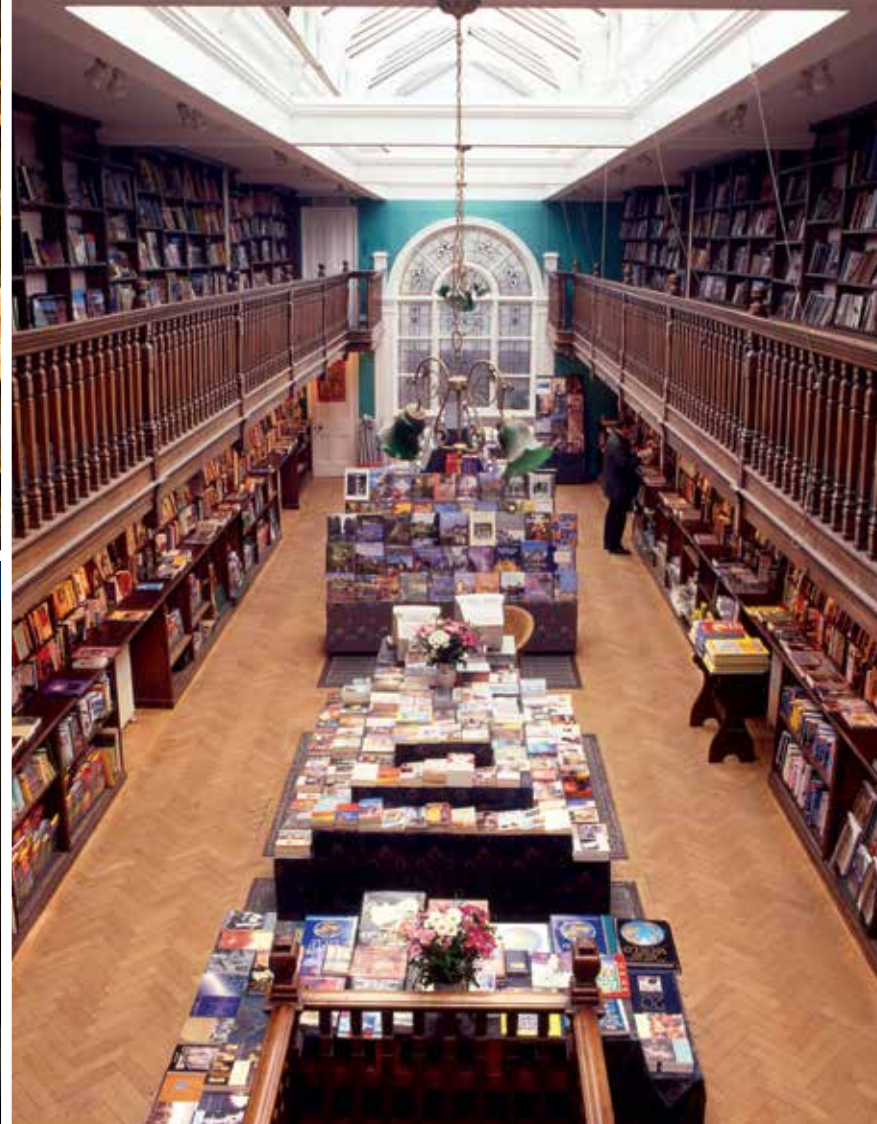


# No bones about it

Named after St Mary's Church and the river, or bourne, beside it, Marylebone has held onto its family-friendly, suburban roots, finds Carla Passino



**W1  
LITTLE BLACK BOOK**

- **David Penton and Son**  
Marylebone's oldest store has been selling homeware for more than 160 years (64, Marylebone Lane)
- **VV Rouleaux**  
Simply the best haberdashery in London (102, Marylebone Lane)
- **Lisson Gallery**  
This hugely successful gallery represents Anish Kapoor, Marina Abramović and Ai Weiwei, among others (67, Lisson Street)

**S**PLIT down the middle by an avenue of plane trees punctuated by bronzes of eminent surgeons, officers and philanthropists, Portland Place progresses from Langham Place towards Regent's Park in a stately sequence of blue-plaque buildings, reminiscent of a Parisian boulevard. Although Gallic grandeur influenced John Nash's later plans, the street owes its matronly proportions to one of the handful of grandees.

**'It was a woman, however, who set into motion the events that would change Marylebone's fortunes'**

The vision of those grandees shaped Marylebone into today's rare combination of graceful townhouses and tranquil mews, culture and medicine, urban sophistication and country village. In 1767, the 3rd Duke of Portland promised a gentleman named Thomas Foley that, if the land abutting his property were ever developed, the views from Foley House would be preserved by creating a large street

**Marylebone retains a charming village feel and, at every turn, there are fine buildings, independent shops and restaurants, with Regent's Park nearby**

in front of it—and that's how Portland Place came to be such an impressive 110ft wide.

It was a woman, however, who set into motion the events that would change Marylebone's fortunes. In 1711, Henrietta Cavendish Holles inherited the 200-acre manor of Tyburn—equipped with a village, fields and the notorious Boarded House, which held bear-, leopard- and tiger-baiting sessions—from her father, the Duke of Newcastle. After she married the 2nd Earl of Oxford, the couple (or rather, the Earl's cunning uncle, Tory politician Edward Harley) conceived a brilliant plan to turn the estate into a new neighbourhood for the ever-expanding London. The original design, featuring a grid of elegant streets serviced by pretty mews, persists even where the Georgian buildings have long gone.

Although the Oxfords had Cavendish Square laid out in 1717–18, it took another 50 years and the 3rd Duke of Portland's inspired choice of developers—Robert Adam and his brothers—for Marylebone to evolve from sleepy suburb into one of London's ►

most fashionable quarters. In particular, Portland Place drew the attention of many of the city's great and (not always) good, from Gen Thomas Gage, former commander-in-chief of the British forces during the American Revolution, to inveterate gambler Lady Sarah Archer.

Such was the road's popularity that, story has it, a ferocious row broke out between a Society lady and her husband following his ill-advised decision to lease a house in Berkeley Square over one in Portland Place—the poor man had the worst of it when his wife struck his head with a poker.

Marylebone's many socialites also made it a magnet for the doctors that cured their ailments. After a time during which Cavendish Square looked set to be a 'citadel of medicine', as Stevenson calls it in *The Strange Tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Harley Street took over and virtually anyone who was anyone in the profession eventually worked there, including Florence Nightingale.

### 'Charles Dickens lived from 1839 to 1851 at the now-demolished 1, Devonshire Terrace'

Alongside the world of medicine, however, Marylebone has also played an important part in London's cultural scene. The Royal Academy of Music and Wigmore Hall still fly the flag for music in an area that counted Hector Berlioz, Sir Edward Elgar and John Lennon among its denizens and the premises of venerable Daunt Books have been a literary landmark ever since antiquarian bookseller Francis Edwards opened a shop at 83, Marylebone High Street in the 19th century.

A short walk away from the bookshop, on the corner between Marylebone Road and Marylebone High Street, a relief commemorates Charles Dickens, who lived from 1839



Elegance personified in Nash's sweep of lovingly maintained terraces at Portland Place

to 1851 at the now-demolished 1, Devonshire Terrace in a mansion of 'excessive splendour', whose sizeable bills go a long way towards explaining why the author published so many stories at the time, including *A Christmas Carol* and *David Copperfield*.

Perhaps Marylebone is simply conducive to writing: Frances Hodgson Burnett penned *A Lady of Quality* at 63, Portland Place, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote the poems that made her hugely famous at 50, Wimpole Street, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle killed time at the unsuccessful ophthalmology practice he had opened at 2, Upper Wimpole Street, by crafting the adventures of the world's most famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

If the Baker Street sleuth is Marylebone's best-known, albeit entirely fictional scion,

one of its most generous residents must be philanthropist and collector Sir Richard Wallace, who made the area one of London's top art destinations. Sir Richard had previously lived in Paris and 'after the upheavals of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune, in August 1871, he started a frenetic year of collecting,' says Suzanne Higgott, a curator at the Wallace Collection. He bought on a vast scale from people who had been associated with the Second Empire and, after he moved to London in the 1870s, royals, artists, writers and notable medics all flocked to Marylebone, where Sir Richard and his wife lived at Hertford House, to view the magnificent artworks. Marylebone's art fortunes were then sealed after Lady Wallace left the masterpieces from Hertford House's ground and first floor to the nation in 1897—the Wallace Collection museum opened in 1900.

Despite the culture, architecture and a pedigree to rival Mayfair's, Marylebone's most charming trait is that it remains a village at heart. 'It's that villagey feel you get by going to the local butcher, fishmonger and fromagerie, where they all know you,' says Bob van den Oord, the managing director of Portland Place's Langham Hotel, who lives locally. 'Marylebone has lovely restaurants, shops and outdoor spaces—a stroll around Regent's Park after dinner is a glorious way of finishing your evening. The whole atmosphere is rather tranquil, it's not overcrowded and that makes it special. You simply don't think you are in London.'

Alamy

## At home in Marylebone



### Dunstable Mews, £2.45 million

Tucked away in a quiet spot close to Marylebone High Street, this beautifully renovated mews house has a 29ft reception room, dining area and bespoke kitchen on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a second reception room upstairs. *Lurot Brand* (020-7590 9955; [www.lurotbrand.co.uk](http://www.lurotbrand.co.uk)) and *Dexters* (020-7224 5544; [www.dexters.co.uk](http://www.dexters.co.uk))



### Ulster Terrace, £3,800 per week

Set on the ground and first floors of a Grade I-listed Nash building, this magnificent three-to four-bedroom apartment has plenty of interesting details, including fine fireplaces and beautiful corncicing, and long views of nearby Regent's Park. *Dexters* (020-7224 5545; [www.dexters.co.uk](http://www.dexters.co.uk))



### Harley Street, £18.5 million

Beautifully renovated by award-winning architects SHH, this 8,603sq ft, Grade II-listed Georgian townhouse combines period details, including exposed beams and trusses and the original wine cellar, with contemporary features, such as the spa, gym and pool complex in the basement. *Savills* (020-3527 0400; [www.savills.co.uk](http://www.savills.co.uk))

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