John Maynard Keynes, economist, Desmond MacCarthy, literary journalist, Lytton Strachey, biographer, Leonard Woolf, essayist and non-fiction writer, Virginia Woolf, fiction writer and essayist. By the 1920/30s the group had moved on.

1925 While he was developing the area, Burton built himself a house in large grounds, named Tavistock House. After many leaseholders, including Charles Dickens, it ended up in the hands of the Theosophical Society, who commissioned Edwin Lutyens to create a new headquarters for them in 1911. Money and patience ran out in 1914 with the building incomplete. **W** After WWI the BMA bought the lease and reinstated Lutyens and it was opened in 1925. It has been extended several times since, including across the front.

1931 By the 1920s, the garden squares began to deteriorate and were under threat. Squares at Endsleigh Gardens disappeared beneath Friends House. There was a public outcry which led to a Royal Commission in 1927 and the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931, which gave protection to 461 squares and other green enclosures, ensuring that they could not be built upon and were preserved for leisure and recreation. However, the Act did not prevent alterations to the buildings surrounding the squares. Much of the original housing

disappeared in the 1930s beneath university blocks and modern hotels and many houses were converted into offices.

1936 Opening of **X** Charles Holden's austere limestone Senate House, then the tallest secular building in London at 209 feet. Plans to extend the complex northwards to Byng Place, with 17 courtyards, never took place.

1967-72 **Y** The Brunswick Centre was initially planned as a private development at a time when private, mixed-use development was rare. The centre, on land owned by the Foundling Hospital, replaced streets of run-down Georgian terrace housing with an open shopping precinct complete with cinema and residential accommodation above. It was designed by Patrick Hodgkinson in the mid-1960s in brutalist style. Building started in 1967 and was completed in 1972. The original plan to extend up to Euston Road was blocked by the Ministry of Defence who would not release land they leased. After failing to attract sufficient private buyers, the residential section was leased to the LB Camden for use as council housing, while the developer retained ownership of the structure and shopping areas. Plans for renovation, repeatedly blocked by residents' committees, began in 2002. This included the painting of the blocks in their originally-planned colour. The major work was completed in late 2006.

The Brunswick Centre was one of the first brutalist modern buildings to be listed in 2000.

2011 The very newest to the Bloomsbury squares and gardens, the tiny **Z** Marchmont Community Garden, was opened in 2011.