

# THE BELSIZE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER  
AUG 2023

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

[www.belsize.org.uk](http://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 two events over the last weeks. For the Summer Party this year, we managed to avoid some ominous weather forecasts. We were also pleased to hold an event jointly with the Friends of the Belsize Community Library about the Erno Goldfinger house on Willow Road.

We are really pleased that our former chair Averil Nottage will lead an historical walk about the Eton College estate. In this Newsletter, she has written about the themes in the walk. Please do sign up for this walk on EventBrite.

The annual London Open House Festival is due to take place in September and you'll be able to see some Belsize properties during this. One is BelSoc committee member Santa Polescuk's architectural practice, a building notable for the steps taken to retrofit energy efficiency into the building. On that theme, we also highlight energy performance certificates.

The Newsletter covers what is on at Hampstead Theatre and some Camden Council information about trees in the borough and bulky waste collections. There are also some details of the charity, Doorstep Library.

We are awaiting further news about the planning applications for Howitt Close, where the Society participated in the recent planning inquiry. The Newsletter sets out the current position.

We hope you enjoy the Newsletter.

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### Belsize Society Walk



Averil Nottage will lead the walk "From Elysian Fields to Trains and Villas", starting in England's Lane, looking at the history of the Eton College estate.

**11am and 2.30pm, Sunday  
24 September**

**Free, book on Eventbrite.**

The afternoon walk will be followed by tea and cakes at St Saviour's Church, Eton Rd

## From Elysian Fields to Trains and Villas

*Averil Nottage gives us a flavour of her guided walk this autumn which will look at the history of the Eton College estate:*

In the first half of the 19th century the Belsize estate, which had good views of the City, was divided up to provide country residences for wealthy Londoners. The Eton College estate, to the south of England's Lane and Lancaster Grove, was lower lying and continued to be farmed as hay meadows.

Apart from two former farmhouses on a track known as England's Lane, the only properties on the Eton College estate were those in the hamlet of Haverstock Hill on the Hampstead Road. These are shown in the foreground of John Constable's "View of the City of London from Sir Richard Steele's Cottage", which he painted in around 1832. The simple white cottage, standing on a bank to the right, was set back from the Hampstead Road and shielded by trees. It was named after Dick Steele, the Anglo-Irish essayist and playwright who temporarily sought solitude there in 1712. He was knighted three years later.



***John Constable's View of the City of London from Sir Richard Steele's Cottage, 1832***

Opposite the cottage on the painting is the rustic Load of Hay tavern (which was rebuilt and is now the Haverstock Tavern). Here, gentlemen of the road drew bridle beside the horse block to refresh themselves with a tankard of ripe ale before setting out across country. Drovers on their way to market left their cattle drinking at the water trough while quenching their own thirst at the inn. Coachmen heading for Hampstead stopped to refresh themselves, and their horses, before the final ascent. Londoners enjoying a country walk rested in the tea garden. During haymaking, labourers gathered to tittle and laugh, quarrel and fight, and sing

drowsy songs far into the night.

The substantial brick houses below the inn replaced wooden structures built for Moll King in the 1730s, as David S. Percy explains in his fascinating book about "The Harlots of Haverstock Hill: 'Moll' King and her Belsize Houses." We don't know whether these services were still available in Constable's time.

Below the hamlet of Haverstock Hill are yellow hayfields. The American writer Washington Irving, who stayed in Steele's Cottage in the early 1820s, spent many delicious hours lying on the new mown hay and inhaling the fragrance amongst buzzing summer flies and leaping grasshoppers. Almost all the meadows, as far as the eye could see, grew hay, with overloaded wooden carts rumbling down the road to London to feed the Capital's horses. They would return full of horse manure to enrich the soil. Londoners came to these isolated meadows to fight duels, hold protest meetings and enjoy country walks.

## From Elysian Fields to Trains and Villas (continued)

Beyond the hayfields we see the smoky metropolis. This was largely beyond the New Road, now known as Euston Road. Constable would probably have seen the buildings of Camden Town creeping northwards, but he was taking artistic licence in showing St Paul's from this vantage point.

When the Regents Park canal was completed in 1820, farming on the estate became less profitable as hay could be transported cheaply from further afield. But the Provost and Fellows of Eton College had little incentive to develop the land as they personally profited when farm leases were renewed. It was only when they saw the benefits of neighbouring housing developments, such as St John's Wood, that they started to reconsider.

A plan to build Adelaide Road across the estate in the early 1830s was disrupted by the arrival of the London Birmingham railway. George Stephenson, the engineer who oversaw the project, used pioneering methods to build an iron bridge at Chalk Farm and a tunnel under Primrose Hill with a grand ornamental entrance. Large crowds came to visit these novel sights.

Gradually houses started to be built near the Hampstead Road. Samuel Cuming was the main developer and in the late 1840s built villas in the triangular corner of the estate at Chalk Farm between Provost Road and Eton Road. It took many more decades to build over the whole estate and in the meantime dairies, market gardens and nurseries, as well as an exotic poultry farm and a cricket ground, appeared. After proposals were made to develop Primrose Hill as botanical gardens or a cemetery, an agreement was reached with Eton College for it to be preserved as a public open space.

I will cover all these stories, and more, in a guided walk for the Belsize Society on the development of the Eton College estate in the first half of the 19th century.

## Belsize Walk: From Elysian Fields to Trains and Villas

Until the 1830s the Eton College estate was covered with hay meadows. Londoners were attracted to these isolated fields to fight duels, protest and enjoy country walks. Then the railway arrived, cutting through the meadows and soon roads and villas followed as well as dairies, nurseries, market gardens and exotic poultry. Find out about all of this, and much more, on our walk led by local historian, Averil Nottage.

"From Elysian Fields to Trains and Villas" will run twice – at 11.00 and 2.30 – on 24 September starting at the junction of England's Lane and Chalcot Gardens. Tea and cakes will be provided following the afternoon walk. Tickets can be booked on Eventbrite.

### BOOK YOUR PLACE!

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



**For 11am, 24 Sept:**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/belsize-society-local-history-walk-tickets-661576772937>

**For 2.30pm, on the same day, the link is:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/belsize-society-local-history-walk-tickets-661581015627>





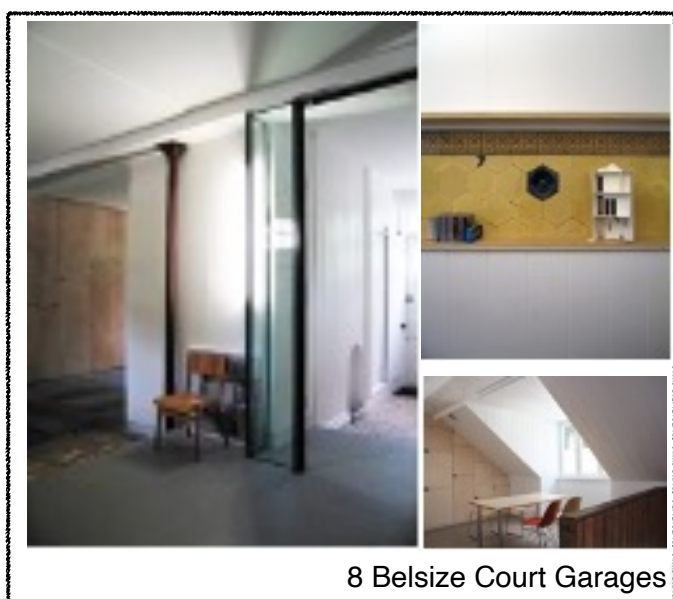
## Live over Work: Visit a carbon-reducing retrofit in Belsize

Sanya Polescuk Architects are opening their offices, with living spaces above, as part of this year's Open House Festival. If you are able to drop by, then the address is 8 Belsize Court Garages NW3 5AJ and tour dates/timings will be confirmed in August at <https://programme.openhouse.org.uk>. The festival runs 6 to 17 September.

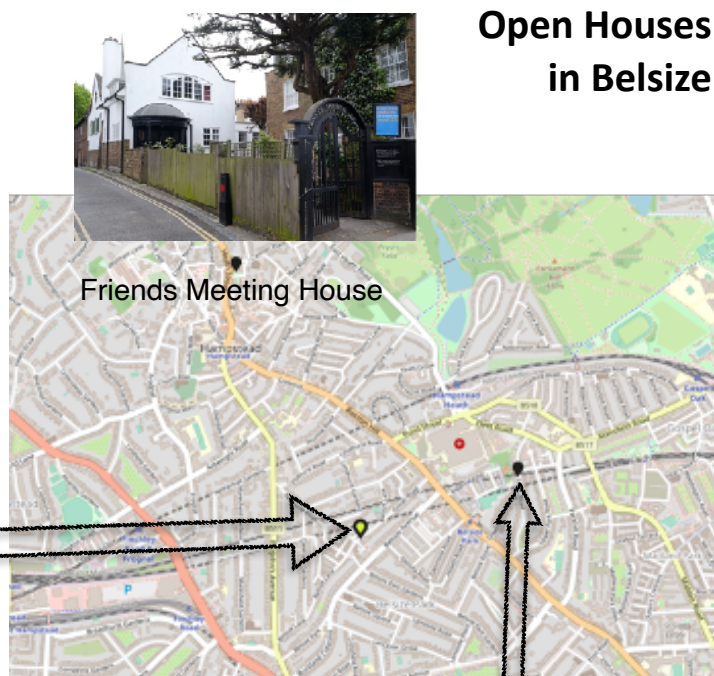
Originally a Victorian live-work coach-and-horses stables with hayloft and coachman's quarters above, this 19th-century mews house is now home to an award-winning architects' studio, a local community land trust and a 4-bedroom upper maisonette rented as an HMO normally closed to the public. The mix of activities within plays an active role in the lives of the local community.

The main idea behind the project was to return the building to its originally intended use i.e. provide a place to live and work. As important was to retain the original Victorian features while making as many carbon-reducing and energy-saving improvements as possible (working towards Code of Sustainable Building, Code Level 4).

Come and meet the architects who work in the office on the ground floor and listen to some interesting facts about the building, go through the development phases with more detail, and have a sneak peek into the archives with samples. The tour will not only reveal secrets about architectural practice but also about an energy-efficient historic house which has retained its unique character.



8 Belsize Court Garages



### Open Houses in Belsize

## OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL



In Camden borough, there are 22 Festival entries this year and, near to Belsize, the Isokon Building is opening. This Grade I listed 1934 residential block of flats was designed by the Canadian modernist architect Wells Coates for clients Jack and Molly Pritchard. Previous Newsletter articles have highlighted the historic nature of the building. An English Heritage blue plaque for Bauhaus masters Gropius, Breuer and Moholy-Nagy has been placed on the building.



Nearby and open will be the Hampstead Friends Meeting House, at 120 Heath Street, NW3 1DR. This is a listed Arts and Crafts freestyle building with plain interior and many charming original features, sympathetically modernised in 1991.

Full Festival details at <https://programme.openhouse.org.uk>. The festival runs 6 to 17 September.

## Public Inquiry on Howitt Close



July saw the Society make representations at the Howitt Close Public Inquiry. The Society objects to the developer Freshwater's proposal to build seven additional flats in a mansard roof extension on the 1930s Art Deco block. We view this as harming the character of the Conservation Area. We have also been seeking greater recognition of the building's architectural merit, applying to Historic England for a listing for the building.

A decision is due soon on whether the planning inspector agreed with Camden's rejection of the proposal. The decision will mean Camden Council turns to a second application the developer has made, similar to the first in adding the additional floor to which the Society and others object. Camden paused consideration of this pending the inspector's decision.

### Bulky waste collections

It is always very irritating to see large items dumped on the pavements of Belsize in the vain hope or misguided expectation that they will be collected by Veolia with ordinary waste on bin day. That does not happen, of course.

Veolia can collect large items that do not fit in your bin, including beds or mattresses, broken furniture like sofas or chairs, and extra bags of rubbish. To book a collection, you should contact Veolia on 020 3567 8105. Help to move items for collection to the outside edge of your property can be provided by Camden's handyperson service (charges apply). Large electrical items can be collected for free by Clearabee, or also by Veolia for a separate charge. You are entitled to two free collections a year if you are a Camden resident and are aged 65 and over, or receive 100% Council Tax Support. You should email [uk.occamden@veolia.com](mailto:uk.occamden@veolia.com) to find out more about the service. Bulky waste, including reusable furniture and large items that do not fit in your bin, can still be taken to Regis Road reuse and recycling centre in Kentish Town.

The Love Clean Streets app can be used to report street cleaning issues, such as illegally dumped rubbish, dog mess, graffiti and litter, using your smartphone. You can report fly-tipping online through the Love Clean Streets web page ([camden.lovecleanstreets.com/help](http://camden.lovecleanstreets.com/help)) or by calling Veolia on 020 3567 8105.

## Belsize Society Summer Party

The Society's summer party took place on a June afternoon in the beautiful garden of our members Deborah and Barry Buzan. The occasion was a great opportunity for members to meet each other and chat while devouring delicious cakes. We are indebted to all who baked cakes and served tea. We are particularly grateful to the Buzans for generously allowing us to use their garden and helping to make the event such a success.



## BelSoc/Friends of Library Talk

We were pleased to be able to host - with the Friends of the Belsize Community Library - an event in June, at which Fabian Watkinson spoke on "The house that no one wanted - Erno Goldfinger & 2 Willow Road".

Fabian showed images of the building over the last decades, a gem that was the Goldfingers' home until the National Trust bought it. Relatively unchanged since the 1940s, the modernist home was described highlighting the building's interiors and furnishings, the Goldfingers' own art collection, all in the context of the Goldfingers' lives.

We heard about the way this building took a full circle in the eyes of heritage conservation. Highly controversial when first proposed with MP Henry Brooke a strong objector, the National Trust would take on the property under the then heritage minister Peter Brooke, Henry's son.



## Tradesman You Can Trust

We enclose with this Newsletter the 2023 Tradesman You Can Trust. Thanks to all who contributed to this year's issue offering new recommendations and confirming their use of the tradespeople they found in TYCT. As usual, the issue covers electricians, plumbers and other tradespeople. We'll begin over the next year to explore new categories of tradespeople or tweak those that are there already, especially as we hear from any of our members involved in retrofitting projects to reduce energy costs.

Just a reminder that your contributions are very welcome all through the year and can be sent by email to [TYCT@belsize.org.uk](mailto:TYCT@belsize.org.uk), be it on the form in the centre of the booklet or otherwise. Please give full details for the entry (website addresses are very useful) as well as whether you prefer your phone number or email to be used by other members to contact you for more information.

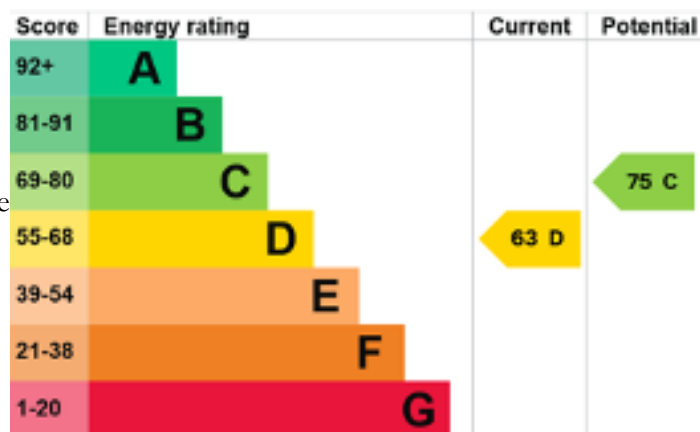
## Energy Performance Certificates

After a two year pandemic-induced hiatus, Open House is back with a programme of events. An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is needed whenever a property is built, sold or rented out. It contains information about a property's energy use, typical energy costs and recommendations about how to reduce energy use and save money.

It gives a property an energy efficiency rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and is valid for 10 years. It is a legal requirement that your property has an EPC rating of E or above before you can rent it out. The Government is considering raising the minimum requirements from level E to C. Listed buildings don't need an EPC.

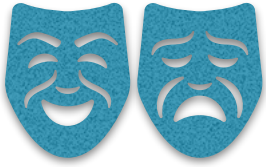
Full details can be found on the Government's website [www.gov.uk/buy-sell-your-home/energy-performance-certificates](http://www.gov.uk/buy-sell-your-home/energy-performance-certificates).

Please stay in touch about your plans to reduce energy use and retrofitting our homes on [retrofit@belsize.org.uk](mailto:retrofit@belsize.org.uk).



EPCs show the current score and what might be possible with improvements in the property





## What's coming up at Hampstead Theatre?

### ***On the main stage - Anthropology***

Merril is one of Silicon Valley's leading software engineers, but her life disintegrates when her younger sister Angie vanishes on her way home from college. A year later, when the police have long abandoned their search, Merrill assembles all the digital material Angie has left behind and sets about building herself a digital simulation of her sister. The resultant 'virtual Angie' offers her some solace – until, that is, it starts to reveal new details about the real Angie's disappearance.

San Francisco-based **Lauren Gunderson** is one of the world's most produced playwrights. Author of over 20 plays, Lauren has received the Lanford Wilson Award at the Dramatists Guild Awards and two Steinberg/ATCA New Play Awards.

Anthropology is the twelfth play that **Anna Ledwich** has directed for Hampstead, where her work has ranged from Labyrinth to the Olivier nominated productions of Dry Powder and Four Minutes Twelve Seconds. 7 Sep to 14 Oct

### ***Downstairs - Octopolis***

Professor George Grey is a brilliant behavioural biologist who, alongside her recently deceased husband, became world-renowned for her pioneering research into octopus intelligence. Mainly the intelligence of one particular octopus, in fact: Frances, who still resides in a large, purpose-built tank in George's campus accommodation.

Into this house of grief walks Harry, an ambitious anthropologist, despatched by the university with permission to test his breathtaking new theory on Frances. The nature of his assignment is shocking to George, and threatens to tear her world apart in more ways than one.

**Marek Horn's** plays include Wild Swimming (Edinburgh Fringe and Bristol Old Vic) and Yellowfin (Southwark Playhouse). Octopolis is directed by **Ed Madden** and is his second collaboration with Marek. Ed's credits include Yellowfin (Southwark Playhouse) and A Table Tennis Play (Edinburgh Fringe). 15 Sep to 28 Oct

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### **Doorstep Library: Words take you places**

Doorstep Library is a community-focused charity dedicated to bringing the gift of books and the joy of reading into the homes of children and families who need our support. 1 in 5 children don't own a book, and 1 in 4 children leave primary school unable to read or write properly. By working with families every week, the charity hopes to improve a child's future opportunities in life, instilling a lifelong passion for reading.



The Library operates across London and has a project particularly close to us: in Chalk Farm. It is looking for volunteers to join its team. For more information, and to discuss opportunities in more depth, visit:

<https://volunteer.doorsteplib.org.uk/>.

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### **Trees in Camden: Did you know that...**

Camden Council manages approximately 28,000 individual trees across the borough and 10-15,000 additional trees as part of sites of nature conservation. In 2022-23, Camden removed 166 trees and planted 600 trees. Out of that total, 64 street trees were removed and 561 street trees were planted. The tree canopy cover has increased by about 1.1% in the last 9 years up to 22.9%. The canopy cover includes council land, private land and green spaces not managed by the Council. London plane trees make up 13% of those in the borough followed by lime trees (6%) but there is a wide array including false acacia (2%), whitebeam (2%) and sycamores (3%). To find out more about notable trees in Belsize Park, go to our website: <https://www.belsize.org.uk/features/2020/notable-trees-in-belsize-park>.

# Dates for your diary

## Belsize Society

24 Sep, starting at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Historic walk led by Averil Nottage. Book on Eventbrite. Free. The afternoon walk will be followed by tea and cakes at Octagon Hall, St Saviours, NW3 4SU.

## Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road, NW3 [www.camdenartscentre.org](http://www.camdenartscentre.org)

16 Sep, 2-6pm. Chains of Desire. An afternoon of presentations exploring the art and life of Martin Wong, and his time spent on New York City's Lower East Side. Free/donation.

## Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Wed-Fri, Sun, until 17 Dec. Lancelot Ribeiro: Finding Joy in a Landscape. A journey through the changing landscapes of Hampstead-based expressionist poet and painter. Free.

5 Sep, 7-8.30pm. Folk and Fusion Concert. Join New Elizabethan Award winners Eleanor Grant and Gus McQuade for an evening of folk and fusion. £17/£15.

27 Sep, 7-9pm. Ajay Chowdhury - The Detective. Join Burgh House Book Lab for an evening discussing the new edge-of-your-seat thriller The Detective. £8/£6.

5 Oct, 7-9pm. Laura Freeman - Ways of Life. Join Burgh House Book Lab for an evening discussing the book Ways of Life. £8/£6.

## Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, Eton Avenue, NW3

26-28 Sep, tbc. Follies. The classic Sondheim/Goldman musical showcases this year's MA Music Theatre actors. <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/events/>

## Belsize Community Library, Antrim Road, NW3

Thursday, 21 Sep, 7.30pm. Tudor Allen: Treasures of the Archives – Highlights from the Collections of Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre. £5 suggested for donation and refreshments.

Thursday, 19 Oct, 7.30pm. Carole Isaacs: The Wolf of Baghdad. £5 suggested for donation and refreshments.

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](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk). Deadline for next

issue is: **24 October 2023**

To send posters for noticeboards:

[haverstockboard@belsize.org.uk](mailto:haverstockboard@belsize.org.uk)

[villageboard@belsize.org.uk](mailto:villageboard@belsize.org.uk)

To send details for Tradesmen You Can Trust:

[TYCT@belsize.org.uk](mailto:TYCT@belsize.org.uk)

For planning matters: [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk)

To find out the latest about Camden Planning:

<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](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk)

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