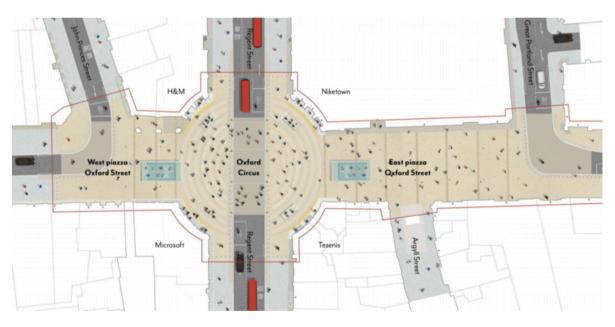


Newsletter October 2021

Piazzas Pulled



We are pleased to announce that Marylebone residents have had a reprieve from the proposals to close Oxford Street either side of Oxford Circus. Westminster Council in a surprise announcement sent the following Letter a couple of weeks ago in which they said: "Having listened to our residents and reviewed the cost effectiveness of the proposal for a pilot for the Oxford Circus piazzas, we have decided that it's better to move forward with a focus on permanent schemes. Therefore, the temporary piazzas previously planned to open at Oxford Circus later this year will not now go ahead, along with all associated enabling street works."

This victory should not be underestimated. Westminster were intent in

Orders and indeed they had already commenced the enabling works in order to do this. They were made aware of the widespread discontent with the general lack of proper consultation, particularly since Covid, by the letter sent on behalf of the Westminster Amenity Societies as detailed and expanded on in last month's Newsletter. (See article below). Following this and a number of backbench meetings it was decided to abandon the Piazza works scheduled to have closed Oxford Street from this November.

This is not however the end of this particular idea. The letter goes on to say that WCC will be focusing on engaging with residents and other stakeholders on potential permanent schemes for piazzas at Oxford Circus, along with associated enabling works. So the threat of closure and the resulting disruption is still very much there, although not, no doubt, until after next May's elections are well out of the way.

We, together with our fellow amenity societies in the West End, will therefore be focussing on continuing to resist any future plans to divert Oxford Street's traffic through our neighbourhoods.

Leader Responds to Amenity Societies

Last month we detailed a <u>letter</u> sent to the Leader of Westminster Council on behalf of 24 Westminster Amenity Societies (WASF) drawing attention to the problems stemming from the lack of adequate consultation with residents generally. This followed on from the Mound debacle, the revelation of massive cost overruns and the resignation of the Deputy Leader,

A number of serious concerns with Westminsters governance were listed in WASF's letter, which mainly focused on the lack of consultation in many areas and claimed that many people felt their participation in local affairs was "futile". The Leader has now responded to this <u>letter</u>.

The Leader's response represents a substantial move forward, in that it is a recognition that all is not right with the present methods of consultation and there is an evident willingness in the letter to address this.

In order to better achieve this aim, it has been agreed to form a small amenity society working group, which will include a Marylebone Association representative, to investigate with the Leader and key officers how this can be best addressed.

The Problem with Regent Street

The Fantasy.... ...the Reality





"Greener, safer and more accessible"

More polluted, less safe and less accessible

Someone needs to decide whether Regent Street is to continue to be an essential north-south thoroughfare for the West End's traffic or to become a shopping Mall for Crown Estates commercial rental portfolio. So far it is trying to be both - and failing.

This is yet another example of the dire effects of lack of proper consultation. Here we have "temporary" works affecting key areas of Marylebone, Fitzrovia, Mayfair and Soho, driven through on the whim of a large organisation, in this Case the Crown Estates, without any public accountability. This is then followed up by a glossy presentation with no proper evidence claiming success and a heavily biased consultation document.

However the declared success of this project is heavily disputed. Since the Crown Estates "improvements" to Regent Street it can now take 40 mins to drive from Langham Place to Piccadilly Circus. The creation of a single lane in both directions with no pull-ins has meant that all other vehicles are forced to a halt when the buses stop. This creates considerable congestion and lines of idling traffic- so the scheme actually makes pollution worse, not better, as claimed.

The Soho Society reports that problems now exist on Great Marlborough Street and Beak Street - major vehicle exits from Soho which get congested as they cannot clear on to Regent Street quickly, this in turn leaves traffic idling in Soho in its residential streets. The widened pavement has also made it difficult for cyclists to safely negotiate.

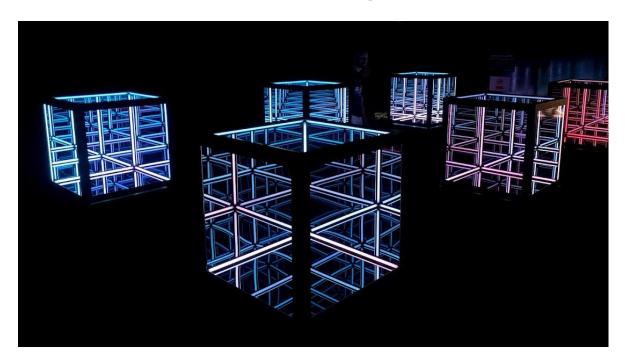
The scheme also fails in heritage terms. The Soho Society say Regent Street is an important street in terms of London's and the nation's built environment and heritage, "we think the new pavement is too wide and it changes the visual feel of Regent Street through the relationship of the height of the buildings and the width of the carriageway and the pavement".

They have asked what evidence the Crown Estates has gathered in order to monitor the effect of these works, for instance has pollution been monitored in Recent Street and the streets surrounding? Do they have any analysis of what proportion of journeys on Regent Street (including construction and delivery) realistically can transfer to public transport or bike?

They ask, "When does the temporary scheme end? It strikes us as not green, nor safe nor accessible and will only get worse as people return to offices in Soho and the West End increasing the amount of vehicle traffic".

As with the postponed Piazza Scheme it is quite clear that the Crown Estates see great financial value in turning areas of our major road networks into pavement. Obviously, they are convinced that wider pavements bring increased footfall and revenue, but at what cost to pollution and congestion in

Mound Revived with Light Show



The age-old adage that there is no such thing as bad publicity has certainly been proved correct in the case of the Mound which has clocked a total of 102,587 visitors in less than two months, according to figures from Westminster Council.

Never mind that people have come to see how bad it really is, at least they have come. Cllr Rachel Robathan, Leader of Westminster City Council, commented that: "The Mound is part of our broader strategy to get people back into our City, visiting our shops, restaurants and theatres, supporting our local economies and revitalising our communities — and it's doing exactly that. The Mound and the light-show have been drawing people from far and wide who are really liking them." Still, the Mound is not up to everyone's taste. One person commented "At least if you're inside that godforsaken hill then you can't see it."

However, these figures have only been achieved by abandoning all charges to visit the attraction, which means that ratepayers and any sponsors that can be found will have to underwrite the entire 6.6 million pounds cost of the scheme. Numbers may have now increased, but by dropping any charges the financial consequences of this are even more dire. So far, the cost works out at £63 per visitor or to put it another way, every Council taxpayer has spent £51.40 to fund it!

Mounds of Rubbish

It appears that the council took their eyes off the ball with regard to rubbish collection over the pandemic period. With many staff being reallocated to

other matters, and put on home working, enforcement became practically nonexistent in some areas. The 'Report It' site which we were urged to use was often just ignored. The City Inspectors, whose job it was to monitor compliance with waste regulations, the times bags left out, etc, were withdrawn. They are now gradually being reintroduced so things are improving - and none too soon as commercial activity builds back up to precovid levels in many areas.

However, Labour alleges that Westminster's streets are still littered with mounds of dumped rubbish, "from Pimlico to Paddington despite the Council spending £50 million a year with Veolia whose contract has just been extended for another three years".

Labour Councillors say that the time is long overdue for tough action against the regular rubbish dumpers who litter the streets of Westminster and who are currently getting away with this, "particularly selfish and nasty form of antisocial behaviour".

Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg, Labour City Management spokesperson said: "The Council spends nearly £1 million a week on waste collection but all that expense and effort is being undermined by the constant dumping of mounds of rubbish on street corners, by trees and lamp posts and at the side of black bins. Residents are rightly concerned that the dumpers are getting away with this appalling behaviour and want to see action."

"If the Council wants to change people's behaviour and 'make the polluter pay' then heavy fines will make people think twice before they dump rubbish again".

We agree, but first the council needs to actually get to grips with enforcement in order even to do this.

Ward Changes

Conservative candidates announced for the new Marylebone Ward

Next year's elections will be contested on new boundaries following a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission to ensure that councillors represent approximately the same number of voters. The new Marylebone Ward incorporates parts of the existing High Street wards and the Bryanston and Dorset Square wards. Most of the rest of Marylebone is to be incorporated into the West Ward. You can view the updated ward boundaries here.

Cllr Barbara Arizmanov, Cllr Ian Rowley and Cllr Karen Scarborough have been selected as the Conservative candidates for the new Marylebone Ward leading up to the 2022 local elections.

Cllr Rowley has represented the existing MHS ward since 2007, and in that time has covered crime and disorder, housing, financial, commercial and strategic matters. Ian is currently the Chair of both WCC Audit and Performance Committee and WCC Conservative councillors back bench group. He also sits on WCC Investment Board, Property Board and Commercial Opportunities Board.

Cllr Karen Scarborough also represents the existing MHS ward and sits as School Governor of St Vincent's School and St Mary of the Angels, as well as a Trustee of the Young Westminster Foundation.

Cllr Barbara Arizmanov currently represents Bryanston and Dorset Square Ward (which will be lost as a result of the boundary changes). Barbara has worked with residents and many organisations on issues associated with airquality, public protection, public realm and planning, and has served as Governor of two maintained Westminster schools. She is Deputy Cabinet Member Children's Services, Schools Finance and sits on the licensing committee.

TfL Consulting on Congestion Charge

Readers may recall that the Mayor originally stated that hours for the Congestion Charge, the fee and the exemptions would revert to their prepandemic levels this September. However in spite of this Tfl are now consulting on new proposals. The proposals included keeping the charging hours from 12:00 to 18:00 at weekends. On the plus side it is proposed to reintroduce the residents' discount after withdrawing it to new applicants in August 2020. The consultation closes shortly on the 6th October.

The proposed changes are listed below:

- £15 charge level
- No Auto Pay or Fleet Auto Pay discount
- £17.50 pay next day charge, and can be paid up to three days after travel
- The charging hours would be Monday to Friday from 07:00 18:00 and Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 12:00 – 18:00
- No charge from Christmas Day to New Year's Day bank holiday (inclusive)
- 90 percent residents' discount, re-opened to new applicants
- Reimbursement arrangements for certain NHS patients, care home workers, local authority and charity workers or volunteers providing certain services during epidemics or pandemics prevalent in Greater London. The expanded NHS staff reimbursement is also proposed to continue.

To find out more about the proposals and to have your say contact:

Online: tfl.gov.uk/ccyourview Email: ccyourview@tfl.gov.uk

Post: FRÉEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (no stamp required)

The consultation closes Wednesday 6 October 2021.

Al Fresco's Future in Marylebone Lane

Al fresco had been set to end across Westminster at the end of the month.

nowever consultations about retaining ai-fresco dining in other parts of the City are still ongoing.

There is the option for some schemes to continue past this date but only, WCC say, if local people agree on schemes in their area. Following "monthlong consultations with local people and businesses", the Council has decided to continue al-fresco dining in and around Covent Garden and on St John's Wood High Street. In these areas WCC say it was found that 80% of respondents to both consultations were in favour of extending outdoor dining.

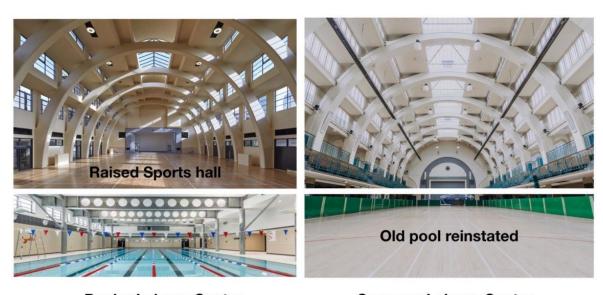
The timing of each scheme will depend on the scale of what is being proposed and what needs to be put in place before it can start, otherwise all barriers currently in place will be removed after 30th September.

It appears that the Marylebone Lane closure has got no continuing consultation and therefore the present scheme should finish at the end of September. However, Howard de Walden are keen to bring forward a permanent scheme involving timed road closures and we understand they are in discussions with WCC on this.

We are told that, if permitted, any proposed scheme, unlike the al fresco scheme, would not then allow an increased number of tables and chairs along Marylebone Lane but would allow the safe movement of pedestrians on the Lane.

There would however need to be a consultation prior to this and we will post any update on this in the newsletter.

Seymour Centre Consultation Extended



Poplar Leisure Center

Seymour Leisure Center

The extended deadline for this consultation is the 18th October. The improvements to the Seymour Centre will be the biggest community infrastructure project in our area - it involves far more than just refurbishing the existing facilities, this is an opportunity to build a legacy for generations to

come with an inspired re-imaging of the whole space for the 21st century.

Westminster City Council has committed £25 million to refurbish the building incorporating a new library, with a better leisure centre and wider services for the local community. WCC's stated aim is that the overall use of the building is flexible and provides services that meet the needs of residents.

WCC say they would like to:

- create an innovative and inspirational design for a newly refurbished and multi-service leisure centre
- ensure the building is fully accessible
- establish a new, permanent home for Marylebone Library, with multifunctional spaces
- offer existing facilities, including a swimming pool with an area set aside for teaching, sports hall, fitness suite (gym) and studios
- support the Council's ambition to become a net-zero carbon organisation
- capture improvements to the surrounding spaces around the building as well as investment in the building.

The original proposals featured a new 'Mezzanine' to raise the floor level of the existing historic, arched Sports Hall, and fit 2 new swimming pools (25m and learner pool) underneath, the scheme included more space for the gym, and finally, a permanent home for Marylebone Library.

During pre-consultation in spring 2021, this scheme was met with universal support, from users of all facilities at Seymour, parents, pensioners and library users - however, unfortunately there is no mention of the 'Mezzanine' scheme in the current survey.

The above image from our <u>March 2019 newsletter</u>. "Poplar Treatment for Seymour Leisure Centre?"

Mixed use for Former Debenhams





Consent has been given for alterations and extensions to, and partial demolition of, existing Debenhams building - to provide a partly extended and refurbished, and partly new, building comprising of a deepened basement, ground, and nine upper floors (including ninth floor Class E space and plant enclosure) to provide commercial, business and service (Class E) use, replacement facades and shopfronts, installation of new plant, provision of cycle parking and other associated works.

AROUND WESTMINSTER

Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Results

Residents and businesses have voted to approve neighbourhood plans for Fitzrovia West and Soho in a referendum which took place on Thursday 2 September 2021. Both experienced low turnouts, but a high percentage in favour.

Accordingly the plans will shortly be adopted by Westminster Council and will form part of the policy documents controlling land development in the neighbourhood area including how decisions on planning applications are made.

Details of vote:

FitzWest:

residents: for 236 against 62 [79.19%/20.81%]businesses: for 26. against 4 [86.67%/13.33%]

Soho:

residents: for 237 against 24 [90.8%/9.2%]businesses: for 40, against 5 [88.89%/11.11%]

For both Forums the road to an approved neighbourhood plan has been many years in the making (7 years for Fitzwest) and included a lengthy consultation and scrutiny period.

Whereas Soho was alway expected to be made a business area, this was not the case with Fitzwest. Like Marylebone, Fitzwest district was made "a neighbourhood business area, since the area is predominantly business in nature", despite the fact that both have densely packed, vocal and engaged residential communities.

That decision meant any neighbourhood plan had to be developed in partnership with local businesses and would have to be approved by a vote of

both the residents and business rate payers.

Fitzrovia News commented: "Nothing stands still in Fitzrovia for long and the Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum and its Neighbourhood Plan will be quickly put to the test by property developers who know how to work the planning system, and a council that seems all too happy to give them what they want."

Hanover Square Gardens Reopen

Hanover Square Gardens reopened to the public on the 15th September in a formal opening ceremony outside the gardens on the western terrace which Westminster City Council and New West End Company hosted. The event was attended by the Mayor, Jonathan Glanz and various Westminster officers who had been responsible for pushing the project through. Notable by their absence were any of the amenity societies in the immediate area, who were not invited, not even the Residents Society of Mayfair and St James, whose area this covers.

The Gardens have been re-landscaped with a new orbital path, central lawn area, newly planted flower beds, a water feature, restored timber benches, new granite seating and feature railings which include new entry gate positions.

Cllr Eoghain Murphy and Julie Redmond will be the two new Conservative candidates for the ward. Cllr Murphy currently represents Bryanston and Dorset Square Ward (which will be lost as a result of the boundary changes) and also sits on the Planning Applications Sub-Committee. Julie Redmond lives in Marylebone and is a member of the Marylebone Association Committee, responsible for Business Liaison and Community Engagement and is a qualified A&E nurse.

In the 2018 local elections, Westminster Week reports, Cllr Pancho Lewis (Labour) broke a 32 year stretch of unanimous Conservative representation for the ward. In a tightly fought election, the Labour candidate secured 984 votes compared to 990 for Cllr Barnes and 973 for Cllr Glanz.

It remains to be seen how the boundary changes will affect next year's vote but local issues such as the Mound, al fresco and Oxford Street diversions will no doubt be on residents' minds.

As at the time of writing we have not been informed of the candidates selected for the new Marylebone Ward.

Busking Reviewed Again

Since Westminster City Council's new Busking and Street Entertainment Policy came into effect in April, WCC have committed to reviewing it at quarterly intervals and after one year of implementation.

The purpose of the review is to gather feedback and understand the impact of the policy and the processes that the council has introduced.

This first quarterly survey is available through the link below. Please note that there is no closing date for this survey, responses will be collated quarterly to give an overall view over a 12 month period.

Regulated areas in central Westminster include:

- Oxford Street, Regent Street and New Bond Street
- Piccadilly Circus, Chinatown and Leicester Square
- Covent Garden
- Trafalgar Square, Whitehall, Charing Cross, Embankment & The Strand

Further information on the policy for street performance in Westminster can be found by visiting westminster.gov.uk/busking.

Help Afghan Refugees

There are numerous Afghan refugees who are staying at the Hilton Metropole at the moment. They are in need of the following:

- Toys
- Girls leggings for all ages (almost all the girls were wearing leggings under dresses).
- Trousers for boys of all ages.
- Warm clothing and outerwear for every age group.
- There were lots of baby girls clothes but far fewer gender neutral items
- Men's and teenage boys' clothes, especially for the slimmer, smaller man. Men's socks and underwear too
- Buggies both single and double are very much in need.

VOLUNTEERS: The thing they most need is people there, at the hotel, helping out in all sorts of ways. The Westminster Connects letter asks for 9-5 but if you have the school run or something else they would be delighted to have people in from 9:30 or 10 until 2 or 3. The sign up is here. or sign up for the newsletter is here.

Covid-19 Vaccination Update

COVID-19 vaccines are available for everyone aged 12 or over. The majority of children between 12 and 15 will only be offered a single dose of a vaccine. You can find more information about who is receiving the COVID-19 vaccine here.

People aged 16 and 17, and children aged 12 to 15, will be contacted by a local NHS service such as a GP surgery to book their vaccination appointments. Parents and guardians of children aged between 12 and 15 will get a letter with information about when the vaccine will be offered.

If you're aged 18 or over, you do not need to wait to be contacted.

If you were contacted but have not booked your appointments, you are still eligible and can book your appointments anytime. You can book your appointment online here.

If you are aged 50 years and over, a health and social care worker or a younger person at risk you will be offered a booster dose of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine this Autumn. The NHS will contact you when it is your turn to have a booster. Find out more here.

Shaftesbury Recovering

West End landlord Shaftesbury has reported a rise in rental collection and footfall levels in its latest trading update – as it predicted a return of the West End's "exceptionally large office-based working population" in early autumn. Between 1 April 2021 and 20 August 2021, footfall in the West End recovered by "50% to 60%" of pre-pandemic levels, it said.

Shaftesbury chief executive Brian Bickell told Property Week that "local authorities have done a lot to increase footfall in central London, especially with its outdoor dining scheme", but added that "it is disappointing that the scheme will come to an end at September-end".

Marble Arch Place For Sale

One of the largest new developments in the West End of the past decade, Marble Arch Place is being sold on.

Marble Arch Place is owned by property investment and development group Almacantarwho are in advanced talks with Asian investor ARA Dunedin Asset Management who are offering almost £290M for this mixed use investment, that would reflect a 4% yield.

It will comprise of 95 thousand square feet of office space, 54 luxury apartments, a new cinema and five ground-floor leisure units. Designed by Rafael Viñoly, the project overlooking Hyde Park is due to be completed later this year.

The Marylebone Diary

The Evening Standard reported "Howard de Walden Estate has had over £130 million knocked off the value of its property portfolio during the pandemic", but it pointed to encouraging post-lockdown occupier demand.

Howard de Walden Estates said the value declined by 2.8% to £4.5 billion in the year to March. Due to lockdowns, numerous stores had to temporarily

close across the estate, which spans buildings across 92 acres of Marylebone, during the period. The estate has been under Howard de Walden family's control since 1879. The landlord in some cases offered tenants rent deferrals, discounts or other assistance as they tried to ride out the crisis and lockdowns.

That has hit rental income and the company, which saw a stronger performance from its medical arm including properties on Harley Street, swung to a pre-tax loss of £101.8 million from a £46.2 million profit. Chairman Sir William Proby said: "We expect continuing challenges to our business as London slowly recovers, however, we are optimistic that with our strong financial position and countercyclical healthcare portfolio we will see a return to a growth in income and profits in the medium term."

Chief executive Mark Kildea said: "Our rental income and revenue profit were lower than they were 12 months earlier, however, the impact was less severe than we had anticipated at the onset of the crisis."

During the year the group paid dividends of £25.5 million, down from £37.2 million."

The Howard de Walden Estate has signed a deal with Hagen, a Danish espresso bar concept, for a new store on Marylebone High Street, next door to the famous Daunt Bookshop.

Additionally, in a further boost to the area's food and beverage offering, chefrestaurateur Stevie Parle has opted to relocate his popular café and shop, JOY, to the neighbourhood.

Marylebone Village is also thrilled to have signed new fashion retailer, Wyse as well as the luxury jewellery brand Mejuri. Launched in 2014 by Marielle Wyse, Wyse London is a premium fashion brand which produces high-quality womenswear 'for every occasion'. This is their first permanent store and will be selling a wide selection from their range, with new pieces launched regularly. The category-defining, fine-jewellery brand Mejuri, will open its first UK store at 96 Marylebone High Street in mid-September. Customers will be able to enjoy the elevated lounge space in store alongside a concierge bar offering personalised jewellery advice.

Jenny Casebourne, Retail & Leisure Director at Howard de Walden, says: "We're delighted to welcome a host of new retailers and food and beverage names to Marylebone Village, all adding to the village's diverse offering". "These new signings attest to Marylebone Village's continued appeal as a quality retail and leisure destination, despite the challenges of the last 18 months." Tim Schroeder, founder of Hagen, adds: "We love the vibe of Marylebone Village - it's very hygge(lig). We love the aesthetics of the street with the beautiful shops such as Daunt Books." "We are thrilled to be invited to join the Village and get the opportunity to bring Hagen to another world-famous high street in London". "We can't wait to share our take on premium specialty coffee, Gløgg (our homemade Danish mulled wine) and of course Hygge with the locals." Marielle Wyse, founder of Wyse London, says: "We are delighted to be opening our first store at Marylebone Village. We can't wait to personally meet all of our wonderful customers and bring the brand to life in its beautiful new home!"

"Our first store simply had to be here. It is the perfect spot in London, encompassing everything that the Wyse London brand stands for."

ASSOCIATION EVENTS

Thursday 28th October at 9.00 am SELFRIDGES TOUR & BREAKFAST 400 Oxford Street, W1A 1AB

Finally, this twice cancelled visit is happening!

In 1906 Harry Gordon Selfridge arrived in London from Chicago with a singular desire to create the greatest shopping experience in the world. Over 100 years later Selfridges continues to honour and celebrate that vision and to create a shopping experience that promises to surprise, amaze and amuse its customers – and this is MA members' chance to share that vision. Selfridges are delighted to welcome you for an exclusive tour before-storeopening to share the extraordinary story of this iconic building and how Selfridges revolutionised the art of shopping. Following our tour we will move to the Brasserie of Light for breakfast. This stunning art deco dining space will in itself be an experience not to be missed. The combined tour and breakfast is being charged at £25.00 per head BUT this includes a £10.00 Selfridges Gift Card which can be spent in the store however you choose. To reserve your place please email Lois German on lois.german@marylebone.org or telephone 0207 487 2706. We have limited availability so immediate booking is recommended and priority will be given to those booked on the earlier event.

REGULAR ASSOCIATION EVENTS

BOOK CLUB

Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 6.30 pm

At last members are meeting up again 'for real' upstairs at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street. Anyone who is interested in joining in should contact Liz Queenan. Meetings have changed to the first WEDNESDAY of each month but will still commence at 6.30. This month's choice is Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro. 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 11th October 2021 from 6.30 pm The Larrik, 32 Crawford Place, W1H 5NN

Continuing with our regular bimonthly pub evenings at this cosy, warm and welcoming gastropub with great food, wines and beers. Everybody is welcome so do come along whether you are a regular or new to our pub evenings, where you will be greeted by our hostess for the evening, Ann Marie Johnson.

SCRABBLE CLUB

Tuesday 12th and 26th October 2021 at 5.00 pm
The Duke of Wellington, 54a Crawford Street, London W1H 2HQ

The Scrabble Club is alive and well and enjoying our new upstairs venue at The Duke of Wellington pub in Crawford Street. Members normally meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, from 5 until 7, with Scrabble sets and dictionaries provided – and all levels of players welcome. Anyone interested in joining and/or wanting further information should contact rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org or 0788 789 1977.

Mailing Address: Marylebone Association, 229 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 5PN If you have news get in touch by emailing news@marylebone.org