

Faraday House stands on Old Gloucester Street in the Bloomsbury area of the London Borough of Camden. Like every part of London this has its hidden history.

Holborn is the name of the nearest Tube station and of the former borough which since 1965 has been part of Camden. Holborn is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) a Holebourne – the stream in a hollow – referring to the upper part of the Fleet River, which still flows beneath the streets, joining the Thames a mile or so south-east of Faraday House. A tollgate known as Holborn Bar marked the western boundary of the medieval City of London. Holborn developed around Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn where top lawyers still train.

Bloomsbury, noted for its leafy squares, is the heart of London's intellectual quarter, centred on the British Museum and University of London. The members of the 'Bloomsbury Group' of writers and artists, which gathered at the home of novelist Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) at 50 Gordon Square, were noted for their rejection of the social and sexual conventions of their day.

Faraday House was originally Britain's pioneer college of electrical engineering, named after Michael Faraday (1791–1867), inventor of the first electric motor, transformer and dynamo.

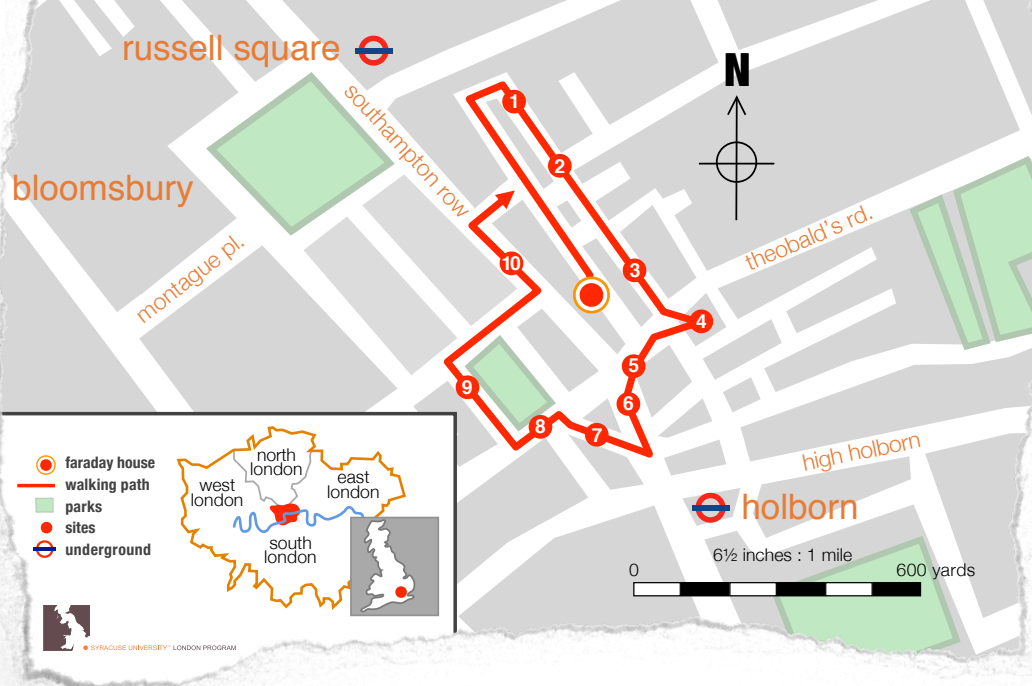
Old Gloucester Street was built c.1720 and named after the oldest surviving son of Queen Anne (reigned 1702–14), the Duke of Gloucester, who died aged ten. The houses immediately beside Faraday House to the north date from the early eighteenth century, though some have been refronted. The street was heavily damaged by bombing in World War Two and the housing block opposite Faraday House is post-war.

Queen Square, now dominated by medical institutions, was laid out by c.1730 over a filled-in medieval reservoir. The poet, designer and socialist William Morris (1834–96) had a house and workshop at the north end. Other residents have included the novelist Fanny Burney, philosopher Jeremy Bentham and Jerome K. Jerome, author of *Three Men in a Boat*. In 1915 a German Zeppelin airship exploded above the square.

The October Gallery is devoted to cutting-edge contemporary art from around the world.

The Queen's Larder takes its unique name from when Queen Charlotte (1744–1818) rented its cellar to store ingredients for the favourite dishes she prepared for her demented husband, King George III (reigned 1760–1820), when he was under the care of Dr Willis in his consulting rooms, then at the other end of the block.

At the church of **St George the Martyr** (consecrated 1723) American poet Sylvia Plath (1932–63) married the future British Poet Laureate Ted Hughes (1930–1998) in 1956.



The Mary Ward Centre is named after the author of *Robert Elsmere*, a controversial best-seller (1888) about a crisis of faith. Mary Ward (1851–1920) also pioneered 'special needs' education and was a friend of Henry James. The Centre offers classes and has a cosy café.

The Italian Hospital was founded in 1884 to serve the 'Little Italy' of nearby Clerkenwell and is now a hostel for parents whose children are patients in Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Great Ormond Street is synonymous with the Hospital for Sick Children (founded 1851), Britain's leading paediatric centre. At his death Sir James Barrie (1860–1937) bequeathed it the royalties from *Peter Pan*, which have yielded the hospital some £70,000,000.

On **Boswell Street**, Robert Frost (1874–1963) lived for a year in a room above the Poetry Bookshop which stood at No. 35. Frost's first two volumes of poetry were published in Bloomsbury, making him famous when he returned to the US in 1915.

Red Lion Square was laid out c.1680 by Dr Nicholas Barbon (died 1698), a prolific property-developer, shameless con-man and original economic theorist who also founded London's first fire-insurance company.

The memorial bench by the entrance to the gardens commemorates black activist Claudio Jones (1915–1964) a founder of the Notting Hill Carnival.

In the garden a plaque recalls a local law lecturer who died on 21 December 1988, along with thirty-five SU students, when Pan Am Flight 103 was destroyed over Lockerbie, Scotland by a terrorist bomb.

Statues honour Fenner Brockway (1888–1988), a campaigner for the freedom of Britain's former colonies and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), mathematician, philosopher, anti-nuclear campaigner and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1950).

A blue plaque at the corner of Dane Street marks the site of the workshop of John Harrison (1693–1776) inventor of the marine chronometer, which solved the problem of measuring longitude.

A plaque at No. 17 marks the former home of poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), and later of William Morris and his lifelong friend, painter Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833–98).

The Central School of Art (1905–08) was largely designed by its first principal W. R. Lethaby (1857–1931) a conservationist and disciple of William Morris.

Kingsway Tram Tunnel not only carried trams (1906–52) but was also used to store the Elgin (Parthenon) Marbles from the British Museum during World War II to keep them safe from enemy bombing. It is now used as a spooky setting by film-makers.

Paved, pedestrianised **Sicilian Avenue** (1910) is noted for snacks and spaghetti.

Bloomsbury Square, the first London square to be called a square, was laid out in 1661 on the 'building-lease system' by which London landowners shifted the risk of putting up houses onto speculative developers. The garden was laid out by Humphrey Repton (1752–1818), c.1806.

Nos. 9–14 are original but refronted c.1862. No. 17

was remodelled (1777) by John Nash (1752–1835) whose London landmarks include Regent's Park, St James's Park, Marble Arch, Trafalgar Square, and Buckingham Palace.

8 Swedenborg House on **Bloomsbury Way** promotes the teachings of Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) whose disciples have included William Blake (1757–1827) the French Symbolist poets and Carl Jung. On the other side of the road is the magnificent church of St George's, Bloomsbury Way (1716–31) designed by Nicolas Hawksmoor (1661–1736) and recently refurbished at a cost of £9,000,000.

9 A bronze plaque at No. 45 **Bloomsbury Square** marks the home of the fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773) who famously published a volume of letters written to his illegitimate son on how to be a gentleman (e.g. never laugh in public). Dr Samuel Johnson dismissed them as 'teaching the manners of a dancing-master and the morals of a whore'.

No. 5 (1744), by Henry Flitcroft (1697–1769), was the home of Isaac D'Israeli (1766–1848), father of Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81) Britain's first Jewish Prime Minister. No. 10 was home to Dr Robert Willan (1757–1812) the first English physician to classify skin diseases systematically.

Other residents have included American writer Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) and Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), architect of New Delhi, the Cenotaph and the British Embassy in Washington D.C.

During the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots (1780) the home of the eminent judge Lord Mansfield (1705–93) on the east side of the square was sacked by the mob and his furniture and books burned in the square. The simpleton 'hero' of Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), an onlooker at the incident, was sentenced to be hanged here. Two real rioters actually were.

The statue of **Charles James Fox** (1749–1806), by Sir Richard Westmacott, was erected just ten years after his death. Drunkard, gambler, libertine and brilliant public speaker, Fox spent most of his political life in opposition. An outspoken supporter of American independence, he successfully introduced the bill for the abolition of Britain's slave trade in 1806. The statue gazes north at his friend, Francis Russell, fourth Duke of Bedford. Fox is robed as a Roman senator in tribute to his eloquence and, for his defence of civil liberties in wartime, holds a scroll symbolising Magna Carta.

No. 4 **Bloomsbury Place** was the home of royal physician Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753) whose vast collection of antiquities, scientific specimens, coins, medals and manuscripts formed the core collection of the British Museum. Sloane invented milk chocolate and marketed it as a medicine.

10 Exit onto **Southampton Row** where a blue plaque marks the birthplace of Sir John Barbirolli (1899–1970), conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra (1937–42). Pass via Cosmo Place to Queen Square and Old Gloucester Street to return to Faraday House.