

## Marylebone property market offers safe haven for investors



Financial journalist **Richard Northedge** talks to Simon Hedley of Marylebone estate agent Druce about the local property market, investment opportunities,

banker's bonuses and the current global turmoil.

Where should the bankers and brokers of the City and Canary Wharf put their bonuses? Back into the financial markets on which they already rely for their jobs, their pensions, their share-options and those bonus payments? Not if they have learnt their own lessons about diversification and spreading risk, says Simon Hedley, director of the Druce property agency. "They need an alternative home for their money, and we could all learn from their example" he says.

Yet shares are volatile, interest on deposits is minimal and bond and gilt-edged stocks prices will fall as interest rates rise. And 'alternative investments' such as artworks, gold, antiques or stamps can be nice to look at but be just as risky as more mainstream vehicles and usually pay no income - indeed it often costs money to store and protect them.

But there is one investment that provides a steady income and is not directly linked to the City markets on which the financiers depend for their earnings - Property. Fashions in other investments come and go - remember dot.com ventures, wine stocks and ostrich farms? - But whether the economy is booming or slumping, people need somewhere to live. House prices since the financial crisis have shown the relative resilience of real estate: they fell, perhaps 20 per cent, but central London values are now back above their 2007 peaks. Compared with most other investments that constitute stability.

“House prices since the financial crisis have shown the relative resilience of real estate”

There are parts of the capital where even a respectable City bonus might not be enough to buy a residential property, however. Belgravia and Mayfair are superprime locations but they come at superprime prices. Yet there are more affordable neighbourhoods nearby that are just as central and with equally fine properties. Marylebone, north of Oxford Street, is one adjacent area, but unlike some others it is not blighted by poorer-quality housing or lingering industrial uses. "It has the best of both worlds, with high-class living but also the village atmosphere," says Hedley. "The area can be compared to Mayfair, Knightsbridge and Belgravia in terms of the range and quality of accommodation available, yet at the same time, Marylebone has ambience."

Historically this area was owned by major family estates that maintained high standards of design and construction and monitored the buildings' usage. Simon Baynham, property director of the Howard de Walden Estates, which owns 92 acres there, says: "Marylebone, with its unique neighbourhood atmosphere, still represents good value compared to some of the soulless parts of Knightsbridge, Mayfair and Chelsea".

But although almost exclusively housing - unlike some central areas where the few residents are squeezed between modern office blocks - Marylebone remains an ignored location for many Londoners, nevermind investors. However, it is its village-like atmosphere that makes it so appealing to those who live there. "Marylebone is more



10 Queen Anne Street

Boho-Chic," says Simon Hedley. "Smart and refined at the same time, with its independent boutiques, garden squares, farmers' market, fashion outlets and high-end restaurants. Marylebone High Street is dubbed a foodies' paradise thanks to the array of organic and global cuisine on offer from the excellent restaurants and food shops."

There are schools too and Baynham is keen to attract more families. But its central location puts it within walking distance of the capital's other attractions - from the green acres of Regent's Park and Hyde Park or the tourist destinations of Madame Tussaud's.

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## Peter York calls for action on broken pavements



Local resident, newspaper columnist and author, **Peter York** has criticized the poor record

of Westminster Council in replacing broken and protruding pavements in Marylebone.

Commenting to OneSevenFive he said: "I am keen to start an awareness campaign about the appalling state of the pavements in and around Montagu Square, which are in a pretty bad state. Westminster Council is failing in its duty to safeguard people walking in the area. Broken and protruding paving stones are becoming the norm and are a danger to old and young alike".

It will come as no surprise to readers that York, a well-known commentator about social style and social change is appalled that when the Council does take action it is done on the cheap. He points out that "the replacement of traditional paving stones in Gloucester Place and George Street with 'patio slabs' has been done piecemeal and it's completely hideous in a Georgian streetscape. The other 'street furniture' is bad enough - it needs to be completely rethought" he told OneSevenFive.

### Join the campaign

There is an extensive section on road policy on the Westminster Council website: [www.westminster.gov.uk](http://www.westminster.gov.uk) simply enter Marylebone pavement policy in the search command. There is also a section where you can make comments on the state of pavements in your location.

Or, if you have an example of unlevel, cracked or dangerous pavements in your area of Marylebone send your comments and pictures to the editor at: [info@alywincom.co.uk](mailto:info@alywincom.co.uk) and we will try to publish as many of your comments as possible in the next issue.

## All shapes and sizes!

**Mary Wilson** takes a look at the history of mews.

The word 'mews' comes from the French 'muer', meaning to change and in mediaeval times became the term used for falcons moulting. It was then adopted to describe the buildings in which any birds used for falconry were kept. In 1377, the King's Mews were built near Charing Cross (now the site of Trafalgar Square) to house Richard II's falcons and when this became the royal stables in the 16th century, the name was retained. The mews were demolished in 1760, moved to the grounds of Buckingham Palace and the Royal Mews are still used as stables today.

Over time, the uses for mews have changed dramatically. From birds of prey to four legged beasts with haylofts above, they

were later used for carriages belonging to the grand terraced houses built in the 17th and 18th centuries. Then from the early 20th century, many were turned into garages - both commercial and residential, with living accommodation over the top. Nowadays, many garages have been incorporated into the houses to create extra living space.

“The word 'mews' comes from the French 'muer', meaning to change”

A widely held misconception of mews houses is that they are small and dark.

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Devonshire Mews South

## Win a £50

Vinoteca voucher

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History at the heart of Marylebone



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Urban gardens in the city landscape



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Portman Village joins the high street



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Summer Fayre Sunday 19th June



OneSevenFive: published for Druce

Marylebone residential property consultants



## All shapes and sizes! *continued*

Although this may be true of a few properties, a good number have been radically improved and extended making them as light and bright as any other London terraced house. Some mews still have cobbled roads and usually provide a close knit community, favoured by those wanting a pied-a-terre or somewhere to keep their much loved, and often valuable, vehicle.

*A widely held misconception of mews houses is that they are small and dark.*

In Marylebone, there are around 500 mews houses in 45 mews. Their more notorious inhabitants include John Profumo, who entertained Christine Keeler in Wimpole Mews and a group of philanthropists, who met regularly in Cato Street in the early 1800's to discuss the murder of the British Government and Prime Minister. Thankfully, their dastardly plot was uncovered and five of the group were hanged in 1820. Today, mews owners include Barbara Windsor, Guy Ritchie (with his girlfriend Jacqui Ainsley) and Madonna, who owns a large house and two mews houses.

*In Marylebone, there are around 500 mews houses in 45 mews*

Mews houses come in all shapes and sizes from one or two bedroom cottages to stunning and expansive four to five bedrooms houses. Many have been extended upwards – the only way to go and several have been totally rebuilt. But all retain a certain charm with the most popular, and therefore those which carry the highest premium, being in the quieter cul-de-sacs.

This sector of the property market in Marylebone has shown more growth than any other and any sizeable mews worth its salt will sell for several million pounds nowadays. Druce is marketing an unmodernised two bedroom mews house in Devonshire Mews West, which is due to be cobbled in the not too distant future for £1.795 million. A little further down the same mews, a very contemporary four bedroom house with double height central atrium was sold last year with an asking price of £4.35 million and a four storey four bedroom house in Devonshire Mews South, which had been extended and refurbished, was recently sold with an asking price of £3.45 million.

*Marylebone has shown more growth than any other and any sizeable mews worth its salt will sell for several million pounds*

You might have to wait a while to find the mews of your dreams, but when you do, it should be worth waiting for.



Devonshire Mews West

## Marylebone property market offers safe haven for investors *continued*



Hallam Street

*Properties in west Marylebone sold for £800 a sq ft four years ago are now going for £1,300*

The department stores of Oxford Street and Bond Street's shops are close by and the West End theatres easily reached. Marylebone residents have the Wallace Collection pictures and Wigmore Hall's concerts on their doorsteps and a network of public transport links to London's other facilities.

The district's growing popularity has attracted developers who are pushing the prime district east and west beyond its unofficial boundaries of Great Portland Street and Baker Street. The area near Marble Arch at the west has been dubbed Portman Village by another of the traditional family landlords, the Portman Estate and Hedley says: "I believe we are seeing the start of a renaissance in the lower quarter of west Marylebone. Portman Village has significantly changed in the last three or four years.

"East Marylebone, mainly for 'lifestyle' reasons, has been much more popular than its western sibling. People have wanted to be close to Marylebone High Street, Harley Street and Fitzrovia, which has been reflected in the east's higher property values. However, this is changing because Portman Village is starting to offer a slightly edgier lifestyle that will come to rival the high street. Residential values have traditionally been 20 to 40 per cent less than on the eastern Marylebone High Street side, but the west is now a really attractive place to live and people are prepared to pay for it."

Investment buyers can benefit from that re-rating in values. "Despite the recession, properties in west Marylebone that were being sold for £800 a sq ft four years ago are now going for £1,300", he says. He has recently sold two flats there at that price even though they needed refurbishment but which

offer great potential. Houses with gardens are on offer at 1,100 a sq ft and he says: "You can't match that kind of value in east Marylebone. East will continue to grow, but hot on its heels is going to be its up-and-coming neighbour."

There is a wide variety of properties however, from flats to houses and Georgian to modern. A 1930s art deco listed building in Hallam Street, once the headquarters of the Royal Society of Paediatricians, has recently been turned into three stylish apartments of 2,850 to 3,840 sq ft priced from £6.4m but smaller properties elsewhere can sell for under £500,000. And in Queen Anne Street, east of the high street, an office block has been converted into five apartments selling for between just under £3m and £5.5m.

Such properties will appeal as much to owner-occupiers as to investors – and that is part of the attraction for those buying to let. Financiers want to be certain they can realise their investment and, whatever the state of the property market then, property owners in an area like Marylebone will have a choice of selling to other investors or to those wanting to live there. If anyone appreciates the dangers of an exit being dependent on other investors buying, it is the canny City financiers currently looking for a home for their bonuses.

Hedley's parting shot is steeped in his past experience of the location and various financial, political and property crisis over the years. "The Marylebone property market has always been one of the key West end areas that reacts to global events. The current political upheaval in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and Libya – plus the volatile stock markets secures Marylebone's place as a prime location for bricks-and-mortar and a stable investment."

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# :90 second interview

Druce estate agent **Sukey Brecher** has worked in Marylebone for 10 years. Here she discusses her love for the area, her job and the changes she's seen in the Marylebone property market. And she still believes there are exciting times to come.

Interview by **Gerald Bowey**

### What has kept you working in Marylebone for the last 10 years?

I just have a genuine love for the area. It's the warm friendly atmosphere, the independent cafes, shops, restaurants and farmers market that create a buzz you don't get anywhere else in the West End. There is nothing corporate about Marylebone and I am fond of the village feel that, in my view, gives it its soul. I love the cosmopolitan feel that the many international communities bring to Marylebone as well. It's a lively area that brings out the best in me.

### What made you become an estate agent?

Well I worked for a large bank for several years, but eventually realised that banking wasn't for me. Subconsciously I think I always knew I wanted to work in property - even as a teenager I remember flicking straight to the residential property sections in newspapers and magazines. I knew I had a passion for property so I began working for Druce to learn more about it. I never thought for a minute that I'd be here 10 years later.

### So what's the allure of the job?

For me it's the fact that every day is different. You deal with people from all over the world, and with different properties that present challenging and exciting opportunities. Buyers and vendors put a lot of trust in us, so building relationships is key and that's something I enjoy doing. And Marylebone is the perfect place to be if you've got a passion for property. It has a bit of everything, from beautiful Georgian homes and mews houses to imposing new developments. It's great seeing the first spade go into the ground at a derelict property and watch it be transformed into a fabulous new development.

### So how has the area and the market changed over the last 10 years?

Well the Howard De Walden Estate's incredible rejuvenation of Marylebone High Street has turned it into one of the most fashionable destinations in London. This has led to the whole of Marylebone becoming more desirable, so the quality of residential property has dramatically improved, and there are more new developments. Buyers are more discerning than they used to be because the area is more upmarket; and the number of foreign buyers has increased because they now recognise Marylebone as a prime central London location, offering safe property investments. We've also seen an influx of British buyers requiring larger second homes - it's difficult to say why but I suspect 10 years ago they would have focused on other parts of London. The biggest change is that the area's become a cocoon where property prices are unaffected by the wider UK market. Prices dipped at the beginning of the recession, but unlike more provincial markets, have been growing by 15% per annum since, and are now way past their supposed 2007 peak. 10 years ago Marylebone probably wouldn't of held its value in the same way.

### What's been your most memorable experience at Druce?

The experience factor is an on-going experience for me. It may sound a bit cliché but every day is really a 'new' day with different clients seeking a home that is special to them. The thing that keeps the experience fresh is trying to match the clients brief with the right property; sometimes it can be a long haul and, in the majority of cases we can find the ideal property to meet the brief - a very rewarding experience to see a client delighted with their ideal home.

### What do you think will happen over the next 10 years?

Property in east Marylebone, close to Marylebone High Street and Harley Street, will continue to be a safe haven for investors and provide strong capital growth. I believe the most exciting changes will happen in Portman Village in west Marylebone. The Portman Estate has been running a potent regeneration programme in the area, and the old, low key pubs and shops are being replaced with exciting, ultra cool and funky retailers, gastro pubs and delis, which are having a very positive effect on property prices. One property we were involved with sold for £800 per sq ft four years ago, but we sold it again for £1,300 per sq ft earlier this year. However, Portman Village is still a long way from its full potential and represents great value. As well as the new look Portman Village people like its close proximity to Oxford Street, Selfridges and a new Waitrose. I expect prices to catch up with east Marylebone and Fitzrovia over the next 10 years.

### So what's selling at the moment and to whom?

There's always an undersupply of stock so everything gets taken quite quickly. Many of our clients are business people who are attracted to the area because of its quick transport links to the City and Canary Wharf. High specification flats and homes that are easy to maintain are always popular with busy professionals. Our foreign clients, many of whom spend a large percentage of their time abroad, often opt for secure apartment blocks with concierge services and underground car parks. Weak sterling has led to a huge demand from foreigners and 70% of our clients are purchasing second homes, so very secure properties are very popular. The majority of our foreign buyers are Russian, Greek and Middle Eastern. Domestic buyers frequently go for Georgian or Edwardian properties with period features such as high ceilings, and are happier to take on refurbishment work because they have more time. Families with children often take properties close to Regents Park or in quiet garden squares such as Montagu Square and Bryanston Square.

### Will you be here in another 10 years?

Frankly I can't imagine doing anything else. I still find the job challenging in good and bad times. And I have no doubt that Marylebone will continue to offer me opportunities in the future because Druce is set to be involved with so many exciting new developments and properties. Marylebone and my job continues to stimulate me, so I have every confidence that I will still be here in 10 years time.

## A snapshot of some of Druce's current properties

### Devonshire Close, London, W1

A one stunning bedroom apartment on the first floor of this charming mews property, located at the end of a very sought after cobbled Mews Street. **£475,000 STC Leasehold-52 Years.**



### Crawford Street, Marylebone, W1

A spacious two bedroom duplex apartment with a terrace off the reception that benefits from stunning views. **£1,350,000 STC Leasehold 110 Years +.**



### The Hanover, Hallam Street, Marylebone, W1

A truly spectacular Penthouse with two terraces in a beautiful Grade II listed building finished to the highest specification throughout. **£7,950,000 STC Leasehold 999 Years + Share of Freehold.**



### Devonshire Mews, West Marylebone, W1

A charming two bedroom freehold mews house in close proximity to the amenities of Marylebone High Street, with benefits from an integral garage and balcony. **£1,795,000 STC Freehold.**



### Portland Place, London, W1

A stunning duplex apartment in a prestigious ported period apartment block, with spacious entertaining areas and three large bedroom suites. **£3,995,000 STC Long Lease.**





# The Wallace Collection at the heart of Marylebone

**Gerald Bowey** takes a peek at an intimate historic family house situated in Manchester Square and brimming with magnificent works of art.

Situated moments from London's fashionable Marylebone Village and the fantastic shopping of Oxford Street and Bond Street, the Wallace Collection offers a wonderful way to while away the hours. Whether you're meeting the famous 'Laughing Cavalier' for the first time, enjoying the sheer sumptuousness of the setting, or relaxing in the beautiful glazed courtyard restaurant, *The Wallace*, you'll be glad you made the trip.

For many local residents and visitors too, the Wallace Collection is their favourite place in London. Although it is a national museum, like some of London's grandest institutions, its particular charm lies in its intimacy. Here the works of art are displayed in a lavish, yet un-intimidating home and the tastes of one extraordinary family remain preserved

in a single building. 'This palace of genius, fancy and taste', a description of Benjamin Disraeli's written in the visitors' book in 1878, perfectly captures its magic - to walk into the Wallace Collection is like stepping back into a leisured, more graceful age than our own, one where time seems to have moved at a gentler pace and where beauty was enjoyed without the slightest trace of shame or embarrassment.

Assembled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by five generations of one remarkable family – the first four Marquesses of Hertford and Sir Richard Wallace, the illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess and bequeathed to the nation in 1897, news of Britain's greatest ever legacy, with its whispers of vast riches, illegitimacy and scandal, was lapped up by a gossip-hungry public, who flocked to see it upon the public opening in 1900.

The 5,470 objects in the Collection include an extraordinary array of eighteenth-century French art: furniture, porcelain and gold

snuffboxes of the finest quality, together with French painting at its most elegant and sensuous in the works of Watteau, Boucher and Fragonard. Complementing these are masterpieces by some of the greatest names of European art, including Titian, Canaletto, Rembrandt, Hals (*The Laughing Cavalier*), Rubens, Velázquez and Gainsborough, the finest collection of princely arms and armour in Britain (always a welcome surprise for visitors) and superb Medieval and Renaissance objects including Limoges enamels, maiolica, glass and bronzes. It is possible to explore the 25 galleries in just an hour or to come back time and time again and still discover new treasures.

In Hertford House, the London home of the Marquesses of Hertford and of the Wallace Collection, something of the domestic splendour and atmosphere of a grandiose nineteenth-century home can still be felt today. This is largely due to an extensive and sympathetic ongoing refurbishment of the State Rooms, which has truly brought them to life; visitors can now get really close to



The Laughing Cavalier (Frans Hals, 1624)

the French Royal Court; hear the original 18th century clocks chime and floorboards creak. Each room has its own theme; the *Study* houses the largest collection of Marie-Antoinette's belongings in the world, the *Oval Drawing Room* is inspired by Louis XV's fascinating mistress, Madame de Pompadour and is home to Fragonard's delicious painting, *The Swing*, and the *Small Drawing Room* delights in the beauty and frivolity of the *fête galante*.

“Something of the domestic splendour and atmosphere of a grandiose nineteenth-century home can still be felt today”

The Collection is free and open all year, except for 24-26 December. There is an additional extensive programme of exhibitions, family activities, talks, classes and public events.

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*The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN. 020 7563 9500 or visit online at: [www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org)*



Hertford House



The large drawing room at Hertford House

## Extending your lease is in your own interest



**Jenny Branscombe** has more than 35 years experience in all aspects of valuation work and has dealt with many lease extension negotiations

on the Howard de Walden and Portman Estates. Here she explains to OneSevenFive some of the most important aspects to be considered when extending a lease or buying a freehold...

### Why should I extend my lease?

A lease is a wasting asset – as it gets shorter it reduces in value relative to longer leases or freeholds. Therefore the shorter the lease becomes, the more you will have to pay to extend it. The Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act (1993) allows you (once you have owned your flat for 2 years) to claim a new lease expiring 90 years after the end of your existing lease.

Also, some leases on the Portman and Howard de Walden Estates have rent reviews to a percentage (usually 0.5%) of

long lease or freehold value, so you could end up with a rent of £7,500 pa for a flat worth £1.5m. Under the Act, your new lease is at a peppercorn rent.

If you are trying to sell your flat on a short lease, you may find that the buyer will ask you to serve a Notice claiming a lease extension, so that they do not have to wait two years. The Notice can then be assigned to them together with the lease.

### How much will it cost me?

The premium depends on the length of your lease, the value of your flat on a new lease compared with the current lease, the value of the freeholder's reversion and the value of the ground rent. You will need a valuer experienced in Leasehold Reform Act valuations, who knows values in the locality, and who will inspect your property, read your lease, carry out research and calculations and report to you with advice on the price you are likely to have to pay, as well as the price you should offer.

Your valuer will also carry out negotiations on your behalf and give evidence before the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal if necessary.

### What are my options?

If you have a flat in a building with like-minded tenants, you can join together to buy the freehold – this is known as a collective enfranchisement. Unlike lease extension claims, which you can only make after two years ownership, this can be done as soon as you purchase your flat.

Over 50% of you have to make the claim in order to qualify. If everyone participates, you will each pay only a little more than you would for an individual lease extension.

If there are non-participants then the participants have to pay the non-participants' shares and become their landlord. This can be a good investment as eventually a lease extension will almost certainly be required and as freeholders you will get the premium. As "marriage value" is not usually payable for the non-participant flats you will make a profit when you extend their lease and charge the marriage value. However there is no guarantee that they will want a lease extension in the near future.

### How long will it take?

The first step is to get the valuation done, decide whether you want to go ahead, and find a solicitor who is familiar with the Act to serve the initial Notice on the freeholder.

The freeholder then appoints a valuer who will inspect and advise him what figure to ask in the Counter Notice, which must be served within 2 months of the Notice.

Once the Counter Notice has been received, the two valuers commence negotiations and try to reach a settlement that they can both recommend to their respective clients.

Your solicitor has to refer the matter to the Tribunal within 6 months of the Counter Notice if the new lease has not been completed, otherwise you will be deemed to have withdrawn the claim, but will still be responsible for the abortive costs. Your solicitor can make the reference as early as 2 months, if negotiations are not moving forward and you need to put some pressure on the freeholder's valuer.



# Quality takes pride of place in Marylebone

**Richard Aylwin** talks to Amazon Properties founder Charles Gourgey about the quality and attention to detail that distinguishes his developments

Charles Gourgey is a modest man, but there is no doubting the pride in his voice when he describes how buyers of the apartments in his Hallam Street development prefer it to One Hyde Park – supposedly the hottest address in town this year.

“Some of our purchasers who had been to One Hyde Park said they would rather buy our style and quality of accommodation,” says Gourgey.

And it is this emphasis on quality and attention to detail that distinguishes Gourgey’s company Amazon Properties from many others.

Given the history of the Hallam Street project it is not surprising that Amazon has lavished so much care and attention on it. It is a beautiful 1930s Grade II listed Art Deco building that was formerly the Royal Society of Pediatricians headquarters, located one

block east of Portland Place. Its interiors reflect the elegance of the 1930s, with three unique, large duplex, open plan 3-4 bedroom lateral apartments and a penthouse which were all snapped up shortly after completion mostly with £5m plus price tags.

Simon Hedley, the head of Marylebone agents Druce who marketed the Hallam Street properties confirms that Amazon has ability to spot gaps in the market for just the right property. “In this case for large, lateral units of 3-4,000 sq ft each which are extremely hard to come by, that have the added attraction of a character building and outstanding finishes,” he comments.

It may be surprising that all the apartments have been bought by UK buyers given the enthusiasm for Central London from overseas buyers who see London as a safe haven and are taking advantage of favourable exchange rates. But again this is one of Gourgey’s mantras – ‘understand your buyer’. While he is happy to sell to whoever can afford his properties, one can tell that he prefers buyers who fully understand the market and are clear about what they want. “This has been an endorsement of our aims and objectives” he says with satisfaction.



In recent years Amazon has had a strong attachment to Marylebone and Fitzrovia. The company’s first project was the former Royal National Institute for Blind people in Great Portland Street where, in 2002, it converted the 100,000 sq ft building into residential, offices, leisure and retail space which it has retained as a long-term investment. “We regard this area north of Oxford Street with its proximity to Regents Park as being particularly attractive and up until recently undervalued,” says Gourgey. He cites the fact that there are a number of tube stations serving the area, including Oxford Street, Baker Street and Warren Street, which gives easy access to all parts of London for residents.

An added architectural attraction are the industrial style buildings going back to the 1920s where there is the ability to create open plan, ‘voluminous’ space. In fact what really appeals to Gourgey is the variety of locations in this area, from the more tranquil Marylebone with the medical Harley Street enclave and beautiful London squares through to the more edgy type of environment in Fitzrovia. “I believe that there is a greater diversity of buildings and communities in these locations than the ‘uber-rich’ style of residential environment to be found in Mayfair, Knightsbridge and Belgravia.

“What really appeals is the variety of locations in this area, from the more tranquil Marylebone with the medical Harley Street enclave and beautiful London squares to the more edgy type of environment in Fitzrovia.”

Amazon’s next project is going to be in Portland Place which will comprise seven luxury apartments. Buyers of these properties will benefit from the building’s proximity to the acclaimed Langham Hotel and they will have membership of the hotel’s club and facilities. Agents Druce will be marketing these properties and are expected to come onto the market towards the end of this year.

Life could have been very different for Charles Gourgey who trained as a chartered accountant with BDO. He describes this period of his career as “being in the wilderness” and lacking creativity, so he decided to leave the accountancy profession. While considering his future his father suggested he spend sometime at the family estate agency Kenwoods, and what started as a stop-gap job became a passion.

“I have always been interested in applying a level of creativity to the commercial world,” he says. The opportunity came up when he and his father started buying a number of vacant, unwanted offices in secondary positions that were being off-loaded by major corporations such as BT and the banks.

They bought up buildings in locations such as Feltham, Heathrow and Holloway and because they understood the different property sectors including offices, hotels and residential they were able to consider different options for these buildings. “We weren’t constrained with the tag of being just office developers or retail developers and were able to apply our creativity to obtain permission for an appropriate change of use.”

Amazon has an impressive record having, as a mixed-use developer, undertaken over 50 schemes in the last 20 years and, in the spirit of adaptability have even undertaken projects in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean when the time has been right, and the returns attractive.

There is little doubt that Gourgey and his team are likely to be around for many years to come because they love the creative challenge of putting projects together and seeing them succeed. He says determinedly that this is something that will never be superseded by his weekend activities on the tennis court and golf course.



Generally a settlement is reached before the case is heard, thus saving costs for both sides, but occasionally a hearing is necessary. Once the matter is decided either by agreement or Tribunal decision you have 2 months to complete.

In my experience the process may take anything from 6 months to 18 months. It generally only takes longer if the case is heard and one or both parties appeal against the decision.

#### What fees will I have to pay?

You will have to pay your valuer a fee (usually fixed) for the initial valuation advice. Later there will be a fee (usually on an hourly rate but can be fixed) for negotiations.

You will also have to pay your solicitor for serving the Notice and for agreeing the new lease (or freehold transfer) with the freeholder’s solicitors.

The freeholder can ask for a 10% deposit on lease extension claims.

(If the case goes to Tribunal there will be a fee for your valuer for preparing and presenting a case as expert witness. If there are legal as well as valuation matters in dispute you may have to pay a barrister).

You will be responsible for paying the freeholders “reasonable” valuation costs and legal costs for the conveyancing. (These do not include negotiation or Tribunal costs, as each party pays their own).

“All my work has been by recommendation, either by my clients or their solicitors.”

If the premium is above “Stamp Duty” limits, you will have to pay the appropriate rate of duty. On an enfranchisement claim, the final total premium is divided by the number of participants and the appropriate rate applied to this average figure.

#### Why should I employ you?

I have more than 35 years experience in all aspects of valuation work. I spent 13 years in the District Valuer’s Office of Kensington and Chelsea then continued my career for 5 years running a valuation department for Jackson-Stops and Staff in Mayfair.

I went into practice on my own in 1991 and since then have concentrated on Leasehold Reform Act work, both under the 1967 Act (which applies to houses) and the 1993 Act (which applies to flats.)

I have dealt with many lease extensions and enfranchisements on the Cadogan Estate, Grosvenor Estate, Howard de Walden Estate and in particular on the Portman Estate, where I have dealt with 12 enfranchisements, 10 lease extensions, and 6 rent reviews in Montagu Square alone.

All my work has been by recommendation, either by my clients or their solicitors.

I am a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and a Member of the Academy of Experts and therefore have a duty to keep up professional standards. I have extensive experience in the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal and other courts.

#### What makes you different to another lease extension expert?

As I work for myself I can offer a very personal service, dealing with every aspect of your case myself, liaising closely with your legal advisor, and answering your queries or concerns without delay. My fees are very competitive as I do not maintain West End offices.

*To talk to Jenny about your lease extension please see her contact details on page 11.*



# The English love affair with the garden

Over the centuries there have been poems and songs written about the English country garden, but is there still room for this indulgence in London's urban landscape?

The earliest English gardens that we know of were planted by the Roman conquerors, but these were mainly large set pieces, like the best complete example at Fishbourne a large Palace in Sussex. We know very little about the gardens of the warlike Anglo-Saxon England and have to fast forward to the Middle Ages and the Monasteries which had both kitchen gardens and herb gardens to provide a source of food and medicine.

The monastery cloister provided an open green space surrounded by covered walks, generally with a well, or fountain at the centre. Castles sometimes contained a small courtyard garden, with paths through raised

The Tudors were heavily influenced by Italian ideas – the knot garden which was made up of intricate patterns of lawn hedges, usually of box, intended to be viewed from a mount or raised walkways. The spaces between the hedges were often filled with flowers, shrubs or herbs; while the Stuarts were slaves to the French fashion for formal gardens, the chief feature being a broad avenue sweeping away from the house flanked by rectangular parterres made of rigidly formal low hedges.

The 18th century saw a swing from the formality of the Renaissance to a more natural look with carefully calculated vistas with temples, statues and classical ornaments punctuating the parkland. Lines were no longer straight, paths curve and wander, and parterres are replaced by grass with trees planted in clusters rather than in regimented straight lines. Rounded lakes replaced the rectangular ponds of the



## Beaumont Street

*A delightful Freehold house (a rarity in Marylebone) close to the high street with an abundance of natural light and a stunning roof terrace.*

flower beds. Other typical features included turf seats and high mounds which allowed a view over the castle walls.

As castles gave way to fortified manor houses in the later medieval period, the garden became a simple green space surrounded by hedges or fences, much like today's traditional garden, where games such as bowls or tennis took place on the lawn. With the Reformation many landowners enclosed common land to create parks for keeping deer or cattle; this natural landscape gave way to formal gardens near the house with hedges or walls for privacy.

earlier style and the garden became open, joining the house to the environment in which it sits. This natural style soon became the landscape garden familiar to us today.

The greatest surviving landscape gardens by Capability Brown still display the English country house as part of the surrounding fields and farmlands. Gone are the formal beds and walks. Grass parkland was brought right up to the doors of the house. In the Victorian era the fashion moved again towards massed beds of flowers (raised in greenhouses) with many colours and designs.



## The Penthouse, 10 Queen Anne Street

*A stunning duplex penthouse apartment on the top two floors of a newly refurbished building in the heart of Marylebone Village boasting a large south facing terrace on the top floor.*

It was also in the 18th and early 19th century that the Howard de Walden and the Portman estates carried out an intense period of building in Marylebone that heralded in the great public and private squares in the area.

The 21st century London urban sprawl of modern property development does not readily lend itself to the tradition of the English garden, but in Marylebone, where there is an eclectic mix of property types,



## Albany Street patio

*4/5 bedroom house, located yards from Regents Park with a terrace off the master bedroom as well as a patio garden.*

The Victorian period saw a profusion of public gardens and green spaces aimed at bringing culture to the masses. Gertrude Jekyll, arguably the most influential gardener of 20th century England, popularized the herbaceous border and the layout of the garden based on colour schemes from plants raised in greenhouses; this built on the tradition of the Cottage garden, with its profusion of flowers and climbers on trellises and walls.

gardens and terraces continue to cling on and are prized by the people buying houses and flats in the area.

Just a few are featured here.

*For more information on these examples and other properties with terraces and gardens please contact: Druce on 020 7 935 6535.*



## Classic Marylebone patio

*A superb designer apartment with a tiled garden in one of Marylebone Village's finest locations.*



## The Penthouse, Bryanston Place

*A delightful two bedroom 4th floor lateral apartment with its own lift, with access from the principal rooms onto a terrace which runs along the south facing elevation.*



## Molyneux Street

*This Freehold house in a quiet street on the western side of Marylebone has a secluded and atmospheric garden.*



# Lettings quickly snapped up in sought-after village environment

**Paul Thomson**, head of lettings at Druce, believes the Marylebone lettings market will continue to be buoyant in the future. Here he discusses with James Carnegie his passion for working in lettings, the current forces driving the market and the Marylebone lifestyle attracting tenants.

I've lived in Marylebone for 12 years and have worked here, as an estate agent, for 9 years. I tired my hand at numerous jobs before deciding on a long term career in estate agency. I worked for a capital markets house, ran a printing company and spent time selling courses at a financial services training firm. Then, I began managing a Marylebone bar with a plan to save money and travel the world. But, in the end, I never went travelling and have not lived outside Marylebone since I began working at the bar.

I found that I was meeting and making friends with people from all the countries that I'd intended to travel to! I loved Marylebone's atmosphere and decided it was where I wanted to live and ultimately work too. During my bar management days I got to know Simon Hedley, Druce's managing director, and after building up my skills with short stints at a couple of other London estate agents I began working for Druce. I had a background in sales and had always been impressed with the property in Marylebone. I knew that Druce was the most prominent local agent, so working for them was my goal.

I enjoy working in lettings because the market is incredibly fast moving. Deals are often completed extremely quickly - perspective tenants can come in to our office on a Monday afternoon and by Tuesday afternoon they can be moving into a property. You also meet an array of different people, from student tenants to landlords that are CEO's of blue chip companies. Landlords and tenants are very different types of customer with completely dissimilar needs, so dealing with both ensures a versatile and interesting job. You're usually out and about more if you work in lettings and you get to know many people in the area - if I go for a 15 minute walk in Marylebone at least three or four people will say hello which, for me, is one of the best things about the job.

It's a very exciting time for the Central London lettings market and it's got good prospects. The Royal wedding has already brought thousands of tourists to the city and the 2012 Olympics will do the same next year. This should stimulate the market and make London a more popular destination in the long term.

*It's a very exciting time for the Central London lettings market and it's got good prospects.*

It is likely that children from overseas will come back and study in London or retired couples will decide to live here for a year or so, which will have a positive effect on the lettings market. Marylebone will benefit from this pattern because it's in the heart of London; close to the West End theatres, Oxford Street and cultural landmarks like the Wallace Collection. People from other countries moving into the area appreciate

that Marylebone is quintessentially British, but feel at home because of the strong international communities and cuisine here.

There is always an undersupply of stock in Marylebone and increased demand from tenants will put further pressure on supply. Rents have risen by 5 to 10 per cent in the last twelve months because tenants are renewing their leases so not much property comes back on the market. This is positive for landlords because affluent central London tenants can nearly always afford the rent rises.

However, we are seeing more refurbishment plans in Marylebone than ever before. The Howard de Walden Estate, the Portman Estate and developers are now turning a great deal of commercial property into luxury flats and houses. These new developments will offer good opportunities for investors and tenants requiring desirable accommodation. Investors that purchase these new properties will be rewarded with strong capital growth and a safe haven for their cash in prime, easy to let, central London property. Despite there being a lot of new developments there are not enough to stop there being an undersupply.

*For our tenants living in Marylebone is a lifestyle choice.*

For our tenants living in Marylebone is a lifestyle choice. Successful professionals are attracted to the area because of its quick transport links to the City, Canary Wharf and Heathrow Airport. Young professionals will take very small apartments so they can be close to the incredibly fashionable Marylebone High Street. Tenants enjoy the coffee shops, organic food shops, high fashion boutiques, restaurants and celebrity spotting at weekends.

Families enjoy the close proximity to some of London's best parks and appreciate that Marylebone is a safe neighbourhood with a homely village vibe. What's really interesting is that our clients are all in different financial positions and have very different lifestyles. Whether they have a fashionable, professional, family or retirement lifestyle Marylebone can nearly always offer a suitable property.

Rents range from £400 to £5000 a week, so Marylebone is a lot more diverse than other prime London locations with both affordable properties and very high end properties. I really appreciate this because I am involved with almost every kind of property imaginable - from £400,000 flats to properties that are valued in the tens of millions. Young couples often share one bedroom flats, their dual income means they can afford to be in a very desirable area. These properties are usually located in old mansion blocks. More established professionals with families will go for the stunning Georgian properties or luxurious new developments and pay towards the top end of the price range.

We deal with a lot of search agents and corporate move companies who specialise in finding their, usually overseas clients, properties to live in while they work in London. They tend to require apartments and houses that are ready to move into and easy to maintain. We have been working with relocation agents more in recent years as an increasing number of overseas professionals choose Marylebone as their preferred base while they work in London.

I work for Druce because it specialises in an area that I know well, understand the way the local community works both on a professional and social level and can advise potential tenants about during the critical period, before making a decision to move into the area.

Because we're an independent agent with only one branch in Weymouth Street there's no corporate "hand of God" business model

to follow with hundreds of employees. This means our clients get a very personal service from individuals with a very intimate knowledge of the Marylebone property market.

*Here are just five properties, currently available to rent, which offer a choice of accommodation to match individual tenant's life styles.*

## DORSET SQUARE

Flat 6, 29 Dorset Square, NW1

A quaint two bedroom flat, located in a picturesque English square with a feature fireplace in the reception room. **£675 Per Week**



## FITZROVIA APARTMENTS

413 Fitzrovia Apartments, 41-51 Bolsover Street, W1

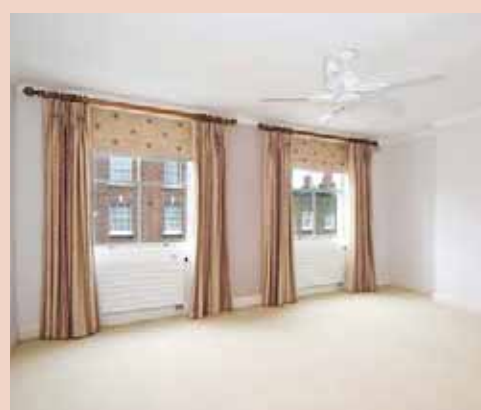
A one bedroom apartment built around private landscaped gardens, with proximity to Regent's Park, Great Portland Street station, and the trendy shops and restaurants of Marylebone High Street and Charlotte Street. **£675 Per Week**



## DEVONSHIRE PLACE

Flat 2, 6 Devonshire Place, W1

Refurbished two bedroom property including a wonderful master bedroom suite with a plasma screen and superb reception room with an open plan kitchen. **£1,100 Per Week**



## MOLYNEUX STREET

9 Molyneux Street, W1

A rare Georgian townhouse of five stories with a patio garden, fully fitted modern kitchen, drawing room, master bedroom, two further bedrooms, and wine cellar. **£1,750 Per Week**



## WESLEY STREET

2 Wesley Street, W1

Contemporary five bedroom semi-detached house, situated in the heart of stylish Marylebone Village, with a spacious roof terrace. **£2,750 Per Week**





# Vinoteca team adds key Portman Village location

## to award-winning Smithfield restaurant

The team behind the award-winning Smithfield based wine bar Vinoteca have recently opened a new wine bar and shop in Marylebone's rapidly expanding Portman Village, located in Seymour Place, just a stone's throw from Oxford Street and Marble Arch **Gerald Bowey** samples what's on offer.

Last year I experienced the sheer pleasure and indulgence of a Winemaker Dinner at the St John Street Vinoteca in Smithfield so had high hopes on my first visit to the new Portman Village branch. I always like to do a lone visit first to see what's on the menu and how the atmosphere stacks-up. Although it was late afternoon there were plenty of people finishing their lunch and upon explaining I only wanted a snack I was given a warm welcome and a table.

Dining on one's own can be a harrowing experience, and within a matter of minutes a young lady followed me in (nothing to do with me, just a happy coincidence for the restaurant) and she was likewise accommodated at a table nearby and very quickly made to feel comfortable. Friendly and attentive service, without being over active, made for a pleasant start to the experience; I had the soused mackerel, cucumber and beetroot salad with

wheaten bread. One of the strong features of the Vinoteca experience is their wine suggestions, alongside a daily-changing menu, I had a glass of Austrian white - the 2009 Kamptal Gruner Veltliner 'Kies', which complemented the strong flavours of my salad, without losing any of the subtleties of the grape or indeed the lingering taste of the wine in the mouth. At £11 the snack was easy on the digestion and the wallet.

*Friendly and attentive service made for a pleasant start to the experience*

However, I returned for a full lunch a couple of days later, when my guest was Paul Finch, the chairman of the newly formed Design Council CABE\* and an outstanding bon vivant in his own right. He arrived before me and was studying the outstanding wine list when I arrived. He quickly expressed his delight at the extensive selection of wines and confirmed that he had been impressed with the warm welcome on his arrival.

It was a bright sunny day – one of those instant and strange English miracles, when summer bursts out without warning. We had a roomy table in front of the wide open windows because of the fine weather; we ordered a bottle of rose, the Costieres de

Nimes 'Les Galets, Chateau Mourgues du Gres from the Rhone area, a wonderful, and we agreed, the best area for a good rose. "Unctuous" exclaimed Finch! It was simply delicious, a true rose colour and hint of strawberries with a superb refreshing finish. It certainly lubricated well and got us off to a good start.

We both started with the brawn with comichons, English mustard and toast. The brawn was more of an inspired terrine, presented on the plate like a roman mosaic, colourful, well made and delicious with a generous serving of cornichons – we agreed that it was "the best starter of its type that we had had for yonks."

Paul had the grilled marinated bavette, watercress, horseradish & triple cooked chips and I chose the mutton & oyster pie, mash & spinach. We decided on an Italian wine Dolcetto d'Alba from G D Vajra (Piemonte). The bavette passed my guests' first test: tender; the second test: tasted like steak, but without being excessively marinated or over cooked, a tricky thing to achieve. The chips were crisp and chunky without being too filling. My pie was just out of this world. The key to this dish was the mutton, traditionally a cheaper cut of meat, it was lovely and tender and the pastry, a combination of a pie crust top with the case of the pie more like suet in texture that 'melted' and merged with the mutton & oysters – again, we agreed that both main courses had passed the third and final test – would we order it again? You bet we would!

*My pie was just out of this world*

The Dolcetto went well with the bavette, the bouquet of cherries and raspberries following through to the palette, however, for my taste, it was a little too light with my pie. Still it was my choice and perhaps I should have stayed with the Vinoteca recommendation of the Maremma Rosso. We decided to take time out and have a little cheese before our dessert. This was also to allow us to finish off the Dolcetto. From an interesting selection of British Isles cheeses we shared some Kirkham's Lancashire and a portion of Milleens, both served with oatcakes and a quince paste. The Lancashire particularly had a smooth and wonderful



lingering taste that finish off the Dolcetto to perfection.

After a suitable rest bit we flirted with the dessert menu and Charlotte our attentive waitress who was particularly keen to guide us through the choice of desserts. Paul decided on a lemon possett with rhubarb compote and almond shortbread, while I was intrigued to see how I would react to poached pears with chocolate sauce & chocolate ice cream; I was amazed by the subtlety between the flavours of the poached pears and the chocolate ice cream, not something I would think about putting together. Paul considered his lemon possett was a triumph of Elizabethan cooking – "top notch" – just as it should be! The desserts were washed down with two outstanding sweet wines, the Cadillac for Paul and a glass of the Moscatel for me, a superb accompaniment and finish to the meal.

The cost of the food came out at about £29 per person, but remember we had four courses, even though we shared the cheese. We had decided to choose our own wines and this added a further £69 to the bill. However, if we had gone with the Vinoteca recommendation with each course this would have added just over £32 to the bill.

So what's the verdict? Over my two visits I found the staff friendly and welcoming. This approach immediately puts one in a good state of mind for the experience of eating out – something that is not always obvious to restaurant managers and owners. Good food, obviously prepared with great care and attention, followed through with good and attentive service, without being obtrusive. The reasonably priced and creative menu is a joy for the diner to experience and, like us, to linger over to savor the delicate and distinctive flavours while trying to work out how the chef and his team cleverly balance them.

*Good food, prepared with great care and attention*

*I can only echo my guests comment – would I go back? You bet I would!*

*Vinoteca, 15 Seymour Place, London, W1H 5BD. Tel: 020 7724 7288*



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# New 'village' joins the High Street

**Mary Wilson** visits an up-and-coming shopping oasis known as Portman Village.

There's much more to Marylebone than just Marylebone High Street! The area has fabulous residential squares where festive garden parties take place, many fine period properties, a plethora of charming mews, the Wallace Collection and Wigmore Hall for art and music aficionados and in west Marylebone, an up and coming shopping oasis known as Portman Village.

The Portman Estate, which owns 110 acres of prime Marylebone, has been quietly improving west Marylebone over recent years, investing £12 million in its regeneration. This has included major work upgrading two parallel streets, New Quebec Street and the southern end of Seymour Place, to create Portman Village.

The Village is an eclectic mix of hip fashion shops, delicious watering holes and food shops and relaxing beauty shops. Some businesses are brand new, others' facades have been given a face lift and all tenants have been encouraged to hang up

The idea of creating a new 'village' came about when a number of leases came back into the Estate's control

a diamond shaped sign with their business name on it, just like shops used to do in the olden days to advertise their wares.

The idea of creating a new 'village' came about when a number of head leases within the two streets came back to into the Estate's control, with the buildings requiring extensive refurbishment. "We recognised that substantial investment was required to restore these Georgian terraces to their former glory and decided to create an area that would be the focus for the community by providing a new village style shopping and dining destination in London" says Oliver Fenn-Smith, Property Director at The Portman Estate.

Now, the concept for the The Village is coming to fruition with the recent opening of several new shops, two new pubs (The Portman – a gastro pub and The Grazing Goat – a country style hotel and pub), a Corsican Pizza restaurant and Vinoteca wine bar and restaurant. Thirteen new units have opened over the past year. The Lemongrass Thai Spa – the first of its kind in London – celebrated its opening in March and Muralto, a South African contemporary furniture shop whose owner specifically wanted to find a quirky central London destination, launches fully in April.

You can also find interior design shops, two top fashion boutiques run by international fashion designers Ronen Chen and Osman Yousefzada, an art studio, an optometrist, laundrette and dry cleaners and a firm of accountants. Other places for foodies to go include Seaport The Brasserie, which is an excellent Mauritian seafood restaurant, Mura – a Japanese restaurant and La Masseria, a Puglian deli.

Working together with Westminster City Council, The Portman Estate has spent £400,000 on the revamp of Seymour Place, while New Quebec Street has recently

## Portman Village WI



The Portman: Fine dining and public house

undergone a £600,000 makeover, including new York stone pavements and road resurfacing. To control the balance of the tenants, the Estate is granting 5 year leases outside the Landlord and Tenant Act. This gives them the flexibility to monitor the tenant mix and make changes when they think necessary. However, two of the more established tenants, Marble Arch Paints – one of the oldest ironmongers in London and the Chinese restaurant, the Red Sun, will be staying put with improvements to their façade soon to take place.

restaurants, including 25% off the joining fee for Home House – the private members club in Portman Square.

Historically, there has been a huge disparity in values between west and east Marylebone, with the east being around 15 percent more expensive. Now, this price difference is slowly disappearing, helped along fast by the newest place-to-be-seen - Portman Village.

[www.portmanvillage.com](http://www.portmanvillage.com)

Historically, there has been a huge disparity in values between west and east Marylebone

"Many people have remarked on the very noticeable improvements to the Estate in recent years and the demand to live, work or open a shop or restaurant is strong. Our substantial investment in individual properties, the surrounding public areas and our tenants is beginning to bear fruit and initiatives such as the launch of the Portman Village Club card, provides exclusive benefits to members and therefore loyalty to our retailers and hotels" says Oliver Fenn-Smith. The PV Club, which was launched last summer, gives members discounts of 10% to 25% off many of the Portman Village shops and



Osman designer fashion



Sandy's Corsican Pizzeria



Greenhouse unisex hairdresser and total grooming



Ronen Chen designer fashion



# My Marylebone

Local resident **Peter York** first come to prominence for writing *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook* on the 1980's Sloane phenomenon\*. He is a columnist for *The Independent on Sunday*, *GQ* and *Management Today*.

## Home is...

An elegant Georgian house in Montagu Square.

## Why Marylebone?

I came here as a child when I visited a school friend, so I have always been aware of Marylebone, although the area was run down and slightly fraying at the edges then. But even then I considered it a "Sleeping Beauty" and something kept drawing me back; I wanted to be here, it was properly urban with a touch of green in the square. My first place in Marylebone was a 'duplex' flat also in the square.

## What advice would you give a tourist visiting Marylebone?

Marylebone triangulates with what tourists expect that's good, but there's more. *Selfridges* on Oxford Street is a wonderful shopping building with clever contents. *The Wallace Collection* is a treasure of French furniture and porcelain. Towards Baker Street you have *Madame Tussauds* and the whole Sherlock Holmes teenage tourist experience. But then you have to do the Georgian street plan and look at the architecture.

## What was the last play you saw in London?

Sheridan's *The Rivals* with Penelope Keith and Peter Bowles. It was a master class by Bowles, his performance as an evil lascivious old dreamer drooling romantically over his son's intended was breathtaking. The sets were good too.



## What was the last album you bought or downloaded?

I don't buy and I don't listen to music. Music is over. I love Ferry and Bowie and thought that Punk was a very exciting period – but I don't really think about music. That said Harvey Goldsmith asked me to a showcase in a small room at the O2 last year for a revised version of the Faces (2010) which was great fun. They had a 'Face' for every decade since the Sixties.

## What do you most like wearing?

I like being that bit overdressed. Ties for instance. Never never any sports-derived clothing. No trainers here please - dressing up is, it's a coded language. I can't understand why David Cameron lapsed into plain bad manners over the Royal Wedding; I'm glad he's relented.

## What's the best meal you've had in Marylebone?

Well it's not really difficult these days. Baker Street and Dorset Street are a sort of local base and have a good range of venues that

I regularly dip into, *Galvin's* is a particular favourite and of course the *Locanda Locatelli* in Seymour Street is an opportunity to experience the best of Italian food – as a treat, it's expensive. *The Duke of Wellington* is a good gastro pub for a working lunch.

## What's your life philosophy?

You can go a long way on being totally un-realistic. You have to find things to be interested in. Get alongside clever people; something will rub off.

## What is your guilty pleasure?

I like to go to Uniqlo, Primark and I'm always interested in the new things on the Zara shelves, so-called cheap clothes are much better than they used to be and you don't worry when you drink then. On the home front I love Turkish Delight.

## What makes you laugh?

Comedians who deal with repression like Barry Humphries. New comedians are clever but not funny. Loved the Fast Show and I love Borat. I prefer my comedy on TV rather than live.

## What makes you sad?

The acute awareness that the world is bad in a different way than it used to be. Perhaps I notice all this more since I wrote my book on dictators. Libya is a terrible situation but it seems to me that we are very selective about who we go to the rescue of and why.

## Which Marylebone shops do you rely on?

Everything, there is such a wonderful choice. In Marylebone High Street I use *Daunt Books* and the *Oxfam* shop all the time.

## What are you up to at the moment?

I'm working very hard on a picture book on the fashion magazine photographer Jim Lee, a friend, again someone I met through a school friend. He worked closely with Vogue

editor-in-chief Anna Wintour in London and New York on fashion and advertising shoots and his photographs from the sixties and seventies are part of the permanent collection at the V&A. I have never written a biography before but the publishers asked me to contribute a chapter and then took me out to lunch and asked me to do the whole book – Jim is such a good, good friend I wanted to do it.

I am also hoping to start an awareness campaign about the appalling state of the pavements in and around Montagu Square, which are in a pretty bad state. Perhaps this piece will start it off? Westminster Council is failing in its duty to safeguard people walking in the area. Broken and protruding paving stones are becoming the norm and are a danger to old and young alike. When the Council does take action it is done on the cheap; the replacement of traditional paving stones in Gloucester Place and George Street with 'patio slabs' has been done piecemeal and it's completely hideous in a Georgian streetscape. The other 'street furniture' is bad enough – it needs to be completely rethought.

## What would you most like to be remembered for?

Well on a purely practical level I'd like to think that every now and again someone will read an article of mine and get something from it.

But I set great store by friendships and sustaining long lasting relationships. I am working with the brilliant Julia Hobsbawm, the founder of Editorial Intelligence, a new kind of media business which runs an opinion former network called the eiClub; I hope we're building something there. We're rolling the events out to New York and Mumbai this year.

*\*The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook (1982) co-writer Ann Barr.*

# Marylebone Summer Fayre sets up its stalls again

With a backdrop of the distinctive streets of Marylebone Village and the adjoining open spaces of Paddington Gardens, St Marylebone Parish Church Gardens and Moxon Street Car Park, the Marylebone Summer Fayre offers a full days celebration of all that's great about Marylebone. Taking place on Sunday 19th June, the occasion also provides an exciting and packed day of events for this year's Father's Day.



With an array of bustling market stalls, restaurants, cafes and BBQ's visitors will be surrounded by some of the best food and drink in London, catering to all ages! There's no shortage of activities for children too! From fairground rides to playground games, street dancing to street Shakespeare theatre, drawing competitions to bread making classes, face painting and bicycle riding, and the list goes on.

And while the kids are being entertained parents can sit back and relax to the sounds of the all day music concert in the park and appreciate the truly distinctive community spirit that makes this Fayre and Marylebone something of an oasis in the heart of Central London. As Marylebone has developed, and its profile has grown, so too has the scale and ambition of the Fayre organized



and run by the Howard de Walden Estate for the past seven years. Many stallholders and performers apply to take part from far and wide and as you wonder through the streets, what was once a low key afternoon has become a hugely popular festival with around 30,000 residents and visitors to the area attending last year.

If you feel like taking time out to talk about the local property scene be sure to visit local Weymouth Street company Druce on their stall, when Simon Hedley and his team would be pleased to welcome you, with a drink, and give you the benefit of their extensive local knowledge.

*For more information on the Fayre please visit [www.marylebonesummerfayre.com](http://www.marylebonesummerfayre.com)*

