Blue Plaques and Buildings

A history of anaesthesia walk around London

Acknowledgement: This walk is based on the ‘Blessed Chloroform Lecture’, 2008, delivered by Dr David Zuck.

If you enjoyed this walk, other places of interest can be found at www.medicalmuseums.org.uk

The Anaesthesia Museum

Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland
21 Portland Place
London W1B 1PY
Telephone +44 02 7631 1650
Fax +44 02 7631 4352
Email heritage@aagbi.org
Website www.aagbi.org

Opening times of the Anaesthesia Heritage Centre
Mondays to Fridays from 9.30am - 5.00pm
Appointment recommended
There is no entrance charge, but charges apply for some services.

Public Transport
Tube stations nearest starting point:
Great Portland Street - Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan
Regent's Park - Bakerloo
Length: approx. 2.5 miles
Numerous opportunities for breaks en route
On 16 October 1846, William Morton publically administered ether to relieve pain during a surgical operation and news of his success spread rapidly. This walking tour will take you to some of the sites associated with anaesthesia and its early history in London.

1 Joseph Lister, Portland Place and 12 Park Crescent

Joseph Lister promoted the use of general anaesthesia and taught medical students how to administer it. He was interested in patient safety during anaesthesia.

2 Former University College Hospital Cruciform Building, Gower Street (no Blue Plaque)

This building was University College Hospital until 2005 and is now part of London University. It was built in 1906, replacing the North London Hospital which opened in 1834 to train University College medical students. Here, on Monday 21 December 1846, medical student William Squire administered ether while Robert Liston amputated a leg, the first major operation performed in England under general anaesthesia.

3 Bonham Carter House, 52 Gower Street

Francis Boott was an active member of University College Hospital’s Council. He told senior surgeon, Robert Liston about a letter he had received from Boston, USA relating Morton’s demonstration of ether anaesthesia. Boott also told his friend James Robinson. Robinson gave the first ether anaesthetics in England in this building for the extraction of teeth on the morning of Saturday 19 December 1846. Boott’s home, 24 Gower Street, was on part of the site of Bonham Carter House.

4 James Robinson’s house, 14 Gower Street

Leading dentist James Robinson lived in this building.

5 First home of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, 9 Bedford Square (no Blue Plaque)

The Association bought this house in 1984 and refurbished it. In 1985 the Association moved in and it was officially opened by HRH Princess Margaret in 1987. The Association moved out in 2003 when the building became too small for its staff and activities.

6 Thomas Wakley and Thomas Hodgkin, 35 Bedford Square

Thomas Wakley was a surgeon founder and first editor of The Lancet and was opposed to the use of ether or chloroform to ease labour pain. Thomas Hodgkin was the pathologist who first described Hodgkin’s Disease in 1832.

7 John Snow, Soho Square

John Snow was the first specialist anaesthetist and a leading pioneer in its development. He developed equipment to administer it and researched how anaesthesia worked. He lodged in Bateman Buildings when he was a medical student. Bateman Buildings were redeveloped in the 1960s and are very close to 54 Frith Street.

8 John Snow, 54 Frith Street

John Snow lived here from 1838 to 1852 when he moved to 18 Sackville Street.

9 John Snow pub, Broadwick Street

This road was called Broad Street until the 1930s when it was renamed. The brass plaque and red paving stone mark the site of the Broad Street pump, which caused an outbreak of cholera in August/September 1854. John Snow had the pump handle removed, speeding up the end of the epidemic. John Snow was a teetotaller for most of his life.

10 Thomas Clover, 3 Cavendish Place

Thomas Clover’s house had a workshop in which he invented equipment to administer anaesthesia. He was interested in patient safety during anaesthesia and he played a large part in introducing a new anaesthetic, nitrous oxide also known as laughing gas.

11 The Anaesthesia Heritage Centre, 21 Portland Place (No Blue Plaque)

If you would like to know more about the history of anaesthesia, please visit the Heritage Centre (details can be found on the back of this leaflet).