

**NEWS** | Fire service cuts

**Walking tour reveals our 'mad world'**

The little-known history and characters of Marylebone will be brought to life in a new walking tour of the area.

Richard Watkins, a City of Westminster Guide, has devised the walk to take in the sites of the infamous and gruesome Tyburn Tree; Britain's very first Asian restaurant; and the stories of scientists, writers, artists and eccentric characters who once called Marylebone home.

His walk, *The Mad World Of Marylebone*, introduces walkers to the likes of the Duchess dubbed "The Queen From Hell", a grumpy scientist driven mad by street music, and areas where highwaymen plied their trade and met their fate.

Grand squares and less-celebrated arts and crafts buildings are also discovered in the maze of lanes and courts lying just off Westminster's main streets.

The preview tour of *The Mad World Of Marylebone* starts at 2pm on Saturday, then at 2pm on November 4. Meet outside exit 3 of Marble Arch Tube station.

■ Tickets are £5 for the preview tour and £7 thereafter (£5 concessions). For more see [www.trailsofthecity.co.uk](http://www.trailsofthecity.co.uk).

**Union says closing down fire station could put lives at risk**

Concerns raised about future cover for dense population and big leisure area

by Peter Apps  
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Lives could be put in danger across the borough if Westminster fire station closes as part of a cost-cutting exercise, a Fire Brigades' Union chief is warning.

Westminster station in Greycoat Place, Pimlico, is one of 17 stations earmarked for closure on a list leaked to the BBC.

Paddington station in Harrow Road and Soho station in Shaftesbury Avenue are not on the list.

London Fire Brigades' Union regional secretary Paul Embery said: "Everyone should be concerned, even if it isn't your local fire station that is closing down. They can say that the first fire engine will still be on the scene within six minutes but that is misleading, because when you need back-up, you'll need to call in engines from other stations nearby."

"People need to understand that these proposals jeopardise the safety of everyone. It's an old cliché, but in a fire seconds count; the difference between dying

from smoke inhalation and living comes down to a few seconds. You can't shut down so many fire stations, and make so many firefighters redundant, without putting lives at risk."

The Brigade has been asked by Mayor of London Boris Johnson to save £64.8million over the next two years.

**'Unique need'**

Westminster fire station does not have a specific patch and responds to calls depending on need.

If it closes, the nearest extra support is Euston and West Hampstead stations. Belsize Park station is also pegged for closure.

London Assembly member Murad Qureshi said: "In such a densely populated borough, which holds the biggest leisure and licensing areas in the country, there is a very unique need and we must have adequate cover. Not only should we be concerned for those living in Pimlico and Victoria, but everyone in Westminster should worry."



■ Murad Qureshi outside Westminster fire station

Picture: Dieter Perry

An LFB spokesman said: "Like virtually every other public service, the Brigade is facing the need to make savings. There is a target for these savings but the full details will not be known until at least December, when the government announces its grant to the Brigade. "We expect to be able to maintain

our current target response times. "No decisions about any possible fire station closures have yet been taken. Before they are, there will be a full public consultation." Borough firefighters last year attended more than 5,200 false alarms, more than 1,000 fires and more than 1,800 other incidents.

“Like virtually every other public service, the brigade is facing the need to make savings. No decisions about any possible closures have yet been taken.

London Fire Brigade spokesman

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