

## Introduction



Figure 1. October 2006 view of the restoration of Gordon Square.

Gordon and Woburn Squares in Bloomsbury are two of around 600 public and private garden squares found in London today. Their particular value lies in their being green spaces within a densely built-up area. This booklet, with accompanying CD and fold-out charts, has been designed to develop their use for science teaching at Key Stage 4 (KS4). From our own experience, we know that it is often challenging to develop outdoor investigative work of sufficient rigour for this age group using local green spaces. However, we hope that the teacher support material, curriculum links and worksheets in this pack will encourage you to explore the possibilities of the 'outdoor classroom' of Gordon and Woburn Squares.

The authors, Field Studies Council and the University of London cannot accept liability for any school groups or parties visiting Gordon Square or Woburn Square.

### A brief history of Gordon and Woburn Squares

The area of modern-day Bloomsbury was mostly farmland until the early 1660s, when the then Earl of Southampton constructed buildings in what was eventually to become Bloomsbury Square. However the area was laid out mainly in the 18th century, largely by hereditary landlords who made land available for speculative builders.

Over the next two centuries, several estates of buildings were constructed. Gordon and Woburn Square were some of the last areas to be built. Most of the original buildings in the Squares still exist. These substantial terraced houses were intended for London's upper middle classes. As in many other places, the central gardens in both Squares were originally reserved for the private use of residents of the surrounding houses. Residents had keys to the gates of the



Figure 2. 1941 view of the eastern side of Woburn Square  
(Source: National Monuments Record)

gardens; the general public were not admitted. The layout of paths, lawns and flower-beds in Woburn Square has never been altered, but the gardens at Gordon Square were first laid out on a formal rectilinear plan with straight paths and rows of trees. In the 1890s the paths were made more curved, with a larger area of shrubs at the northern end. It is this variation which makes the habitats of Gordon Square particularly interesting.

The Squares continued to change during the twentieth century. In the 1920s, tennis courts were constructed towards the northern end of Gordon Square, although these were demolished after World War Two. A section of Woburn Square was used for the construction of the Institute of Education and the School of Oriental and African Studies in the 1960s, leaving the roads on either side of the gardens as dead ends. By the 1990s, the Squares had fallen into disrepair and were suffering from antisocial behaviour. Following the highly successful restoration of nearby Russell Square gardens, the University of London, who own the Squares, obtained Heritage Lottery funding to restore them. The restoration project in 2006 focused on improving paths, removing some trees, enclosing the gardens with railings based on the original design, and restoring the summer house in Woburn Square and the old gardeners' hut in Gordon Square, the latter for use as a café.



Figure 3. 1950s view of buildings surrounding Gordon Square.  
(Source: National Monuments Record)



Figure 4. 2006 view of eastern side of Gordon Square.

### Using this resource pack

Five activities have been developed to be completed within the Squares. On the following pages a table illustrates the breadth of study and the How Science Works skill areas, from the 2006 KS4 Programme of Study (PoS) for science, that the activities have been built upon. The accompanying CD contains all the pupil worksheets, a PowerPoint presentation with illustrations and photographs and a 'Sense of Place' PowerPoint presentation to introduce pupils to the Squares. Many of the activities demand the simple identification of plant and animal species, so fold-out charts have been included.

These activities will, of course, need to be adapted for your pupils and department. In producing them we hope that new opportunities for teaching science and making it relevant to our pupils' local environments will arise. Although designed specifically for the two Squares, these activities can readily be adapted for use in other local green spaces.