



The Arts Society Harpenden Evening

"Marvellous Marylebone"

— a Virtual tour on January 6th 2021

In these peculiar times of lockdown and cancellation of all visits for our Society, we have had to look at other alternatives which can be enjoyed by members and their guests from the comfort of our homes..quite a benefit in January!

An enterprising Blue Badge guide Pepe Martinez came to our attention, having organised fellow guides and himself to do various tours of London. We chose his tour of “Marvellous Marylebone” and it was a most interesting virtual tour of this area of West London. He started by showing us a map of the extent of the area of Marylebone and reminding us it was once a village outside the City. The name is taken from the Church of St Mary (which has had three incarnations). The original church was built beside the stream called Tyburne. Another name for a stream was “bourne”, and then it became St Mary le Bourne, shortened to Marylebone! The third church was built between 1813-1817, and this is how it looks today.



We started at Home House in

Portland Street, which was designed by James Wyatt in the 18th century for Elizabeth, Countess of Home, and it is an elegant



Georgian building. In 1926 it was leased by Samuel Courtauld to house his growing art collection, until the collection was moved to Somerset House. It has been used as a private members club since 1998 and Pepe gave us a sneak view of some inside rooms.

Talking of art collections, Pepe took us to see some of the Wallace Collection in Manchester Square. The collections of art, porcelain, furniture, arms, and other artefacts are housed in Hertford House, which was the former townhouse of the Seymour family. It is named after Sir William Wallace who was responsible for amassing the wonderful collections, arranged over 25 galleries.



While in Manchester Square, Pepe showed us the former headquarters of EMI at no.20, and one of its concrete balconies where the Beatles were photographed for the cover of “Please Please Me” in 1973.

Nearby is the Royal Academy of Music in Marylebone Road, built in 1822 and granted a Royal Charter in 1830. It has famous alumni, including Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Elton John and Annie Lennox to name a few! And it houses the world’s largest collection of musical instruments.



We were virtually walked through to Langham Place to see the huge headquarters of the BBC. In 2012 the Corporation moved from Bush House, in the Aldwych, at which time a large very modern extension was added to the original building. We saw photos of the modern exterior and interior, including the large glass room which features as a backdrop to the evening news!

Opposite the BBC is All Souls Church, built by John Nash and consecrated in 1824, and which has a recognisable spire.



We heard some of the stories about Charles Dickens, Florence Nightingale, and their connections with Marylebone, as well as virtually walking down Baker Street and Harley Street.



However, this is just a little snippet of what was a most fascinating virtual tour of one of London's famous districts.