



THE ST MARYLEBONE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026 Number 377

www.stmarylebonesociety.org

Registered Charity 274082

CHURCH STREET MASTERPLAN— A NEW COMMUNITY HUB



Community Health and Wellbeing Hub illustrative view – façade materials subject to further consultation.

The Westminster City Council team leading on the Church Street Masterplan development recently presented an update on progress to the SMS Planning Committee, with the architects focusing on the preliminary design concepts for the Lisson Grove/Lilestone sites and Sites B and C on Church Street itself. As part of the project, the redevelopment will include a multi-service 'Community Health and Wellbeing Hub' opposite Church Street, with blocks of flats extending across the site between Fingest, Rishborough, Hardwick, Dinton, and Fulmer House.

In terms of visual design, the architecture is inspired by existing 19th century buildings in Marylebone, to

capture the sense of place and character of the locality. Whilst it may be possible to reflect the materials, (brick, stone and terracotta) in the development, the scale and the density of the proposed buildings are harder to reconcile. Local residents in Lisson Grove and Rossmore Road have conveyed their concerns to the society about over-development and the sharp change in scale at the Lilestone Street Hub location, opposite and within view of a terrace of twenty-two Grade 2 listed houses on Lisson Grove. We were assured that the proposed taller housing blocks on this site will be set back from the surrounding streets and ensure no worsening of amenity for existing residents.

With the Church Street Masterplan 'Site A' now on site, the development is entering into the next stage of public participation for Sites B and C. Residents and stakeholders are invited to participate in co-design workshops which will consider 'Design vision and identity', 'Transport and communal space', 'Landscaping and public realm' and 'Sustainability'. The workshops will take place at 35-37 Church Street, NW8 8ES and run through June to early July and if you are interested you can sign up to take part in the Site B & C co-design workshops.

If you wish to be kept up to date on what is happening you can sign up with https://www.churchstreet.org/sign_up

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Farewell to the Lord Mayor, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg

We were delighted to join the Lord Mayor, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg at his Farewell Reception held in the Lord Mayor's parlour on the 18th floor of Westminster City Hall.

As a local Labour Councillor, Paul has

devoted 43 years of service to Westminster, maintaining close links with the St Marylebone Society since the 1980s when he was instrumental in lobbying to prevent the closure of Marylebone Station. With good humour and generosity Paul's farewell speech outlined the many opportunities and connections he had enjoyed over his mayoral term, thanking all the people and groups who has supported him. In return he has promoted the work of two charities, the Avenues Youth Project and Hotel School, both of which help young people develop skills to improve their life chances. For more information, to donate and get involved see their websites on the following links:

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

One of the ways Paul raised funds for these charities was to hold Walking Events around the city. Led by Westminster Guides, these were informative, sociable and entertaining. Living in a historic and ever-changing

urban landscape, walking is a great thing to do: it's healthy, free and sustainable. To support and encourage us all to become flaneurs a 'Westminster Footways' map has been developed with input from Westminster Guides. Hard copy maps are available from Libraries and a digital version is downloadable to phones. For more information see the following links: <https://footways.london/westminster> <https://westminsterguides.org.uk/>

We therefore thank Paul for his long service and support in caring for and protecting the amenity, character and beauty of Marylebone, and wish him all the best for the future.



Paul Dimoldenberg and Gaby Higgs.

A RETURN TO A CONSERVATIVE LED WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

Following the May 7th local elections, the Conservatives have resumed control of Westminster Council and Councillor Paul Swaddle has been confirmed as its new Leader. In his inaugural speech to a Full Council Meeting, he stated his priorities would be based on listening to residents' wishes during the election campaign. These are to restore safe, clean streets across the city; challenge the Family Home Tax introduced by Labour; explore legal challenge to Sadiq Khan's ill-thought-out project to pedestrianise Oxford Street and halt further



Cllr Paul Swaddle.

work on the C51 cycle route on Hamilton Terrace, which had been opposed by over 1000 residents.

His Deputy Leader, Cllr Caroline

Sargent, has been given a new Cabinet role on Enforcement to provide leadership on several areas of concern to local residents (anti-social behaviour, rough sleeping, graffiti, irresponsible e-bike and e-scooter dumping and short-term lets). Robert Rigby has been appointed Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Civic Pride. Given the political upheaval of the recent local elections, it's notable that all six councillors for Marylebone and Regent's Park Wards were re-elected. We will continue to wish them well and work together in the future.

PLANNING MATTERS – VACANT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

A recent application (25/05835/full) for 43 Linotype Street (previously the Swan & Edgar pub) was refused by Westminster City Council. The proposal to convert the two upper floors into a flat, leaving just the ground floor for another use, was deemed to harm the viability of the public house, contrary to Policy 20 of the City Plan 2019-2040 (January 2026).

The society successfully campaigned to list the pub as an asset of community value in 2014, but it has remained vacant since then. Its viability is challenged by its small size, back street location, changing drinking habits and its significantly greater value as a residential use.

Another vacant property in our neighbourhood is 6 Ivor Place

(previously a launderette). The shopfront has been recently refurbished but we have no knowledge of when or if it will reopen. Both the public house and launderette uses are protected as they support local communities. If they were to reopen, would you use them? What do you think about the future of these buildings in our conservation area?



Local campaigners outside the Swan & Edgar 2014.



Launderette shopfront in 2018.

THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II GARDEN IN REGENT'S PARK

This spring saw the opening of the Queen Elizabeth II Garden, an innovative project that has been designed to represent the late Queen's life, loyalty and love of plants and flowers. In early March the society was fortunate to see the work-in-progress with a tour of the garden, led by Senior Landscape Design Manager Matthew Halsall. The structure of the garden was complete; paths, water-features, structures, seating and planting but only the daffodils were in bloom. A month later when we revisited the garden with local councillors, the garden was vibrant with colourful wildflowers, blue bells, tulips and allium and alive with the sounds of nature. A wonderful new place in our neighbourhood, for reflection and inspiration, that will change and evolve every time we visit it.

BBC Gardeners World (series 26, episode 6) showcased the garden's development from conception to completion, telling a fascinating story and explaining the horticultural rationale behind the creation of this unique public garden.



L-R: Amanda-Jayne Doherty, Robert Rigby, Fiona Packe, Gaby Higgs, Cllr Heather Johnson, Matthew Halsall and Nick Biddle.

'BAKER STREET' - WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

The late Dr Leonard Jacobs was a local GP and a stalwart member of the St Marylebone Society. Seventy years ago, he published an article on the history of Baker Street in *The Baker Street Journal (TBSJ)* - self-described as "*An Irregular Quarterly of Sherlockiana... Published by The Baker Street Irregulars, Inc. 221B Baker Street, R. F. D. 1, Morristown, N. J.*" (USA). There is a nod in Leonard's final paragraph to the usual subject matter of the TBSJ, and indeed something that acts as a coda to our article in the SMS Autumn 2025 Newsletter, on what Arthur Conan Doyle was thinking when he fixed on 221 Baker Street as the place where Sherlock Holmes lived. Aside from that, Leonard's article is a well-researched mini-history of Baker Street, which is well worth republishing. Being largely historical, most of what he has to say is unaffected by the passage of time. However, to the extent that the text needs updating, this has been done via the endnotes. The original article had no illustrations, so to add to its general interest, we have supplied some.

Mike Wood

BAKER STREET BY LEONARD JACOBS



Fig 1. St Paul's Church, Portman Square, c1906, which stood on the east side of Baker Street, between what is now Robert Adam Street and George Street. St Paul's Church was built in 1779 and demolished in the 1970s. Although some of the original buildings survive further north, in the south the four and five storey Georgian terraces that can be seen here have all been swept away and replaced with much taller 20th and 21st century buildings.

For most of the world Sherlock Holmes and Baker Street are names that are inseparably linked. Baker Street, however, has a reality and history of its own - perhaps not as gripping as Conan Doyle might have created, but nevertheless of interest.

Baker Street lies in the centre of the London Borough of St. Marylebone¹. Just over half a mile in length, it runs northwards from Portman Square to the edge of Regent's Park. It is a busy road, being both a substantial shopping centre and the main route from Hampstead and St John's Wood to the West End.

The Domesday Book of 1086 shows this area as part of the Manor of Lilestone. The walls of the City of London were two miles distant to the east, and in only a few places had the oaks of the Great Forest of Middlesex been cleared. In 1553 Sir William Portman bought the southern part of the Manor, and even then, the only notable landmark lay at one corner of the estate, the gallows of Tyburn, execution place for the criminals of London. Today most of the land is still owned by the Portman family.

country squires with extensive property in Dorset and Somerset, and they leased the bulk of their London estate to a speculative builder, William Baker.

Little is known about Baker, and most of what is comes from an Act of Parliament of 1774². On February 23rd of that year Baker died, and the Act enabled the trustees "*to accept, grant and make Building and other Leases, Contracts and Agreements of certain Messuages, Lands and Premises, late of William Baker, Esquire, deceased, during the minority of his son, Peter William Baker, an infant.*"

In 1755³ Baker took a forty-year lease on 258 of the 270 acres of the Portman Estate, and subsequently longer leases were granted on certain lots. Development was slow, and when Baker died nineteen years later, the major part was still farmland. It had been a wise investment, however, and the executors had no difficulty in disposing of the land. Two builders, Samuel Adams and Mr Elkins, former associates of Baker, took over the Pump Field and the 18-Acre field that lay north of Portman Square.

Baker had confined his building to the area around Portman Square. Although he may have planned the street that was to bear his name, it was not until 1779



Fig 2. Upper Baker Street c 1905. The Tea & Coffee Importer and adjacent premises, on the corner of what is now Baker Street and Melcombe Street, were replaced in the early 1930s by a building for the Abbey Road Building Society which, due to the renumbering, created a 'No. 221 Baker Street' for the first time.



Fig 3. Madame Tussaud's Waxworks in the Great Room of the Baker Street Bazaar, prior to its transfer to their current site in 1884.

(five years after his death) that the parish rate book first mentions it. Adams and Elkins in that year had built six houses, though only four were so far occupied.

London streets have always had the disconcerting habit of changing their names even though apparently the same road. Baker Street was no exception. A map of 1794 shows it extending for about half of its present length: then, although without houses, it is York Place up to the New Road (now Marylebone Road) and then Upper Baker Street. Only in recent times has order been brought to the situation: in 1921 York Place, and in 1930 Upper Baker Street, were submerged into Baker Street.

Baker Street has never been a thoroughfare of great importance or distinction. What fame it has had through the years has resulted mainly from one block on the west side of the street, that between Dorset Street and Blandford Street (formerly King Street)⁴.

The parish rate book for 1785 records, "Field on the north side of Portman Square. The Rt. Hon. Lord Jeffery Amherst, the lessee, and the Captain and Colonel of the Second Troop of Life Guards, for stables and ride occupied by himself and troop." Contemporary maps show it to have been a very large building, with central riding arena and surrounding barrack accommodation. In 1822 the Life Guards left, and the building was leased by George Young. Three years later he opened 'The Portman Horse Bazaar' for the sale of horses, carriages and harnesses. The sales were held twice weekly, and there was stabling for 400 horses and space for 500 carriages. The coffee rooms on the upper floor were a regular social rendezvous, while other accommodation (known as the Portman Rooms) could be hired for balls, meetings and

entertainments. "In one year, the accounts have exhibited returns of more than half a million sterling" reported the *Portfolio Magazine* in 1825.

Houses and shops were soon built along the Baker Street frontage. The shops led into the inside of the building, and by 1830 it was known as the Baker Street Bazaar, a name that persisted for ninety years.

In 1835 Madame Marie Tussaud leased the ground floor shop and the Portman Rooms above for her Waxworks Exhibition. Madame Tussaud had brought her collection to England just after the turn of the century, and toured around until her decision to settle finally in Baker Street. It has always been a mystery why she picked this unfashionable street, away from the

centre of town. Possibly it was the attraction of a small community of French émigrés centred on the nearby Roman Catholic Chapel of the Annunciation. (The street in which the building stands was appropriately later renamed after Charles Dickens's hero Sidney Carton⁵.)

The Waxworks were, of course, only part of the activity in the Baker Street Bazaar. Some of the businesses were substantial, others just vendors of mementos and nick-nacks. Every year from 1839 to 1861 the Royal Smithfield Club held its annual cattle show in the arena. Then there were exhibitions, such as the one in 1829 of musical and mechanical toys, and 'fancy sales' like the one of 1849 in aid of the Royal General Annuity Society.

One of the less successful enterprises was the 'Glaciarium and Frozen Lake', opened in December 1842. There were 3,000 square feet of ice-like composition floor for skating, backed by a panorama of Lucerne and alpine scenery "covered with snow and hoar frost." Despite energetic advertising the affair was short-lived.

In 1884 Madame Tussaud's moved to its present home in Marylebone Road, and the Portman Rooms re-emerged as a place for private entertainment. Chief of the businesses still left in the Baker Street Bazaar were the several shops of Druce & Co. Thomas Charles Druce had been one of the first to take a lease – in 1822 – of the shop on the corner of King Street. He was then an upholsterer, but his business so prospered that he acquired another shop in the block and branched into furniture and hardware. His sons and grandsons continued the expansion, and gradually the adjoining shopkeepers were bought out. By their centenary in 1922 Druce's held the lease of the whole of the southern half of the block. Their three-storey department store occupied most of the front of the site, while at the back was their furniture depository. Squashed in



Fig 4. Early photograph of the west side of Baker Street. In the centre is the projecting entrance to the Baker Street Bazaar, with the Portman Rooms advertised above. To the left, the foothold established by Druce & Co eventually expanded to take over the entire site of the Bazaar.

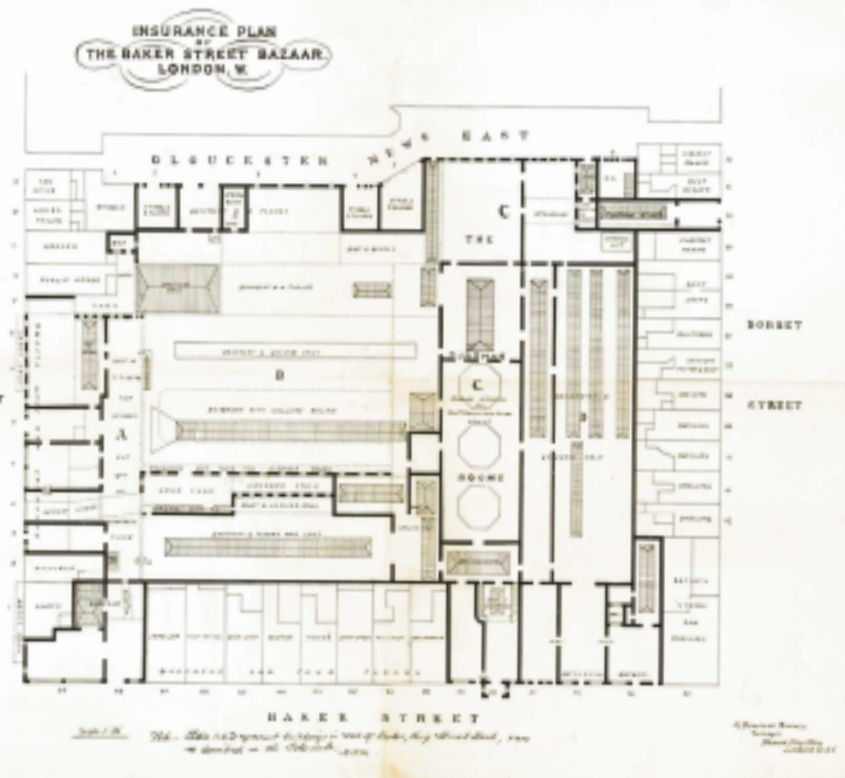


Fig 5. Plan of the Baker Street Bazaar c1919. The Great Room (see Fig 3) had been vacated by Madame Tussaud's and, at this date, it had become part of the 'Portman Rooms' (marked 'C' on the plan).

between, and occupying the original arena site, was Lane's Club for the devotees of billiards, boxing and all-in wrestling.

During the Second World War Druce's was the only part of Baker Street to suffer serious damage. One night in 1941 the store was burnt to the ground. Druce's moved to other premises in Baker Street, and until recently the site remained vacant, leased to the U.S. Navy as a car park. Today a block of offices is under construction⁶.

There is little more to tell of the story of Baker Street. Its only other notable building is Baker Street Station, at the corner of Marylebone Road. The first

underground railway in London, the Metropolitan, built on the 'cut-and-cover' system, was opened in January 1863. Its one line ran from Paddington to Farringdon Street in the City, and one of its important intermediary stations was Baker Street. Later expansions have made it an important junction and one of the keys of the underground network.

There have been few famous residents⁴. In 1803 William Pitt (the Younger) spent one of his brief periods out of public office at number 120. The distinguished actress Mrs Sarah Siddons, lived at 27 Upper (now 226) Baker Street for several years until her death in 1931, and Cardinal Wiseman, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, lived at

8 York Place (now 100 Baker Street) before his death in 1865.

And what of Sherlock Holmes? Readers of *The Baker Street Journal* will know that Baker Street's numbers in the Master's day went only up to No. 85, and that there has been much dispute as to which house was hidden under this pseudonym of '221B'. The London County Council has avoided a decision by paying its tribute by renaming a nearby street Sherlock Mews. (Incidentally, Watson's Mews in another part of Marylebone is not another compliment: it was there as early as 1840.)

But why did Holmes choose to live in Baker Street in the first place? Perhaps the Miss Holmes who resided at No. 23 Baker Street from 1848 until 1856 was an ancestral relative of his. Of this, as of so many other things, we shall never know.

Notes

1 Since 1965, part of the City of Westminster

2 Leonard was writing before the publication of Richard Bowden and Tom Mayberry's history of the Portman family – *From Somerset to Portman Square* (2022). From which we learn that William Baker was a gentleman farmer from Shropshire who, by 1741, had become a major Portman tenant in London. When Baker took his larger lease from the Portman Estate in 1755, it was described as consisting of two farms. One of these farms, at Lisson Green, was occupied by William Baker himself. The special significance of the 1755 lease was that for the first time it permitted building development to take place, subject to individual building leases granted by the estate.

3 As published in *The Baker Street Journal*, this date appears as '1775', but it clearly should have been 1755. Baker died in 1774 aged 59 (Bowden & Mayberry, *op. cit.*, p. 62).

4 Leonard was writing 70 years ago, subsequent research has shown that Baker Street was the centre of a miniature court in exile in the period following the French Revolution and subsequent 'Terror' – a 'court' focussed on a block, just to the north of the one described by Leonard. For it was at No. 46 Baker Street that the Comte d'Artois (1757– 1836) – later King Charles X of France – was living and on whom the nobility of the *ancien regime* attended from their houses or lodgings nearby (Mackenzie (1972) *Marylebone*, p230).

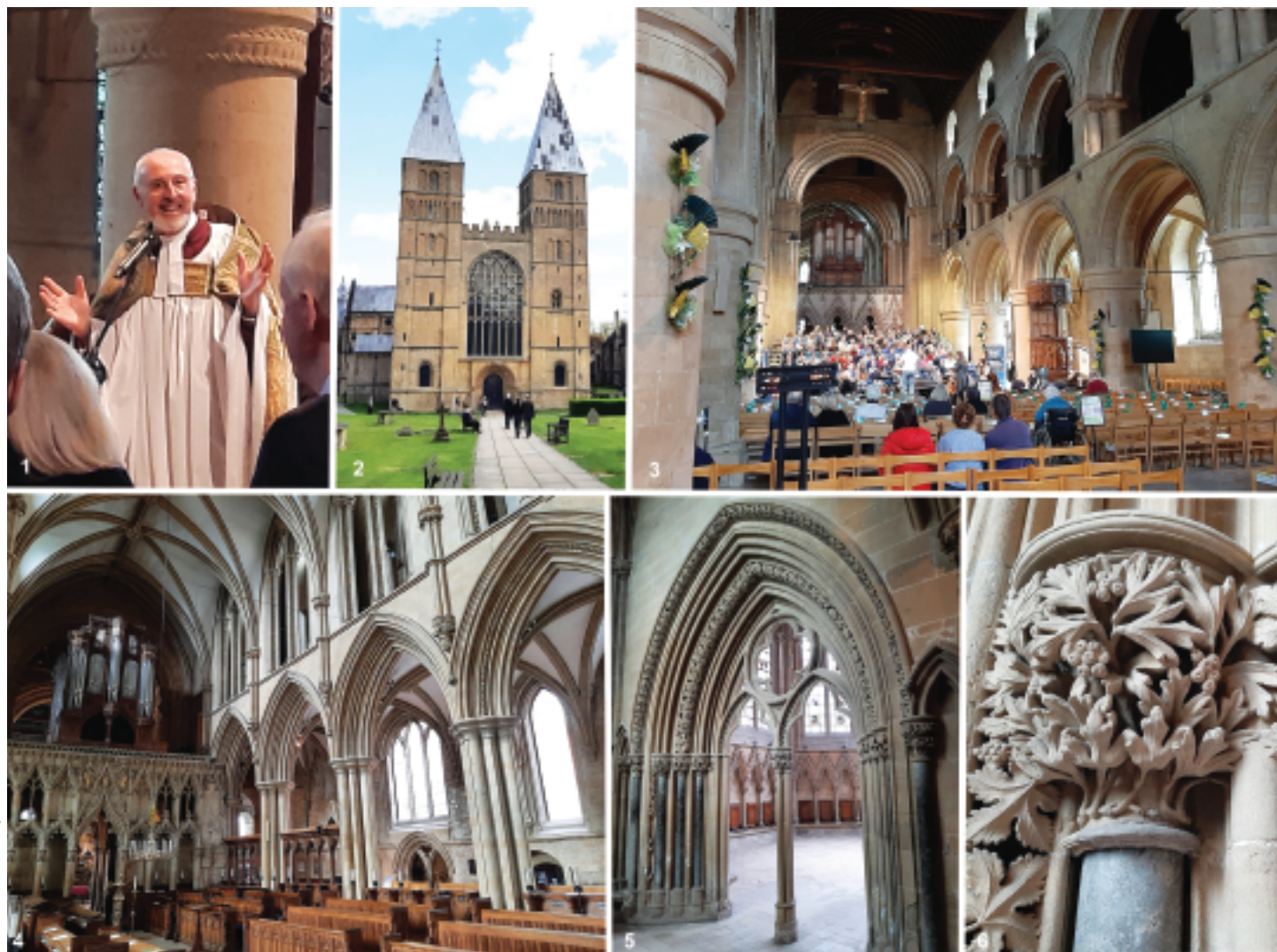
5 From *A Tale of Two Cities*. Although the Chapel of the Annunciation closed in 1911, the building still existed at the time Leonard was writing. The building was put to a variety of uses: as a furniture warehouse, a day nursery, a mortuary chapel, a protestant prayer-room, a synagogue and a sound recording studio. It was in the latter incarnation that Millie Small's 'My Boy Lollipop' was recorded in 1964. The Chapel building was finally demolished in 1969 (Bowden & Mayberry, *op. cit.*, p. 72).

6 The site was being redeveloped as the head offices of Marks & Spencer. The building has subsequently been enlarged and remodelled by Make Architects (2005-8) as '55 Baker Street'.



Fig 6. Photo of 55 Baker Street, which occupies the site of the former Baker Street Bazaar. After the Second World War, the car-park on this bomb-damaged site was redeveloped and became the head office of Marks & Spencer in 1957. Following Marks and Spencer's departure in 2004, Make Architects enlarged and remodelled the site as '55 Baker Street'.

FROM ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH TO SOUTHWELL MINSTER – 136 MILES NORTH AND c700 YEARS BACK IN TIME



Photos courtesy of Sheila D'Souza.

In its last newsletter, the Society thanked Revd Canon Dr Stephen Evans for his 16 years of unstinting service to the people of Marylebone and congratulated him on his appointment as Dean of Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire. After his successful restoration of our 200-year-old Regency Parish Church of St Marylebone, he will now take charge of Southwell's 900-year-old Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an

architectural masterpiece which showcases three distinct medieval styles – Norman, Early English and Decorated Gothic.

A sizeable group travelled north from Marylebone on Sunday 19th April 2026 to attend Father Stephen's official welcome to the Diocese of Southwell and his installation as the eighth Dean of its Minster. Amongst them were members of St Marylebone's clergy, Parochial Church Council and

congregation, including several SMS members. The solemn rituals and readings of the Installation were highly symbolic and interspersed with well-chosen and beautifully performed music and hymns. In today's secular age, it was a truly unique opportunity and a privilege to experience the full splendour of this venerable ecclesiastical ceremony in such an awe-inspiring setting.

Sheila D'Souza

Key to the photo-collage: 1. **Dean Stephen Evans**, wearing the Cope of Southwell Minster, which replaced the Cope of St Marylebone which he wore on arrival for the installation ceremony. 2. **Southwell Minster**. The main body of the church – the towers, transepts and nave – are Norman (circa 1108–1170). 3. **The Nave** features massive circular columns and Romanesque arches. 4. **The Quire** was rebuilt in Early English Gothic style (circa 1234–1251) with pointed arches, elegant lancet windows and a high-vaulted stone roof. 5. **The Chapter House** in Decorated Gothic style (late 13th century) is considered one of the most beautiful buildings in England. Octagonal and with no central supporting pillar, it was a remarkable engineering feat at that time. 6. **'The Leaves of Southwell'**. The intricate 3-D stone carvings of leaves of oak, hawthorn and maple are renowned as the UK's finest and most naturalistic examples of botanical detail alongside mythical 'green men' and animal carvings.

EVENTS IN MARYLEBONE

ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH, 17 Marylebone Road, NW1 5LT www.stmarylebone.org
FREE LUNCHTIME CONCERTS at 13.00 -14.00.

31 July 2026 Love Songs by Schubert, Mozart, Mahler, Fauré, Saint-Saëns and many others with Salwan Cartwright-Shamoon (Tenor), Yating Hu (Soprano) and Matthew Clemmet (Piano)

MARYLEBONE THEATRE

www.marylebonetheatre.com

OUR PUBLIC HOUSE 30 June - 4 July
THE SMILE OF HER 10 July - 29 August

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.

ST CYPRIAN'S CHURCH
Glentworth Street, NW1 6AX www.stcyprians.weebly.com

St Cyprian's hosts a wide-ranging programme of free concerts as part of the St Cyprian's Chamber Music Series. Concerts take place monthly on Sunday evenings at 6pm and are open to all and are free. The programme includes chamber music, solo recitals, orchestral concerts, choral music and jazz performed by outstanding musicians in a beautiful setting. 19 July - The Willow Orchestra, 20 September - Duo Suzon, 18 October - Tondo Duo, 15 November - Chantefable.

REGENT'S PARK

www.royalparks.org.uk.

The Lord Chamberlain's Men play **OTHELLO** in St John's Lodge Garden, August at 5.30pm.

REGENT'S PARK OPEN AIR THEATRE www.openairtheatre.com

20 June - 18 July **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** In a new production directed by Atri Banerjee underscored with folk-infused melodies composed by Maimuna Memon, experience Shakespeare's most spellbinding comedy as it blossoms once again in a magical outdoor setting.

25 July - 12 September **CATS**. A brand-new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's global sensation **CATS** leaps into the magical outdoor setting of Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Based on T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, and with a legendary score featuring Old Deuteronomy, Macavity: The Mystery Cat, Jellicle Ball and the chart-topping hit Memory, this production of **CATS**, directed and choreographed by Regent's Park Open Air Theatre Artistic Director Drew McOnie is sure to be one of the theatrical events of 2026.

Marylebone in Bloom

Many of you may remember this was the title of the St Marylebone Society annual gardening competition, which celebrated urban gardening including window boxes, hanging baskets and public house planting. There's no appetite to revive this event, partly due to an increasingly transient resident population. Walking around our neighbourhood, one can identify the houses and flats that are actually lived in, evidenced by well-tended window boxes and entrance pots. Fortunately, Westminster City Council has planted street trees wherever possible, most recently on Upper Montagu Street, and the Baker Street Quarter has installed and maintains seasonal planters along Melcombe Street which enliven the route to Marylebone Station.

Georgian Marylebone's grid of terraced houses was densely built, but where there's even a small opportunity for planting, an exceptional, if ephemeral, landmark can establish itself in our psyche. Tended by its careful owners, the beautiful magnolia on the corner of Park Road and Ivor Place heralds Spring and brings joy to us all. Long may it bloom in Marylebone!



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 & Burk

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President: Lord Adonis

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Hon. Treasurer: Liz Queenan

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(Newsletter and Membership)

Mike Wood (Local History)

Ian Wylie (Planning)

Patricia Kleinman (Planning)

Johan van der Merwe (Events)