

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.

It was great to see many of you at the Summer Party this year, after being unable to host this event for the past two years. We had a sunny day, cakes and tea, and a wonderful garden to enjoy this in.

We are really pleased that our former chair Averil Nottage will lead an historical walk in the area around Parkhill Road. In this Newsletter, she has written about one of the themes in the walk - spies in Belsize - complementing her piece last time on the British Modernists who also lived in that area. Please do sign up for this walk on EventBrite, which will be a tour through this history.

We were deeply saddened to hear of Diana Self's passing. The Newsletter has a piece commemorating her. There is also a piece about volunteering for the Society, an aspect of our work for which Diana provided a lot of support, as she hosted numerous events bringing members together to progress Society work.

The Newsletter has two pieces about clean air, with Camden consulting on its pollution strategy and the new Parklets being established in the Borough. A Parklet has appeared at the corner of England's Lane and Antrim Road.

On planning matters, we report on the O2 Centre development and on the closing of the England's Lane launderette. Also, the Hampstead Theatre's autumn schedule is highlighted.

Hope you enjoy this Newsletter.

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Belsize Society Walk



Averil Nottage will lead a walk exploring the British Modernists, spies and political exiles residing around Parkhill Rd in the 1930s.

**11am and 2.30pm, Sunday
25 September
Start at the junction of
Parkhill Road and
Haverstock Hill.**

The afternoon walk will be followed by tea and cakes at Belsize Library

SOVIET SPIES IN LAWN ROAD

Former BRA Chair and local history expert, Averil Nottage, writes:

Between the mid 1930s and mid 1940s seven Soviet spies lived in the Lawn Road Flats, (now known as Isokon), and many others lived nearby. Who were these spies and what brought them to the area?

From 1933 the rise of Fascism and suppression of workers' movements in Germany and Austria led many active Communist Party members to flee their homelands, bringing little but their political passions with them. They gravitated to areas where their views might be received sympathetically. Soviet intelligence agencies targeted these political exiles to set up their spy networks in Britain.

The Lawn Road Flats, opened in 1934, were very different from the accommodation otherwise available in local Victorian houses. This sleek Modernist block was designed as an experiment in minimalist urban living. The 32 compact "ready to live in" flats had built-in furniture and all services provided. Intended for young professional with few belongings, they were also perfect for refugees. Jack and Molly Pritchard, who owned the flats, were very sympathetic to the exiles, renting vacant flats to them free of charge and helping with introductions and employment.

Jack Pritchard innocently commissioned Edith Tudor-Hart to photograph the construction of the Flats. Edith, who had a studio on Haverstock Hill, was an active member of the Austrian Communist Party and worked for Soviet Intelligence. In 1934 she introduced Arnold Deutsch and his wife to the Pritchards and helped them move into the Lawn Road Flats.

Deutsch arrived in London to establish a Soviet spy network. He focused on Oxford and Cambridge University students with communist sympathies who were likely to reach the upper echelons of government and the civil service. He was one of the most successful Soviet spies then living in London and recruited more than 20 agents including the "Cambridge Five". Edith Tudor-Hart introduced him to Kim Philby who she knew from Vienna. At the height of his clandestine career Philby rose to be the Head of M16 whilst also a KGB spy. Deutsch was recalled to Moscow in 1937 after some slipups and then sidelined.

Meanwhile in 1933 Robert Kuczynski, a rich and influential German-Jewish-communist exile, moved into a flat at 12 Lawn Road. Most of his family, who gradually joined him there, worked for Soviet intelligence. In 1936 Brigitte, a talented secret agent, moved into Lawn Road Flats after marrying a British communist, Anthony Lewis. In the same year her brother Jurgen



Ursula Kuczynski, or Agent Sonya.

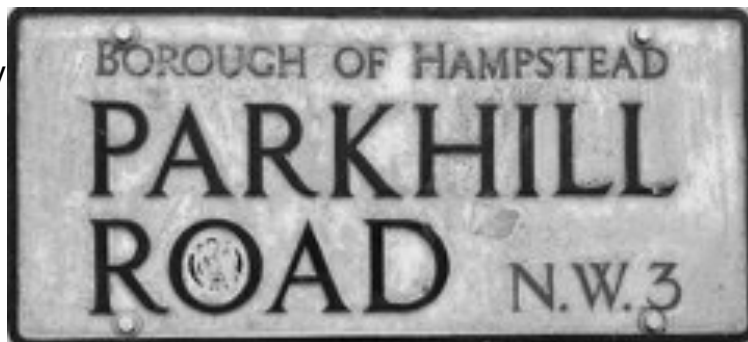
Soviet Spies in Lawn Road (continued)

arrived in London to reactivate the German communist party in Britain, living at 36 Upper Park Road. As a well-respected government statistician, he had many influential friends. Brigitte's sister Ursula, codenamed Sonya, was sent to Switzerland by Soviet Intelligence to establish a small group of anti-Fascist activists prepared to work inside Germany. Brigitte briefed new recruits in the Lawn Road Flats' restaurant, the Isobar, before they travelled to Switzerland. In 1942 Jurgen and Ursula recruited Klaus Fuchs, the spy who revealed British atomic bomb programme secrets. After the war they both returned to East Germany.

The Lawn Road Flats offered the perfect camouflage for well-educated and charming Soviet spies who blended seamlessly into the atmosphere of middle-class respectability.

The site layout made it hard for the intelligence services to keep track of visitors once they had entered the building. German and Austrian spies worked quite separately as they came from different Marxist traditions and linked to rival Soviet secret service agencies. So, spies who were near neighbours may not have known about each other's activities.

As well as the Lawn Road Flats, MI5 also monitored other local locations. In 1938 Jurgen Kuczynski helped to establish the Free German Cultural League at 36 Upper Park Road "to provide a social and cultural centre for refugees and a platform for refugee artists". MI5 was not convinced and saw it as "politics by other means". They also identified Edith Tudor-Harts studio as "a rendezvous of persons interested in communist matters".



Belsize Walk: Artists, Refugees and Spies

Between about 1933 and 1939, artists living around Parkhill Road pioneered the British Modernist art movement, whilst spies living around Lawn Road were at the centre of Soviet espionage in Britain. The political turmoil in Europe, and arrival of exiles escaping Fascism, had a significant impact on both these developments. You can find out more about local culture and chicanery in those extraordinary times on our walk on Sunday 25 September. Led by Averil Nottage, it will take place twice - starting at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

The afternoon walk will be followed by tea and cakes at Belsize Library. The walks will start at the junction of Parkhill Road and Haverstock Hill. We expect a big demand so, to keep everyone safe, we are limiting numbers by operating a ticket system.

BOOK YOUR PLACE!

To book your place register on Eventbrite or through contacting us (back page).

For 11am, 25 Sept: [https://](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/belsize-society-local-history-walk-tickets-401934546047)



www.eventbrite.com/e/belsize-society-local-history-walk-tickets-401934546047

For 2.30pm, on the same day, the link is:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/belsize-society-local-history-walk-tickets-401950945097>



Diana Self - An Appreciation

It is with great sadness that we report that Diana Self died on 22 June peacefully at her home. She was 97.

Diana was a remarkable woman who made an enormous contribution to the Belsize Residents Association, now the Belsize Society. Having moved to Lancaster Grove from Hampstead after her retirement, she joined the committee of the BRA in December 1990 and soon took responsibility for social events. From 1996 to 2000 Diana chaired the society at a time when parking controls were being introduced, Belsize Village was pedestrianised and plans were made to redevelop the Swiss Cottage complex. She remained on the committee, continuing to organise social events impeccably, until 2007. For at least ten more years, Diana hosted new members lunches and meetings with councillors in her beautiful flat. She was also always available to offer her wisdom and support.

Diana was very committed to neighbourliness and loved to create events to bring people together. Some of you will remember that soon after you joined the association, Diana phoned to welcome you and invite you to a new members lunch. And, as she had organising social events down to a fine art, everything she arranged was always a great success. Diana will long be remembered for her warmth, generosity and commitment to Belsize.



Application to demolish O2 Centre and replace with flats

BelSoc is part of the Confederation of Local Community Groups ("CLCG") which has been formed to oppose the planning application by developer Landsec to build blocks of flats on the site occupied by the O2 Centre, its car park and other commercial units running down the rail line from Finchley Road to West Hampstead. The developer wants to build about 1,800 new homes with additional commercial development in and around a "Finchley Square." CLCG has serious concerns about the design quality, the large proportion of single aspect homes (ie box-shaped dwellings), shadowing impacts on nearby properties, poorly designed public spaces, and green space deficiency.

CLCG's written objections to the planning application emphasise the closely-packed buildings that are Soviet in concept. The new buildings would be much taller than the existing O2 Centre and would amount - in effect - to a line of inappropriate tower blocks. The contrast between the characterful low rise and largely Victorian and Edwardian streets of the surrounding area and the plans for towers rising over 100m is stark.

Camden Council has identified a need for around 950 homes on the site as part of its emerging site allocations strategy to meet national planning policy requirements. The much larger number of homes in the planning application would result in significant overdevelopment. Only 35% of the homes would be affordable housing provision. All the affordable homes would be grouped together which gives rise to concerns about social polarisation.

The rabbit hutch nature of the proposals may be discerned from the breakdown of housing types: 46% will be studio or one bedroom flats when Camden's Strategic Housing Market Availability Study identifies an 8% need for that type of home. No four bedroom dwellings are proposed even though the Availability Study identifies a 16% need.

CLCG is calling on Camden not to permit the O2 Centre's demolition. The shops, services, food and drink in the existing Centre provide a valuable and much-used local amenity. They contribute to a sense of community and their absence would drive local people further afield - for example, to Brent Cross. The effect would be a depleted town centre. New commercial activities in the developed space would compete with Finchley Road and cause economic decline there.

You can find out more by reading CLCG's full objection at southampstead.info. The planning application is ref: 2022/0528/P.

Camden consults on 2022-2026 Clean Air Strategy

Camden Clean Air Action Plan 2022-2026 describes what Camden Council and other partners will do to improve air quality and protect health from air pollution over the next four years. It also provides useful information, guidance and suggestions to help you protect your own health by avoiding air pollution and reducing emissions from your own activities.

The draft Plan has been produced with the help of the Clean Air Partnership, which is made up of Camden residents, schools, community groups and businesses. It lists a range of outcomes for cleaner air and improved health in Camden, and the actions that the Council will take to achieve these over the next four years.

The outcomes for cleaner air and protecting health are categorised under seven key themes:

- Reducing emissions from construction and development
- Reducing emissions from buildings
- Reducing emissions from transport
- Supporting communities and schools
- Indirect emissions (from sources outside Council control)
- Public health and awareness
- Indoor air quality and occupational exposure

Additionally, the Plan describes Camden's long-term commitments for achieving clean air in Camden, and these are set out in the Camden Clean Air Strategy 2019-2034 which is contained within the Action Plan document.

The Council are asking several questions about your experience of how air quality (air pollution) affects you, as well as asking for your views about whether you think the draft Clean Air Action Plan will help to clean the air you breathe.

You can view and download the draft Camden Clean Air Action Plan 2022-2026 and respond to the consultation at: <https://consultations.wearecamden.org/supporting-communities/camden-clean-air-action-plan-2022-2026/>.



Camden Clean Air Parklet: Belsize leads the way

After many months of planning, Camden Council opened its first Parklet on 28 June in Belsize Park! The aim of the Camden Clean Air Parklet is to create a space that is dedicated to the community and improving the air we breathe. A Parklet is a car parking space that is converted into a community space for something more environment or community focused such as bike racks, seating areas, or green space. Camden is aiming to increase the number of Parklets in the Borough. Camden Clean

Air was selected along with two other organisations in the Borough to develop and install a trial Parklet.

It will now be in place for 12 months. If the council think the trial has been successful, they may consider introducing a Camden Parklet Scheme, providing the community with a process to apply for Parklets.

So why not give it a try? Located at the corner of England's Lane and Antrim Road and an excellent place for a coffee.



Volunteering for the Society

We would really appreciate members considering volunteering some time for the Society. Emerging from the lockdown, we are very excited to begin to arrange events, represent the views of the community in local forums, celebrate the heritage and history of Belsize, and continue efforts to improve the environment we live in. We also really appreciate the help many members are already providing. But the two years of restrictions has meant the pool of people that have helped has diminished. This is partly because we have done less, but also because the lower interaction means we have not been able to tap into the Society membership.

If you would consider volunteering for the Society as you return from summer, then please do get in touch (contact details on the back page, with info@belsize.org.uk being the Society email address).

How could you help?

We have a range of roles that can be undertaken quite flexibly. You may like to deliver the Newsletter each quarter, strolling around our lovely streets to distribute this publication and TYCT. You may like to contribute to the Newsletter, perhaps writing about a local issue or history and heritage and natural environment of Belsize. We have Society noticeboards, maintained by volunteers who keep the boards up-to-date and ensure matters of local interest are publicised. We need help with the events that are organised, whether taking a lead in arranging an event, or contributing to the event itself, such as by baking a cake or serving the teas at our Annual General Meeting. You may be able to host an event for the Society, such as the garden party. In many of these roles, over the last few years, the pool of volunteers has become smaller and it would be great - if you can spare some time - to share the effort amongst a few more people.

We have many opportunities to organise Society activities.

We are currently on the lookout for someone to co-ordinate the delivery of the Newsletter. This involves receiving from the printers the 500-odd newsletters, working with the Newsletter and membership teams to fill envelopes and then pass on to the team of delivery volunteers. We thank Ann McLarty for organising this over a number of years. If you enjoy working with others, and can spare a couple of days each quarter, and you feel able to help, please do contact us.

Wider than that specific role, it would be really welcomed if individuals felt able to lead on other key management roles - whether the editing of the Newsletter, helping on scrutinising planning applications, organising events, assisting on membership and aspects of running the organisation. The Belsize Society is a volunteer-run body and - during the last three years - these tasks have necessarily had to rely on a stable core team, but it would be good to refresh... and there are new areas of community work emerging where individuals may take a lead.

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL, 8-21 SEPTEMBER

After a two year pandemic-induced hiatus, Open House is back with a programme of events, including access to a huge number remarkable buildings, landscapes and neighbourhoods all over London. There is a wide range of special events, guided tours, and activities for children and families: there is something for everyone.

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



BelSoc enjoys a first summer party after lockdown

We were pleased to be able to host a summer party this year, after an absence for two years. Around 70 people spent a sunny afternoon together, enjoying the tea and cakes and meeting neighbours.

Former chair, Handley Stevens, said a few words about the Belsize Residents Association years when he was involved.

We are really grateful to Deborah and Barry for hosting and to the volunteers who both provided cakes and helped on the day.

Belsize Village launderette

With the closure of the much-loved launderette in England's Lane, we wish to highlight the launderette in Belsize Village (54 Belsize Lane). Open every day from 7:30am to 10:00pm, it provides an essential local service.



What's coming up at Hampstead Theatre?

Next on the Main Stage - The Snail House

Sir Neil Marriot had a "good pandemic", becoming familiar to millions from his TV appearances as a government medical advisor, and he is now rewarding himself with a lavish birthday party. But, amidst the oak panelling and the silver service, his family are at one another's throats again, and he thinks there's something familiar – and somehow unsettling – about one of the catering staff...

The Snail House is the first completely original play from **Richard Eyre**, the vastly experienced director of theatre, opera, film and television who was Artistic Director of the National Theatre from 1988 to 1997. His previous productions at Hampstead have included *The Last of the Duchess* and *Mr Foote's Other Leg*.

Next on Downstairs - Ravenscourt

Lydia is a mental-health professional determined to make a difference. She has given up her comfortable job in private practice to become a therapist at Ravenscourt – where society's most in need can receive treatment. But as Lydia settles into the job, she starts to realise how high the odds are stacked against her being able to really change things. Maybe the cynics are right: the system is broken and nobody cares..

Georgina Burns is an alumnus of Hampstead Theatre's INSPIRE course for emerging playwrights; *Ravenscourt* is her first produced full length play. Hampstead Theatre's Associate Artist **Tessa Walker** (*Big Big Sky*, *The Glad Game*) directs.

Dates for your diary

Belsize Society

25 Sep, starting at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Historic walk led by Averil Nottage. Meet at junction of Parkhill Road and Haverstock Hill, NW3. Free. The afternoon walk will be followed by tea and cakes at Belsize Library.

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

26 Aug, 7pm. Not the wick, nor the candle, but the burning: an evening of film, video, poetry and music that splices together ideas around family,. £4/5.

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

14 Sep, 6.30pm. Emily Itami and Marianne Levy in Conversation. Join the authors for an evening discussing their novels: 'Fault Lines' & 'Don't Forget to Scream'. £6-9 through Eventbrite.

15 Sep, 7.30pm. Good Golly, Miss Molly & Master Tommy! 18th-century London was home to a flourishing queer subculture with Molly & Tommy Houses. This immersive evening will be hosted by Lasana Shabazz & Azara. £20-15 from Eventbrite.

28 Sep, 6.30pm. David Hare - We Travelled. Join playwright, screenwriter and theatre/film director David Hare for a conversation on his new book. £6-9 through Eventbrite.

13 Oct, 7.30pm. Farinelli: Operatic Castrato Sensation. Mezzo Soprano Maria Ostroukhova with Les Bougies Baroques present a special Salon Concert with Social and Supper after, part of the first annual Queer Georgian Social Season. £20-25 from Eventbrite.

St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3

Sunday 25 Sep, 6.30pm. Belsize Baroque play music by Handel and Avison. Tickets £15 available at www.wegottickets.com/event/552588.

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.

Contact Us

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For Newsletter submissions and letters:

info@belsize.org.uk. Deadline for next

issue is: **24 October 2022**

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/navigationenvironment/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