

THE BELSIZE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

AUG 2021

The Belsize Society is a Registered Charity (number 1180842), continuing the work of the Belsize Residents Association.

www.belsize.org.uk

Notes from your Chair

Welcome to the August Newsletter of the Belsize Society.

We were sad to have to cancel the Summer Party this year. The postponement of the lifting of lockdown unfortunately just caught our event. However, this Newsletter does contain details of events in the autumn.

We are really pleased that our former chair Averil Nottage will lead an historical walk in the area that Belsize House inhabited, tying into the November event, "The Story of Moll King's Belsize Houses" where David Percy will present filmed excerpts of his book. This event will also provide an opportunity to celebrate 50 years of the Association and Society.

There is also a dip into the Belsize Residents Association archive, covering the campaigns residents progressed in two areas - the closure of local post offices and the removal of estate agent boards.

As we emerge out of lockdown, the Newsletter covers some of the reopening of the arts in the Belsize area, reviewing the Walter Price exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre and some recent plays at the Hampstead Theatre.

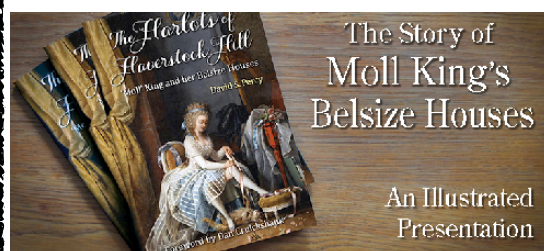
The next months will see the Society participating in a second planning inquiry over 100 Avenue Road as the developers seek to reduce the affordable housing associated with the project. The Newsletter covers this as well as the dialogue we are having with the Council about enforcement during construction of projects.

The Newsletter reports also on initiatives to plant trees in the area and the Society's donation to the Belsize Community Library.

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Belsize Society Event



David S. Percy presents filmed excerpts from the book *The Harlots of Haverstock Hill*

7pm, Thursday 4 November
Belsize Community Library,
Antrim Road, NW3 4XN

Free, register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/moll-kings-belsize-houses-tickets-166433486037>

Fiftieth Anniversary Events: The Story of Moll King's Belsize Houses



The Story of Moll King's Belsize Houses

An Illustrated
Presentation

A production by David S. Percy
with Dame Janet Suzman reading filmed excerpts
from the book

Belsize Community Library
Antrim Road NW3 4XN
Thursday 4 November 2021 at 7pm

David S. Percy, who directed *The Belsize Story* documentary and published *Belsize Remembered* presents the fascinating account of some of the first settlers on Haverstock Hill. A story of pioneers who arrived in Belsize in the early part of the 18th century and the houses they lived in.

This is a captivating tale of a really gutsy, determined individual who made her own way, a woman who mixed with harlots, courtesans and lords of the land.

This presentation has been specially produced to coincide with celebrations to mark the Belsize Society/BRA 50th anniversary. It will be a big screen event that should prove to be an informative and enjoyable evening.

Free admission – first come first served – limited seating

We are very pleased that David Percy will present the story of Moll King's houses as featured in his book *The Harlots of Haverstock Hill* at the Belsize Community Library on 4 November 2021. The film includes readings by Dame Janet Suzman. We will also celebrate 50 years of the Society and Association at the event.

Harlots is an account of the remarkable life of "Moll" King, an 18th century madam or brothel-keeper, an ambitious and opportunistic woman who rose from humble beginnings in the streets of London to become one of the first settlers in Belsize Park. Moll became a wealthy landowner with several properties on Haverstock Hill in the days when there were no more than a handful of houses along this country road to Hampstead. Her legacy remains there to this day.

There will be a chance to ask David questions about the fascinating tale, as well as socialise after the screening and Q&A.

We ask you to pre-book as space will be limited and we are keen to be able to manage the event in line with any restrictions in place at the time.

The event will be free, but please register at the event link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/moll-kings-belsize-houses-tickets-166433486037>.

If you are unable to access Eventbrite to make a booking, you can contact us at 7794 0874.



A Stroll Through Time: BelSoc Historical Walk

If you're free on Sunday 19 September, why not join us for an afternoon stroll that will transport you through centuries of local history?

Starting in Belsize Terrace, we'll hear how a forest became farmland and then gentlemen's country residences before being transformed into a middle-class suburb. We'll find out about Belsize House in its 18th century heyday as a fashionable pleasure garden before it declined into a "scandalous Lew'd House". We'll see how housing fashions changed, who lived here and where they shopped, drank and worshipped. And we'll finish at Belsize Library for tea, delicious cakes, and a chance to socialise.

Meet at Belsize Terrace at 3pm.

Open House

OPEN HOUSE LONDON

*Open House Festival 2021 is
on 4-10 September, with a week
of events.*

*This year's programme will be
published soon.*

See:

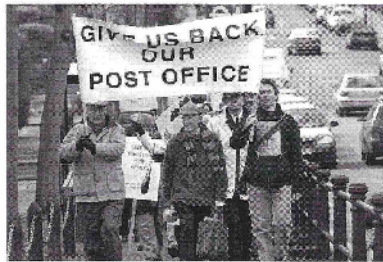
<https://open-city.org.uk/open-house>

SHAPING BELSIZE AND THE BRA CAMPAIGNS

Through fifty years, we have commented on numerous developments, participated in campaigns and sought to improve or at least maintain the essential character of the area.

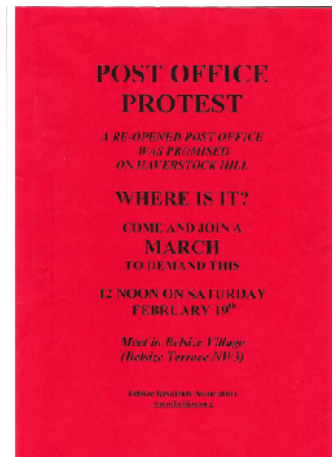
In late 2003, as part of its Network Reinvention Programme, the Post Office announced its plan to close the Belsize Village post office. At this stage, there were four post offices in the area. As well as the Village, there were offices in Haverstock Hill, Hampstead Heath and England's Lane. Haverstock Hill's post office closed a few months into 2004 with England's Lane and Hampstead Heath closing in 2008.

There was considerable opposition, with the Belsize Residents Association making its case to the Council and to the Post Office as it consulted about closures. The BRA Chair, Handley Stevens, is captured in the newspapers with the then MP Glenda Jackson relating concerns. There was a BRA and Belsize Conservation Area Advisory Committee march on 19 February 2005, in which 150 people walked from the Village to the Haverstock Hill post office. It was a "bitterly cold day", but over the two hours, nearly 500 signatures were added to a petition. It did work: the Belsize Village post office was maintained until 2006, responding to the strength of residents' feelings and gaining three extra years.



Picture by Nigel Sutton

Residents march from Belsize Village to Haverstock Hill on a chilly day



In the archived material, already in 2005, the Association had begun to propose putting a post office in Haverstock Hill Budgens. A Post Office Consultation Manager introduces BRA to a Post Office Network Change Manager who thought the idea was worth investigating. Things go quiet until October 2010, when the BRA Newsletter celebrates the opening of a post office counter in Thornton's Budgens with a poem.

As BRA members marched to save post offices, they had reason to celebrate a different successful campaign. Since the mid-1980s, estate agent boards had been banned in neighbouring conservations areas: Hampstead Village, South Hill Park and Swiss Cottage. It was only through a long, 20 year campaign that the BRA received approval in 2005 for the ban to extend to the Belsize Conservation Area, alongside Fitzjohns/Netherhall and Reddington/Frognaal CAs.

There had been some hope that this change would occur earlier. In 1994, a vote at Camden Council went against the ban only through the chair's casting vote. There were also some legal successes to control estate agents that were breaching the regulations for boards. In 2000, the complaints made by the Association about agents who put up bogus for sale/rent boards, as a form of advertising, led to successful prosecutions that achieved media coverage.

As the ban came into force, in March, the Association was also on the frontline to enforce the changes. The BRA conducted a door-to-door survey recording all visible estate agent boards. Boards that were in place before the ban could remain there until the property was sold and the audit provided a means to identify new boards. The survey indicates where we might have been today: records show that 12 estate agent boards adorned Belsize Square and 16 in Fellows Road. The steps taken in the conversation areas have now led to a Camden-wide ban on boards.

The Association's archives are full of examples where, over 50 years, the BRA and BelSoc have been active in shaping Belsize. The routine work of comments made on planning applications, complaints about breaches and responses to consultations stretches across five lever arch files making an impact in enhancing and maintaining the Belsize area.

Walter Price: Pearl Lines

Camden Arts Centre to 29 August

It was with a mixture of eagerness and trepidation that I ventured to the first art exhibition I have seen since lockdown began in March 2020. My trepidation was soon overcome. Camden Arts Centre now sports a giant outdoor canopy for those who want coffee or lunch in the open air. The garden has been tidied up with many wonderful flowers. A new gate, opening directly onto Finchley Road, means that there is no need to be inside at all after you have viewed the art.

In addition to an installation by local special needs schoolchildren, the two current exhibitors are Walter Price (*Pearl Lines*) and Olga Balema (*Computer*). Both are New York-based artists born in the 1980s but Price is the more engaging. His works in chunks of colour combine painting and drawing on surfaces such as paper and wood. They are playful yet provide a thoughtful commentary on urban living and identity. Images of suspended hats creates the feel of a crowded city street.

Born in Georgia but living in Brooklyn, Price held a studio residency at the CAC in early 2020. During that time, he experimented with scale and material to create new, large paintings. Returning to New York during the lockdown, he created smaller works in confined conditions, using his existing paints. There is sometimes an overt lockdown theme to these works, such as the striking *Where's your mask, fool* (2020) in which an oversized haunting figure looks down on a person with no face covering. But for me, the themes of alienation from other people and from the natural world were the more subtle forms of pandemic-thinking across the two exhibition rooms.

In the first, larger room, oil paintings on paper each portray a collection of images reduced or simplified to almost child-like forms. The painted images are spaced out on the paper, so that there is a large expanse of white on each one - mirroring the vast whiteness of the CAC itself. For me, the white spaces give these works a poster-like effect owing more to the world of pop art and disposable images than the art salon. It takes time for the eye to wander over each of the seemingly disjointed parts to understand the theme of the picture as a whole. The brush strokes on first glance seem to have been quickly executed, in unpremeditated fashion. Upon closer inspection, these are carefully crafted works. *Step into the sun* (2020) is typical of the deconstructed forms: a large foot (the person taking the step of the title) is placed in isolation above a yellow sun and a slab of green grass.

Smaller acrylics on paper are dominated by black paint. These figurative works with an urban feel represent black men. I did not see any women but there was an affecting picture of a child holding an adult's hand before crossing the road (*Always look both ways*; 2020). A small series of bodies (*Bod deese*; 2015) creates a corporeal feel with simple curves.

The second exhibition room is devoted to small colourful works with paint covering the entirety of the surface - sometimes thickly laid and so that the images intrude outwards such as the rain clouds in *Hold the umbrella tight while viewing my rain* and *Fate of the animals #2*. These paintings feature high-backed sofas, reminding me of the inside (and sofa-based!) living that we have all experienced during the pandemic. Several showed wide landscapes and nature as if dreaming of outdoor freedom. A human house is like a cage: we live in spaces that intrude on nature but we remain constrained. In this room too, there are repeated but different portraits of a black woman's head on pale backgrounds. In *Is there a fundamental lack of internal volition?* (2020), the head is symbolically spattered with white paint, returning to the theme of whiteness that is both artistic and political.

Many of the paintings in this second room seem to have a high degree of abstraction; but on further viewing, faces, sun, grass, water and clouds emerge. Combining the built and natural environments, they emphasise for me the way in which we have been couped up in lockdown and have had to resort to memories or imagination to reconstruct the larger world.

A film narrated by the artist invites us to place our own experiences onto the work. The artist has given the exhibition to us as a gift. I suppose it is only natural to look at the images through the prism of lockdown but I enjoyed the exhibition immensely. It is free, local and large enough that you don't have to come within 2 metres of anyone if you don't want to. What's not to like?

Sorry that we cannot provide images but you can have a taster at camdenartcentre.org/walter-price-pearl-lines/.

Hampstead Theatre: a local gem reopens

At long last, after having to shelve performances last year, Hampstead Theatre has been able to give us a series of productions that challenge and inspire. *The Death of a Black Man*, by Alfred Fagon (1937-1986), received its world premiere at Hampstead in 1975. The revival in the main theatre shocked and entertained in equal measure. Set in a flat on the King's Road, the play centres on the lives of two black men and a black woman seeking to make their way in the world. The male characters evoke sympathy then



suspicion and then horror as they exploit the woman with tragic consequences. The small cast (Nickcolia King-N'da, Toyin Omari-Kinch and Natalie Simpson) gave vibrant, pacy performances. Ably directed by Dawn Walton, the set oused 1970s kitsch. As some of the press reviews pointed out, the anti-racist themes would not be presented in the same way nowadays and some of the dialogue would indeed be controversial in its own right. Nevertheless, the radical force of Fagon's writing made this a stand-out experience to watch and listen to.

Downstairs, Deborah Bruce's *Raya* had a cast of four and a small audience but was engrossing. Roxana Silbert's direction made a bare stage with a few colourless props feel like we were sitting in the downstairs floor of a house, where a man and a woman end up after a university reunion. Each presents to the other (and to the audience) with one façade but all is not what it seems. As the plot develops, the audience learns that neither has the life that they contemplated at university. Each has a personal tragedy which they mask by deception or by revealing less than the truth. The audience is itself duped - presented initially with a trivial meeting of two old friends but becoming, gradually, engrossed in their all too human problems. The play depicts two sympathetic characters doing their best in a tough world.

For reasons set out in the brilliant programme notes, Hampstead was in 1967 the venue for the premiere of Tennessee Williams' *The Two Character Play*. A play within a play, Kate O'Flynn and Zubin Varla play a brother and sister who in turn play a brother and sister trapped in fear and confusion in the family home after the death of their parents. Directed by Sam Yates, the stage within a stage makes the action cramped, the only freedom in the entire production being provided by care-free dances which are elegantly executed by the two excellent actors. The dialogue is in the style of theatre of the absurd. The plot lines are inconclusive, life being a never-ending drama. This is not an easy night out, but worth the effort.

Future productions include *Big Big Sky* (Tom Wells; directed by Tessa Walker), *The Memory of Water* (Shelagh Stephenson; directed by Alice Hamilton) and *Malindadzimu* (Mufaro Makubika; directed by Monique Touko). Further details at www.hampsteadtheatre.com/whats-on/main-stage/. For information about the Alfred Fagon Award for Black British Playwrights, see www.alfredfagonaward.co.uk/about-us/.

Other openings

Freud Museum reopens with an exhibition for our times. **A new exhibition explores how Freud reacted to the Spanish flu crisis and how modern psychoanalysis has responded to Covid.** On display are rarely-seen letters written by Freud to friends and colleagues in the days after his daughter Sophie's death from influenza, exposing personal reflections on death and loss. Alongside these historical reflections are contemporary psychoanalytic observations of the present pandemic, in a series of new short videos featuring contributions from clinicians and researchers. Opening hours Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, 10.30-5pm. Exhibition runs until 12 September. Tickets must be booked online. 20 Maresfield Gardens, NW3 5SX. @FreudMusLondon.

From the National Trust: Fenton House and Garden (17th century house and walled garden) are open for pre-booked visits on Saturdays, Sundays and on bank holidays. 2 Willow Road (an innovative modernist house from 1939) is open on Thursdays by pre-booked tour only.

Update on 100 Avenue Road

Members may be aware that Essential Living (Swiss Cottage) Limited has appealed against Camden's refusal of its application to modify the consent it obtained in 2016 to build a 24 storey block of 186 flats at 100 Avenue Road by the tube station at Swiss Cottage. The new application sought the removal of the obligation it had agreed in 2016 to include at least 36 affordable units in the new block, leaving the only "affordable housing" obligation as an obligation to ensure that 18 of the 186 flats are available on a "Discounted Market Rent" basis.

We had objected to the original application for the new development, which was eventually granted on appeal by the Secretary of State, who appeared to accept that the affordable housing to be provided in the development, and other public benefits, outweighed the harm that the development would cause to the Conservation Area.

Essential Living commenced work, demolishing the existing building in 2017 but "paused" significant construction works on the site in the summer of 2020, following the completion of the demolition, piling and basement box. It says that due to Covid-19, the cost of the main contract amongst other mounting costs, and significant delay to the original project timescales, inter alia, a decision was made to submit the new application in order to improve the current position on the scheme's viability. Essential Living claims that without the removal of the 36 affordable units the development will not be viable.

BelSoc objected to the new application on the basis that the modification being sought in the application would mean that a substantial element of the public benefit would be removed but leaving the "harm" that everyone accepts will result from the development. Whether or not the project is "viable" is not a valid reason in law to modify an obligation that serves a "useful purpose" unless it will serve the useful purpose equally well after the modification. The "useful purpose" is the provision of the 36 affordable units and if that is removed by the modification clearly it cannot serve the useful purpose equally well. Camden refused the application for that reason and for a number of other reasons.

Belsoc has been accepted as a Rule 6 party at the public inquiry into the refusal of the new application which is likely to be held in mid-November.



Engaging with Camden about Enforcement

For almost two years, we have engaged with Camden Council about the enforcement of construction management in the Borough, especially in residential areas like ours. Construction management is about how developers implement their planning permission.

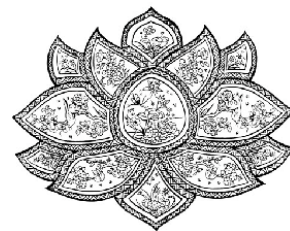
The productive dialogue has involved discussions about the practices in other London Boroughs, a presentation to the Council's Planning Committee policy meeting, and keeping the Council informed about the recent experience of residents. We have worked with other resident bodies, such as the RedFrog Forum.

As we emerge from lockdown, we have restarted the dialogue with Camden. A recent focus has been the use in other Boroughs of Codes of Construction Practice. These encourage developers to use best practice in the construction phase of the more complex projects, such as basement developments. In other Boroughs, such as Islington and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, developers commit to the code as part of the planning permission. There may also be inspections of sites, to catch issues such as noise, pollution and traffic, which encourages the adoption of best practice, e.g. pointing out where a contractor might use quieter machinery.

Next steps with Camden involve us updating the Councillor in charge of this policy area about our experiences over the last two years and what we have learnt from other parts of London.

Belsize Society Historic Walk

Led by Averil Nottage



3pm - 5pm

**Sunday 19 September
Meet at Belsize Terrace**

**Followed by tea and
cakes at Belsize
Community Library**

The Queen's Green Canopy: Plant a tree for the Jubilee

You may well have heard about the tree planting initiative to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Everyone across the UK is being invited to plant trees from October 2021, when the tree planting season begins, through to the end of the Jubilee year in 2022.

The initiative invites individuals, community groups, businesses and others across the UK to plant trees - and the Belsize Society hopes to play its part in our local area. Whilst individuals are welcome, even encouraged, to plant new trees in their gardens or on other private land as part of this initiative, the Belsize Society is looking for planting locations that are accessible to the public. The first step is to draw up a shortlist of possible places in the area where there is scope to plant one or even a few trees. We intend to discuss this shortlist with Camden Council and hope to agree one or more suitable locations.

Preparation of the ground and planting would be the next stages, followed by ongoing care of the young saplings. We will be looking for volunteers in due course!

We hope to have more to report in the November Newsletter.

Belsize Society donation to Community Library

The Society has funded the library's purchase of equipment for its events, primarily a new mixer and associated microphones and stands. This will be used as it reopens, with the library planning an exciting range of talks, musical events and, of course, hosting some of the Society's events. One of the first to use the equipment will be the November presentation of "The Story of Moll King's Belsize Houses".

Details about hiring the library are at: <https://thewinch.org/hire-the-library/>



Flash floods, 12 July

Camden Council is requesting that anyone who noticed or experienced flooding should report this to:

GREENCAMDEN@CAMDEN.GOV.UK

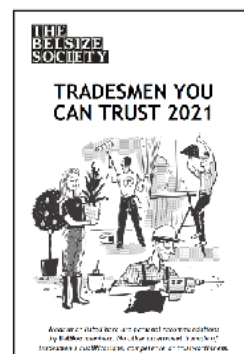
Camden is particularly keen to learn about the following types of flooding:

- internal: clean water or sewage (please say which) at a property, eg in basement, or coming up through the floor into the ground floor, or simply entering the property from outside
- external: at a building site (eg an open basement or demolition site), where water is seen to flow out of or through holes in the ground.

If you should have any photos of flooded properties or streets (where the drains were not coping), these would also be extremely helpful. Camden produces a map of roads affected by flooding so that developers know where to be particularly careful not to add to water run-off. The last two flood years for Hampstead were 1976 and 2002, but the maps of flooding for these two years included only the roads for which flooding was reported. It is important that Camden is aware where properties flood. Camden would not divulge which properties were flooded, only mapping the roads affected.

TRADESMEN YOU CAN TRUST 2021

You may remember that in May, we sent those of you who are online an email attaching a pdf to correct an error/omission in the 2021 issue of TYCT. We apologise to all members for the mistake and are enclosing with this August Newsletter, a correct paper copy of the two pages (nos. 6 and 8) which you can insert into this year's booklet.



Meanwhile we trust that you are still finding the booklet a useful BelSoc publication.

Dates for your diary

Belsize Society

19 Sep, 3pm. Historic walk led by Averil Nottage.
Meet at Belsize Terrace, NW3. Free.

4 Nov, 7pm. The Story of Moll King's Belsize Houses.
David Percy will present filmed excerpts from the
book, *The Harlots of Haverstock Hill*. Free, register at
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/moll-kings-belsize-houses-tickets-166433486037>

Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road, NW3 www.camdenartscentre.org

27 Aug, 8pm. Garden Nights: Alaya and other films by
Nathaniel Dorsky. A small-scale outdoor screening of
silent 16mm films by American experimental
filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky. £5.

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

1 Sep, 7pm. The War Against the BBC. Patrick
Barwise and Peter York interviewed about their
book. £9 through Eventbrite.

5 Sep, 2.15pm. A Bagatelle: Music for clarinet and
piano played by Alison Eales and Anna Le Hair.
£10 from 01462 896778.

17 Oct, 7.30pm. Mandolin+1 concert series, No. 2.
Collection of colourful, witty, original duos by
composer David Braid, performed by guitarist
David Black and the composer on mandolin. £20

St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3

Sunday 12 September, 6.30pm. Belsize Baroque
play music by Graupner, Corrette, Handel Abel and
Venturini. Tickets £15 available at
www.wegotickets.com/event/521497.

Belsize Community Library, Antrim Road, NW3 (Re-opening in September)

Every Friday, 6.30-9pm, Open Mic and Poetry. Zoom
id: 898 4229 5129; Facebook: Belsize open mic.

16 Sep, 7.30pm. Jon Sopel, BBC's North America
Editor, talks on "Reporting America: from Trump to
Biden" via Zoom, ID 889 6466 1765, no password
necessary.

21 Oct 7.30pm via Zoom ID 889 6466 1765, no
password necessary Karin Fernald, author and
performer will present an illustrated talk on "Edwin
Lanseer: the Shakespeare of Dogs."

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For Newsletter submissions and letters:
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issue is: **24 October 2021**

To send posters for noticeboards:
haverstockboard@belsize.org.uk
villageboard@belsize.org.uk

To send details for Tradesmen You Can
Trust:
TYCT@belsize.org.uk

For planning matters: info@belsize.org.uk

Interested in keeping up with Belsize news
and events? If you wish to receive
occasional emails from us with news about
Belsize and BelSoc and are not already on
our list, please send your email address to
info@belsize.org.uk

To find out the latest about
Camden Planning:
[https://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/
navigation/environment/planning-
and-built-environment/](https://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/environment/planning-and-built-environment/)

Would you like to join our committee
and/or help with events, distribution
and other tasks? If so, please email
info@belsize.org.uk

www.belsize.org.uk