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# THE GISSING JOURNAL

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## Contents




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# The Gissing Journal

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"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
*Commonplace Book*

## Gissing and Chelsea: An Urban Walk


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"I must get Mr Warburton to come and walk about Chelsea with me [...] He's a great authority on London antiquities." Rosamund Elvan's observation in Chapter 29 of Gissing's last completed novel, *Will Warburto*n, provides an appropriate epigram for this essay-cum-walk.

Where would you choose to take a walk following in Gissing's footsteps? Maybe Clerkenwell, Bloomsbury or Marylebone? Outside London, we might contemplate walks in Wakefield, Exeter or even Naples. But on this walk I want to take you from Sloane Square through Chelsea to Battersea Bridge. Not only does this take us past Gissing's official blue-plaque residence in Oakley Gardens, the only place in Chelsea where he resided, but it also passes sites mentioned in no fewer than ten of his novels: Chelsea features prominently in *The Unclassed*, *Isabel Clarendon*, *The Emancipated*, *The Odd Women*, and *Will Warburton*; and has bit parts in *A Life's Morning*, *The Nether World*, *The Whirlpool*, *The Town Traveller*, and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. It also features in the essay "On Battersea Bridge" and the short story "In Honour Bound." Chelsea also provided shelter for Gissing's friend, Morley Roberts, most notably in Danvers Street, but also in Manresa Road and Redburn Street. In mid-sojourn, in September 1883, Gissing enthused to his sister, Margaret, "There is only one place in the world wherein to live, & that is *Chelsea!*"[1]

Although Gissing assured his brother that "[t]his is a vastly convenient part of the town, as far as communication goes,"[2] the reality is that Chelsea is not nowadays the most accessible of districts to Londoners and visitors who rely on the Tube. There are boats for commuters, between Chelsea Harbour, Cadogan Pier, the City and Canary Wharf, and Gissing delighted that "[f]or twopence one gets down to the city by steamer, a delightful ride."[3] And there are buses – in 1879 there were horse-bus routes from King's Road through Sloane Square to the West End and the City and on to Bethnal Green and Hoxton, and from 'The Monster,' a pub on the west side of Ebury Bridge, in Pimlico, through Westminster to Bank; but the nearest underground

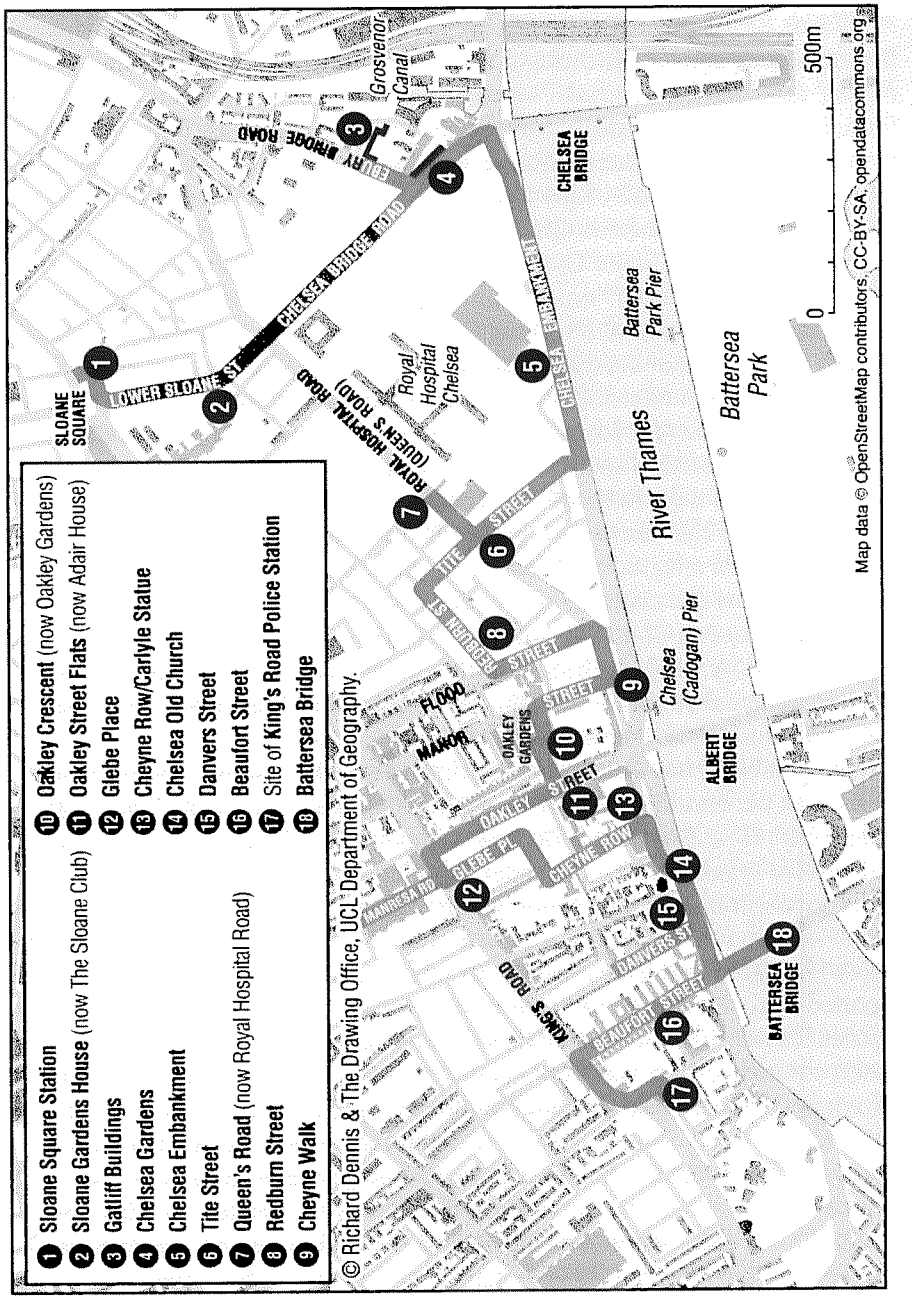
station, then and now, is Sloane Square, built by the Metropolitan District Railway in 1868 **[1 – numbers in bold and square brackets refer to numbers on the accompanying map: see p. 3]**. The station buildings were rebuilt in the 1930s, but one constant feature of the station that Gissing must have noticed is the Westbourne River which flows through the middle of the station in an aqueduct in an iron tube over the heads of waiting passengers. Another unusual feature was the 'Hole in the Wall' pub on the eastbound platform from 1868 to 1985, a feature deployed by Iris Murdoch in *A Word Child* (1975).[4] Gissing was evidently familiar with the station – he gave instructions to his brother, Algernon, on how to reach his lodgings from the station,[5] and he set two scenes in *The Odd Women* there.

Everard Barfoot goes by train to Sloane Square, intending to walk from there to Queen's Road [now Royal Hospital Road] where his cousin, Mary, and her companion, Rhoda Nunn, live. The fog is so dense that he has to grope his way, feeling the fronts of the houses. The trains could keep going, albeit slowly, because of the block signalling system that prevented more than one train from occupying each section of line. Rhoda reports to Mary that "[i]t took him more than half an hour to get here from Sloane Square," a walk which under normal circumstances should not take more than ten minutes (*The Odd Women*, Chapter 17).

On a subsequent visit to Queen's Road, Everard encounters Monica. He leaves first, but "[t]he afternoon being sunny, instead of walking straight to the station, to return home, he went out on to the Embankment, and sauntered round by Chelsea Bridge Road." As he enters Sloane Square he meets Monica, who has left later but walked directly to the station. Entering the station together, they fail to notice Rhoda, who is just leaving it: "She saw the pair, regarded them with a moment's keen attentiveness, and went on, out into the street." Barfoot and Monica then travel together, in an otherwise empty first-class compartment (Underground train carriages on the Metropolitan and District Railways comprised separate compartments with room for a maximum of 10-12 people who sat facing one another), he to Bayswater, she to Portland Road (now Great Portland Street) (*The Odd Women*, Chapter 18).

Upon emerging from the station into Sloane Square, we also need to pay attention to the buses. In *The Unclassed*, "On a certain afternoon in October" (1884 edition), amended to "On a Sunday afternoon in October" (1895 revised edition), Waymark meets Casti in Sloane Square and they wait together for an omnibus en route to visit the O'Grees in Peckham. Casti knows that his wife, Harriet, is spying on him, having come round from their lodgings in Markham Street (just north of King's Road) by the back streets to check up on his movements (Book 6, Chapter 5/Chapter 35).





Sloane Street (almost certainly the northern section of the street between Sloane Square and Knightsbridge) features in *The Town Traveller* and in *Our Friend the Charlatan*: Lord Polperro lives in "Lowndes Mansions" in the former, and society hostess, Mrs Toplady, has a house in Pont Street (off Sloane Street) in the latter. Gissing had first visited Pont Street as early as January 1882 when one of his tutees lived there.[6] But we will set off in the opposite direction, towards Chelsea Bridge, noting, in passing 'The Sloane Club,' previously 'Sloane Gardens House' **[2]**, an 1890 block of flats "for ladies of limited means," erected on the corner of Lower Sloane Street and Turk's Row by the Ladies' Dwelling Company Ltd.[7] While this is not strictly a Gissing site, it and several other institutions in the immediate vicinity contribute to our understanding of why Gissing thought Chelsea to be an appropriate location for Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn in *The Odd Women*.

Two blocks of flats more directly associated with Gissing are the model dwellings where the newly-reformed Ida Starr takes lodgings in Pimlico in the 1884 version of *The Unclassed* [in the 1895 edition the lodgings are located in Fulham, part of a misguided general relocation that Gissing makes, presumably to accommodate the experience of readers who cannot imagine the much more constricted London of c.1870 when the novel is set] and the "many-tenanted building hard by Chelsea Bridge" with windows overlooking "the gardens of Chelsea Hospital (old-time Ranelagh)," where Will Warburton has a flat on the fourth floor (*Will Warburton*, Chapter 1).

Ida's building has a resident superintendent who seems to be on familiar terms with her and looks after her cat in her absence (in prison, when Harriet frames her) (*The Unclassed*, Book 4, Chapters 3 and 8/Chapters 19 and 24). There were several blocks of model dwellings in 'Pimlico' (itself a difficult-to-fix locality) by the time Gissing was writing *The Unclassed*, but the one which best fits the scale and character he described is Gatliff Buildings on Ebury Bridge Road (then called Commercial Road) **[3]**. Charles Booth reported that the buildings were among "the most cheerful places in the district."[8] I am NOT suggesting that Gissing simply 'copied' reality but, as an observant author who was very careful about his locations, he would surely have known about these buildings and recognised their appropriateness to the needs of his plot. Gatliff Buildings comprised 149 flats erected over five storeys – three regular floors, a basement storey, and an attic storey with mansard windows in the sloping roof.[9] They were erected in 1867 by the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes on land owned by the Grosvenor Estate, who often used such dwellings as a way of sanitising marginal areas (in this case next to the Grosvenor Canal) which might otherwise degenerate into slums. The rent of



4/3 per week for two rooms was among the cheapest for model dwellings anywhere in London, though Ida paid only 3/6 for her two rooms "at the very top." Today, a two-room (one-bedroom) flat in the building, now retitled 'Gatliff Close,' will set you back £500,000.[10]

Back on Chelsea Bridge Road is a double row of Victorian flats: Wellington Buildings in the rear is a classic terrace of plain, flat-fronted, six-storey, model dwellings erected by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company in 1879; but in front of them, facing Ranelagh Gardens, are the slightly more, up-market, bay-fronted, Chelsea Gardens, also built by the IIDCo., but evidently with higher-status tenants in mind **[4]**: the flats were of four to six rooms, and Charles Booth reported of them that "owing to their fine position" they had been "appropriated by a wealthier class," albeit including "many prostitutes and kept women." For this reason, he had downgraded them on the revised Poverty Map of 1899 from "red" (middle-class; well-to-do) to "pink barred" (fairly comfortable, but with that hint of neighbourhood in transition).[11] There is a plaque to Jerome K. Jerome who lived there in the 1890s, as did Kenneth Grahame, author of *Wind in the Willows*, so the residents were certainly not all artisans or even junior clerks. In June 1890, Gissing's brother, Algernon, stayed for a few days with his friend, Morton Evans, a civil servant who lived at 103, Chelsea Gardens.[12] There can be no doubt that Chelsea Gardens are the model for Will Warburton's flat.

Gissing's Chelsea Bridge (opened by Queen Victoria in 1858) was replaced by the present bridge in 1937. But it was visually similar to today's bridge – a suspension bridge, albeit narrower and too weak to cope with modern motorised traffic. In *The Odd Women*, it is on the route of Virginia Madden's long walk from Lavender Hill to Holywell Street, "past Battersea Park, over Chelsea Bridge, then the weary stretch to Victoria Station, and the upward labour to Charing Cross" (Chapter 2). And in *Will Warburton* it implicitly connects Warburton's flat to his artist-friend, Norbert Franks's rooms in Queen's Road, Battersea, just across the river.

Grosvenor Road, on the north side of the Thames west of Vauxhall Bridge, had been built as far as the Royal Hospital by the time Chelsea Bridge opened, but it was incorporated into the Embankment in the 1860s, when the Metropolitan Board of Works, under its chief engineer, Joseph Bazalgette, created a wide carriageway from Blackfriars west to Chelsea, beneath which is situated the northern low-level sewer, running parallel to the Thames. A completely new section of Chelsea Embankment was opened in 1874 from the Royal Hospital west to Battersea Bridge, passing another new suspension bridge, Albert Bridge, which had opened in 1873. As well as sanitary and road improvements, the works had the effect of narrowing the river and improving

its flow, and reclaiming mudflats that had not been very sweet-smelling environments, eliminating some tidal wharves and riverside businesses, and leaving space for public gardens and a riverside promenade, as well as stimulating the building of new terraces of fashionable town-houses and mansion flats facing across the Embankment and overlooking the river. This was an ideal environment for flâneurs and for romantic encounters **[5]**.

Monica takes the train from Herne Hill to York Road Station (Battersea) and then, as the night was fine, she walks to Chelsea. Not wishing to arrive early at Mary and Rhoda's house, she loiters on Chelsea Embankment, and it gives her pleasure to reflect that in doing this she is "outraging the proprieties" – as a married woman, but alone, in the gathering gloom, along a stretch of promenade where most pedestrians would have been couples or single people in search of company. Rhoda and Mary often walk along by the river at sunset in summer (*The Odd Women*, Chapter 29/Chapter 10). Everard Barfoot, as we have already noted, deviates out onto the Embankment before sauntering back to Sloane Square. Will Warburton encounters Rosamund Elvan "moving by the parapet in front of Cheyne Walk." Her admiration for the sunset prompts Will to remember his time in Chelsea Gardens, and they walk back along the Embankment "as far as Chelsea Bridge, where Warburton pointed out the windows of his old flat." By now "[t]he sun had gone down in the duskily golden haze that hung above the river's vague horizon. Above, on the violet sky, stood range over range of pleated clouds, their hue the deepest rose, shading to purple in the folds." They affirm their mutual love of London, "loitered back past Chelsea Hospital, exchanging brief, insignificant sentences" and then stand silently at the foot of Oakley Street (by Albert Bridge): "Scarcely changed in form, the western clouds had shed their splendour, and were now so coldly pale that one would have imagined them stricken with moonlight; but no moon had risen, only in a clear space of yet blue sky glistened the evening star" (*Will Warburton*, Chapter 33). In *Howards End*, E. M. Forster uses the same location and time of day for a critical encounter between the Schlegel sisters and the widowed Mr Wilcox.[13]

Chelsea Embankment faces Battersea Park (also opened by Queen Victoria in 1858) across the Thames. Without venturing there, we must at least note the significance of the park for Monica, who first agrees to meet Widdowson on the corner of the park nearest Albert Bridge, walks with him back to near Chelsea Bridge and then accepts the offer of a trip on the river in a rowing boat; for Rhoda Nunn and Mildred Vesper who go for a walk in the park before dinner (*The Odd Women*, Chapter 5/Chapter 21); for Will Warburton and Rosamund, who renew their acquaintance when she invites him to meet her on the Embankment in the park where he will find her



sketching (*Will Warburton*, Chapter 31); and, in *Isabel Clarendon*, for Ada Warren and Hilda Meres, who walk over Albert Bridge, along the length of the park to Chelsea Bridge, and then race a river steamer back as far as Battersea Park Pier (Part 2, Chapter 6).[14] The boat then crosses the river "towards the pier at Chelsea" (also known as Cadogan Pier). This pier, just downstream from Albert Bridge, is also where, in *The Unclassed*, Waymark meets Ida and Sally to travel by boat upstream to Putney and then walk through Roehampton to Richmond (Book 3, Chapter 2/Chapter 15), and where, in *A Life's Morning*, Wilfrid disembarks from a Thames steamer following his encounter in Bushey Park with Emily Hood, who had rejected him several years earlier (Chapter 22/Chapter 23). Today, Thames Clippers between Putney and Blackfriars call at Cadogan Pier, but only as a commuters' service in weekday rush hours. Leisure travel between Westminster, Richmond and Hampton Court bypasses Chelsea.

Continuing our pursuit of Gissing locations, we must head north via Tite Street **[6]**, immediately west of the Royal Hospital, to regain Royal Hospital Road (Queen's Road until 1912). Tite Street is not a location that Gissing uses in his fiction, but in the 1880s it was becoming a centre for Chelsea's artistic elite: James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent, the art critic Harry Quilter, who was fiercely opposed to Whistler's art, and Oscar Wilde all lived here at various times.[15]

In the absence of many contemporary photographs, it is hard to identify a model for Mary and Rhoda's "plain, low, roomy old house in Queen's Road, over against the Hospital Gardens" (*The Odd Women*, Chapter 3). But the block immediately west of Burton Court **[7]**, which then included Paradise Row facing the Hospital stables and Infirmary, seems more likely than that immediately east, which was almost all small shops. Moreover, Everard's decision to walk down King's Road before groping his way through the side streets on his fogbound excursion to Queen's Road implies that his destination cannot have been at the eastern end of the road. Of Paradise Row, a writer in 1880 noted that the houses "are covered with creeping plants, have pretty parterres, and with their handsome entrance gates in front and large gardens at the back might have seemed Paradisaical. They are low, but have generally five windows at the first floor and contain good rooms wainscoted to the ceilings. Altogether they have an air of old-fashioned gentility."[16] No. 2 Paradise Row, also known as Ormonde House, housed the School of Discipline for Girls, the aim of which was "arresting the progress of vice in the minds of female children already contaminated by actual guilt." Girls were instructed in reading, spelling, needlework and household labour.[17] In *Thyrza*, Mrs Ormonde runs a kind of reform school-cum-convalescence home for little

girls, whom she sends "back to their homes in London better physically and morally than they had ever been in their lives before" (Chapter 7). Another key setting in *Thyrza* is Paradise Street, a real street in Lambeth, presumably "discovered" by Gissing in the course of his "day after day" there in July 1886.[18] But we might speculate that Paradise Street prompted memories of Paradise Row, which Gissing would have passed regularly while living in Oakley Crescent two years earlier; and that Paradise Row had offered up the name Ormonde as an appropriate traditional reformer. Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn are engaged in a much more radical agenda of female emancipation, and for an older age group, more suited to the spirit of Chelsea by the 1880s and 1890s. Indeed, in 1890 the School of Discipline moved from Chelsea to the more suburban Parson's Green (much as Gissing relocated Ida's model dwelling from Pimlico to Fulham).

Continuing on the northern extension of Tite Street brings us to Tedworth Square and Redburn Street **[8]**. Morley Roberts moved in September 1889 to new lodgings at 49 Redburn Street,[19] a substantial (still extant) terraced house, where the landlady, listed in local directories and ratebooks, was Mrs Mary Jones.[20] Booth's assistant described the street as "3½ storeys: all tenements: good working class: pink [fairly comfortable: good ordinary earnings]," and most of the houses listed in *Kelly's Post Office London Directory* were "apartments."[21] In *The Whirlpool*, Cecil Morphew moves to lodgings "in a street near Chelsea Hospital, a poor-looking place, much inferior to those in which Rolfe had formerly seen him.[22] His two rooms were at the top, and he had converted a garret into a dark chamber for his photographic amusement. Dirt and disorder made the sitting-room very uninviting" (Part 1, Chapter 9).

From Redburn Street, we return to the Embankment at the east end of Cheyne Walk, which originally faced directly onto the river **[9]**. In *Isabel Clarendon*, Gissing remarks on "the house where for many years Rossetti painted and wrote" and "not many doors away is that in which George Eliot died." He went on to commend the "pleasant" air, "the flowing breadth of stream" and "the patches of tree-planted garden" which "make a perceptible freshness." This was "a scene far from unlovely; the old houses of Cheyne Walk are abundantly picturesque [...] The great Queen Anne dwellings on the Embankment have their charm." Most of these characteristics remain true today, though sadly not the observation that "[v]ery little traffic is within sight or hearing": the Embankment is now a kind of inner London ring road, a route from the A4 and A40 in West London to the A2 and A23 in South London without having to pay the congestion charge! But for Ada Warren: "She



promised herself that, when the day of her freedom came, she would take one of the houses in Cheyne Walk" (*Isabel Clarendon*, Part 2, Chapter 6).

There are parallel passages describing the area in Gissing's letters to his sister, Margaret, on 4 October 1882 and 27 February 1883, where he details "the fine row of old Queen Anne houses called Cheyne Walk, where numberless interesting people have lived. At No. 16 lived Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the poet & painter. At No. 4 lived & died the painter [Daniel] Maclise, &, subsequently, George Eliot. To the right is a grand new house, built in the old style, where lives Sir F[rederic]. Leighton, the P.R.A. [President of the Royal Academy]."[23]

Gissing, like Rosamund Elvan in *Will Warburton*, took rooms in Oakley Crescent, in his case at no. 17 (now 33 Oakley Gardens, where an official 'blue plaque' records his residence between September 1882 and May 1884) **[10]**. Gissing first rented two rooms from Mrs Coward, and then, when his wife, Helen, went "to live with some people in Brixton," he 'downsized' to "a little back room [...] very, very small, & choke full of things, but redolent of quiet work" for which he paid 7/- weekly "including all attendance!" When this downstairs room proved "damp & unwholesome" he moved to the back parlour, which was "really very comfortable, quite dry, &—joy of joys—the chimney does not smoke even when the door is closed!"[24] Rosamund's rooms were "characterless," but "in the place of the landlady's ornaments, which were not things of beauty, she scattered her own *bibelots*, and about the walls she hung a number of her own drawings." Within a week, her sitting-room had been "brightened with the hanging water-colours, with curtains of some delicate fabric at the windows, with a new rug before the fire place" (*Will Warburton*, Chapter 29). Gissing's own room(s) may never have been so attractively domesticated, but he was reluctant to leave, claiming that he had been driven out by the noise in a house which had "become very full of people." Nine months before this, however, he had already noted that the Cowards "only propose living here for a little more than another year, so that it is vain to look forward to a longer tenure in my own case."[25] In fact, the ratebooks for Oakley Crescent (preserved only for 1881, 1886 and quinquennially) show that in April 1881, the "occupier" was William Card (but his name was deleted, indicating that he moved out during that year), and by 1886 the occupier was Miss Clara Betts, dressmaker, who remained there until at least 1901.[26]

In *Isabel Clarendon*, Thomas Meres and his daughters also occupied "a small house in a little square" only three minutes' walk from the Albert Bridge. Oakley Crescent was not quite a square, since there were houses on the 'inside' of the crescent, but from its location and its size (Ada rented two

rooms when she came to stay, thereby displacing the Meres sisters into one bedroom, but there was also room for Thomas to have his own "very small [...] book-thronged" study where pride of place was given to a photographic reproduction of Raphael's Sistine Madonna) it is evident that the Meres' house was structurally like the Cowards', albeit more intellectually equipped (*Isabel Clarendon*, Part 2, Chapter 6).

The directories for Oakley Crescent reveal two other addresses of passing interest for 'odd women': at no. 25 was the 'Argyll Home for Orphans and Friendless Girls' which, by 1887, had been replaced by the 'Working Girls' Club,' and at no. 35 a 'Training Home for Servants.' By 1889 this had become a 'Training Home for Dressmakers' and by 1891, 'Residence for Business Girls,' but the proprietor throughout was Miss Elizabeth Anne Tournier (1850-1925), who, in 1892, was President of the Women's Co-operative Guild. Even more significant for the reputation of Chelsea as a home for 'odd women' were the Oakley Street Flats (now Adair House) **[11]**, a 5-storey block opened just a few months before Gissing moved to Oakley Crescent. They comprised unfurnished rooms for "ladies of limited income" at rents of 3/- to 4/- per room and "limited service at moderate charge."[27] In *Dear Faustina* (1897), a novel by Rhoda Broughton whose earlier works Gissing had admired for their "wonderful freshness" and "independent vigour,"[28] the formidable Faustina Bateson occupies a fourth-floor flat in More Mansions, "one of those blocks of towering jerry buildings that have sprung up [...] to meet the requirements and match the purses of independent female spirits, imprudent marriages, and narrow incomes." It is "neither large nor pretty" but "we have a nice peep of the river" (Chapter 4).[29] The real Oakley Street Flats would also have offered a "peep of the river" from some of its upper-floor rooms. Individual flats were rated at £7, £14 and, where two flats had been joined together, £18, values which could be compared with rateable values of £6, £8, and £11 for 1-3 room flats in nearby Peabody Buildings, with £42 for 17 Oakley Crescent, £46 for 49 Redburn Street, and £184 for 16 Cheyne Walk.

Oakley Street mostly comprised more conventional three-storey plus basement terraced houses, often divided into flats, such as no. 152, rated at £55, where the attractive and widowed Rosalind Williams (née Potter, a sister of Beatrice Webb), took temporary lodgings in 1898 while looking for a house. Gissing saw her frequently when he was living in Dorking and she in nearby Holmwood, and he dined with her at 152 Oakley Street on 22 April 1898. The street numbering on Oakley Street was consolidated soon afterwards and no. 152 became no. 90, as confirmed by the same occupier – Dunmore, Henry, apartments – being listed for those addresses in successive years.



Oakley Street leads into King's Road where, heading west, we immediately reach the intersection with Manresa Road to the north and Glebe Place to the south **[12]**. Sadly, nothing survives of the Manresa Road that Gissing visited frequently in 1889-90 in the company of Morley Roberts, who moved briefly to 15 Trafalgar Studios, Manresa Road in the summer of 1890.[30] Manresa Road was the site of a community of artists, including Alfred Hartley, Frank Brangwyn, A. D. McCormick and the sculptor, Thomas Stirling Lee. It was also where Gissing made the acquaintance of the naturalist, W. H. Hudson. Roberts wrote an important essay for *The Scottish Art Review* (August 1889), "A Colony of Artists," describing the Manresa Road community, and used the studios (albeit relocated to Belsize Park) as a setting for his novel, *In Low Relief* (1890). More importantly for present purposes, Gissing set some of the closing chapters of *The Emancipated* (completed in August 1889) in studios much like those in Manresa Road. Mallard invites Miriam to tea in his studio and soon she makes a habit of walking along the road where his studio was situated. "And so it befell that Miriam was drawing near to the studios at the moment when a cab stopped there, at the moment when Cecily [Miriam's sister-in-law] alighted from it" (*The Emancipated*, Part 2, Chapter 14). Cecily enters the yard to find a row of studios, each with its tenant's name on the door, and arranged over two storeys with the studio itself on the upper level. Miriam keeps watch, for a seeming eternity, and then observes Cecily and Mallard leaving together, one of those topographical coincidences of which Gissing was so fond. Mallard subsequently invites Miriam back to his studio and, in the course of conversation, contrives to sketch her head twice, once as the puritanical Miriam and once as the emancipated Miriam (*The Emancipated*, Chapter 16).

The Trafalgar Studios were hardly 'picturesque,' more like industrial workshops, and the stone-yards adjoining them were more for building materials than for sculpture. In 1891, the 16 studios were recorded as one unit with a rateable value of £300, i.e. less than £20 per studio. Lee's sculpture yard was separately rated at £21, but Hartley had moved into the more stylish Wentworth Studios, converted from the private house of the developer of the entire complex, the builder, John H. Brass. Here, Hartley and his fellow artist, Frank Short, rented a studio rated at £84.

Much more picturesque, and consequently still extant, are the studios erected in Glebe Place, including Cedar Studios (1885-6) and Glebe Studios (1888-9).[31] It was in the latter, at 53 Glebe Place, that Gissing sat (and stood) for William Rothenstein in June 1897 while he made two drawings, of which the standing version now adorns the cover of this journal. Gissing visited the studio again in April 1898, the same day that he acquired a copy of the second

volume of Rothenstein's *English Portraits* in which he was included, and the same day that he dined with Mrs Williams in nearby Oakley Street.[32]

For our purposes, Glebe Place very conveniently leads into Cheyne Row **[13]**, where Thomas Carlyle's house (and now, museum) is situated, a modest (£55) home for such an eminent Victorian. In October 1882, Gissing reported that Carlyle's house was "still vacant & cheerless." In April 1894, he walked from his home in Brixton to Chelsea and "looked at Carlyle's house, which now has a marble tablet with Thomas's head." In December 1895, he visited again, with two friends from the time he had lived in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1877. By now the house had "opened as public exhibition."[33]

Before this, however, in 1882, a statue of the seated Carlyle by Sir Edgar Boehm, had been unveiled in Embankment Gardens, where Cheyne Row meets Cheyne Walk. In April 1883, Gissing wrote a sonnet entitled "Carlyle's Statue," "one of the best things I have yet written."[34] And in *Isabel Clarendon*, Ada walked "by herself along the river [...] She walked till the sun had set, watching the changing clouds and the gold on the river. On her way home, she paused a moment before each of the historic houses close at hand, and stood to look at the face of Thomas Carlyle, who had just been set up in effigy on the Embankment" (Part 2, Chapter 15).

Staying with Ada Warren on the Embankment, we can celebrate *The Tattler*'s acceptance of her "little sketch called 'River Twilight,'" and the "red glare" in the sky "[o]ver to the south": Lambeth, "a mysterious region of toil and trouble" (a phrase which took on new meanings for its author, as the setting for the tragic deaths, both of the fictional Thyrza and the all too real Helen). For Ada, the sunset brings new hope: "The glare in the south became a mighty illumination of the heavens; it was like the rising of a new sun." But undercut by the sight of "a wretched woman [...] huddling herself in her rags, as if preparing to sleep" on one of the riverside benches (*Isabel Clarendon*, Part 2, Chapter 9). Another sad, lone figure on the Chelsea Embankment was the "philological explorer" Mr Filmer, convincing himself that he was "honour bound" to his long-time Bloomsbury landlady: "he leaned upon the parapet, and gazed at the sullen river."[35]

Proceeding west along the Embankment – past the imposing pile of Carlyle Mansions (1886), nicknamed "The Writers' Block" [*sic*], commemorating the residence of Henry James, who died here in 1916, T. S. Eliot, Somerset Maugham, and many other not-so-literary figures, and noting the spectacular white-painted stone relief panels on the side of the building, representing vases of flowers, the sun, sailing ships, a crab, and herons or storks flying, fishing and standing by water – we reach Chelsea Old Church **[14]**, described by Gissing to his younger sister, Ellen, as "a very quaint old building,"[36] and



by which Rosamund Elvan and Bertha Cross paused briefly in a mood of enthusiastic contemplation as they walked back from Rosamund's rooms in Oakley Crescent to Bertha's home in Walham Green (*Will Warburton*, Chapter 29). The church suffered badly in the Blitz, but was rebuilt in the 1950s.

And so to Danvers Street, where Morley Roberts lived at no. 4 in 1887-9 **[15]**. Roberts described his life at 4 Danvers Street in both "A Writer's Novitiate," reproduced by Pierre Coustillas in Volume 29:3 (July 1993) of this journal, and in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (1912). He moved into an unfurnished and unserviced single room in September 1887, paying 4/- per week. He cooked in his own room. His total expenses (including rent) amounted to £8/10/6 for the first three months. Occasionally, he paid a charwoman "who washed the room down." He bought "what passes for milk in London" (probably watered down or adulterated) from street vendors and groceries from a nearby shop. A row of shops on the north side of Cheyne Walk survived from pre-Embankment days when this had been Lombard Street, including a post office/baker on the corner of Danvers Street, next door to a grocer.[37] No. 4 was part of a terrace of houses, nos. 4-16, each rated at £28, substantially less than the terraced houses in Redburn and Oakley Streets. From 1887 into the 1890s, the occupier of no. 4 (presumably Roberts's landlord) was William White.[38] No. 4 and the shops immediately to its south were destroyed by a World War II parachute mine, probably in the same raid that damaged the church. Roper's Gardens, a public garden named after Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More, now occupies the site.

Danvers Street runs parallel to Beaufort Street **[16]** where, in *The Unclassed*, Gissing situated first Julian Casti and soon afterwards Osmond Waymark "almost next door" (Book 2, Chapter 8/Chapter 13; Book 3, Chapter 2).[39] Waymark has "[o]nly one room," which Woodstock thinks must be "Devilish unhealthy" (Book 3, Chapter 3/Chapter 16), whereas the Castis (as Julian is now married to Harriet) have two rooms "only divided by folding doors" (Book 4, Chapter 5/Chapter 21). Sadly, none of this internal plotting tells us anything about the buildings in which their rooms are situated, nor about where (on a long street) they were located. In any case, very little survives from nineteenth-century Beaufort Street. Booth recorded 3- and 3½-storey houses, some semi-detached, poorer north than south, and mapped the street as "red" (middle-class) in the south but only "pink" (fairly comfortable) north of King's Road.[40] King's Road Police Station **[17]**, where Ida is taken when she is arrested after leaving the Castis' rooms, is another

victim of redevelopment, though we know it was located only one block and a dog-leg west of Beaufort Street, on the corner of Milman's Street.

There are other, less specific references to Chelsea that I have not dared to locate on a map. In *The Emancipated*, the Spence family move from Italy into a house in Chelsea "held on a long lease," close enough to both the Embankment and Mallard's studio for Miriam to pass those places on her walks (Part 2, Chapter 10). In *The Nether World*, the solicitor's clerk, Scawthorne saves money to spend at the theatre or in dining out by living on the second floor of a lodging house in "a certain dull street in Chelsea" (Chapter 30/Chapter 36). Ryecroft distances himself from the "*vie de Bohème*" that he associates with "unredeemed Chelsea" (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Spring, 8).

Nearing the end of his *Private Papers*, Ryecroft reminisces on an evening "by the river at Chelsea," an evening which Gissing had previously fictionalised in Ada Warren's "River Twilight":

> I loitered upon Battersea Bridge – the old picturesque wooden bridge, and there the western sky took hold upon me. Half an hour later, I was speeding home. I sat down, and wrote a description of what I had seen, and straightway sent it to an evening newspaper, which, to my astonishment, published the thing next day – "On Battersea Bridge." How proud I was of that little bit of writing! (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Autumn, 21)

The real article, "On Battersea Bridge," was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 30 November 1883. The old Battersea Bridge, represented in art by, among others, Whistler, Camille Pissarro, Walter Greaves, and Atkinson Grimshaw, comprised, in the early 1880s, seventeen narrow spans. The carriageway was also too narrow for modern traffic. It was demolished in 1885 and replaced by a five-arch granite and cast-iron bridge, designed by Bazalgette, and opened in 1890 **[18]**. Gissing's experience on the old bridge concentrated first on the pedestrians: "artisans with tool-basket on back, heavy-footed labouring men, women and girls with the little bags and newspaper parcels which speak of stuffy workrooms, all on their way home, with eyes set straight before them or sunk in brooding to the ground, too weary to spend one thought upon the noble picture to be seen for a turning of the head [...]." But we are urged to "stand and gaze awhile," looking west into the setting sun to St Mary's Battersea, the railway bridge, the factories and the river traffic. It is 5 o'clock in late November. Gissing paints a nocturne in crimson, "green and purple, amber and gold."[41] Today the prospect is of a deindustrialised, gentrified Chelsea Harbour, but it is still worth gazing awhile.



I have not ventured any grand theory underpinning this walking essay. Rather, in Ryecroft's words, "I wrote it because I enjoyed doing so." I hope you might enjoy following in Gissing's footsteps. And, if this essay has done nothing else, perhaps, in the words of Gissing's neighbour on the bridge, it "Throws up a deal o' mud, don't it?"[42]

[1] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-96) 2, p. 159 (15 September 1883).

[2] *Letters*, 2, p. 105 (2 November 1882).

[3] *Letters*, 2, p. 100 (4 October 1882).

[4] There was also a pub on the Circle Line platform at Liverpool Street and Murdoch's protagonist, who lives in Bayswater and works in Westminster, stops off at either Liverpool Street or Sloane Square as he circles the Circle Line to and from work.

[5] *Letters*, 2, p. 108 (8 December 1882).

[6] *Letters*, 2, p. 71 (19 January 1882).

[7] 'Sloane Gardens House' functioned as a club for ladies, much like a contemporaneous building in Chenies Street, Bloomsbury, erected by the Ladies Residential Chambers Company, and today better-known because of its association with Millicent Garrett Fawcett and her sisters. See Emily Gee, "'Where Shall She Live?': Housing the New Working Woman in Late Victorian and Edwardian London" in *Living, Leisure and Law: Eight Building Types in England 1800-1914*, ed. Geoff Brandwood. Reading: Spire Books, 2010, pp. 89-109.

[8] Charles Booth Police Notebooks B362, p. 41 (Booth Archive, LSE).

[9] C. Gatliff, "On Improved Dwellings and Their Beneficial Effects on Health and Morals," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 38 (1875), pp. 33-63.

[10] There was another block of model dwellings which had been reserved for ladies since 1878, where the rents were as low as 2/6 per room, but these were in Peel Street, Campden Hill, north of Kensington High Street.

[11] J. N. Tarn, "The Improved Industrial Dwellings Company," *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 22 (1968), pp. 43-59; Charles Booth Police Notebooks B362, p. 29.

[12] *Letters*, 4, pp. 224-225 (1 June 1890).

[13] "They turned back towards Oakley Street. The lamps and the plane trees, following the line of the embankment, struck a note of dignity that is rare in English cities. The seats, almost deserted, were here and there occupied by gentlefolk in evening dress." Mr Wilcox "implied that one ought not to sit out on Chelsea Embankment without a male escort." E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000 [1910]), pp. 110-111.

[14] Ada and Hilda also go rowing together on the lake in the park (*Isabel Clarendon*, Part 2, Chapter 7).

[15] Kit Wedd, *Creative Quarters: the art world in London, 1700-2000* (London: Merrill Publishers, 2001), Chapter 5; Patricia E. C. Croot (ed.), *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 12, Chelsea* (London: Victoria County History, 2004), pp. 102-106.

[16] Walter H. Godfrey, "Paradise Row, north side: Nos. 2a, 3a and 4-7 (formerly) Queens Road West," in *Survey of London: Volume 2, Chelsea, Pt I* (London: London County Council, 1909), pp. 23-28.

[17] "School of Discipline for Girls, Chelsea, London," at http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/ChelseaDiscipline/ [accessed 7 March 2018].

[18] *Letters*, 3, p. 48 (31 July 1886).

[19] Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late-Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 167 (23 September 1889).

[20] Mary Jones was born in 1831 in Huntingdon and already at 49 Redburn Street in the 1881 census. She died in 1915 as an inmate of the Christian Union Almshouses, 233-235 Marylebone Road. I am grateful to Markus Neacey for this information.

[21] Charles Booth Police Notebooks B362, p. 113; *Kelly's Directory for London*, 1882, 1895, 1899 are online: http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16445coll4; the directories for Chelsea, 1887 and annually, are in Kensington & Chelsea Local Studies Library.

[22] Bear in mind that, at the beginning of *The Whirlpool*, Morphew has a private income of £300 (enough to rent a whole house in the suburbs or a good flat in town, so rooms on the top floor, even in a respectable street in Chelsea, would be 'inferior' to what he had previously enjoyed.

[23] *Letters*, 2, p. 122 (27 February 1883), see also p. 100 (4 October 1882).

[24] *Letters*, 2, p. 111 (27 December 1882), p. 145 (18 July 1883).

[25] *Letters*, 2, p. 211 (28 April 1884), p. 150 (9 August 1883).

[26] For more on the Cowards, see Bouwe Postmus, "The Peregrinations of a Preston Traveller," *Gissing Journal*, 43:3 (October 2007), pp. 27-32 and "The Continuing Story of the Coward Family," *Gissing Journal*, 51:3 (July 2017), pp. 51-54.

[27] *Morning Post*, 26 July 1882.

[28] *Diary*, p. 22 (29 February 1888); *Letters*, 3, p. 185 (29 February 1888).

[29] I am grateful to Lisa Robertson for bringing Broughton's novel to my attention. Lisa's forthcoming book is entitled "Housing Crisis: Home and Identity in Nineteenth-Century London."

[30] *Diary*, p. 222 (24 July 1890) and numerous entries in the months following 24 March 1889.

[31] See Wedd, *Creative Quarters*, pp. 100-105; Croot, *Middlesex*, pp. 102-106.

[32] *Diary*, p. 436 (7 June 1897), p. 491 (22 April 1898).

[33] *Letters*, 2, p. 100 (4 October 1882); *Diary*, p. 336 (29 April 1894), p. 396 (11 December 1895).

[34] Reprinted from the manuscript at Yale in *Letters*, 2, p. 133.

[35] "In Honour Bound," *English Illustrated Magazine*, 13 (April 1895), pp. 79-88.

[36] *Letters*, 2, p. 102 (4 October 1882).

[37] As well as street directories, see photographs from the late 19th century in 'The Library Time Machine' blog edited and mostly written by Dave Walker in Kensington & Chelsea Library at https://www.rbkclocalstudies.wordpress.com/tag/riverside/.

[38] White was an engineer fitter. In the 1891 census he was recorded with his wife, 2 children, widowed sister-in-law and 2 lodgers (also engineer fitters). The 1895 Directory listed "White, William, apartments" as the occupier of 46 Paultons Square (at the north end of Danvers Street), where he was still resident at the time of the 1901 census. White died in 1908 and is buried in Brompton Cemetery. My thanks, again, to Markus Neacey for information in this note.

[39] In the 1895 edition, Waymark and Casti were "living near to each other" rather than "almost next door" (Chapter 15).

[40] Charles Booth Police Notebooks B362, p. 171; for a photographic image see https://rbkclocalstudies.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/beaufort-street.jpg.

[41] "On Battersea Bridge," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 November 1883, p. 4.

[42] *Ibid.*



# Fragments of Life: Arthur Machen and George Gissing

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The recent 50th anniversary *History and Index of The Gissing Journal* (2016) has brought to light some unexpected entries in the 'Subject Index' section.[1] These include entries on authors such as John Betjeman, Arthur C. Clarke, C. S. Lewis, and Edgar Allan Poe – not the names one usually associates with Gissing. To these disparate writers can be added another one – Arthur Machen – the 'Apostle of Wonder.'

Arthur Machen was born in 1863 and died in 1947. Although he was to live almost twice as long as Gissing, he was a near contemporary. Like Gissing he was born in the provinces and grew up with a great love of books and literature and like Gissing one of his favourite authors was Dickens.[2] But Machen and Gissing had much else in common. They were widely read in the classics and contemporary writing and both aspired to and reached an excellence in their own work. Despite the high quality of their writing neither author received a wide readership in their lifetime – some of the topics they broached did not sit well with either Mrs. Grundy or the majority of contemporary critics. However, both authors had a small but dedicated circle of admirers and champions in their day and now have enthusiastic readers and contributors to journals dedicated to their work and memory.

Machen was the only son of an impoverished vicar of Gwent. He did well at school but his parents were too poor to send him to university. Machen, like Gissing was drawn to London and he arrived in 1881 with a vague plan of a writing career to be supported by journalistic work. These first few years proved very difficult, and on many occasions, he suffered through hunger, subsisting on a diet of dry bread and green tea. Like Gissing he earned some extra money by tutoring while he focused on his own writing career. One can envisage both Machen and Gissing enduring similar poverty in the 1880s – living in dingy rooms not far from each other – each struggling with his own writing. Machen's first published work was *The Anatomy of Tobacco* (1884)[3] – a quaint celebration of the wonders of pipes and smoking – all of course in the days before anyone was aware of the inherent dangers of tobacco. In these early years Machen supported himself by working variously as a publisher's clerk, book cataloguer, children's tutor, and translator. His French was excellent and he translated some important works including the first complete translation of *The Heptameron* of Margaret of Navarre (1886) and the *Memoirs*