

# Belsize Residents Association

## Newsletter

August 2018

### Notes from your Chair

Welcome to the August Newsletter.

We had a splendid day for this year's Garden Party and are grateful to all who helped organised it. The venue was fabulous and we had plenty of great conversation and cakes.

In this issue, we focus on the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. The School's Deputy Principal introduces us to this fascinating local institution. Also, the School is kindly inviting members to an event in the Autumn. Details about this will follow by email as we're still organising it.

The issue has an article which asks whether you may be able to help with a pollution monitoring initiative for Camden. As the area has some pollution hotspots, there is a need for good local data about pollution, and this initiative seeks to fill that gap.

BRA continues to monitor planning applications. One of our planning experts describes the hurdles faced by small organisations like us in challenging large planning applications. The summer is likely to see this issue at large, as challenges are mounted about the developments around Swiss Cottage.

And finally, you'll see the Isokon will have a new Blue Plaque on it if you go to Lawn Road.

Hope you enjoy this issue.

[www.belsize.org.uk](http://www.belsize.org.uk)

### Contents

Focus on: Royal Central School of Speech and Drama - 2
Air Quality Monitoring - 4
BRA and the Planning System - 5
Camden Transport Strategy Workshop - 6
Camden Local Transport Meeting - 6
Trees In Camden- 7
Blue Plaques for Belsize- 7
Start of Works Delayed at Swiss Cottage - 7
Help Needed - 7
Dates for Your Diary - 8

### BRA Autumn Event

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama



**BRA has been invited to see Central students perform at the Embassy Theatre next term, with a chance to discuss the production with other BRA members at special drinks/nibbles.**

**Details will be circulated to members nearer the time, with a ballot for places.**

# FOCUS ON: ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

*The Editor writes:*

Camden has a long tradition of excellence in the arts. This tradition is nowhere better embodied than in the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, our distinguished neighbour (and BRA member) in Eton Avenue. I interviewed Debbie Scully, Central's Deputy Principal, about its origins, its teaching and its ties to Swiss Cottage.

We began by talking about Central's history and how it came to be in Swiss Cottage. The School was founded by Elsie Fogerty in 1906 as the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, located in the Royal Albert Hall. Its early students included Laurence Olivier and Peggy Ashcroft whose busts remained in the Albert Hall until recently. By the mid-1950s, space was running short and the lease in Kensington was running out. So, in 1957, the School moved to the Embassy Theatre in Swiss Cottage. Princess Marina opened the Central School of Speech and Drama on 28 May 1958.

Central was at that time a privately-funded institution with no resort to public funds for expansion beyond the theatre and old house which formed the original lease. Chairman Sir John Davis raised the money for a new adjacent building which was opened in 1961 by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, who was then Central's Patron. In 1972, a studio on the corner of Buckland Crescent was opened by new patron Princess Alexandra.

Central became grant-aided by the Inner London Education Authority in the mid-1970s. Being grant-aided and not grant-maintained, it remained unable to access capital funds for development and shortage of space was a continuing problem. Although Central had expanded since taking the lease, it did not have the sort of buildings and spaces needed for students to work on the full range of theatre-related projects. Stage sets had to be constructed outside and then taken into a low portacabin through the back door as it was

physically impossible to build them anywhere else.

Following changes brought about by the Education Act 1988, Central became eligible for government funding.

This marked an important turning point: for the first time, the School was able to develop a long-term strategy for future expansion. All options were on the table, but the decision was taken to remain at Swiss Cottage. Close to all the amenities of the West End and the world-leading London theatre scene, the benefits of the site were enormous. Being a little outside central London meant too that accommodation for students was more affordable.

The 1990s saw the end of the speech training that had been Elsie Fogerty's specialism. Speech therapy had by that time moved away from elocution-based learning towards a scientific discipline and no longer fitted Central's theatre-based specialisms. But Central continued to develop. A new workshop facility was opened in 1991 followed by a studio theatre, design studios and wardrobe facilities. In the late 1990s, the five-storey East Block was completed, housing a library, computing facilities and social spaces for students. The Embassy Theatre was later refurbished and the West Block opened in 2005, with modern performance spaces and rehearsal rooms. In the same year, the School became a federal member of the University of London. The Queen conferred Royal Title in 2012.

I asked Debbie about the student experience. She talked about the long hours and special commitment that is needed to study at Central. Inclusivity is a core part of the ethos. Central is wholly committed to a diverse student population.



# FOCUS ON: ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

I was able to see the impressive atrium which is intelligently designed to make the building accessible for wheelchairs and constitutes a high-quality piece of architecture of the sort that BRA endorses.

There are currently around 1000 full-time students including 600

undergraduates. Central's ethos is to ensure that students immerse themselves in the totality of the arts that make theatre. Reflecting this holistic approach, students

have numerous pathways to a degree. There are three undergraduate degrees in acting: the Acting BA, the Acting (Collaborative and Devised Theatre) BA and the Acting (Musical Theatre) BA. Competition for places on these courses is enormous: about 5000 candidates apply for fewer than 50 places a year. Each candidate is individually auditioned. This painstaking process captures the right sort of person for Central: talent and ability to pay attention are key qualities, and they need to be seen in real life not on paper.

At postgraduate level, Central offers Classical Acting, Contemporary Acting and Acting for Screen. Acting is, however, only one strand of Central's work. It has also taken stage design out of the fine art school and into the stage school. There are no fewer than 13 undergraduate degrees in theatre design: costume construction, prop making, scenic art, lighting and sound are just a few of the courses on offer. Constantly seeking to innovate, Central is the first institution to offer a degree course in puppetry. Productions such as the National Theatre's *War Horse* have benefitted from Central's expertise.

Central has a longstanding commitment to the training of educators in theatre, having trained



drama teachers since 1912. It trains voice coaches, movement coaches and drama therapists. Elsie Fogerty's original vision of social participation is still a strong theme in Central's work. Students are keen to apply their theatre skills to different social settings. They have contributed their skills to community projects both in the UK and abroad (particularly India). They have partnered with other theatre organisation such as Clean Break, the well-established drama charity which works with women prisoners and former prisoners. The Saturday Youth Theatre inspires young people to become involved in arts and theatre, as does Central's work in schools.

What about the future? A new North Block is under construction due to be completed in the autumn and to be opened in January 2019. Ten years in the making, the Block will provide a much-needed courtyard-style theatre. It will be topped by a fully-sprung movement space and, wrapped around, will be 10 storeys of offices to complement the existing proscenium arch theatre and the studios. The development will mean that students will be taught entirely on campus, removing the need to travel to other venues for teaching and improving the overall experience of studying at Central.

I asked Debbie what makes Central such a special place to work. She pointed to the sheer number of activities that happen every day. Teaching, academic research and writing, social outreach, public productions, a thriving programme of short courses, inspiring the next generation of actors: Central stretches boundaries while remaining true to traditional theatre skills. And I suppose that, as neighbours, this is what we notice too. Whether we are reading RSC programme notes by one of Central's professors or coming across its local outreach work or recognise a Central name in the acknowledgements of an Ali Smith novel, we appreciate Central's national importance and its contribution to our own neck of the woods.

# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

## Air quality monitoring in Belsize/Swiss Cottage – volunteers needed

*BRA Committee member Tess Poole writes:*

Are you interested in collecting evidence about the air quality in the Belsize Park/Swiss Cottage area? Can you suggest any air pollution ‘hot spots’ where air quality monitoring should take place?

Camden Council is offering Community Infrastructure Levy money to fund a 12-month community air quality monitoring exercise if BRA can organise a team of volunteers to implement the data collection.

How will the monitoring be carried out?

We will be monitoring levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), the main source of which is vehicle exhausts. At each of 10 locations there will be 3 diffusion tubes and these will need to be changed once a month. We will collect monthly readings for 12 months and then at the end of the period the council will process the data and provide us with an annual nitrogen dioxide figure that can be compared with the annual legal limit value for that pollutant. If the data confirm that NO<sub>2</sub> levels are too high then this will strengthen the case for taking action to improve air quality in our local area.

Camden Council will hold an information and training session for the volunteers. We would need to make a firm commitment as in order to obtain valid data we have to stick to the requirements:

- The project needs a commitment from BRA for at least 12 months.
- The diffusion tubes will need to be changed every month on specific change dates.
- The tubes have to be refrigerated before and after use as the medium used to capture the pollutant can degrade.
- The diffusion tubes need to be sent to Camden Council as soon as they have been collected, either delivered by hand or posted the same day of collection.
- BRA will provide volunteers with stamped addressed posting envelopes; Camden will reimburse BRA for the postage costs of sending the diffusion tubes back.

Where will the air quality be monitored?

We can propose up to 10 locations in or near the Belsize and Swiss Cottage wards, which would enable us to collect air quality data at a very local level. Areas with serious vehicle congestion and/or ‘rat run’ routes would be good candidates as vehicle emissions are the major source of NO<sub>2</sub> in our area.

Camden’s air quality team will provide guidance on monitoring locations and how to secure the diffusion tube brackets in place.

If the various Swiss Cottage building projects impede traffic flow then this could lead to raised NO<sub>2</sub> levels. We could, for instance, choose some locations on or near the boundary of the 100 Avenue Road development site, although these air quality monitoring sites will not identify the specific source of the NO<sub>2</sub>.

When would we start?

If there is enough support from BRA members, the monitoring can begin as soon as we have the diffusion tube volunteers organised. We would like to have everything in place to start the monitoring project by the end of 2018 at the latest.

How can you get involved?

Please contact BRA via [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk) by 30 September if you would like to:

- Propose a location in Belsize or Swiss Cottage wards for air quality monitoring;
- Volunteer(s) to ‘adopt’ and look after a monitoring site and change the test tubes – we will need at least 2 people, but preferably 3, per monitoring site to allow for holidays, illness and other commitments;
- Help to coordinate volunteer air quality monitoring teams – we would like at least 2 coordinators who could work with the BRA committee.

BRA believes this is a very worthwhile air quality monitoring exercise. However, we will only be able to go ahead with the project if we have enough support from members as Camden does not have the resources itself to carry out the monthly diffusion tube collections.





# PLANNING MATTERS

## BRA and the Planning System

*BRA Committee member and planning expert Sanya Polescuk writes:*

One of the many good ways of looking after your neighbourhood is balancing the need for its modernisation and the desire to safeguard its special character. In a nutshell, that is the aim of Belsize Residents Association's Committee when assessing Planning Applications received by the Council. Generally this means two things: ensuring that the Council takes into account the all-important aspect of the physical context, such as immediately-adjacent buildings and, looking at the wider neighbourhood, its existing infrastructure and ability to cope not only with the future needs of the development but also its needs during the process of construction. BRA assesses and participates in both. The second aspect is particularly important for large-scale, major developments such as, for instance, 100 Avenue Road or The Hall School.

It is of course notoriously difficult to stop major developments – their applicants invest heavily in the preparation of the applications and ultimately they should be able to address the particular



needs and aspirations of the local area. The current planning system stipulates community consultation in the process of a major application's preparation (Camden's Statement of Community Involvement, adopted July 2016). The applicant is obliged to conduct a number of consultations and feed its results into the proposal. This should minimise local objections and avoid the refusal of planning permission. Instead, permissions are granted with a string of conditions which the applicant must discharge before construction can start on site, ranging from the Council's approval of further studies such as a Construction Management Plan (CMP) to

samples of materials proposed for the development. Some of these conditions are subject to further community involvement, such as preparation of a CMP, whilst other get logged in the Council's system and are less transparent.

One of the overriding frustrations with the current system is the inability of a community to have a fundamental impact on major proposals, regardless of the time or financial investment. Until such time as the system changes, we are doing our utmost to help shape major developments so that their impact on our neighbourhood and our lives is as contained as practically possible.

## BRA CELEBRATES SUMMER

It was wonderful that BRA members Angelina and Kamal Kohli could host so many of us for the annual garden party. Many thanks to them for hosting this year.

Over 60 people enjoyed the sun, tea, cakes and conversations.

....Lost in the partying, we did not take photos. Apologies for this.

# TRANSPORT MATTERS

## Camden Transport Strategy Workshop

*BRA Chair Prabhat Vaze attended this Workshop on 4 July.*

Camden's transport strategy is nested within a wider TfL strategy and will be used to prioritise a pot of money that Camden controls for local transport issues (about £2m per annum called the Local Investment Fund).

The Council is consulting on the headline objectives, which are: 1) increasing cycling and walking; 2) reducing car ownership; 3) accessibility for all; 4) increasing safety; 5) reducing emissions and noise; 6) maintaining the highways network and kerb-side spaces for the movement of goods and people; 7) economic growth and regeneration.

At the meeting, there was a Q&A followed by topic-focused breakout sessions. Belsize issues were raised (ensuring adequate time at crossings, developments and construction traffic, tackling pollution, encouraging cycling and walking, tackling the school run).

BRA in the main supports Camden's ideas but members may have mixed views about Camden's approach to cars. There was discussion about the relative importance of different drivers to reduce congestion. A lot of ideas centred on reducing residents' car ownership levels, but the data seemed to indicate that increased congestion was as much due to the rise in delivery vehicles and the use of private hire cabs.

The consultation will continue and BRA will no doubt formally take part when a draft Strategy is produced.

---

## Camden Local Transport meeting

*Prabhat also attended the annual meeting between TfL and Camden residents on 18 July. TfL and Camden's transport officials answered questions from residents around Camden. BRA asked three pre-prepared questions that were submitted for consideration in advance of the meeting:*

*Q: Given the changes/construction in Swiss Cottage, we would welcome greater comfort that buses are going to run in a timely way and that there is planning for both the construction-related disruption and any separate one-off disruptions occurring at the same time.*

*A: In broad terms, TfL have developed plans at different levels and have put in place systems for both construction-related disruptions and one-off events. Maintaining traffic flows will be a high priority. As and when necessary, traffic lights will be changed to ease congestion.*

*Q: We have read that the Mayor has cut the 268 bus frequency. There has been no user consultation; and possibly no consultation with local authorities either. Why has there not been proper consultation and what is the evidence that the reduced bus frequencies will be adequate?*

*A: This is one of those areas where TfL do not consult, because they change buses quite a lot. The change to the 268 services is based on analysis of passenger levels. TfL are trying to be more transparent about the changes. They now publish a monthly report of changes to bus timetables and are planning to provide more data about rider levels so that the routes where changes are likely can be made known. If they become aware of changes to a certain aspect of a route, such as some temporary change causing ridership to drop, then they can review changes to the timetable. However, changes to one route usually come about because frequency levels have been adjusted upwards in some other areas with high rider levels. So TfL would argue that this is adjusting resources for the best overall.*

*Q: The pedestrian crossing phasing outside Waitrose in the Finchley Road is very short. The Swiss Cottage underpasses and crossings for pedestrians are in need of improvement as quite aged, and there are accessibility issues.*

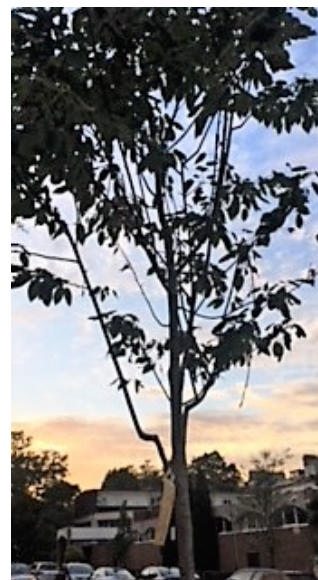
*A: TfL are willing to review these issues and propose to let BRA know when a review may happen. They regularly look at crossings and can check on ones where we experience problems. Residents will be able to take part in any review and BRA will be sent contact details.*

## IN THE COMMUNITY

### Trees in Camden

Camden Council manages approximately 28,000 individual trees across the borough and 10-15,000 additional trees as part of sites of nature conservation. The diverse tree stock includes a large number of pollution-resilient London planes and also limes, sycamores, maples, birch, ash, cherry, holly, whitebeam and false acacia. Over 3,500 trees are classed as juvenile, which means seedlings and saplings.

Did you know that you can help to water some of these young trees? Look out for notices on trees which tell you how to do it.



---

### Blue Plaques for Belsize

English Heritage have unveiled two new blue plaques in Belsize. The Isokon Building in Lawn Road (which we featured in the last edition of this Newsletter) now has a plaque dedicated to Bauhaus designers and teachers Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy. The three men lived and worked in the building in the 1930s. Commemorated at 4 Downside Crescent are war correspondent Henry Nevinson (1856-1941) and his son the avant-garde artist CRW Nevinson (1889-1946). The English Heritage website has lots of information about all five of these famous residents.

---

### Start of Works Delayed at Swiss Cottage

The construction of Cycle Superhighway 11 (CS11) was due to start at Swiss Cottage on 30 July 2018. Works will now be delayed pending the application for judicial review brought by Westminster City Council. The case is due to be heard in the High Court on 6 September 2018.



### Help Needed

Local resident Elaine Chambers is working with Camden Council to support their campaign of “Please turn off your engine” walkabouts. This is part of the “Stop Cars Idling” campaign and volunteers are needed to help. This would involve a one hour briefing session by Camden Officers and a couple of hours walking around a particular area to approach cars with idling engines. Camden will provide leaflets and hi-viz jackets. The idea is for a team to take action on one specific day with a number of different dates being available. If you would like to take part, please contact [elainchmb@aol.com](mailto:elainchmb@aol.com) with your name and email address or phone number so Elaine will have a good list of volunteers.

## Dates for your diary

### Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road

Summer Social: An afternoon of free, artist-led activities, performances and events for all ages.  
Sunday 9 Sept, 12-5pm

Exhibition Tour: Peter Fraser and Yuko Mohri,  
Sunday 16 Sept, 3pm. Free, booking essential.

### Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

'An evening of Beethoven, Brahms and Ravel': with award-winning violinist Ravi Vera Jacques performing the Spring Sonata, Ravel's Tzigane and other compositions. Thursday 6 Sept, 7pm, £18.

'An evening with Yuri Sabatini' performing operatic arias and songs. Thursday 13 Sept, 7pm, £12.

'Sibelius Society: Works from WW1' performed by Lisa Ueda (violin) Daniele Rinaldo (piano). Sunday 30 Sept, 3pm. Free with tickets from: [ainola@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ainola@blueyonder.co.uk)

'The Springett Lecture: John Constable and Hampstead Heath': Lindy Guinness, contemporary British painter, talks about her fascination with plain air painting and Constable's passion for the Heath. Wednesday 25 October, 8pm, free.

[www.burghhouse.org.uk](http://www.burghhouse.org.uk).

### St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3

Belsize Baroque: Music by Handel, Alison, Albinoni, Telemann and Geminiani £12. Sun 30 Sept, 6.30pm.

Belsize Community Choir: Rehearsals Thursdays, 7-9pm. To find out more contact: 0207 431 7554 or [info@belsizecommunitychoir.org.uk](mailto:info@belsizecommunitychoir.org.uk)

### Regent's Park Decorative & Fine Arts Society

Lectures in St John's Wood Church Hall, St John's Wood Roundabout NW8 7NE at 8.00pm. Coffee is served from 7pm, lectures start 7:30pm. £8.

'James Tissot: Images of Women': Dr Kathy McLauchlan, a lecturer in 19th century art, considers the development of Tissot's work, depicting lifestyles of wealthy English subjects. 2 October.

'The power and glory of our country houses': Anthony Russell, lecturer who assists the British Museum, celebrates these magnificent buildings. 6 November.

## Contact Us

For membership and general enquiries:

Anne Stevens

020 7794 0874

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

Prabhat Vaze (*Chair*)

07930 406230

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

Sarah Courtin (*Secretary*)

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

For Newsletter submissions and letters:

[info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk). Deadline for next issue is: **22 October 2018**

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:

[braplanning@gmail.com](mailto:braplanning@gmail.com)

Interested in keeping up with Belsize news and events? If we have your email address, we will send you occasional emails with news about Belsize and BRA. If you wish to receive emails 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/>

[www.belsize.org.uk](http://www.belsize.org.uk)