

Methodist Church House



Bloomsbury Justice Walk

Methodist Church House

BLOOMSBURY
JUSTICE

Tavistock Place is in the heart of Bloomsbury, a part of London with a rich history and many connections to justice-seeking.

You are invited to come on a walk around our local area to explore some of the history and characters of our neighbourhood; find out more about the links with justice stories; and perhaps find some places to have coffee or eat lunch and green spaces to go and relax on sunny days!

The main walk takes approximately an hour and is 2.5 miles long. In the centre of this booklet there is a map to help you navigate, and you're free to complete as much or as little as you like – there is even a little bonus section if you're feeling energetic.

Many of the people and places mentioned on this walk reflect some of the Justice Priorities of the Methodist Church, and they are colour-coded as follows:

- **tackling poverty**
- **flourishing environment**
- **justice for refugees**
- **opposing discrimination and promoting equality**
- **pursuing peace**

There are some others too.

If you discover more places and stories on your walk, please add them to the Tavistock Place Walking Tour page on the intranet with a photo and description. Have a good walk!

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Hospl

Sch

MANCHESTER STREET 68-3

Chan

Church

Sch

Chap

FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

B.M. 70-0

College

Hospl

Ch

BRIT. MUSEUM

Ch

DOMSBURY SQUARE

83-9

VERNON PLACE 85-3

82

B.M. 83

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B.M. 82-9

P.L.B.

85-6

L.R.

81-4

9-0

83-9

85-3

82



1. Methodist Church House

25 Tavistock Place

Our walk begins at Methodist Church House. The building was previously owned by Birkbeck College, part of the University of London.

Birkbeck was founded in 1823 as the London Mechanics' Institute, with the intention of offering education in science, art and economics to the working people of London. This was considered so controversial that the founder was accused of "scattering the seeds of evil".

In 1830 the college took the further radical step of admitting women as students. It was the only university in London to remain open during the Blitz. Birkbeck continues to operate out of a number of buildings throughout Bloomsbury.

Ordnance Survey map of Bloomsbury 1894

Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland



2. Marchmont Community Gardens

Marchmont Street

This narrow patch of land was meant to be part of the Brunswick Centre to the south in the 1970s, but the Territorial Army refused to release it. It was pretty much abandoned until funding was released for it to become a community garden and much needed habitat for a diversity of wildlife.



3. Gay's the Word

66 Marchmont Street

Gay's the Word is the UK's oldest LGBT bookshop and a long-running space for the LGBT community.

It was set up in 1979 by a group of gay socialists as a community space where all profits would be funnelled back into the business. Now the shop is bursting with books, but when it opened there simply weren't enough LGBT books to fill an entire shop so half the place was a café instead.

The shop was the meeting place of the London branch of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners during the miners' strike of the 1980s – the group's actions were told in the fabulous 2014 film, *Pride*.

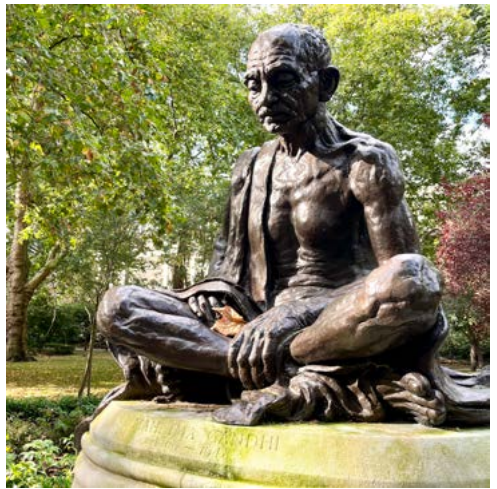


4. Mary Ward House

7 Tavistock Place

Mary Ward was a leading figure in the 19th-century Settlement Movement, which sought to alleviate poverty by getting rich and poor to live more closely with each other, breaking down boundaries.

Mary Ward persuaded philanthropist John Passmore Edwards to donate the land for this building. Here people living in poverty were provided with education, day care for children, legal aid, training and healthcare to tackle the root causes of poverty. Through music, chess societies and lectures, local residents were able to participate in activities previously reserved exclusively for the upper classes.



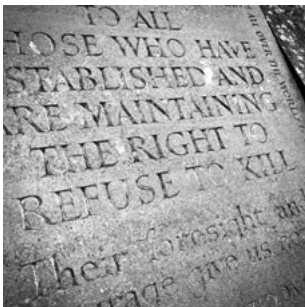
5. Tavistock Square Gardens

Tavistock Square

Tavistock Square Gardens contains a number of statues and monuments calling us to peace.

The bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled by Prime Minister Harold Wilson to mark the centenary of Gandhi's birth. Gandhi studied law at the nearby University College London from 1888-1891.

On the north side of the square is the Conscientious Objectors' Commemorative Stone, commemorating "the right to refuse to kill", and a cherry tree planted in 1967 in memory of the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Finally there is a memorial to the 13 people who died in the terrorist attack on a bus in the square in 2005.







6. Friends Meeting House and garden

173-177 Euston Road

Friends Meeting House is the headquarters of Quakers in Britain.

Quakers are actively involved in seeking justice in many ways, and the new garden in front of the entrance includes a carved timeline that captures significant points through Quaker history including Elizabeth Fry's prison reform work, evacuating children from Nazi Germany in the Kindertransport, campaigning for same-sex marriage and disinvestment from fossil fuels.

Friends House has also hosted many important meetings including the first international conference on sanctions against South Africa called by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1964; a visit by Martin Luther King Jr ahead of his Nobel Prize ceremony; and a rally at which Greta Thunberg spoke.



7. Asquith Xavier

Euston Station

Across the road from Friends House is Euston Station, which until 1966 operated a colour bar in its recruitment. It was ended thanks to Asquith Xavier who fought to become the first Black train guard at Euston Station. Asquith moved to England from Dominica as part of the Windrush generation. After several years working on the railways, he applied for a promotion to Euston where guards were paid an extra £10 a week, but the station operated a whites-only policy. Mr Xavier objected, and two MPs wrote to the secretary of state for transport, Barbara Castle. British Railways announced that no grade would be closed on racial grounds in the London Division.

In 2023 an Avanti West Coast Pendolino train was named after him.



8. Hugh Price Hughes

8 Taviton Street

Hugh Price Hughes was a Wesleyan Methodist Minister and first Superintendent of the West London Mission.

In response to the publication in 1883 of *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* which detailed the "condition of the abject poor", Hughes was stationed here to social and evangelistic work among the urban poor.

Price Hughes also represented what became known as the 'Non-Conformist Conscience' in political and social issues, asserting "what is morally wrong cannot be politically right".

He is described by the *Dictionary of Methodism* as having "died of over-work" in 1902. A lesson for us all!

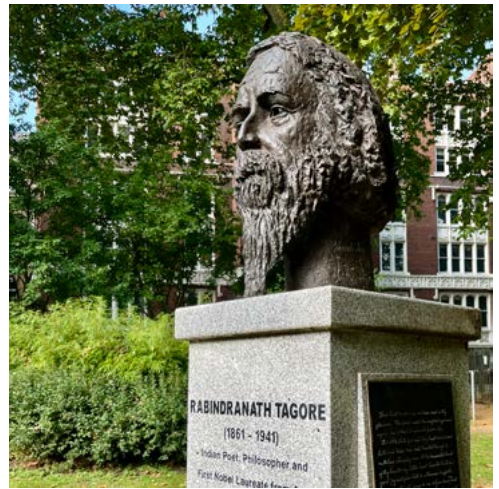


9. John Maynard Keynes

46 Gordon Square

John Maynard Keynes was part of the Bloomsbury Group of intellectuals, along with Virginia Woolf and EM Forster. Keynes moved into this house in 1918 and lived here until his death.

He remains an influential economist. His thinking changed how governments manage economies, especially during tough times. He believed that when people spend less, the government should spend more to keep jobs and businesses going. His ideas helped guide policies that led to stronger economies and more stable job markets, influencing how countries handle financial crises.



10. Rabindranath Tagore

Gordon Square Gardens

This statue commemorates Rabindranath Tagore, who in 1913 became the first non-European and the first lyricist to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. He spoke out against British colonialism in India, nationalism and the caste system. His work has inspired people across different faiths. The quote on the statue is from his work *Little Flute*:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life. This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable. Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.



11. SOAS

Woburn Square Gardens

SOAS, the School of African and Oriental Studies, is home to the archives of the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS). This archive includes minutes, correspondence, personal papers and visual materials from missionary work across the world from the 18th century onwards.

These important documents include some of the earliest surviving English-language accounts of these regions, cultures, languages and social lives of communities in these regions.



12. Lilian Lindsay

23 Russell Square

Lilian Lindsay was the first qualified female dentist in Britain, and the first female president of the British Dental Association.

She was born in 1871, and was the first of 13 children. She won a scholarship to school where the head told her she would be suited to a career teaching deaf children. Lilian disagreed (firmly) saying she wanted to be a dentist. Because of the argument, she lost her scholarship. When she applied to the National Dental Hospital she was interviewed on the street because the dean was so concerned she would distract the male students!

She was eventually accepted to the Edinburgh Dental Hospital and became the first woman to join the British Dental Association in 1895.



13. The Wiener Holocaust Library

29 Russell Square

The Wiener Holocaust Library is the oldest Holocaust archive in the world.

It contains a huge collection of photographs, press cuttings and eyewitness testimony, including pamphlets explaining fascism written by Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists; an archive of Jewish World War 1 memorials; eyewitness accounts of pogroms and the Holocaust; and examples of photographs used by the International Tracing Service to trace anonymous lost children after the war.

It also includes images of the 'Windermere Boys', 300 Jewish children from Nazi camps who were sent to the Lake District to recuperate, and whose stories were told in a recent BBC documentary. The Library also offers in person and online events, and an in-depth online introduction to the Holocaust.



At this point you can choose to continue the full tour, or to walk diagonally across Russell Square and skip to location 18 on Great Ormond Street.

14. Dame Millicent Fawcett

2 Gower Street

Millicent Fawcett was the leader of the peaceful campaign for women's suffrage and the co-founder of Newnham College, Cambridge. It was while she lived at this address in 1928 that she saw women finally achieve equal voting rights with men. She was the first woman to have a statue in Parliament Square (in which she holds the sign saying "Courage calls to courage everywhere").



EUSTON ROAD

METHODIST
CHURCH
HOUSE

Tavistock
Square

St George
Gardens

UCL

Gordon
Square

Marchmont
Street shops

Brunswick
Centre shops

Brunswick
Gardens

Woburn
Square

WOBURN PLACE

GUILFORD STREET

Russell
Square

Queen
Square

MALET STREET

GOWER STREET

BRITISH
MUSEUM

Bedford
Square

Bloomsbury
Square

TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

NEW OXFORD STREET

Tavistock Place Walking Tour



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15. Bloomsbury House

21 Bloomsbury Street

The building is currently hidden by scaffolding and hoardings, but for a brief period around World War 2, Bloomsbury House was an anchor for people seeking refuge from Nazi Germany.

It was the headquarters of many of the main refugee agencies – the German Jewish Aid Committee (later the Jewish Refugee Committee), the German Emergency Committee (Quakers), the Church of England Committee for Non-Aryan Christians and many others. Workers and volunteers within this building offered financial aid, help in getting training and work and advice on schooling to Jewish refugees who had fled Nazi Europe.

Some refugees were interned on arrival, others were dispersed without support, others had lost all friends and family. Bloomsbury House represented a lifeline for many refugees as they tried to rebuild their lives and flourish in a new country.



16. Harold Arundel Moody

Great Russell Street YMCA

A devout Christian, Harold Arundel Moody formed 'The League of Coloured Peoples' in 1931 at the YMCA, seeking to establish racial equality and address the persecution of Jewish people.

Born in Jamaica, he trained as a doctor in London, but, despite graduating top of his class, he was denied a hospital job because he was Black. He established his own GP practice in 1913, treating children in the area for free, and opening his home to Black people who were denied lodgings elsewhere. In 1943, Dr Moody was eventually appointed to a government advisory committee on the welfare of non-Europeans.



17. Trades Union Congress

23-28 Great Russell Street

Congress House is the home of the Trades Union movement in Britain, with 5.5 million members across 48 member unions. The statue at the front represents the strong helping the weak.

Trades Unionism has strong roots in Methodism: four of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, transported to Australia for taking an illegal oath and forming an early union, were Methodist local preachers.



18. John Howard

23 Great Ormond Street

Opposite Great Ormond Street Hospital is a plaque commemorating John Howard, after whom the Howard League for Penal Reform is named.

As High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, he was responsible for the country gaol... and was appalled by what he found there. He set out on a tour of gaols of England, confident he would find a good example for Bedford gaol to follow (he was shocked by what he saw), and then set out across Europe.

He gave evidence to Parliamentary Committees which led to two Acts aimed at improving conditions in gaols. He advocated state-controlled prisons in which the regime was tough but the environment was healthy. He died in Ukraine of "gaol fever", a form of typhus.



19. Vera Brittain

58 Doughty Street

Doughty St has a number of famous current and former residents associated with justice.

Vera Brittain lived in this house with her friend and fellow writer Winifred Holtby. Brittain served as a nurse in France in World War 1. The horrors of this experience, together with the deaths of her brother, fiancé and several friends, contributed to her growing sense of pacifism.

In the 1930s she joined the Peace Pledge Union as a sponsor and the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, finding increasing inspiration for her pacifism in her faith. She served as a fire warden during World War 2, but continued to travel round the country speaking and raising money for the Peace Pledge Union.



20. Doughty Street Chambers

54 Doughty Street

Brittain is best known for her memoir, *Testament of Youth*, but the letters written between her and her friend Winifred Holtby are a fascinating window onto how two young women try to navigate friendship, solidarity, work, relationships and patriarchy.

Doughty Street Chambers was the first barristers' chambers set up outside the Inns of Court, by a group of lawyers focused on civil rights law and human rights law.

Notable members (and former members) include Helena Kennedy KC, Amal Clooney and Sir Keir Starmer KC.





21. Charles Dickens

48 Doughty Street

In Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, Charles Dickens's tomb inscription reads: "He was a sympathiser with the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

Through his novels, Dickens drew mass attention to injustices in Victorian society – which he himself had experienced. His father ended up in a debtors' prison, so the young Charles had to work in a factory to support his family.

His books tried to make readers aware of the realities of life for working people. *A Christmas Carol* was a chilling depiction of both poverty and the heartless mindset of those who profit from it.

Oliver Twist showed the suffering of the industrial masses. *Bleak House* depicted the convoluted, lawyer-ridden complexities of the rules of civil procedure then in place in Britain.

Dickens wasn't a revolutionary, and he was certainly a flawed family man, but he brought an awareness of the realities of poverty in Victorian England to a mass audience.



22. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and RH Tawney

21 Mecklenburgh Square

Sir Syed was an Indian Muslim reformer, philosopher and educationalist, and the first Muslim to be knighted. This was in recognition of the many British lives he saved during the Great Rebellion in India. Yet he was damning of the British for their aggressive expansion into India and argued for Indian representation in government. He lived in this house for a year.

He wrote: *“Do not show the face of Islam to others; instead show your face as the follower of true Islam representing character, knowledge, tolerance and piety.”*

RH Tawney was a later resident of the same house. He was an economic historian and Christian Socialist.

Teaching for the Workers Education Association and serving in the ranks during World War 1 opened his eyes to the realities of working life and the urgency of social change. His impact on Anglican social thought and the Labour Party in the 1920s were significant.

He once said: *“What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people with equal justice call the problem of riches.”*



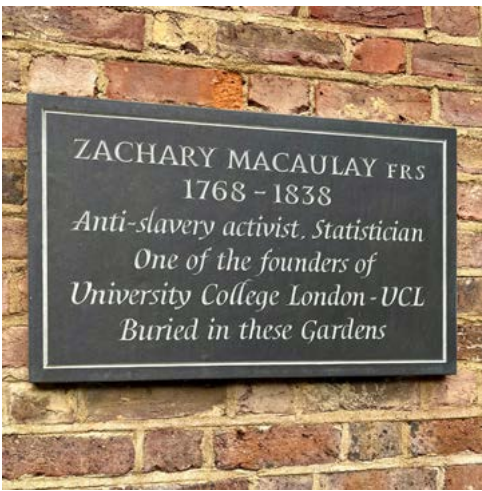
23. Calthorpe Community Gardens

258-274 Gray's Inn Road

This pocket park and allotment is a legacy of a community campaign. In the 19th century the site was occupied by a timber workshop. By the 1940s refrigerators were being manufactured there, but the building and local houses were badly damaged in the war and the site was cleared.

After many years of disagreement the land was handed over for a community garden. The deep valleys in front of the park are the former basements of the houses that have never been filled in.

The community centre and garden is a hub for therapeutic sports and community support. It incorporates an innovative closed-loop food-waste cycle: food grown in the gardens is used in the café and community meals, food waste is used for fertiliser and biogas, and biogas is used to make tea for volunteers!



24. Zachary Macaulay

St George's Gardens

In 1713 St George's Gardens were one of the very first burial grounds to be established away from a church. Yet by 1855 they were so full they were closed. Thirty years later, they were reopened as "open air sitting rooms for the poor", in the words of housing reformer Octavia Hill.

In the far north-east corner is a plaque to Zachary Macaulay, a Scottish statistician and a founder of the University of London. As a teenager he emigrated to Jamaica where he worked as an assistant manager on a sugar plantation.

Realising he objected to slavery, however, he renounced his job and returned to London, where he joined William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect in the abolitionist movement. He was Governor of Sierra Leone for five years, the West African colony for emancipated slaves.



25. Foundling Museum

40 Brunswick Square

The Foundling Museum is the museum commemorating the UK's first children's charity. Thomas Coram established a hospital to care for babies at risk of abandonment. Child mortality rates were soaring and each year in London 1,000 babies were abandoned by parents experiencing extreme poverty.

The Foundling Hospital (which continues today as the children's charity, Coram) required mothers to hand over their children, usually with an identifying token which could then be used to reclaim them at a later date.

The museum shows both stories of some of the children themselves, as well as the wealthy patrons, such as Hogarth and Handel, who supported the Hospital.

Outside the museum you will see a tiny sculpture on the railings, made by Tracey Emin, reflecting a modern day token – see if you can find it.



26. Stella and Fanny

13 Wakefield Street

Thomas Ernest Boulton (Stella) and Frederick William Park (Fanny) were Victorian upper-middle class cross-dressers at a time when this was highly transgressive. They performed on stage as women, and enjoyed going out in public dressed as women.

They were placed under police surveillance for a year, arrested, held on remand where they were treated brutally, and in 1871 charged with sexual offences, together with three other men.

The trial was the first time that the word “drag” was used in evidence to mean wearing women’s costumes. All five were found not guilty, though Boulton and Park admitted appearing in public dressed as women.

After the trial both resumed appearing on stage again. The failure of the prosecution to convict led in part to the introduction of harsher laws against gay men in 1885.

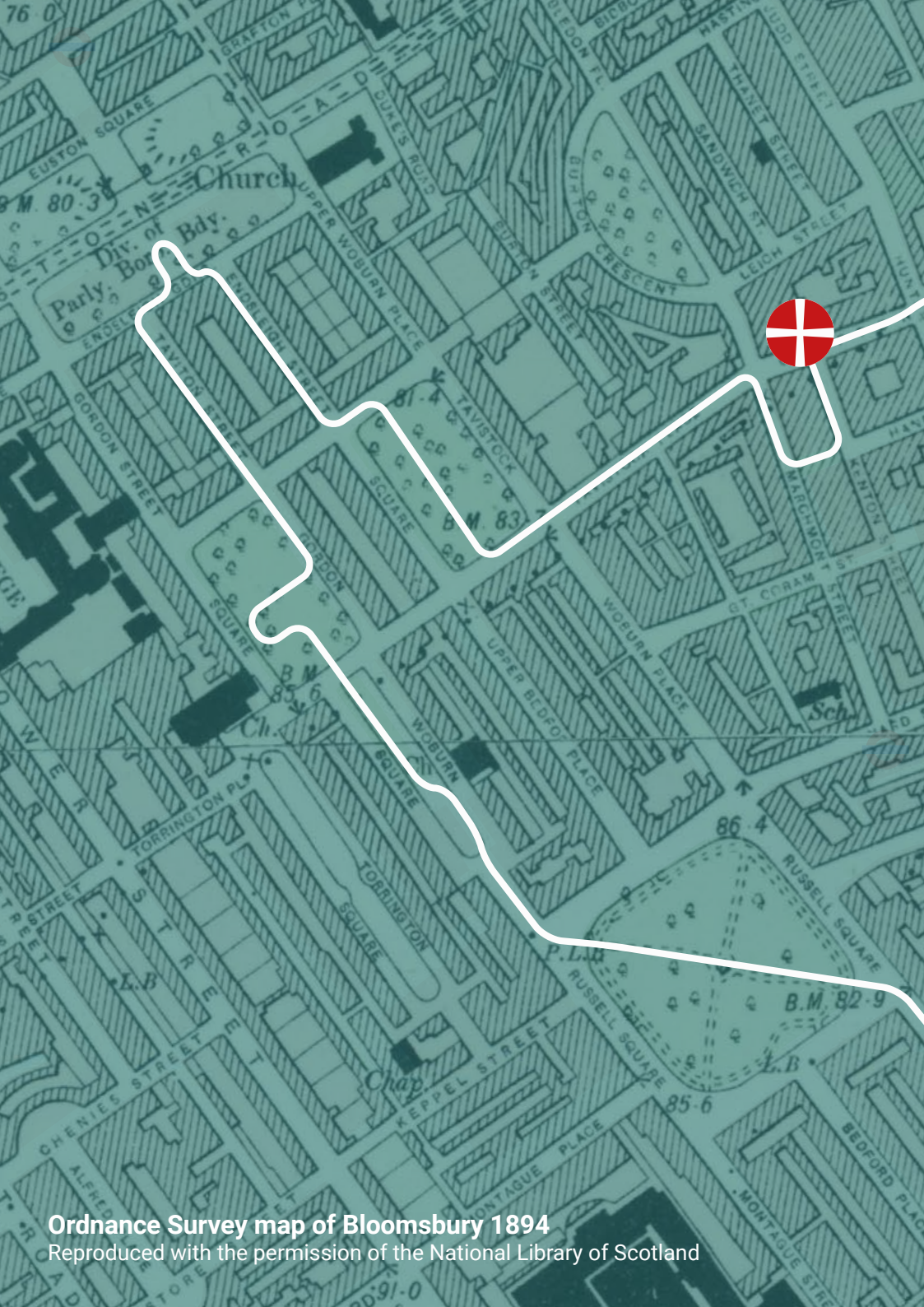


27. United Reformed Church House

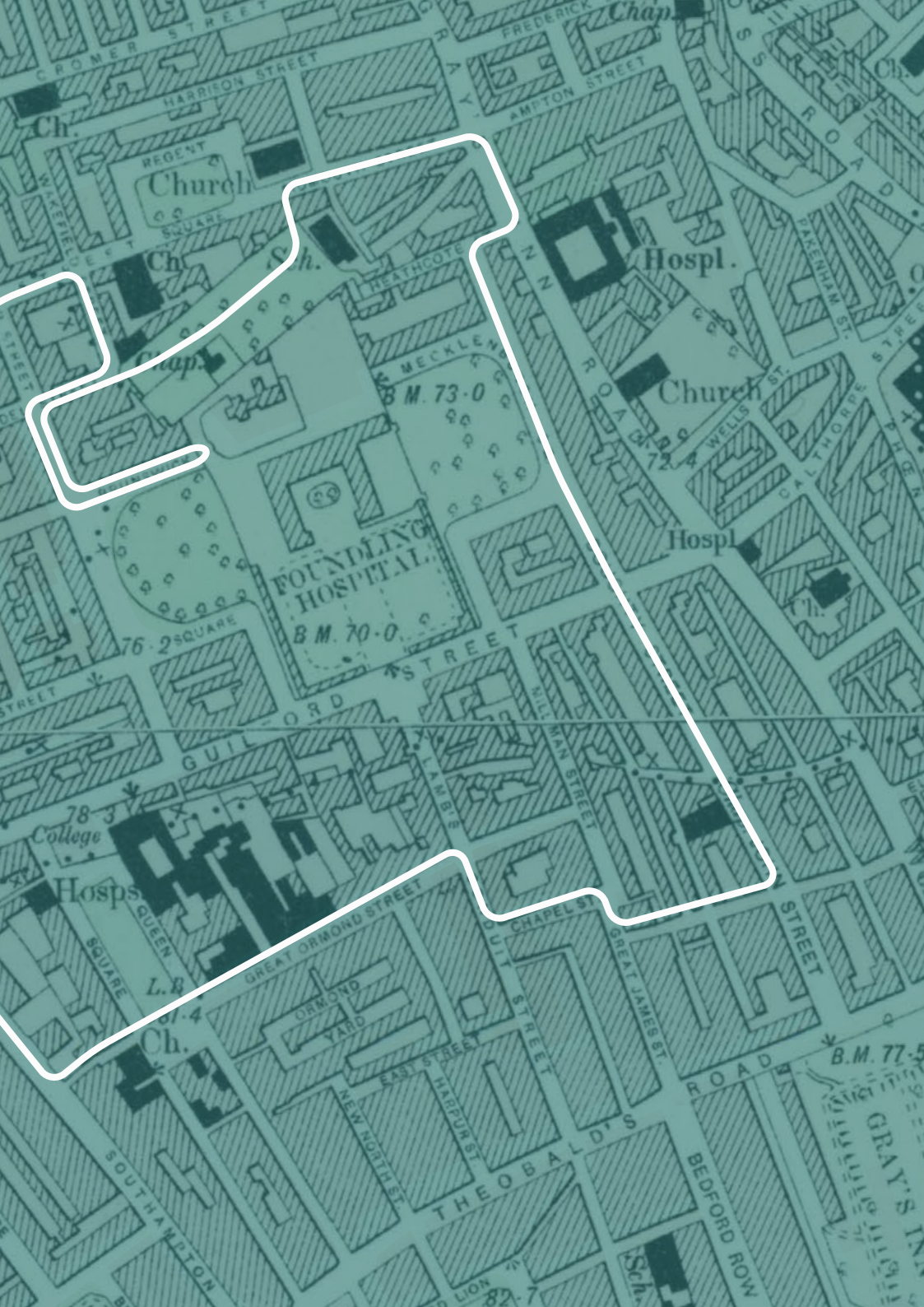
86 Tavistock Place

The United Reformed Church is one of our closest partners – physically and ecumenically! The URC was created in 1972 but has its roots back in the Reformation, and is committed to further union between Christian Churches. Its first female minister was ordained more than 100 years ago in 1917.

The URC is a full partner in the Joint Public Issues Team, along with the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union.



Ordnance Survey map of Bloomsbury 1894
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CROMER STREET
HARRISON STREET
REGENT CHURCH
SQUARE

FREDERICK CHURCH
AMPTON STREET
SUSSEX ROAD

HEATHCOTE
HOSPITAL
CHURCH

MECKLENBURG SQUARE
B.M. 73.0

FOUNDLING HOSPITAL
B.M. 70.0

76.2 SQUARE

GUILDFORD STREET

78.3 COLLEGE

HOSPITAL

QUEEN SQUARE

ORMOND YARD

CHURCH

GREAT ORMOND STREET

CHAPEL STREET

GREAT JAMESTOWN ROAD

STREET

SOUTHAMPTON

NEW NORTH STREET

HARRIST STREET

THEOBALD STREET

BEDFORD ROW

B.M. 77.5

GRAY'S IN



Text: Rachel Lampard
Graphics and photography: Steve Walker

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