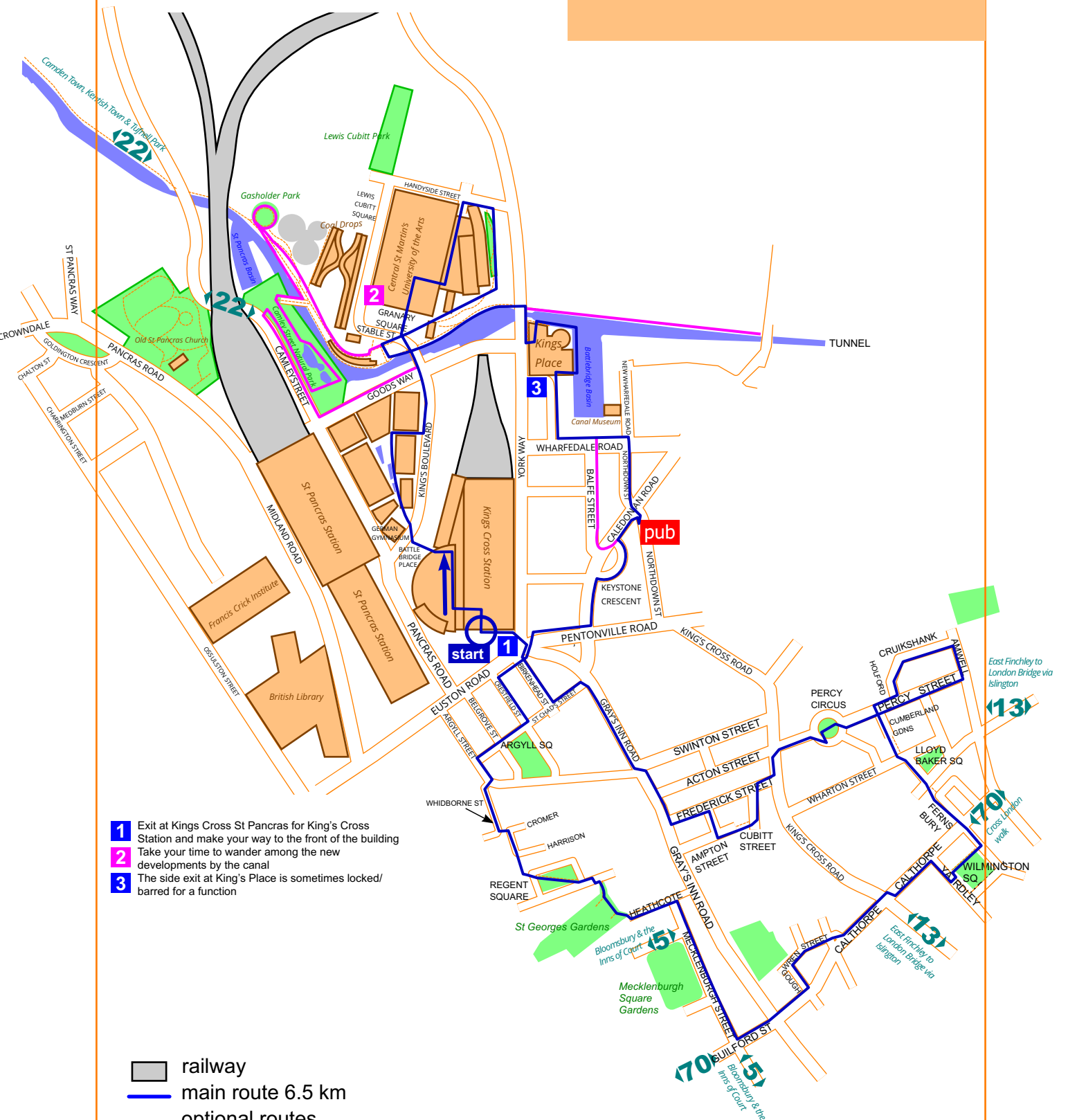


Kings Cross walkabout



- 1** Exit at Kings Cross St Pancras for King's Cross Station and make your way to the front of the building
- 2** Take your time to wander among the new developments by the canal
- 3** The side exit at King's Place is sometimes locked/ barred for a function

railway
 main route 6.5 km
 optional routes

10 intersection with another walk



1kilometre

walk notes

Kings Cross Walkabout

This pavement walk takes in old and new. As well as Kings Cross this walk explores the slopes of the Fleet valley immediately downstream - the Battlebridge, Calthorpe, Lloyd Baker and New River estates.

The Fleet

The river Fleet used to flow south along the western side of St Pancras Road, turning eastward along the south side of Battle Bridge Common (which extended on the south almost to St. Chad's Place) until it crossed the old highway (now Gray's Inn Road) and turned south again, passing St Chad's Well and Spa Fields. At the crossing was a broad ford, which gave its name to Bradford Bridge, corrupted in Tudor times to Battle Bridge. The neighbourhood was generally known as Battle Bridge until the erection in 1830 of a memorial to George IV lent its name to King's Cross; the much-derided statue was removed in 1842 and the rest of the edifice in 1845.

Industrial Archaeologist's Paradise

First we strike north into an industrial archaeologist's paradise. Euston Road was completed in 1756. This kick-started development on the southern part of the King's Cross area with generally low quality two-storey terraced houses but also included the Small Pox Hospital and the Fever Hospital. The Regent's Canal arrived in 1820, linking King's Cross to major industrial cities in the north of England. The Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company's Pancras Gasworks opened south of the canal in 1824. Between 1849 and 1852 the Great Northern Railway (GNR) developed their London terminus and purchased land for the station south of the canal and land to the north for its goods station and steam locomotive depot. Grain was transported from East Anglia and stored in the specially constructed Goods Yard complex (1850-2) before being transported on across London. Coal was stored in the Eastern Coal Drops (1851) and Western Coal Drops (1860s). Various inlets allowed transfer direct from trains to barges on the canal. By 1900, Pancras Gasworks covered 11 acres. In 1864-5 the Improved Industrial Dwellings Society built the Stanley Buildings to accommodate 104 rail worker families to the west of King's Cross station. More than 20 of these historic buildings and structures are being restored. The Granary was the first of these buildings to be reused. Today it is home to Central Saint Martins art college. Also restored



as a restaurant with a german influenced cuisine is the German Gymnasium, the first purpose-built gymnasium in England, designed by Edward Gruning and built in 1864-65 for the German Gymnastics Society.

Regent's Canal

After a few problems with funding and some construction issues, the Regent's Canal was opened to great fanfare in 1820. Initially a commercial failure, by the mid 19th century the canal was busy and profitable. It carried timber, building materials and coal to King's Cross Station from the industrial north. It also brought fruit to marmalade makers, beer to bottlers and grain to a flour mill where Kings Place now stands. It even carried ice from Norwegian glaciers to Carlo Gatti's ice house – now home to the London Canal Museum. The King's Cross Coal Drops were used by the merchant and coal mine owner, Samuel Plimsoll more famous for the Plimsoll line on the side of ships. The harsh winter of 1962-3 saw Regent's Canal freeze so hard that no cargo could move on it for weeks. By the time the thaw came, most of the freight traffic had been transferred to road, never to return.

Kings Cross Station

Plans for the Great Northern Railway's Kings Cross terminus station were first made in December 1848 under the direction of George Turnbull, resident engineer for construction of the first 20 miles of railway out of London. The detailed design of this grade I listed building was by Lewis Cubitt, the brother of both Thomas Cubitt (the architect of Bloomsbury, Belgravia and Osborne House), and of Sir William Cubitt (chief engineer of The Crystal Palace). The design was inspired by the Moscow Riding Academy of 1825. Lewis Cubitt was also responsible for the design of the Great Northern Hotel.

St Pancras Station

St Pancras Station was built rather later, in 1866-8 as the London terminus of the Midland Railway. William Barlow designed and engineered the train shed which at the time was the largest single-span structure ever built. The Midland Grand Hotel – now St Pancras Renaissance – was erected across the front of the station and completed in 1873. This gothic masterpiece, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, was the last and most extravagant of the great railway hotels. It is one of Britain's most celebrated Victorian structures and was heralded at the time as a grand destination for the thrilling age of steam. The hotel and station were threatened with demolition in the 1960s but were saved by preservationists led by the poet, Sir John Betjeman.

Moving south

On the way south after visiting the canal and its buildings the walk passes the amazing oddity **Keystone Crescent**, built in 1855. After passing through the Battlebridge estate, Regent Square and St Georges Gardens (see the history boards) we enter the Foundling estate, a residential development of 1792–1825 on fields owned by the Foundling Hospital.

Mecklenburgh Square and Street were named in honour of King George III's Queen, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, begun in 1804 but not completed until 1825.

Spa Fields

The walk continues along Calthorpe Street, named after Lord Calthorpe, the owner of the estate. The section between Gray's Inn Road and Gough Street was built gradually between 1821 and 1826 and the section east of Gough



The walk with Fleet River Superimposed

Street was built between 1842 and 1849. Across the former path of the Fleet the land rises. This side of the river to the south was Spa Fields, which gained fame shortly after the Napoleonic Wars as the site of great assemblies in support of universal suffrage. The estate belonged to Charles Compton, 9th Earl and 1st Marquess of Northampton. The Northampton Estate's plans for building on Spa Fields were already in train at the time of the meetings. The New River Company had been a tenant of Spa Fields, with seventeen pipes running across it in 1798. These were re-routed to run to the north and south of the field, opening the way for development. The high point, metaphorically and literally was Wilmington Square. In 1886 Lord Compton, later 5th Marquess of Northampton, presented the central garden enclosure to the Finsbury Vestry for public use, which the MPGA offered to maintain for the benefit of the poor. It was laid out as an ornamental garden, with flower beds, trees, seats and a shelter, which remains in place today.

Lloyd Baker Estate

Now we cross northward to the Lloyd Baker Estate (partly built on the New River Estate land). The land here in the 1680s belonged to Dr William Lloyd, an indefatigable opponent of the Roman Catholic tendencies of James II, and one of the seven bishops who, for refusing to have the Declaration of Indulgence read in his diocese, was charged with publishing a seditious libel against the king and acquitted in

1688. The estate was given as part of the dowry of William Lloyd's great-granddaughter Mary when she married the Gloucestershire vicar William Baker in 1775. By then the lower slopes were occupied by a brick- and tile-works that excavated the slope of the Fleet valley here, creating a steeper incline. The Reverend Baker and his son Thomas Lloyd Baker commissioned a plan from their surveyor John Booth, and his son William. The estate's first houses were built by the Union Tavern's landlord on Bagnigge Wells Road (now King's Cross Road) but none of these remain. The earliest surviving properties went up in the mid-1820s along Lloyd Baker Street and Wharton Street. Lloyd Street and Lloyd Square were laid out in the early 1830s. The latter has a central private garden surrounded by very grand, though compact, houses that are similar in style to their predecessors.

The three-storey terraces of Granville Square were built in the early 1840s. The architecture is less imposing but still fine. Several buildings and the Union Tavern's gardens were sacrificed when the Metropolitan Railway came through in 1865. Collateral damage to the tavern itself prompted its complete reconstruction in 1877. The hillside area was Clerkenwell's last big undeveloped space, starting with Great Percy Street in the early 1820s. This was followed by Percy Circus (1841–53) and Holford Square (1841–8), while building in Great Percy Street itself also continued until 1853. As a result of bomb damage, the radial-winged Bevin Court flats replaced Holford Square, while Percy Circus survived, a significant and unusual piece of early Victorian townscape. Great Percy Street, connecting Amwell Street with King's Cross Road by way of Percy Circus, was planned by 1818. It takes its name from Robert Percy Smith, a Governor of the New River Company. Above Percy Circus the street has a harmony achieved by two estates working together. The broad road sweeps downhill between stately terraces. Buildings on the south side that follow the type established on the New River estate in the 1820s were, in fact, on Lloyd Baker ground, in what was originally Soley Terrace. Otherwise, with the exception of Amwell Cottage, there is now nothing else here earlier than 1839. None of the later houses, though, rival the refined Italianate idiom of the Percy Arms public house of 1839–40 at No. 24 Great Percy Street and No. 7 Cumberland Gardens, designed by R. C. Carpenter. Approval was given on the basis that this was to be the only public house on this side of the

estate. The Percy Arms was unlike anything else on either estate, and is a highly considered piece of fashionable architecture. Carpenter took his Italianate design directly from a West End clubhouse, Charles Barry's Travellers' Club of 1832. Borrowing elements from both its main elevations, he reorganized them for his smaller and more vertically proportioned building. (Before long he was to focus on church design and Puginian Gothic.) Sadly it is no longer a pub. Cumberland Gardens and Prideaux Place further west were both developed partly on land belonging to both estates, requiring a measure of co-operation between the two landowners. Cumberland Gardens, a tranquil cul de sac, came into being almost accidentally. Its two sides were in separate ownerships and developed at different times. The six houses on the east side were built on Lloyd Baker property right up against the boundary with the New River Company's land to the west. Originally they had no road frontage, although there seems to have been a path of sorts, roughly along the line of the future street, for access to the West Pond reservoir.

Frederick Street

Returning now via the Calthorpe estate. Lord Calthorpe leased the northern part to Thomas Cubitt who built Frederick Street, Ampton Street, Cubitt Street. He evidently took some care in designing the houses in Frederick Street, which show an ingenious handling of brick and stucco. Nos. 12 to 46 form a composite symmetrical design with few variations. Nos. 12, 18, 26, 34 and 40, each have channel-jointed stucco to the basements and ground floors, with two upper floors of smooth stucco with tall pilasters and a moulded cornice, beneath an attic storey. The doors are square-headed. The intervening houses (in groups of twos and threes) are of plain stucco, the same height and with the same cornice, and having balconies at the first floor. Nos. 28–32 and 42–46 have round-arched doors, and windows to the ground floor and the upper storeys are brick-faced. Between the Fleet and King's Cross Road was a strip of unenclosed land, "waste" of the manor of Cantlowes. Cubitt Street now runs where the stream reached its greatest distance from the road. Northward the stream met the road where Frederick Street joins King's Cross Road and at the south it crossed Calthorpe Street near the Model Buildings. See Survey of London: Volume 47, Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol47> from which much of this is taken.