



THE ST MARYLEBONE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026 Number 376

www.stmarylebonesociety.org

Registered Charity 274082

NEW GARDEN UPDATE



Image of the new garden – HTA Design.

In Regent's Park, work is progressing well on the new garden to commemorate the life of Queen Elizabeth II.

Last year, Royal Parks were delighted to welcome Fiona Packe as Head Gardener. Fiona brings a wealth of horticultural experience from a diverse career in the UK and abroad. She will lead the establishment and maintenance of the new garden and other key horticultural features across The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, overseeing a dedicated team of gardeners and volunteers. Her expertise in climate-resilient planting will be central to shaping this innovative space.

Last autumn, over 200,000 spring bulbs were planted across the site, along with a variety of trees including a magnolia chosen for its climate resilience. The main paths are now complete, and the landscape contractors are currently working on the seating areas and water tower. Meanwhile, the horticultural team are undertaking essential gardening work to prepare the site for opening.

The garden will be a lasting tribute to Queen Elizabeth II – a space for reflection, biodiversity, and connection with the natural world. Many of the trees and plants have been carefully chosen for their ability to withstand

climatic extremes, ensuring the long-term resilience of the space.

Key features include a central promenade with an accessible platform over the pond, a wildflower meadow, and a flower garden with species of personal significance to the late Queen.

The project will also deliver a 184% net gain in biodiversity, transforming a redundant brownfield site into a thriving green space. This includes 2,000 square metres of wildflower meadows and over 5,000 square metres of climate-resilient, pollinator-friendly planting.

Royal Parks look forward to welcoming visitors this spring when the garden opens to the public.

THE ST MARYLEBONE SOCIETY 77TH AGM MEETING 26 NOVEMBER 2025

THE SAMWORTH HALL, ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH

The Chair, Gaby Higgs, welcomed 32 attendees and thanked the St Marylebone parish team for their help facilitating the meeting in such a welcoming and well-appointed setting.

Constitution changes were proposed and agreed by over two thirds of the members present.

Clause 4: The penultimate sentence was replaced with "He/she shall be responsible for all payments on behalf of the Society. Cheque payments up to £250 shall be signed by one member of Council, payments over £250 shall be signed by two members of Council, of whom one shall be the Honorary Treasurer. The foregoing amounts may be varied from time to time as may be decided by the Council."

Clause 9: As under Clause 11 a Special General Meeting can be called at any time, it was agreed to delete the requirement that not less than three Ordinary meetings shall be held in one year.

Election of Officers: The following were all re-elected **nem. con.**

Mo Parkes (Hon. Gen. Sec.), Robert McAulay (Membership Sec.), Liz Queenan (Hon. Treasurer). Council members were also re-elected: Gaby Higgs, Mike Wood, Patricia Kleinman, Ian Wylie, Johan Van Der Merwe and Joseph Dangoor.

The previous Independent Examiner, Antony Alford, has retired and Tomasz Patzer was appointed in his place.

Publications sold well, including the Memorial Garden, Walks and Workhouse books.

Treasurer's Report

Income plus interest was £4,171, expenditure was £3,298. With monetary assets of over £10K in the bank, and over £20K in savings, totalling over £30K, the society is in the process of finding an ethical account that would take charities, and give a better return.

Planning Matters

Gaby Higgs presented a slideshow of the projects the Planning Committee dealt with and requested more volunteers to join the monthly meetings, now held on zoom.



SMS members listening to Rachel Barrett's talk about the Marylebone Workhouse.

Drinks and conversation followed a hugely informative talk by Rachel Barrett about the Marylebone Workhouse.

LORD MAYOR PAUL DIMOLDENBERG'S MARYLEBONE WALK



The event started with a reception at the University of Westminster, the Lord Mayor's alma mater, where he studied town planning. Led by a professional

city guide, we enjoyed an informative and entertaining evening with representatives from the university, local residents and SMS members, considering social housing projects built in Marylebone over the past century.

These included Octavia Hill's first dwellings at 2, Garbutt Place (1865) and a later development of Ossington Buildings (1888-1892) of nine blocks built by the Portland Industrial Dwellings Company. Nearby we saw the site of a public laundry and Ragged & Industrial School in Grotto Passage (1860).

When the St Marylebone Workhouse was demolished in 1965, the site was redeveloped in a modernist style as the School of Architecture and Advanced Building Technology, part of Regent's Street Polytechnic. The project included two 23-storey Corbusier-inspired

housing blocks, one for students and one as council housing.

The most recent social housing built in Marylebone is also on this site, at number 20 Luxborough Street, on what were previously tennis courts for the residents in the tower blocks. This brick-built, 6-storey block was completed in Autumn 2025 and comprises 14 flats for social and intermediate rents, with a ground floor space envisaged as a nursery.

The walk raised funds for the Mayor's two charities, the 'Avenues Youth Project' and 'Hotel School', and if you would like to know more about these causes see their websites:

<https://avenues.org.uk/>

<https://www.hotelschool.org.uk>

NEW PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS ON THE OUTER CIRCLE, REGENT'S PARK

Photo of lamp standard Andrew Kerr (britishlistedbuildings.co.uk)0.



Work has begun at the Kent Passage entrance into Regent's Park. This is one of three new crossings on the Outer Circle, the others being at Chester Gate and Monkey Gate (Primrose Hill Bridge). The existing 'island' type crossings designed for vehicle/cycle priority have created ambiguity on who has right-of-way, with cars frequently stopping in the middle of the road and pedestrians given a false sense of security that they can cross without waiting. This is clearly dangerous for everyone and the hope is that this will be resolved by light-controlled crossings.

The St Marylebone Society met throughout 2025 with other Regent's Park stakeholders to discuss the proposals and also to consider the wider issues and context of the Outer Circle; questions such as, "What is the Outer Circle?", "Is it a through-road or is it part of Regent's Park?" and "How can it be made safer and accessible for all ages and abilities whilst protecting the historic character?"

These concerns and the best interests of Regent's Park have been at the heart of the society's constitution since its role in the late 1940s to prevent the demolition of the Nash Terraces through post-war redevelopment to the intensification of vehicular traffic, cyclists, cultural and sports activities

and general park users today.

The society welcomed the 20mph limit on the Outer Circle, and would like to see this better enforced. We have campaigned for the rush-hour closure of Macclesfield Bridge and York Gate which would prevent the Outer Circle being used as a 'rat-run' and reduce the number of commercial vehicles, which are not permitted in the park but frequently seen. Safety of all is high priority and we support the introduction of the new crossings. However, when infrastructure is changed, we need to ensure that any intervention is sensitive to the character of the park and does no harm.

Regent's Park's Grade I listed buildings are unique and within an exceptional landscape of global significance which must be protected for posterity. The Outer Circle is a beautiful set piece of urban design, elegant in its continuous curve and with a constantly changing perspective as one passes around it (whether on foot, wheels or vehicle). Any traffic control interventions need to be kept to a minimum, small scale, in appropriate materials and reversible.

We have been assured that the new crossings will be as unobtrusive as possible. Noise, signage and lighting will be kept to a minimum to prevent visual clutter and harm to the Conservation

Area Character. The original Grade II 1930s lamp standard will be relocated from the central island towards the north end of Kent Passage (see application 25/05255/LBC for details). With King Edward VIII's cypher 'ER' cast into its column, it's something of a rarity, due to his abdication from the throne within a year of his accession.

The new crossings will be signal controlled by pedestrians, they will be highly responsive and include count-down timers. This is to encourage pedestrians to wait a few seconds rather than run across on the 'red man'. It goes without saying that in accordance with the Highway Code all motor vehicles, e-bikers and cyclists must stop when they have a red light. The Regent's Park Cyclists, representing over 30 cycling clubs, are proactive in educating their members to respect the amenity of the park and lead by example by demonstrating best riding practices. It is much harder to control the actions of commuters, tourists, delivery couriers, e-bike users, and not forgetting pedestrians from all over the world.

Millions of people use the park every year and all park-users should have the courtesy to respect the new crossings' red lights, on wheels or on foot, maintaining this tacit social contract that will ensure safety for all.



Work on the new crossing at Kent Passage.

ST MARYLEBONE'S PUBLIC MORTUARY... A REMINDER

Photo taken by the author, 13 December 2025.



Fig 1: The north side of Paddington Street. The arrow points to a decorated panel housing a plaque commemorating French statesman and writer, Chateaubriand.

Research relating to the burial in 1821 of a British army officer led to an unrelated and unexpected discovery. In trying to locate the approximate spot under Paddington Street where the officer was buried, the decorative brick and stone panel on the north side of the street captured my attention (see Fig 1). The panel houses a plaque erected in 1981 to commemorate Chateaubriand's association with the parish, but the brick structure itself is much older.¹ It is in fact the surviving section of the ornate entrance that led to St Marylebone's Mortuary and Coroner's Court which opened in 1888.

In the 1840s social reformer Edwin Chadwick highlighted the lack of provision for places where corpses could be accommodated securely and hygienically until burial could be arranged.² Legislation arising from Chadwick's work led to the building of mortuaries across London amid the reform of coroner's courts. The period between 1875 and 1889 has been identified as the most significant in addressing the need for more facilities. The new Mortuary and Coroner's Court in the parish of St Marylebone were opened during this period along with mortuaries in Bethnal Green, St James Westminster and St George Southwark. On 28 November 1888, the Bishop of London opened the St Marylebone Public Mortuary and Coroner's Court which had been designed by renowned architects Henry Saxon Snell and Son.³ The buildings were situated to the west of the north burial ground which had recently been opened as a public garden. In 1853, burial grounds on the north and

south sides of Paddington Street were closed but the open spaces were refashioned into public gardens which were opened in 1886. The new Mortuary and Coroner's Court were a replacement for an earlier mortuary which had been erected in the south burial ground c.1867. Resembling an Egyptian building, that mortuary was found to be inadequate and, following the opening of the new mortuary facilities, it was demolished in 1889 (see Fig 2).⁴

For the purpose of orientation, it is important to highlight that the western boundary of the north burial ground aligned with the western boundary of the south burial ground. The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map for the area shows this alignment and a narrow passage called York Court running to the north-west. It also illustrates that the north burial ground abutted buildings to the west (see Fig 3).

Access to the new Mortuary and Coroner's Court was made by a private road which led from Paddington Street. The land for the new private road was taken from the recently opened public garden to the east (the former north burial ground); burials were not removed

and remained *in situ* (see Fig 4).

Visitors to the Mortuary and Coroner's Court were greeted at Paddington Street by an ornate gated arch flanked by decorated walled panels on each side. The arch resembled a lychgate and the cross mounted at the very top completed the religious symbolism. Entry to the private road could also be made through a door inserted into the walled panel on the left. A pamphlet, presumably produced to commemorate the opening ceremony included a drawing of the new complex of buildings (see Fig 5).

In February 1889, *The Builder* reproduced plans and illustrations of the rooms (see Fig 6)⁵.

It also reproduced the following text from the aforementioned pamphlet, which offers a superb insight into the internal fabric of the building and the uses to which it was put:

These Buildings are situated at the South corner of York Court (now closed) facing the old St Marylebone Burial Ground, and are approached by a private roadway from Paddington Street through a somewhat handsome Gothic gateway.

The buildings are arranged in three distinct blocks separated from one another by paved roadways. On the South side is the public Mortuary, the internal walls of which are lined with light glazed tiling their whole height, the floor is tiled and the windows filled with tinted glazed lights. The east end of this room is divided off by a pointed archway, and will be available for use as a mortuary chapel for conducting funeral services.

On the north side are contained in one block a Post-mortem Room and Coffin Store, also an Inquest Mortuary, and separated from it by a large glazed partition, a lobby for the convenience of Jurors viewing the bodies. The arrangement in these two departments are



Fig 2: On the right is the Egyptian-styled mortuary in the south burial ground (demolished 1889).



Fig 3: Extract from OS map of 1875. Red arrow points to York Court. Red spot marks approximate place where the new mortuary was to be built.

very similar (although not on so large scale) to the celebrated Morgue in Paris.

With the exception of the Coffin Store these rooms are lined with high dadoes of white glazed bricks or tiles and are amply lighted by windows and roof lanterns. The revolving post-mortem table has been specially designed for the building on improved principles.

The Central Block, which is two storeys in

National Library of Scotland, Ordnance Survey
London VII.51 1896



Fig 4: OS map of 1896. York Court is stopped-up to the north. Red arrow points to the mortuary complex. Part of the public garden is taken to create the private road leading to the new Mortuary and Coroner's Court (outlined in red).

height, contains on the ground floor the Caretaker's Living Room and Office, also a Waiting Room for the accommodation of witnesses, or for the Jury when in consultation.

The upper floor (approached by a stone staircase) contains the Coroner's Court, Coroner's Private Room, and Caretaker's rooms.

The Court Room is warmed by a large open fire and hot water coils. The fittings

are of pitch pine, varnished.

The whole of the arrangements have been carried out under the supervision of a Committee, the members of which are Mr Churchwarden White, Colonel Burges, Messrs. Edmund Boulnois, M. A., J.P. (Chairman), Hallam, and Reed.

The architects are Messrs. H. Saxon Snell and Son, and the builders Messrs. Wall Bros., whose contract for the works amounts to £3,131, including the heating and gas fittings, carried out by Messrs. May Bros. The tiling was executed by Messrs Simpson and Son.

During the second world war, the mortuary complex of buildings suffered bomb damage and was eventually demolished but in the 1950s, the entrance on Paddington Street was still recognised as a landmark.⁶ In 1964 a car park was erected on the site and the former private road which had led to the mortuary from Paddington Street was retained.⁷ It is unknown whether the arch and left panel were still standing in the 1960s or whether they were demolished during construction of the car park. The right panel which adjoins and aligns with the street boundary of the north gardens survived as a stand-alone feature (see Fig 7).



Fig 5. The new Mortuary and Coroner's Court with the gated entrance from Paddington Street. The left panel abuts No. 21 Paddington Street. Today, the right panel accommodates the plaque of 1981 commemorating Chateaubriand.

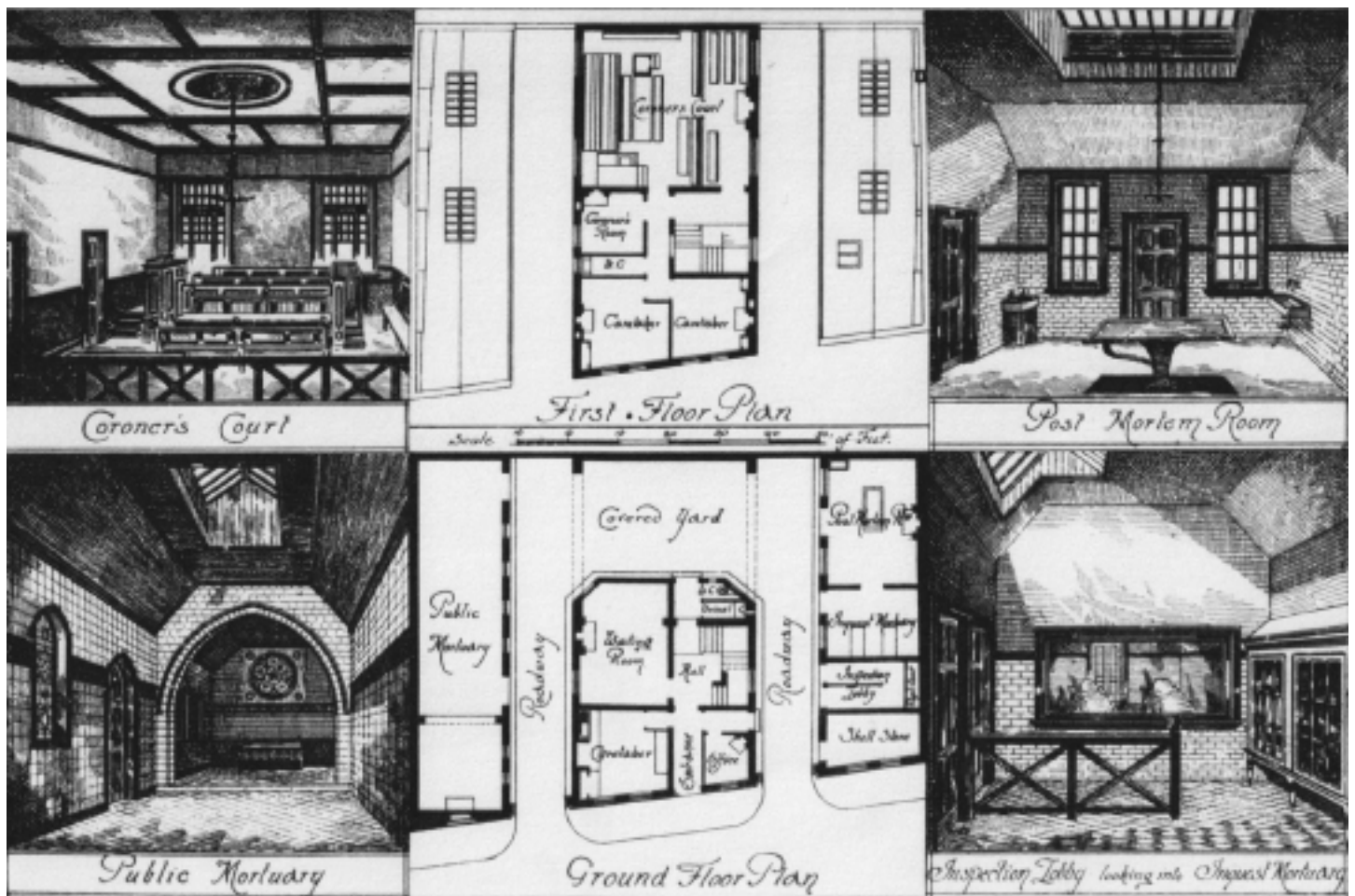


Fig 6: Interiors and floor plans of St Marylebone's new Mortuary and Coroner's Court.

In December 2011, planning permission was granted for the demolition of the car park and for construction of a new complex comprising residential units, health and fitness club, retail accommodation and car parking.⁸

The handsomely built Mortuary and Coroner's Court played a crucial role

in the life of the parish but like so many demolished buildings, its memory has faded over time. Fortunately, the surviving part of the ornate entrance remains in plain sight, as a reminder of St Marylebone's splendid architectural past.

Frances Kerner

Notes

1 *Daily News*, 14 August 1952. A call was made by the newspaper for plaques to be erected to show where 'great foreigners' had lived; *The Daily Telegraph* 16 Sept.1981. The Société Chateaubriand erected the panel on 15 September 1981. Present were Chateaubriand's descendant, the Marquis Charles de Villaines, and Chateaubriand's English biographer, George Painter.

2 Pam Fisher, 'Houses for the Dead: The Provision of Mortuaries in London, 1843-1889', *The London Journal*, Vol. 34 No.1, March 2009, pp. 1-15.

3 On his death in 1904, *The Times* reported that Henry Saxon Snell 'acted as architect to 27 metropolitan and suburban parishes and designed and carried out large infirmaries for the unions of St Marylebone, St George's, St Olave's, and Holborn'.

4 Survey of London, 'South-East Marylebone' Volume 51, p.109.

5 *The Builder*, 2 February 1889, pp. 89-90.

6 WA: MBN/371. In May 1956, GPO (General Post Office) workmen were digging up the north side of Paddington Street to lay cables but discovered a corpse. Subsequently, sixteen exhumations were made, and the bodies reburied elsewhere. In recording the names of the dead, the 'mortuary entrance' was mentioned.

7 *Evening Standard*, 30 April 1964.

8 City of Westminster RN No. 10/10305



Fig 7: Access route relating to the car park in Paddington Street where the gated arch to the Mortuary and Coroner's Court was situated. The right panel of the gated entrance in view with the plaque to Chateaubriand in centre.

FATHER STEPHEN



The Revd. Canon Dr. Stephen Evans has announced that he will leave his post as Rector of Marylebone and his final service at the Parish Church will take place on Sunday, 8th March. On the 19th April he will be installed as Dean of Southwell, thereby swapping a grand early 19th Century parish church for a 12th century cathedral, Southwell Minster, the Mother Church of the diocese of Southwell and Nottingham.

Stephen came to Marylebone in 2010 from Uppingham in Rutland, just 50 miles from his new home in Southwell, and over nearly 16 years he has

immersed himself in Marylebone life, working with the St Marylebone Society, the Marylebone Association, Business Improvement Districts and the Neighbourhood Forum to improve but protect and restore this unique area. He has accumulated an extraordinary knowledge of local social history and Mike Wood has expressed thanks to Stephen for his input into the Society's recent publication about the Memorial Garden. Besides his ecclesiastical duties, the Rector shares responsibility for two schools, the St Marylebone CE School and the St Marylebone CE Bridge School, as well as other universities, agencies and charities. He has also undertaken the chaplaincy of several hospitals and clinics, which requires being on call twenty-four hours and every day.

Not all duties are as onerous. As the President of the Browning Society, on the nearest Sunday to the date of the clandestine marriage of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning at the church on 12th September 1846, Stephen has presided over Browning Sunday, when readings replace a sermon and the service is followed by lunch, an academic lecture and ends with tea and cakes.

We are grateful to Stephen for the hard work he has put into his parish work but his legacy to us is surely the much-needed restoration of the Parish Church,

which began with the urgent need to replace an almost obsolete lift. Thus the Changing Lives Appeal was launched and as in all building projects, issues arose and, in the case of a Grade I listed building, costs spiralled. Somehow the £13million target was reached and the building has been fortified to last and updated to meet current and future needs but with Stephen's immaculate attention to detail and to maintaining the integrity of this historically important church which is a hub for Marylebone's community.

The Society donated to the Appeal and members privately contributed when sponsorship opportunities were offered but perhaps the most notable event was the sponsored lecture. A major part of the renovation was hidden from view. The new roof which required 14,000 Welsh tiles was a masterpiece as were the repairs to the beautiful ceiling, the largest suspended fibrous plaster ceiling in the UK. So following Stephen's lecture about the work, he courageously led groups through the rafters above the ceiling and out onto the splendid roof. Gazing over Marylebone from the rooftop on a balmy Midsummer evening was memorable and we even managed to raise some funds.

On behalf of the Society we wish Stephen and Diana happiness and success in their work in Southwell.

20 LUXBOROUGH STREET- A NEW BOUNDARY TO MATCH THE ORIGINAL



This Westminster social housing project was recently completed with a new wall and railings along the boundary with Paddington Street Gardens North.

The original railings were removed at the start of the project by mistake and various proposals to replace them with a modern design were challenged by the society and St Marylebone Parish Church.

Father Stephen liaised with the society to ensure that the boundary was reinstated exactly as the original, to preserve the conservation area character and retain a memory of the important social history of the site.

EVENTS IN MARYLEBONE

ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH

17 Marylebone Road, NW1 5LT
www.stmarylebone.org
FREE LUNCHTIME CONCERTS at 13.00-14.00. see website for information

ST MARYLEBONE FESTIVAL tIncludes The Choir of St Marylebone Parish Church's 138th annual performance of Stainer's Good Friday oratorio, The Crucifixion which was written for the parish church in 1887.

MARYLEBONE THEATRE

www.marylebonetheatre.com

YENTL 6 March – 12 April. Based on a short story by Isaac Bashevis Singer directed by Gary Abraham with Amy Hack, Genevieve Kingsford, and Evelyn Krape.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

www.ram.ac.uk

The RAM has an extensive programme of classical, modern, and jazz concerts and master classes during term time. All are open to the public. Some concerts are free entry but for all concerts tickets must be booked in advance.

HANDEL's Rinaldo, 17-20 March at the Susie Sainsbury theatre.

David Bates conductor, Julia Burbach director, Bettina John designer, Robert Price lighting designer, Cameron McMillan movement director.

ST CYPRIAN'S CHURCH,

Glentworth Street, NW1 6AX
www.stcyprians.weebly.com

The next concert will be on the **15 March at 6pm** with Emilija Karaliute playing

music written for the Lithuanian kankles (a plucked string instrument like a zither).

Women of Marylebone Project – Marylebone Station

The latest Baker Street Quarter series of art exhibitions went live last week as part of their Marylebone on Display initiative. Head to Platform 3 at Marylebone Station to take a look at artwork created by the Women of the Marylebone Project through a 12 week art therapy programme.

The exhibition has been delivered in partnership with Lazari Investments and Chiltern Railways with funding from its Community Investment Fund. To date, it has featured work from students of The University of Westminster, Young Westminster Foundation and Central London Samaritans.



Residents in Dorset Square have alerted us to the fact that despite the relocation of the coach stop, some coaches are still stopping at the Dorset Square stop. We are liaising with TfL, the Baker Street Quarter and local councillors to remedy this issue. If you have any

photographs of transgressions, please forward them to the society to provide evidence and help us lobby for the coach companies to desist and only stop where previously agreed: outside the Allsop Arms, Gloucester Place, and for the A6 Stanstead Airport coach outside Marathon House, Marylebone Road. Only one coach is designated to stop in Dorset Square, at 5pm daily, and that is the 440 National Express to the Midlands.

**Spring tidy in the
Memorial Garden**
Date to be confirmed.
**Please email to
register your
interest in joining to
help.**



Thank you to our local ward councillors Ralu Oteh-Osoka, Robert Rigby, Paul Swaddle and Lord Mayor Cllr. Paul Dimoldenberg for the wonderful Christmas Tree and Lighting Up Reception, with generous refreshments provided by the Dorset Square Hotel.

CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Baker Street Quarter Partnership
Blandford Estate Residents' Association
Chiltern Court (Baker Street)
Residents Ltd
Clarence Gate Gardens
(Freehold) Limited
Crown Estate Paving Commission
Fellowship of the School of
Economic Science
Howard de Walden Estate

Ian Wylie Architects
Marylebone Theatre
Old Philologists
Portman Estate
Runaway Athletics Limited
St Marylebone Parish Church
The Fruit Garden
The Seashell Restaurant
Wallacea Living
Ward & Burke

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President: Lord Adonis
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Hon. Treasurer: Liz Queenan
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Robert McAulay
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Mike Wood (Local History)
Ian Wylie (Planning)
Patricia Kleinman (Planning)
Johan van der Merwe (Events)