

STONE WALK

Stone Walk starts close to the Cob Gallery, at the southernmost point of Royal College Street, in the gardens of one of the oldest sites of worship in Britain. From here, it traces a path of stones through the city, from the religious to the secular, ancient to present day, finding stones of war and peace, symbols of hope, commerce, fertility, place and communion with a lost London.

Follow the directions at your own pace and risk, be open to the city, carry a stone in your pocket and choose to leave it somewhere along the way.

Sarah Simpkin
August 2014

STONE WALK

Cob Gallery
205 Royal College St
to the London Stone
111 Cannon St

1.

*The Hardy Tree, St Pancras Old Church
Pancras Road, NW1 1UL*

Tombsstones laid out by Thomas Hardy during the 1860s, when the graves of St Pancras Old Church were cleared to make way for the Midland Railway. Stone and roots intertwine in concentric fungus-like circles, extending from the trunk of the ash tree in memorial to the moved on.

Follow Purchase St, Brill Place, Phoenix Rd to Eversholt St, pass the Doric Way and turn right into the entrance to the bus station. Go upstairs into the bar.

2.

*The Doric Arch, 1 Eversholt Street
Euston Square, NW1 1DN*

A round piece of stone, warm to the touch and little wider than a pint glass, is on display on the top shelf behind the bar of the Doric Arch pub. The fragment is a relic of Philip Hardwick's 70-foot Euston Arch, once the world's largest Doric propylaeum. In 1961 the station was demolished and its rubble was dropped into the Prescott Channel of the River Lea, where it was discovered by the television art historian Dan Cruickshank more than thirty years later.

Rest in the Euston Tap or Cider Tap, two of four original entrance lodges built with the Arch, before crossing Euston Rd and walking through the small park next to the Quaker Meeting House. Follow Taverton St to Gordon Sq.

3.

Sarsen Stone

Under a tree in the north west corner of Gordon Square Garden, Gordon Sq, WC1H

For the 75th anniversary of UCL's Institute of Archaeology, it was decided that the best way to remind the public of their work was to place a stone in the adjacent park. A large block of Cenozoic sandstone, or 'sarsen stone', was donated by a Wiltshire farmer. It was transported from Avebury, a site of pagan pilgrimage for its stone circle. Little is known about the people that raised these ancient monoliths, or their purpose, but a press release explained why the Institute had chosen to repeat this primitive act: "Erecting a standing stone will enhance the environment of Gordon Square in a visually pleasing way using natural materials, which will blend in with the green setting of the Square."

Follow Byng Place and Torrington Place, turning left onto Ridgmount Gardens, passing the private benches, locked behind the railings, before turning right into Chenies St.

6.

Woman

*Room 54: Anatolia and Urartu, British Museum
Great Russell St, WC1B 3DG*

Stone Venus figurine thought to be a fertility symbol, originating from Turkey in around 4500 BC. The museum is open every day from 10am to 5.30pm.

Head south down Museum St, past the Parthenon at No.25, left at New Oxford St, right at Newton St, left past the stones of Great Queen St and right down Kingsway. Pass the stone sculpture on the corner of Sardinia St and walk south to the corner of Aldwych and the ME Hotel. At the hotel's core is the reception - a nine-storey-high pyramid, top-lit and clad entirely in Italian Venatino Gioia white marble. Walk three times around the building's triangular perimeter. At Nerv's bust, turn left down Fleet St and Ludgate Hill, or take the No.11 bus from Aldwych to St Paul's.

5.

Peace Stone

*Japanese Garden at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS,
Thornhaugh St, Russell Square WC1H 0XG*

Gravel raked to flow like water around islands of large Larvikite rocks from Norway - a garden for contemplation, based on the theme of 'forgiveness'. The stones came from CED Ltd of Essex, who also supplied rocks for the Kyoto Garden in Holland Park and the penguin beach at London Zoo. The Brunei Gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday, from 10.30 to 5pm, and until 8pm on a Thursday.

Follow Russell Sq and Montague St to the British Museum. Room 54 is on the upper level.

4.

Warrior Stone

*Minerva House, North Crescent,
Fitzrovia, WC1E 7ER*

Statue of the Roman goddess of wisdom and war on the former London headquarters of the Minerva Motor Company, the luxury Belgian car manufacturer who produced armoured cars in the First World War. The statue looks down onto the deep level shelter used by General Eisenhower during the planning of the D-Day invasion.

7.

Gateway Markings

*Portico and Paternoster Square,
St Paul's Cathedral, EC4M 8AD*

Wren's Temple Bar, one of the ancient gateways to the city, was sold to Valerie, Lady Meux in the late nineteenth century. Its stones, and the respectability they represented, were reassembled in the grounds of her Hertfordshire estate. When the gateway was rebuilt on a different site in 2004, a glass jar containing Valerie's time capsule was discovered in stone C45. [See also the marks eighteenth-century builders carved into the walls of the cathedral's portico.]

Continue down Canon St, past the building works unearthing the Temple of Minerva, to the stone.

End, London Stone

111 Cannon Street, EC4N 5AR

Encased oolitic limestone block, exact origins unknown. Superstitions connect the stone with a sacred geometry of ley lines and buried rivers, Roman rubble, Brutus of Troy, the rebel Jack Cade and King Arthur's sword. It has been a millstone, a talisman of the city's fortunes and the terminus of London, and this walk.