

Newsletter June 2021

Dear Tim,

## **ASSOCIATION NEWS**

#### Free at last!

For the first time in 15 months 24 MA Members gathered 'for real', this time outside King's Cross Station on Saturday morning, to explore the amazing 'city within a city' that is the new King's Cross development. So much to see – and as bonus - so many friends to catch up with, many of whom hadn't seen each other for over a year.

The great thing about King's Cross is that it's a real working environment — with offices, shops, restaurants, bars and homes, all rubbing along happily side by side. Who would have guessed Google and The Guardian would be neighbours? Alongside St Martin's School of Art, Tom Dixon's Studio, The Francis Crick Institute — and Waitrose. The imaginative conversion of many of the old buildings alongside some breath-taking new ones had everyone gasping.

Our Blue Badge Guide Janice was, as always, busy sharing fascinating 'not many people know that' facts and figures and a lot of our members remembered only too clearly what this area used to be like – and how their parents warned them NEVER to go there! The weather was pretty miserable but it would have taken more than that to quench our enthusiasm for this truly remarkable achievement. Spoilt for choice, some of us escaped the clouds with a memorable lunch. Although less than a 10 minute bus ride away from Marylebone, several people commented that it 'was like visiting another country'. Definitely one for the 'I MUST go' list.

And lots more Marylebone Association events are lined up over the summer and beyond – see the Events section of the Newsletter.

### Licensing Report - Covid Chaos

Readers will be only too aware that government actions in response to the pandemic have frequently been rushed with the inevitable mixed results, for example traffic measures.

Another policy relaxation that has caused some issues is the encouragement of the night-time or hospitality economy by allowing easy licensing of outside eating and drinking and the closure of some roads, in particular in Soho but also within Marylebone. This seems to have been moderately successful for those businesses lucky enough to be situated in fortunate locations but has not necessarily been a great experience for nearby residents.

We have been anticipating a slew of applications from licensed premises for temporary extensions of hours beyond Westminster's definition of Core Hours. In reality this is most likely to occur in Soho and Covent Garden, but we have collaborated with the other Westminster amenity societies affected and drafted a joint policy of the West End Community Network on this matter.

Our stance is that, despite the obvious need for businesses to be supported wherever possible, this should never be at the expense of those living or even working in a neighbourhood. The Licensing Acts are designed to protect citizens from the negative aspects of alcohol consumption and the policy on hours adopted by Westminster – their Core Hours Policy – has been instrumental in a very civilised compromise between the needs of those who want evening entertainment - and those who want to sleep.

Consequently, we will be opposing any applications for even temporary extensions of hours beyond 'Core' even if based on the need to rebuild profitability after difficulties resulting from Covid regulations. To read WECN draft policy in detail click <a href="here">here</a>.

## The Marylebone Interview

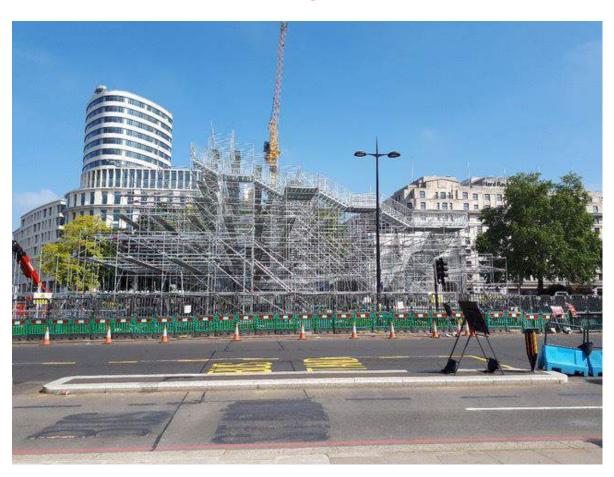




This month Julie Redmond interviews Brett Wolstencroff, who co-founded the Daunt Books at its flagship Marylebone shop in 1990 with James Daunt. Find out how he began and how he is finding trade through the present crisis, go to our website.

## MARYLEBONE NEWS

### Marble Arch Hill Begins



From this modest scaffolding is destined to rise the Marble Arch Hill - whether it will be built and ready to go by the 6th July remains to be seen. And it can be seen in real time on: view a live stream of the work taking place on the Marble Arch BID website.

Helicopter Noise - Marylebone's Greatest Nuisance?

Over the years we have reported on many issues that irritate, annoy or blight the lives of residents, depending on just how close they are to its source: busking, late hours deliveries, noisy and prolonged building works, late hours al fresco dining and much else besides. All of these though have one redeeming feature in common- that is, at any one time, they affect only a small part of our population.

However, in recent years there has arrived a more universal and persistent nuisance, which affects us throughout Marylebone and indeed Mayfair, Bayswater, and beyond. This nuisance is airborne and it visits us, like some biblical pestilence, from the skies, often when the other nuisances have taken a break - at weekends and bank holidays. For this is when the police helicopters emerge to monitor whatever latest demonstration is taking place in Hyde Park, or nearby elsewhere in Westminster, or just maybe to locate a bag snatcher on Oxford Street.

Many a glorious summer afternoon has been ruined by a persistent helicopter hovering, seemingly a matter of metres, over our heads for hour after hour. The noise can be so great that sitting outside is about as relaxing as putting up a deckchair on the hard shoulder of the M25. Even indoors, if you don't want to shout a conversation, the windows need to be closed.

How effective they are in actually preventing crime or pursuing criminals one has no idea, but with Hyde Park in particular increasingly becoming prone to gatherings that can erupt in lawlessness (see article below) the need for monitoring is not doubted - but the methods are. Indeed the rapidly growing drone technology now presents a viable alternative- the use of drones would be equally efficient, cheaper and considerably quieter.

Up to now voices have been raised, but not in any effective and co-ordinated way. This has now been taken up by MP Nickie Aiken who says that with more of us working at home during the pandemic, the use of the helicopter circling above us for hours at a time has become a real issue in central London:

"Many people have been in touch with me about this. I have been calling for greater use of drones. I have repeatedly raised this with the Met and with the government. I have been running an online survey to track details of people suffering from excessive noise".

"To see first-hand a demonstration of their aviation capabilities and to hear about plans to expand the use of drones. You can find out more about the briefing on my website."

Drones do sound as though they would be the answer, and to those that argue that the purchase cost at around £500,000 is too expensive this is short sighted, bearing in mind the cost of one helicopter unit in the air for one hour is £2,820.

We recommend, even for those of you who are survey adverse, that if you only fill in one this year - make this it and hopefully help make a difference to all our lives in Marylebone.

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Increasingly Hyde Park seems to be for the accommodations of vast numbers of people in unauthorised gatherings which often end up in an outbreak of lawlessness and some type of confrontation with the police (and the accompanying helicopters- see article above).

Last month saw Cannabis 420 - an annual "celebration" of the cannabis plant - once again taking place in Hyde Park. This unauthorised gathering grows in size with each year and again ended up with the police applying for a Section 35 Dispersal Order. This is used when there are stabbings or threats of stabbings and gives the police more powers to stop and search, and usually entail the use of a helicopter.

The rubbish left behind was shocking and despite the toilets remaining open, every corner, bush or private garden was used. Clearing the filth usually starts in the gathering gloom when it's safe to do so, and then again at 5am by teams from Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and St James's Park.

In April a crowd of about 1,500 gathered in the Park for an anti-lockdown demonstration. Although no distancing or face masks were worn and thousands of stickers were plastered everywhere, it was mostly peaceful during the day but when a rump of the marchers returned in the evening confrontation with the police developed and several were injured.

Surely the Royal Parks has some kind of duty of care to all its surrounding neighbours and should be taking steps to curtail these unauthorised assemblies?

# Safeguarding Children in Paddington Street Gardens

There has been an incident reported in Paddington Street Gardens where a man exposed himself to a young girl.

Parents and carers are asked to vigilantly supervise their children to ensure they are kent safe and to report any concerns to the appropriate agencies. If

you would like to support child further, there are many resources available via the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children website that help children be more aware of their personal safety.

### Wigmore Street Tree Planting



On Wednesday the 25th of May, Marylebone celebrated the end of lockdown with a new tree planted by the Lord Mayor Johnathan Glanz, John Gilhooly of Wigmore Hall and the noted musician, Stephen Hough CBE.

They were enthusiastically assisted by the eco-team of Queen College Preparatory School. Wigmore Hall has recently reopened and Stephen Hough took a short break from rehearsing in order to join the small gathering.

This is the 976th tree to be planted in Marylebone and Fitzrovia and marks the completion of the Trust's latest planting scheme in Wigmore Street.

The W1W Tree Planting Initiative was started in 2008 and works through the Westminster Tree Trust and the City of Westminster.

The W1W Initiative hopes to reach its target of a thousand trees in Marylebone and Fitzrovia by the end of next planting season. It has made a huge contribution to our streets over the past years and we are hopeful that the Oxford Street District project will open up possibilities for further greening in the area.

## Money for local projects - CIL

Did you realise that deserving local causes that are set up for the benefit of the local community or part of it are able to apply for funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)?

CIL is a tax that local authorities charge developers for infrastructure needs arising from new developments. CIL funds raised from developments are split into 2 pots: 85% goes into the 'Strategic CIL' pot, which the Council can use for infrastructure projects across the borough. 15% goes into the 'Neighbourhood CIL' pot, which must be used within the Neighbourhood area where the funds were raised.

As the designated neighbourhood forum, Marylebone Forum plays a role identifying and supporting local projects through the application process for Neighbourhood CIL funding.

Projects have to meet certain criteria set out by the Council, and the application process requires evidence of community consultation and support, admittedly not an easy process to negotiate. It must also not be in conflict with the policies and priorities in Westminster's City Plan. Fortunately Westminster City Council has now issued detailed guidance to help one negotiate the application process, for the allocation of Neighbourhood CIL funds and help is on hand from the Marylebone Forum.

If you feel you are involved in a local project that could benefit from some additional funding, why not contact the Marylebone Forum at contact@maryleboneforum.org to find out more.

# Oxford Street - consequences of narrowing - a warning from Mayfair

When it was proposed to pedestrianise Oxford Street some time before the last council elections there was considerable concern expressed from many quarters about the resulting traffic displacement to local areas. But that was not the only concern, the plans raised a large number of other issues, including how deliveries and collections would be managed if Oxford Street were to be closed to traffic. We forecast at the time that the small residential streets off Oxford St were bound to suffer if deliveries were pushed into these roads. With the narrowing of Oxford Street, in Mayfair this has already come to pass.

Ever since Primark opened their Marble Arch store they have been making the bulk of their deliveries to the loading bay in North Row. They intended to operate that on a 24 hour basis and local residents, who would have suffered considerably from this, went to court to have restrictions imposed, ironically supported in this by Westminster Council. The residents won the case but Primark later anyway took the decision to cease deliveries by regular sized lorries and only use their mega-lorries. These are too big to use in North Row and so they used Oxford Street, but only after the store had closed at 10pm.

After the recent narrowing of Oxford Street WCC then told them that as there was one lane only now, they had to use Park Street instead. This involved the reduction of a recently introduced motor-cycle Parking Bay to accommodate

them. No time restriction was put on deliveries and when Primark asked about the residents they were told that WCC would deal with that. However the first residents were aware of the problem was around 20th April when late in the evening deliveries began. The bedrooms of 20 flats in New Hereford House look directly onto Park St and since the store now stays open until 10pm deliveries cannot even begin until then. Now residents have to put up with a considerable amount of noise every evening under their windows until well after 11.00pm, and as turnover returns to normal this can only get worse.

This cannot even be called an unintended consequence of road narrowing, WCC were fully aware of the major nuisance that this would impose on a large number of residents but ignored it, because it got in the way of their Oxford Street District agenda. Many cannot see the point of this further narrowing of Oxford Street with pedestrian numbers down and likely to stay lower than they were pre-Covid with the loss of so much residential to office use. This makes the so-called temporary plan not only pointless and a waste of money but also very damaging to residents.

Unsurprisingly residents not only have had no satisfactory response from WCC, to date they have had no response. This is one of those occasions when it gives no satisfaction having a prediction proved correct and, by way of further prediction, if it can happen in Mayfair it can and probably will happen in Marylebone.

Mike Dunn on behalf of CAPOS (Campaign against Pedestrianisation of Oxford St) candidate in the 2018 WCC local elections.

## **Tacky Thayer Street**



This year we were disappointed to see that on the WCC Highways evaluation for 2020/21 there were precisely no nominations for Marylebone carriageway.

improvements. But it is not as though there are not areas of roadway and pavements in Marylebone that are in need of improvement

One such obvious candidate is Thayer Street. Just why is it so neglected? It appears to be the poor cousin caught between Wigmore Street, which receives the OSD budget and Marylebone High Street, which has money spent on it from a separate WCC pot.

After extensive upgrading of the crossings and pavements a few hundred yards up the road on the High Street, Thayer Street now presents a sorry contrast. Over the years the asphalt has been dug up countless times for the installation of new services and now has a patchwork quilt effect which creates a drab backdrop to the rest of the High Street.

## Spiegeltent? Yes at Cavendish Square



Planning consent has been granted for the use of Cavendish Square as a "pop-up event space" for a temporary period of 4 months from 14 June 2021. The proposals include a 9-metre high Spiegeltent.

As we are sure our readers will not need reminding, a Spiegeltent is Dutch for "mirror tent", from spiegel+tent- a large travelling tent, constructed from wood and canvas and decorated with mirrors and stained glass, intended as an entertainment venue.

This "Spiegeltent" is obviously going to be somewhat larger than the example pictured above - with a capacity for 500 people. The planning application says it will be located to the north-east of the Square, but it sounds like it will dominate the entire area of the Square, and be heard far beyond.

The event will be operated by Underbelly and the Spiegeltent will house a range of events including live cabaret, comedy, music and children's theatre with 8 market food stalls and a bar for 500 - nothing to possibly go wrong there then.

Strangely, the Metropolitan Police felt otherwise and submitted an objection and expressed concern over the whole enterprise and its potential to generate noise nuisance, public disorder and crime. However, once again, as with the Marble Arch Mound, the WCC Planning Committee were hardly going to let

such trivial concerns spoil the party. Given "the economic benefit", and the possibility of it providing "life and vitality to the West End and Oxford Street" as Cllr Glen said, the committee unanimously voted to approve the scheme. Why support existing venues and attractions when you can create new ones to compete!

Other than the police, the scheme received limited opposition, quite possibly due to the fact that so few had been made aware of it.

## Buyers line up for Topshop Store



If the race to acquire Topshop's former Oxford Street flagship store is anything to go by, then Oxford Street still has considerable attraction to businesses, with or without Mounds and Spiegeltents. Amazon, Nike, Ikea, JD Sports and Frasers have all expressed an initial interest in occupying the 100,000 sq ft store on Oxford Circus. The building could reportedly sell for as much as £400m.

#### Removal of BT telephone boxes

Westminster Council have been consulted by BT on their plans to remove some of their payphone kiosks due to the low level of use. The full list of kiosks proposed for removal in Marylebone is as follows:

- JUNC NUTFORD PLACE PCO1 BROWN STREET
- O/S NO 33 SEYMOUR PLACE PCO1 SEYMOUR PLACE
- O/S 10 BRUTON STREET PCO1 BRUTON STREET

- PCO PCO1 SACKVILLE STREET
- JUNCT MARYLEBONE RD PCO1 GREAT PORTLAND STREET
- O/S 67 HARLEY STREET PCO1 HARLEY STREET

BT do operate a scheme whereby kiosks can be adopted and promote that they can potentially be used for other purposes, however the retention of the kiosks for non-telecommunications use will require planning permission.

Perhaps Westminster Council should follow City of London's lead - they are auctioning off a number of theirs with a suggested guide price of £45,000 each.

#### Get married in Selfridges

Couples will soon be able to get married in Selfridges; the store has been granted a licence to host weddings. Just in time to cater for the huge backlog created by the Covid lockdown - according to the UK Weddings Taskforce. Last year 220,000 weddings did not go ahead and about 100,000 for the first six months of this year have been cancelled. It is expected that more than 800,000 weddings would be held within the first two years once all restrictions are lifted.

The Oxford Street store has created a wedding suite on the fourth floor of the Grade II-listed building. The Treehouse, Dilly and Bulgari hotels have also been granted wedding licences this year as has Bateaux London, a fine dining boat experience and the former base of the London Scottish Regiment can also host ceremonies. Up to 30 people are now allowed to attend a wedding.

#### E Scooter Petition

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Electronic scooters have been hailed as a zero-emissions transport revolution. The Daily Mail however reports that these trendy vehicles are central to a crime wave currently sweeping the nation. Central London has been particularly affected. Robberies, assaults and drive-by shootings have been carried out on the devices. The Mail is starting a campaign -suggesting individuals write to their MP/Local councillors, see Writetothem.com

## AROUND WESTMINSTER

Heritage Watch- Save Museum Street



Last month we reported on the proposed demolition of the iconic 20th Century Fox building on Soho Square. This month Bloomsbury is now being threatened by a proposed 21 storey office building towering over 80 metres above the surrounding historic streets. This tower block will be 70% the height of Centre Point, containing 251,400sq ft of office space (a 3,700% increase) and only provide 12 'affordable' homes (only 6 of which would be social housing.)

A group has been set up to fight this - Contact MuseumStreet@Bloomsbury.com or 0207 836 5555 for details on how you can take part or use #SaveMuseumStreet on socials.

One wonders in any event what kind of justification there could be to allow an application such as this that would be so harmful to its surrounding heritage?

# Conflict of interest smears City planning

The Estates Gazette reports that the City of London Corporation has been accused of conflict of interest by some of its own councillors after waving through a string of controversial planning applications and "approving ever taller buildings which blight neighbouring properties and degrade heritage assets".

More than 1,250 people have signed a petition claiming to have "no

demanding that councillors with "extensive property interests" be ruled out of the Corporation's planning decisions for fear of bias towards developers.

The petition claims the Corporation has made a series of "bad planning decisions" in recent months which have generally ignored reasonable objections made on planning grounds".

The chief examples cited include a scheme submitted by Virgin Islands Registered Arindel Properties to revamp Farringdon office block 150 Aldersgate EC1 which was approved despite 126 objections from residents as well as the Barbican Association.

The petition claims the City of London had an "undisclosed interest" in the plans because it has a stake in the freehold of the property and therefore "benefited financially" from the approval.

It adds that the approval would not have been granted without the votes of five planning committee members who also sat on a committee which manages the Corporation's property interests, including the asset in question.

Separately, it cited approvals for two major office towers on Gracechurch Street EC3, from developer Tenacity, owned by Hong Kong-based businessman Patrick Wong.

Those were given the green light earlier this year despite heritage groups' complaints that they would harm views of the Grade 1 listed Tower of London and the Monument and overshadow Grade 11 listed Leadenhall Market.

This business vote has led to the planning committee "approving ever taller buildings which blight neighbouring properties and degrade heritage assets" it added. Allocating decisions to panels will exacerbate this existing problem".

It warned that the risk of a "revolving door" between public and private office had not been addressed, adding there was no explicit ban on councillors taking gifts from people with an interest in planning decisions.

It also raised concerns about public access to notes on meetings between developers and councillors, as well as the scope of requirements to report financial interests.

# Tony Devenish holds West Central London Assembly seat

Conservative candidate, Tony Devenish has narrowly held his London Assembly seat in his West Central constituency. Devenish secured 55,163 votes, 38.9% of the vote, just ahead of Labour candidate Rita Begum, who came in second with 52,938 votes and 37.3% of the vote. West Central represents the boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and the City of Westminster. Tony Devenish listed his priorities as reopening the Hammersmith Bridge, building more homes, keeping transport moving

#### **Around & About Marylebone**

Two new businesses have opened, John Boyd hats on New Quebec Street and Strawberries and Cream on Wigmore Street.

Naked Man spotted in Chiltern Firehouse on the night of the blood moon! Many of the diners wondered if he was famous or a fashion icon, much to the chagrin of the diners he went on his merry way barefooted. Actress Sadie Frost's boyfriend Darren Strowger was not too impressed!

We bumped into Mr Lee Parker in Le Pain Quotidien, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon in King Edward hospital on Beaumont Street. He said he is inundated with surgery cases of sports and gym injuries. Since the lockdown has lifted, he has seen younger and younger people with sports injuries, torn Achilles' tendons etc. His advice is to take it easy, don't overdo it in the gym!

Gregg Wallace from MasterChef is enjoying his time out of Lockdown spending it at Home House, he has a big event coming soon there showcasing a five-course meal and private dining with groups of members.

A group of Marylebone Mums went to the Harold Pinter Theatre this week to see Walden. One mum had a temperature of 38.1 during temperature checks, she was put in a holding area and given ice water to bring down her temperature and the mums were then allowed in. As soon as they got to their seats the manager came on stage and said that the show was cancelled due to a positive covid test backstage. This is the world we live in now.

Baker Street Quarter held an outdoor food festival in Portman Square this weekend and it was lovely to sit out in the sunshine admiring the gardens with friends, family and children playing. Fabulous food and drinks were served.

## ASSOCIATION EVENTS

**INFORMAL PICNIC PARTY IN THE PARK** - Tuesday 8th June (OR Wednesday 9th) at 3-5 pm

Celebrate together with a PICNIC AFTERNOON TEA IN REGENT'S PARK.

You can bring your own picnic or buy takeaway from the cafe and will need a rug or fold-up chair - or you can hire a park deck chair. Meet in the Inner Circle on the lawn to the left of the pathway between the Cafe and Open Air

I neatre Box Office. No need to book but please LET US KNOW IT you intend to drop by as numbers must be limited to 30. We want this to be a 'welcome breath of fresh air' after lockdown - but don't want to be accused of (and fined for) organising 'an afternoon rave'! So what if it's pouring with rain on the day? We have a cunning plan: to postpone until the next day - so it will either be Tuesday 8th June OR Wednesday 9th June.

To let us know if you intend to join us, or if you have any queries or are unable to locate us on the day, please ring either Lois German on 07979 817800 or Rosemary Forgan on 07887 891977.

#### ALFRESCO ANACAPRI DINNER - Wednesday 16th June at 7pm

Anacapri Ristorante

10 Dorset Street, London, W1U 6QR (Just off Baker Street)

We are once again returning to this popular venue, having cancelled last year's originally planned evening. As before, Emilio will provide a three course dinner, with house wine, from the A La Carte menu (with the exception of fillet steak and dover sole) for only £35 per person including service.

Those having previously attended will remember the generous portions and free flowing wine. This year we are taking advance payments for those wishing to secure a place.

Places are limited as this has to be alfresco but to book and arrange payment please contact Lois German on lois.german@marylebone.org or by phone on 0207 487 2706.

Obviously all our plans depend on the virus behaving itself – something it has spectacularly failed to do so far - but all being well, some more events to note with full details and dates next month

#### St Marylebone Music Festival - 18-23 July 2021

A truly unusual and ambitious line-up of events celebrating artists who also happen to have been Marylebone residents – from Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Lane to Byron. Commencing with a Festival Choral Eucharist – see stmarylebonefestival.com for the full programme.

We also haven't forgotten:

Dinner at Bright Courtyard – July, exact date tba

Tour of Selfridges with breakfast at The Brasserie of Light

Plus, coming up:

Private guided tour of St Paul's Cathedral

#### REGULAR ASSOCIATION EVENTS

**BOOK CLUB** 

Tuesday 1 June 6.00 pm

Members normally meet at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street – but recently have been meeting via Zoom. Anyone who is interested in joining in should contact Liz Queenan. Meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 6.30 – but our next Zoom meeting starts at 6 pm.

This month's choice is Lampedusa by Steven Price. All books read are available on paper and on e-readers. For more information contact Liz Queenan (liz.queenan@marylebone.org) or tel: 020 7486 3709.

#### **PUB EVENING**

Monday 14 June, 2021 6.30 pm

The Larrik, 32 Crawford Place, W1H 5NN Tel 020 773 0066

(Close to Seymour Leisure Centre)

We have our regular two tables reserved following the latest regulations. Space is limited to 12 so contact Sheila at sheila.green@marylebone.org if you wish to attend. Hopefully future pub nights following that will not require registration. It is always a very enjoyable evening and a wonderfully informal opportunity to meet local fellow residents and make new friends in the friendly surroundings of one of our nicest gastro pubs. Everyone is welcome, pay-as-you-go bar and delicious light supper snacks, hot and cold, always available so do come along.

#### **COFFEE MORNING**

Wednesday 23 June 2021 10.30 am The Wallace Collection, Manchester Square W1U 3BN.

Our first coffee morning in 2021 will be held in the wonderful Atrium Restaurant surroundings.

An opportunity to meet new members and old friends. No need to book - £5 per person. Everyone is welcome.

#### **SCRABBLE CLUB**

BC (i.e Before Covid) the Scrabble Club used to meet twice a month (on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month). We hope to be up and running again with our first date on Tuesday June 22. We cannot confirm the venue at the moment but existing members will be emailed shortly and anyone interested in joining should contact rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org or 0788 789 1977