

The painting of Spanish Place

Monday, 05 September 2011

After breakfast I wandered off to buy some fresh Kent cob nuts from my greengrocer in Blandford Street and passed St James Catholic Church in Spanish Place. It was a beautiful day and I stopped and looked at it and thought "that is the prettiest church in London".

Before I moved to my cottage in Bayswater 44 years ago, I lived in St Andrews Mansions just around the corner in Dorset Street, so I know the Marylebone area very well.

After getting the sweet, green, fresh nuts I returned to my car parked in Manchester Square. EMI used to have their headquarters in Manchester Square. It was where I waited in the toilets aged 15 until everyone had gone home to pounce on Producer George Martin in his office to ask him to make me a star. Unfortunately he was in a clinch with his secretary who he later married.

A lad at Charterhouse I fancied like mad, and never got anywhere with, was a close friend of the then Chairman of EMI, Sir Joseph Lockwood, who lived around the corner in Spanish Place and who, I later discovered in those dark, secret days, was also a good friend of Dorothy's.

Driving off I noticed a man painting at the corner of Hinde Street so I drove around the square, back out and paused by his easel.

"That's lovely", I said, admiring the oil painting. "Have you seen the church in Spanish Place? If you ever paint that I'd be interested in buying it".

Giving him my card and realising I was blocking traffic, I drove on.

He was Richard Colson and sent me an E Mail asking whether I would like to commission the painting and I said OK - but could he include Little Car parked outside the church. This is the result; a lovely moment in 2011, reflected in Richard's original oil style.

It's hanging in my sitting room. But you can see it in the Photos section.