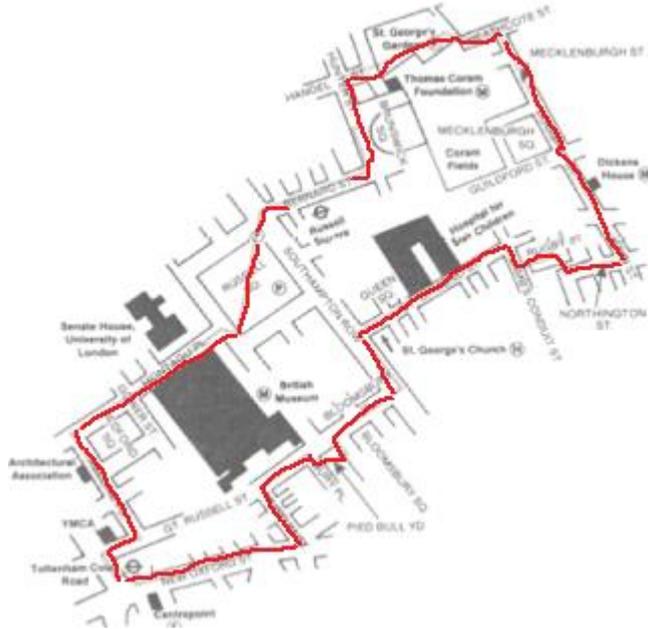


# Fetcham U3A

## Explore London Group 6

### Around Bloomsbury



A circular walk around a once-fashionable residential district laid out between the late 17th and early 19th centuries, mainly by the Dukes of Bedford.

During the early 1900s the district gave its name to the Bloomsbury Group of artists and writers, several of whom lived in the area. The main features of the walk are London University and the British Museum, six squares including Bloomsbury Square, Queen Square and Bedford Square (the finest surviving Georgian square in London), the Dickens House Museum, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children and the Coram Foundation (including the art collection)

Take exit 3 from Tottenham Court Road Station, go straight past the Dominion Theatre and turn right into Great Russell Street by the modern YMCA building.

Turn left into Adeline Place which brings you into Bedford Square, completed in 1780 as the showpiece of the Bedford Estate and today the finest complete Georgian square in London. Continue along the left-hand side of the square past No.35 which bears plaques relating to two 19th-century doctors: Thomas Wakle, and Thomas Hodgkin. All Bedford Square's houses have been converted into offices, many of which - in keeping with the district's literary traditions - were occupied by publishers until the 1980s.

Turn right along the top of the square and go straight on across Gower Street into Montague Place. Further along on the left is Senate House (1932), the main building of London University. Opposite Senate House on the right is the rear entrance of the British Museum. This great museum was opened in 1759 but the building you see here dates from the early 1900s.

At the end of Montague Place, cross into Russell Square gardens using the entrance to the right. Laid out in 1800 and named after the Russells, Dukes of Bedford. There is a statue of the fifth Duke (died 1805) on the right. Follow the main path diagonally across the middle of the garden, past the cafe, to the opposite corner then cross the main road into Brunswick Street, walk past Russell Square Station the right and the Brunswick centre (a development of shops and flats on the left and turn left into Brunswick Square. Virginia Woolf, Leonard

Woolf, Duncan Grant and John Maynard Keynes - all members of the so called Bloomsbury Group, an association of writers, artists and intellectuals – shared a house here in the 1900s. Since then the square has been completely redeveloped.

Carry on past the entrance to the Renoir cinema. If you look right down the north side of Brunswick Square you can see at the far end a statue of Captain Thomas Coram, an eighteenth-century sea-captain turned philanthropist. To the left of the statue is the Coram Foundation, the descendant of the orphans' home (known as the Foundling Hospital) which Thomas Coram founded in 1742. The old hospital building, which stood behind the statue, was demolished in the 1920s. The modern foundation continues the hospital work, but sponsors fostering rather than looking after orphans itself. The foundation's famous art collection - composed of pictures donated to the Hospital by 18th-century painters like Hogarth, Reynolds and Gainsborough - is usually open to the public.

Walk on to Hunter Street and take the first right turn into Handel Street, so named because Handel gave performances of his Messiah in the Foundling Hospital chapel to raise money for the orphans. At the end of Handel Street go into St George's Gardens. Go through the gate at the right-hand corner of the garden, and then turn left and right into Mecklenburgh Street, leading into Mecklenburgh Square. Both this square – named after George III's wife, Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz - and the original Brunswick Square were built in the 18th century on the Foundling Hospital.

Walk straight on along the left-hand side of Mecklenburgh Square into Doughty Street, built around 1800. Go across Guildford Street. Clergyman and famous wit Sydney Smith (1771-1845) lived at No. 14 on the right. On the left, No. 48 Doughty Street is the Dickens House museum. Charles Dickens lived here from 1837 for three years and completed his first three novels here (Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby).

Continue up the slope into John Street and turn right into Northington Street. At the end of the street, turn right and left into Rugby Street, built around 1680 on land owned by Rugby School in Warwickshire. On the left a plaque on No. 13 records the location of the White Conduit, part of the medieval water supply of Greyfriars monastery, which was near St Paul's in the City. Right at the end of the street there is still a drinking fountain. At this point you can also see the original main entrance to the old Foundling Hospital, now a children's playground known as Coram's Fields.

During the 1720s and 30s poor children were dying at an alarming rate - medicine was not winning the battle against disease and death after decades of severe epidemics (typhus, dysentery, measles, influenza). The Foundling Hospital was one product of that great wave of philanthropic activity that took place in England during the eighteenth century.

Captain Thomas Coram retired to Rotherhithe in 1719 after achieving success in the New World, establishing a shipwright's business in Boston, and later in Taunton, Massachusetts. The first children were admitted to the Foundling Hospital on 25th March 1741, into a temporary house located in Hatton Garden. Scenes of extraordinary drama and poignancy followed as the cries of the departing mothers and children echoed through the night. The Governors began the search for a permanent site that would house the purpose-built hospital. A solution was found in the area known as Bloomsbury Fields, the Earl of Salisbury's estate, lying north of Great Ormond Street and west of Gray's Inn Lane. It consisted of 56 acres of land amidst green fields. The price was £7000, the Earl donating £500 of this to the Hospital.

Half way down Lamb's Conduit Street turn left into Great Ormond Street, completed in 1720. On the left, No. 23 has a plaque to John Howard, an 18th-century High Sheriff of Bedfordshire who spent a lifetime visiting prisons in Britain and on the continent in a

pioneering attempt to improve prisoners conditions. Howard's work is still carried on today by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

The right-hand side of Great Ormond Street is mostly taken up by the famous Hospital for Sick Children. Dr Charles West and other doctors founded it in 1852 after research had revealed that there were no hospital places for children in London, even though over 20,000 London children aged ten or under were dying each year.

Walk along Great Ormond Street into Queen Square, built early in the 18th century during the reign of Queen Anne. Various medical institutions are based in this square, including on the left the private Italian Hospital. This was started in 1884 in a private house as a hospital for poor Italians. London's Italian community was at that time concentrated in nearby Holborn.

From Cosmo Place turn left onto Southampton Row and then first right into Bloomsbury Place, leading to Bloomsbury Square, originally built in the 1660s. Sir Hans Sloane, the physician, lived at No.4 for almost 50 years. Under the terms of his will in 1753 his enormous collections of books, manuscripts and natural history items were sold to the government for a modest sum. They subsequently formed the basic stock of the new British Museum.

Carry on along the top side of Bloomsbury Square and then turn left down the far side next to No. 17, the former headquarters of the Pharmaceutical Society. Just beyond No. 15, turn right into Pied Bull Yard where you will find a cafe, wine bar and some interesting specialist shops. Go straight through the gate in the far right corner and turn right and then left into Great Russell Street. The imposing main entrance of the British Museum is on your right.