

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 Newsletter of the Belsize Society.

It feels a very long time since we saw many of you at the AGM in March. Ordinarily, we would be looking forward to seeing you at the Society Garden Party at this time of year. But under the lockdown, we are sadly having to cancel such plans.

This issue of the Newsletter covers some of the activities in the Belsize area, responding to Covid 19. The Hampstead and Kilburn Community Relief Team started in March and has quickly grown to over 300 local residents/volunteers supporting their neighbours and communities. This Newsletter also give details of how to support the Chalk Farm Foodbank, which is currently requesting donations of food and supplies, and the Royal Free Charity. The Charity has been providing vital wellbeing support to front-line workers at The Royal Free Hospital, Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital.

The Winch has been upscaling the support that it is providing to local communities, responding to Covid 19. A Community Hub has been established and Winch CEO Rashid Iqbal describes some of their work, helping deliver essentials and reducing isolation. We were very pleased that Rashid could attend the AGM in March. We also carry a short piece about the AGM, covering his remarks to us (updating us about the Winch especially its running of the Belsize Community Library) and the wider AGM agenda, covering the progress the Society has made in its first year as a charitable body.

At this time, many of us are taking walks around Belsize that are very different to those taken only weeks ago. No longer in a rush to get to work or to the shops and restaurants, the nature, heritage and wildlife of our area is being experienced in unusual tranquility. Bettina Metcalfe describes the rich diversity of trees in our streets and highlights where and what to look out for in our wanderings. We have Alain de Botton's essay, guiding us from a philosopher's perspective about how a walk allows us to rediscover places, casting off one's present situation and how a confinement allows us to reflect on past travels when we were freer to make journeys. We also have a poem by Robert Ilson celebrating this liberty.

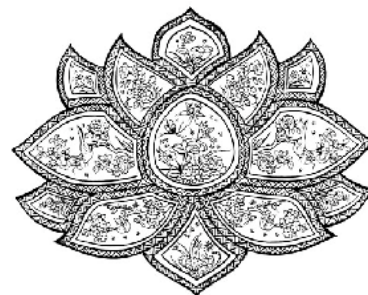
We also include reports of Society activities. There has been a lot of work done to get Tradesmen You Can Trust ready, but we'll send this out to you when practical. Many of you helped on the pollution monitoring project and results are now being analysed. Our back page gives you details of events you can enjoy from home.

Hope you enjoy this Newsletter.

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Belsize Society Annual Garden Party



Members will understand that, owing to social distancing rules, we will not be able to hold our annual garden party this year.

KEEP SAFE

Notable Trees in Belsize Park

Local tree expert Bettina Metcalfe writes:

Belsize Park has more different tree species than most people realise, ranging from native to quite exotic trees. The traditional planting consists mainly of London Plane trees, Lime trees, Maples and Ash and we can still see magnificent large old trees in some of our local streets. Nowadays, many councils adopt a different planting regime; they favour smaller spring-flowering trees such as cultivars of Hawthorn, Cherry, Apple, Pear and Juneberry. Due to climate change, there is, however, also a trend to increasingly diversify and plant more exotic trees from further afield in our streets.

You can find Trident Maple from Korea in Swiss Cottage behind Hampstead Theatre along with Tulip trees from the eastern USA. Fellows Road boasts a number of unusual street trees; Harlequin Glorybower a small example from Japan has been added recently and the Foxglove tree from China displayed its large blue trumpet-shaped flowers in April. Lyndhurst Gardens features a profusely flowering Manna Ash and a couple of Golden Rain trees. The delicate leaves of Henry's Lime from China can be spotted in Belsize Avenue and you can admire the bark of the Mediterranean Cork Oak in Lancaster Grove. A very fine example of a Turkish Hazel is growing in Downside Crescent. The mottled bark of Crepe Myrtle from Asia is most intriguing, it is hardy in most of the UK; look out for its reddish crimped flowers in summer in Belsize Square.

List of Interesting Trees in Belsize

Scientific name, English name, year of introduction and origin

Swiss Cottage. *Acer buergerianum*, Trident Maple, 1896, E China and Korea

Haverstock Hill. *Liriodendron tulipifera*, Tulip Tree, 1680s, East USA

Fellows Road. *Clerodendron trichotomum*, Harlequin Glorybower, c1880 China and Japan; *Paulownia tomentosa*, Foxglove Tree, 1838, China

Lyndhurst Gardens. *Fraxinus ornus*, Manna Ash, late 1660s, South Europe and SW Asia; *Koelreuteria paniculata*, Golden Rain Tree, 1763, Asia, China

Belsize Avenue. *Tilia henryana*, Henry's Lime, 1901, C China.

Lancaster Grove. *Quercus suber*, Cork Oak, late 1600s, S Europe and N Africa

Belsize Square. *Lagerstroemia indica*, Crape Myrtle, 1759, China and Korea

Downside Crescent. *Acer buergerianum*, Turkish Hazel, 1582, SE Europe, Asia

TREES IN BELSIZE: HELPING THE SOCIETY

Are you interested in preserving trees in Belsize?

Would you like to help our community organisation?

We'd welcome a member to act on the Society's behalf commenting on applications made to the Council about trees. Please contact us at

info@belsize.org.uk.

We've had an early dry spring this year and were therefore blessed with an extended period of fabulous spring blossoms. Newly planted trees need to be watered, especially in the first three years after planting. Some trees have a slow release green watering bag fitted around the trunk which is filled through a small opening at the top and can hold about 50 litres. Please help look after the trees in your neighbourhood and water them regularly.

If you would like to learn more about the trees in London, go to treetalk.co.uk which maps many of the street trees. Trees are represented by green circles and by clicking on them, useful information is given about each tree. The website Trees in Camden Map Open Data Portal also gives details of the trees in Camden.

Please email Bettina at treewalksbettina@gmail.com if you are interested in improving your tree identification skills.

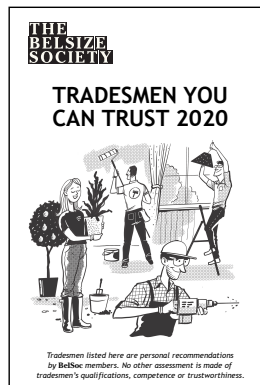
Camden Pollution Monitoring Project

Due to Covid-19, the planned meeting for Camden Council to report back on the results of the community air quality monitoring study in Belsize Park had to be put on hold until such gatherings are again possible. In the meantime, our August newsletter will present the quantitative findings for the 10 locations where we measured the levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), plus some initial discussion of what we have learned about local air quality during 2019. As soon as we are able to arrange the meeting, details will appear on the Belsize Society website and will be sent out by email to the survey volunteers and members.

Your TYCT will be with you soon...

Thanks to members for sending us their new tradesmen 'finds', plus re-recommendations for existing entries. All this input has been compiled and readied for printing. Our usual volunteer newsletter delivery has not been possible due to Covid-19. So, regrettably, we have been unable to include the new TYCT with this newsletter.

We hope that the August newsletter will be under more favourable conditions and will include the TYCT.



Many of you may be reading this online...

Ordinarily, delivery of this newsletter would be through our band of volunteers kindly walking around the area hand posting to members. This time we have printed and posted around 200 newsletters, around a third of the membership, who we know prefer paper. But if you've provided the Society with an email address or are visiting the website, you'll be reading this online.

We hope to return to delivery soon. If you can spare an afternoon every few months to have a pleasant walk around Belsize helping with this, then do contact us at info@belsize.org.uk or call the membership secretary.

Planning matters

During the lockdown, work on 100 Avenue Road has continued with the completion of the slab in June being the next milestone. The site has sought to maintain social distancing while working and staggered the travel of construction workers. The monitoring data to mid-May was available indicating levels of compliance for noise and pollution similar to past periods. The working group has continued to meet online.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, formal Council meetings, such as Planning Committee, are being held remotely, using audio and visual technology. Residents can view the proceedings and make representations to the council, who are conducting remote meetings using Microsoft Teams.

Belsize Poetry

We asked Belsize poet Robert Ilson for some reflective words in the age of lockdown. Here is what he sent us (originally published in Ham & High in April).

At Liberty

If you step into the World today
Remember to use your eyes
To grasp the myriad shapes and hues
Of earth and trees and skies

And should you in a thoroughfare
See someone smile at you
Recall that to return a smile
Is perfectly legal too

And when your path brings you back home
Your freshened memory
Will keep you in good spirits till
We're all at liberty !



The Broader Perspective

We asked writer and philosopher Alain de Botton for something to inspire us in these difficult and unusual times.

At some point in the 1650s, the French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal jotted down one of the most counterintuitive aphorisms of all time: 'The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he cannot stay quietly in his room.'

Really? Surely having to stay quietly in one's room must be the beginning of a particularly evolved kind of psychological torture? What could be more opposed to the human spirit than to have to inhabit four walls when, potentially, there would be a whole planet to explore?

And yet Pascal's idea usefully challenges one of our most cherished beliefs: that we must always go to new places in order to feel and discover new and worthwhile things. What if, in fact, there were already a treasury inside us? What if we had within our own brains already accumulated a sufficient number of awe-inspiring, calming and interesting experiences to last us ten lifetimes? What if our real problem was not so much that we are not allowed to go anywhere - but that we don't how to make the most of what is already to hand?

Being confined at home gives us a range of curious benefits. The first is an encouragement to think. Whatever we like to believe, few of us do much of the solitary original bold kind of thinking that can restore our spirits and move our lives ahead. The new ideas we might stumble upon if we did travel more ambitiously around our minds while lying on the sofa could threaten our mental status quo. An original thought might, for example, alienate us from what people around us think of as normal. Or it might herald a realisation that we've been pursuing the wrong approach to an important issue in our lives, perhaps for a long time. If we took a given new idea seriously, we might have to abandon a relationship, leave a job, ditch a friend, apologise to someone, rethink our sexuality or break a habit.

But a period of quiet thinking in our room creates an occasion when the mind can order and understand itself. Fears, resentments and hopes become easier to name; we grow less scared of the contents of our own minds - and less resentful, calmer and clearer about our direction. We start, in faltering steps, to know ourselves slightly better.

Another thing we can do in our own rooms is to return to travels we have already taken. This is not a fashionable idea. Most of the time, we are given powerful encouragement to engineer new kinds of travel experiences. The idea of making a big deal of revisiting a journey in memory sounds a little strange - or simply sad. This is an enormous pity. We are hugely careless curators of our own pasts. We push the important scenes that have happened to us at the back of the cupboard of our minds and don't particularly expect to see them ever again.

But what if we were to alter the hierarchy of prestige a little and argue that regular immersion in our travel memories could be a critical part of what can sustain and console us - and not least, is perhaps the cheapest and most flexible form of entertainment. We should think it almost as prestigious to sit at home and reflect on a trip we once took to an island with our imaginations as to trek to the island with our cumbersome bodies.

In our neglect of our memories, we are spoilt children, who squeeze only a portion of the pleasure from experiences and then toss them aside to seek new thrills. Part of why we feel the need for so many new experiences may simply be that we are so bad at absorbing the ones we have had.

To help us focus more on our memories, we need nothing technical. We certainly don't need a camera. There is a camera in our minds already: it is always on, it takes everything we've ever seen. Huge chunks of experience are still there in our heads, intact, and vivid, just waiting for us to ask ourselves leading questions like: 'where did we go after we landed?' or 'what was the first breakfast like?' Our experiences have not disappeared, just because they are no longer unfolding right in front of our eyes. We can remain in touch with so much of what made them pleasurable simply through the art of evocation. We talk endlessly of virtual reality. Yet we don't need gadgets. We have the finest virtual reality machines already in our own heads. We can - right now - shut our eyes and travel into, and linger amongst, the very best and most consoling and life-enhancing bits of our pasts.

We tend to travel because of a background belief that, of course, the reality of a scene must be nicer than a mental image we form of it at home. But there is something about the way our minds work that we would do well to study when we regret our inability to go anywhere: there will always be something else on the lens between us and the destination we travel to, something so tricky and oppressive as to somewhat undermine the purpose of having left home in the first place, namely: ourselves. By an unavoidable error, we bring ourselves along to every destination we ever want to enjoy. And that means bringing along so much of the mental baggage that makes being us so intolerably problematic day to day: all the anxiety, regret, confusion, guilt, irritability and despair. None of this smear of the self is there when we picture a trip from home for a few minutes. In the imagination, we can enjoy unsullied views. But there, at the foot of the golden temple or high up on the pine-covered mountain, we stand to find that there is so much of 'us' intruding on our vistas. We ruin our trips by a fateful habit of taking ourselves along on them. There's a tragi-comic irony at work: the vast labour of getting ourselves physically to a place won't necessarily get us any closer to the essence of what we seek. As we should remind ourselves, we may already enjoy the very best that any place has to offer us simply by thinking about it.

Let's turn to another Frenchman with a comparable underlying philosophy. In the spring of 1790, a twenty seven year old writer called Xavier de Maistre locked himself at home and decided to study the wonders and beauty of what lay closest to him, entitling the account of what he had seen *Journey around my bedroom*.

The book is a charming shaggy dog story. De Maistre locks his door and changes into a pair of pink and blue pyjamas. Without the need for luggage, he 'travels' to the sofa, the largest piece of furniture in the room, which he looks at it through fresh eyes and appreciates anew. He admires the elegance of its feet and remembers the pleasant hours he has spent cradled in its cushions, dreaming of love and professional success. From his sofa, de Maistre spies his bed. Once again, from a traveller's vantage point, he learns to appreciate this complex piece of furniture. He feels grateful for the nights he has spent in it and takes pride that his sheets almost match his pyjamas. 'I advise every man who can to get himself pink and white bedlinen,' he writes, for these are colours to induce calm and pleasant reveries in the fragile sleeper.

However playful, de Maistre's work springs from a profound and suggestive insight: that the pleasure we derive from journeys is perhaps dependent more on the mindset with which we travel than on the destination we travel to. If only we could apply a travelling mindset to our own rooms and immediate neighbourhoods, we might find these places becoming no less interesting than foreign lands. What then is a travelling mindset? Receptivity, appreciation and gratitude might be its chief characteristics. And, crucially, this mindset doesn't need to wait for a faraway journey to be deployed.

A walk is the smallest sort of journey we can ever undertake. It stands in relation to a typical holiday as a bonsai tree does to a forest. But even if it is only an eight minute interlude around the block or a few moments in a nearby park, a walk is already a journey in which many of the grander themes of travel are present.

We might, on such a walk, catch sight of a flower. It is extremely rare properly to delight in flowers when one can at any point take off to another continent. There are so many larger, grander things to be concerned about than these small delicately-sculpted fragile manifestations of nature. However, it is rare to be left entirely indifferent by flowers when the world has narrowed dramatically and there is global sadness in the air. Flowers no longer seem like a petty distraction from a mighty destiny, no longer an insult to ambition, but a genuine pleasure amidst a litany of troubles, an invitation to bracket anxieties, a small resting place for hope in a sea of difficulties.

Or we might, on a local walk, spot a small animal: a duck or a hedgehog. Its life goes on utterly oblivious to ours. It is entirely devoted to its own purposes. The habits of its species have not changed for centuries. We may be looking intently at it but it feels not the slightest curiosity about who we are; from its point of view, we are absorbed into the immense blankness of unknowable, incomprehensible things. A duck will take a piece of bread as gladly from a criminal as from a high-court judge; from a billionaire as from a bankrupt felon; our individuality is suspended and, on certain days, that may be an enormous relief.

On our walk around the block, themes we'd lost touch with - childhood, an odd dream we had recently, a friend we haven't seen for years, a big task we had always told ourselves we'd undertake - float into attention. In physical terms, we're hardly going any distance at all, but we're crossing acres of mental territory. A short while later, we're back at home once again. No one has missed us, or perhaps even noticed that we've been out. Yet we are subtly different: a slightly more complete, more visionary, courageous and imaginative version of the person we knew how to be

Seeing Belsize with new eyes during lockdown...



before we wisely went out a modest journey.

We will - one day - recover our freedoms. The world will be ours to roam in once more. But during periods of confinement, aside from the obvious inconveniences, we might come to cherish some of what is granted to us when we lose our customary liberties. It cannot be a coincidence that many of the world's greatest thinkers have spent unusual amounts of time alone in their rooms. Silence gives us an opportunity to appreciate a great deal of what we generally see without ever properly noticing; and to understand what we have felt but not yet adequately processed.

We have not only been locked away; we have also been granted the privilege of being able to travel around a range of unfamiliar, sometimes daunting but essentially wondrous inner continents.

Alain's latest book, published in September 2019, is a collection of essays written for The School of Life, titled *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*. You can also find out more about the School of Life at <https://www.youtube.com/theschooloflifetv>.

AGM Report: First Society Annual General Meeting

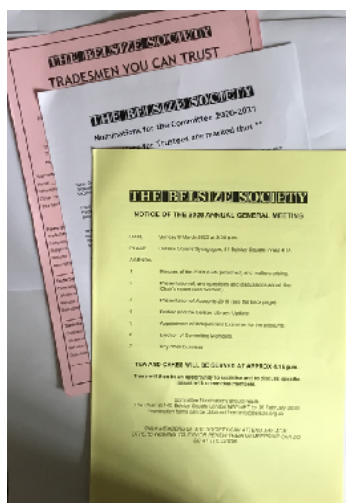
The first full Belsize Society AGM took place at Belsize Square Synagogue on Sunday 8 March. The meeting reviewed a successful year for the Society.

The Chair reported on events that were organised, the continued role of commenting on planning and tree applications, and the publications the Society produced. The Tradesmen You Can Trust booklet was provided to members, who were also kept informed of local issues thorough email, the website and the newsletter. The Society's carol singing and garden party attracted large numbers.

During 2019, we organised a pollution monitoring programme in the area funded by Camden; the year also saw a consultation about the ward boundaries for London councils and the Society made submissions to the consultation.

There was a presentation to the Society made by Rashid Iqbal, CEO of the Winch. He highlighted some of recent work by the Winch, including steps to encourage wider community use of the Belsize Library. The Winch has operated the library for several years, maintaining a librarian and a band of volunteers. There have been a number of community focused events. The discussion that followed highlighted the importance of the links between the Society, the Winch and the Belsize Library. After the AGM, some steps have been taken to progress, especially with Anthony Isaacs joining the Society committee.

The questions and comments raised by members then covered how best to raise concerns about transport issues such as rental cycles parking, obstructing pavements. Large-scale developments and monitoring construction impacts on residents was also discussed. The Society's Treasurer reported on finances, which remained healthy, and there was a discussion about the donations made to local charities.



We also said thanks to some of the 2019 departing committee members: Barrie Tankel and Consuelo Phelan provided considerable efforts over a number of years for the Association and Society. Consuelo's expert input on trees in the area will be hard to replace, and this issue includes an article highlighting how diverse and valuable this natural asset is in Belsize.

Many members will have received Barrie's help and advice as planning applications are considered by the

Council. Barrie was also a Trustee of the Society helping with setting up.

The meeting then agreed the trustees of the Society and the rest of the Committee for the Society was elected.

The new Committee is: Prabhat Vaze (Chair, Trustee); Sarah Courtin (Secretary); Neil Harris (Treasurer), Trustee; Michael Jampel (Constitution and Governance, Trustee); Sanya Polescuk (Planning); Teresa Poole (Community); Anne Stevens (Membership Secretary, Trustee); Anthony Isaacs (BelSoc/Library liaison); Tom Symes (Planning). After the Committee meeting, Artur Carulla was co-opted to the committee, to help on planning matters.

Rashid Iqbal, Winch CEO, updates us...



The Winch is scaling up support and moving services online - working with young people over the phone, hosting meet-ups for parents via Zoom calls, and keeping connected with the community, whilst we all have to stay physically distant.

The Winch has continued to support many of the children and families already known to them with food, regular check-in calls and in providing extended school care for the children of key workers.

But the Coronavirus has created a new set of challenges. The Winch Community has been set up to face these challenges, working alongside volunteers and partners from around the community. The Hub matches offers of help with people who need it - with a team of trained volunteers delivering food and medicine to those who cannot get out of the house, getting food packages to people facing financial pressures, and supporting anyone who needs a friendly phone call.

Do you or someone you know need a hand?

Signing up for support from the Winch Community Hub takes only a few minutes with the online form. Go to <https://thewinch.org/the-winch-community-hub/>. If you would prefer to register by phone, call Maddie on 07526 555697. The line is open between 9am and 5pm on weekdays.

Hampstead and Kilburn Covid Community Relief team write:

Hampstead and Kilburn Covid Community Relief is a community led volunteer group operating a buddy system which has been operating on a 'trust basis' since the commencement of the government's lockdown. We match volunteers with people who need assistance with the delivery of essentials such as groceries from supermarkets, collection of prescription medication as well as provide emotional support to tackle the feeling of loneliness resulting from imposed isolation.

Our group was set up by a small team of local residents on 14th March 2020 and quickly amassed over 300 volunteers as the community was keen to support their neighbours and communities during these difficult and uncertain times. We use geolocation which shows us the location of all of our volunteers, this allows us to identify the closest volunteer to anyone contacting us for assistance. We hope by matching people in this way will help to build or strengthen the sense of community/friendship after the crisis is over.

Given the capacity of our volunteers, we felt it was appropriate to reach out to Camden council and offer our assistance. Through discussions with council officers working with the Covid Mutual Aid groups, we are happy the council have now offered us a base in the JW3 community centre. We will start operating a food hub service every Sunday, our volunteers will collect and deliver food parcels which the council receives from the Felix Project to people who are shielding and will continue to do so when the lockdown restrictions are slowly eased.

If you are struggling financially and in need of food parcels, you can email covidcommunityrelief@gmail.com (or: 07384309912).

In addition to this service, we will continue to provide assistance with grocery shopping and collection of prescription medications.



Foodbank running as normal but still needs donations

Chalk Farm Foodbank continues to open its doors each week, staffed by trained volunteers and well attended by people in the community, usually a rolling number of households a week. People may have experienced delay in benefit payments or have to pay a sudden bill. They may be homeless. They may be on a low income or have lost work or income because of the virus.

The Foodbank needs help: each week its stock is running low on basic essentials. Donations enable it to support those who are really struggling to gain access to food. Please donate much-needed items: UHT Milk; tinned meat; long-life juice; chopped tomatoes; toiletries (no blades); household cleaning products. Donation drop days and times are:

Wednesdays 11.30-1 pm

Thursdays 1-2 pm.

At: Chalk Farm Baptist Church Berekly Rd NW1 8YS

Financial donations can be made at: <https://chalkfarm.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>



Royal Free Charity

For the duration of the crisis, The Royal Free Charity has been providing vital wellbeing support to front-line workers at The Royal Free Hospital, Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital to help them get through this most challenging time.

This has included free hot meals and snacks during shifts, as well as respite areas in which they can relax and connect online with family members. In addition, the Charity has provided psychological support to those who have suffered trauma and accommodation for others who cannot go home because of vulnerable family members. The need is still acute and will continue to be for some time. Though we may have just passed the peak of this crisis, local NHS staff still face much hardship ahead. If you want to make a donation, you can visit <https://www.royalfreecharity.org/covid19>.

Your donation will be allocated to one of the three hospitals.



Dates for your diary

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

Online at <https://www.botanicalmind.online/>. The Botanical Mind, A new online programme of artist commissions, podcasts, films, texts, images and audio drawing on indigenous traditions from the Amazon rainforest. Free.

Online at: <https://camdenartcentre.org/public-knowledge-ignota-books-the-carrier-bag-of-theory/>. Carrier Bag Music is a series of sonic fictions inspired by Ursula K. Le Guin. Free.

Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre:
Film Collection online

Camden's moving history image collection records people, places and events in the history of the area today comprising the London Borough of Camden - the former boroughs of Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras. You can find the collection online.

A member has recommended "About Hampstead", a film celebrating Hampstead and the surrounding areas such as Kenwood and Golders Hill Park. Made in 1957 and available to watch for free at: <https://www.londonsscreenarchives.org.uk/title/139/>.

JW3, Finchley Road, NW3 and online

Online at jw3.org.uk. Seret UK Israeli Film & TV Festival 2020 kicks off with a special event, hosted by Raymond Simonson, featuring actors Nelly Tagar (*The Art of Waiting*) and Tsachi Halevy (*Mossad, All In*). Films screened online £5.

Hampstead Theatre, NW3 and online

As a source of inspiration during lockdown, The Mono Box have created an audio library of monologues from previous episodes of Speech Share, speeches performed on the Hampstead Theatre stage from those performers who were due to appear on stage this spring. <https://www.hampsteadtheatre.com/about-us/the-mono-box/>

Images of Belsize at Tate online

One of two paintings by the Flemish-trained Siberechts in the Tate collection is of Belsize House and estate, thought to be from the 1670s. It is available to view online at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/siberechts-view-of-a-house-and-its-estate-in-belsize-middlesex-t06996>

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info@belsize.org.uk. Deadline for next issue is: **19 July 2020**

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 we have your email address, we will send you occasional emails with news about Belsize and BelSoc. If you wish to receive emails 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/>

www.belsize.org.uk