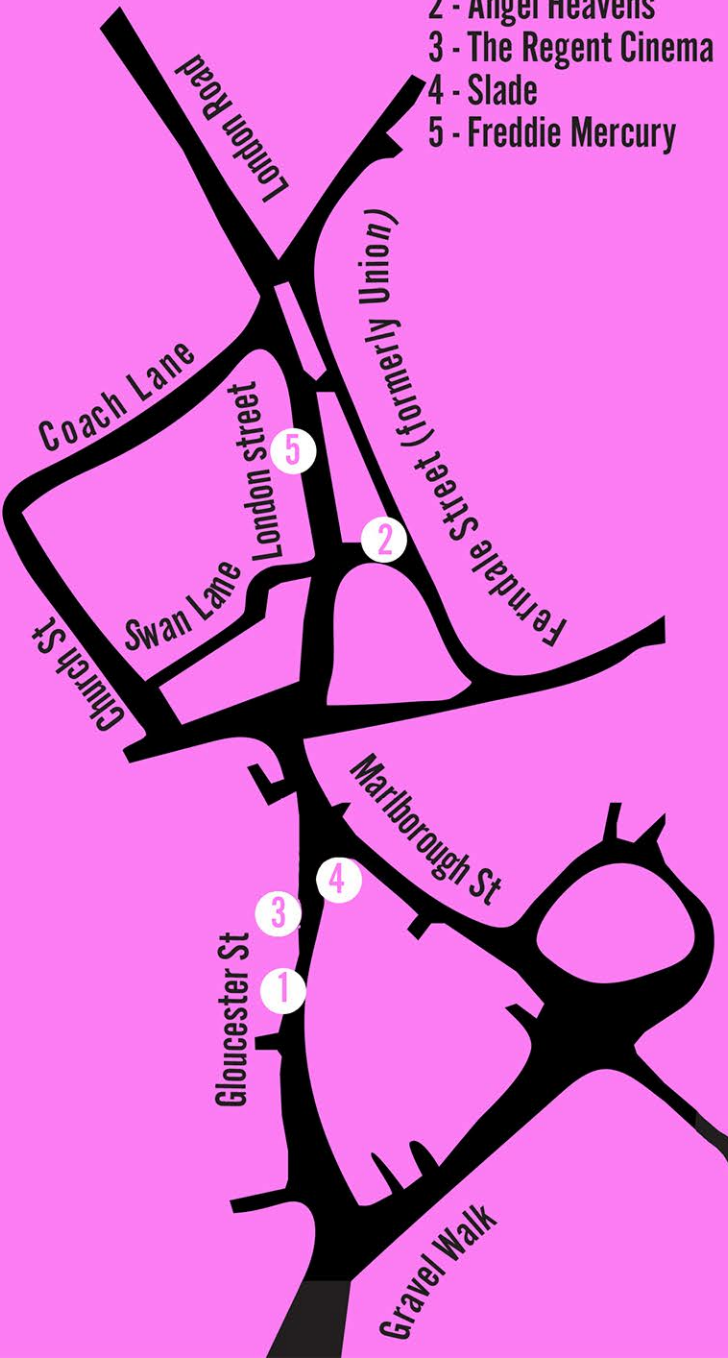


Map of the plaques

Key

- 1 - Cistercian monks
- 2 - Angel Heavens
- 3 - The Regent Cinema
- 4 - Slade
- 5 - Freddie Mercury



How the idea was born

Back in 2019 I was with friends, in the pub, discussing the wonderful weirdness of our town of Faringdon. I suggested that we should celebrate some of our places of interest beyond the obvious; maybe a plaque scheme like the Blue Plaques we see around the country. However, ours would have to be pink, to fit with the town's obsession with the colour, and propensity to dye our pigeons the same **colour!**

Also – not just celebrating a person of significance who was born or lived somewhere, but also noting the slightly more tenuous links to a performance, a visit or an event. Little did I know that the idea would come to fruition due to the diligence of one of our wonderful councillors who happened to be with me in the pub!

- Rachel Williams

With thanks to...

Liza Whitney Design
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manufacture and installation of the plaques

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The FPP volunteers: Dave Headey, Gene Webb,
Felicity Cormack, Rosalind Burns and Al Cane

Anna Cane and Al Cane for leaflet design

Project managed by Rosalind Burns

Faringdon's Pink Plaques

commemorating
some of the less well-known
names and places around the
town.



1. The site of the priory of the Cistercian Monks

Dentist Surgery, Gloucester Street

In 1203 King John granted the manor of Faringdon, with benefit of tithes from the two halves of the town, to the Cistercian order of monks. Originally it was intended that an abbey or monastery would be raised here, but this plan was soon transferred to Beaulieu. A cell of monks remained in Faringdon, making their devotions in All Saints Church, farming, tending to the sick and collecting tithes for the next few centuries - until the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

They occupied a number of buildings in the town, their main accommodation being in the priory, which was on the site now occupied by Gloucester House and Gloucester Street Car Park.



More details of the activity of the Cistercian Monks can be found in the leaflet "Faringdon Tunnels", which is available in the Tourist Information Centre.

2. Angel Heavens Skidders Lane between London St and Ferndale St

Angel Heavens was born in Eaton Hastings in 1771 and christened in Longcot. He came to Faringdon in 1802 and lived in Skidders Lane (then Collyers Lane) from 1809 until his death in 1839 at the age of 67.

He took on a lease for 900 years and the property included the Bakers Arms Inn in Ferndale Street (then Union Street) - which ceased trading in 1993 - and the Old Bakehouse in Collyers Lane. Collyer was an old Faringdon name. The properties were not made freehold until 1909.



He seems to have been the innkeeper and also to have run a 'carrier' or delivery business with his son Elijah whose infant children are sadly commemorated in All Saints' churchyard. Angel Heavens's singular claim to fame is his appearance in 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' by Thomas Hughes, which was published in 1857. The book is set in the 1830s when Angel would have been in his 60s. This is the passage where he appears at the village 'Veast' in Uffington.

THE JINGLING MATCH. 35

Angel Heavens signature



And they carry him off to load him with fairings; and he returns to Benjy, his hat and coat covered with ribbands, and his pockets crammed with wonderful boxes which open upon ever new boxes and boxes, and popguns, and trumpets, and apples, and gilt gingerbread from the stall of Angel Heavens, sole vendor thereof, whose booth groans with kings and queens, and elephants, and prancing steeds, all gleaming with gold. There was more gold on Angel's cakes than there is ginger in those of this degenerate age. Skilled diggers might yet make a fortune in the churchyards of the Vale, by carefully washing the dust of the consumers of Angel's gingerbread. Alas! he is with his namesakes, and his receipts have, I fear, died with him.

3. The Regent Cinema 4a Gloucester Street

The cinema building replaced barns and old farm cottages and was built of the same bricks as the Folly Tower. It was the only building in Faringdon which aspired to Art Deco. It was officially opened by Lord Berners in the mid 1930s and at that time called The Rialto. Several celebrities were apparently at the opening including John Betjeman and Adele Astaire (Fred's sister). The first film ever shown starred Gary Cooper and was called 'The Lives of a Bengal Lancer'. There was such a crush that an usherette fainted and had to be carried out over the heads of the crowd.

In 1948 it became The Regent Cinema. Films ceased to be shown in 1969 when the cinema was changed to a bingo hall. This too had closed by 1981. The building was demolished and in 1984 houses were built on the site, now called Regent Mews.



More information on:

<https://www.faringdon.org/regent-cinema.html>

4. Slade Corn Exchange (inside kitchen window)

Built in the mid 19th Century on the site of the former Green Dragon Coaching Inn Faringdon's Corn Exchange became a venue for all kinds of community and cultural events over time. This included live music concerts performed by touring bands. One that has been consistently mentioned was a rumoured performance by an early version of the soon to be famous band Slade at some point in late 1969 or early 1970. After doing some public research several people verified the fact that they did in fact play at the venue around this time.

There is no found record or review of the night in the local press and no known photographs exist, but there is indisputable anecdotal evidence that the band played a very loud and noisy gig there around this time. Slade's four man line up at this time were Noddy Holder on vocals and guitar, Dave Hill on vocals and guitar, with Jim Lea on bass, keyboards, violin and vocals and finally Don Powell on drums. There is some doubt about whether they were still known by their earlier name of Ambrose Slade at the time of their Faringdon concert or had it already been shortened to the far better known Slade? Many other bands played at the Corn Exchange over the years but probably none as famous as Slade were to become.

5. Freddie Mercury at The Old Bull 27 London Street

Residents and visitors to Faringdon in the late 1980s were spoilt for choice when looking for a pub: the town was awash with them, including The Bull in London Street. Some current residents recall their surprise, when dropping in for a few drinks, to find Freddie Mercury propping up the end of the bar. They came to understand that he was 'very friendly' with one of the barmen. As time went on, the parties at The Old Bull earned a reputation for being wild and wonderful. Those who attended remember that a stage would be set up at the back of the building, in what is now the kitchen, and Freddie would perform there in his inimitable way. A few years later the pub ceased trading and is now a private residence.

Further information about the public houses in Faringdon can be found at <https://www.fdahs.org.uk/buildings/public-houses>

[fdahs.org.uk/buildings/public-houses](https://www.fdahs.org.uk/buildings/public-houses)

