

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

# www.belsize.org.uk

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# **Notes from your Chair**

Welcome to the August Newsletter of the Belsize Society.

We were very sad to hear about the passing away of Consuelo Phelan in May. She was passionate about the trees in Belsize and helped the Society and BRA for many years. This Newsletter has a piece about her.

The Newsletter also presents results from last year's pollution monitoring project. It shows three of our 10 locations breached the annual legal limits for nitrogen dioxide and several other sites experienced high levels during winter months. Thanks to the volunteers and Teresa Poole for this study which we'll build on in the coming months.

Peter Darley writes about Robert Stephenson, Chief Engineer for the London and Birmingham Railway in the 1830s, residing in Belsize, and who personally took responsibility for the the first nine miles of the line from Camden Town, establishing the construction technology for the railway age.

September sees the release of a book that captures Belsize in the 18th century. David Percy's book about "Moll" King describes a woman who mixed with harlots, courtesans and lords.

The Newsletter also updates on some local news, including the work of a group of organisations consulting on a Hampstead Hopper Bus. We also describe donations the Society are making, particularly responding to C19 challenges. With this issue, you'll also be receiving a copy of Tradesman You Can Trust.

Hope you enjoy the Newsletter.

# Open House

#### **OPEN HOUSE LONDON**

Open House weekend is on 19-20 September, with a week of events until 27 September. This year's programme will be launched on 26 August.

See:

https://open-city.org.uk/openhouse

#### In Memoriam: Consuelo Phelan

It is with considerable sadness that the Belsize Society has learnt of the death of Consuelo Phelan. Many members will remember her as a very longstanding committee member who especially loved and cared for the trees and plants of Belsize. She kept a very close eye on all planning applications related to trees, and it is certainly thanks to her efforts that some of our beautiful trees were spared the axe. Members also often saw her at the gates of the garden party or the AGM; she only stood down from the committee at the most recent AGM last March after many years of service.

Consuelo was born in Melbourne in 1938. Her Irish and English ancestors settled in Tasmania in the 1800s the earliest being George Cartwright who arrived in Hobart in 1820 aged 21 as Hobart Town's first lawyer. He found himself in a chaotic and violent new convict settlement. He eventually married the daughter of a female convict (children were sometimes allowed to travel with their mothers in appalling conditions).



Consuelo was educated at school and university in Melbourne, completing an Arts degree. She then began a teaching career in Melbourne, eventually sailing to Europe in 1967, where she furthered her French studies in Paris and then settled in Belsize Park and began teaching at what is now The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Secondary School, specialising in English and French, until her retirement. At her funeral a former colleague and friend Oonagh O'Flynn described her as: "a superb teacher, a wonderful colleague and a curious and constantly developing human being with interests in so many areas of life beyond education" while other old friends described her quirky sense of humour and her love of literature and art.

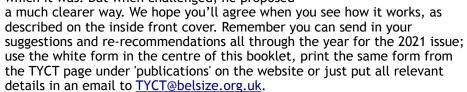
She spoke of returning to live in Melbourne after her retirement, but ultimately chose to remain in Belsize Park, perhaps because of her easy access to London galleries and the frequent trips she made to other parts of Europe, especially France, accompanied by like-minded English and Australian friends.

When Consuelo realised she had little time left she chose privacy, declining offers of help. As she wished, she died peacefully at home at the end Under lockdown of May. conditions, attendance at her funeral was necessarily very limited, but Anne Stevens was present to represent the Belsize Society. She will be greatly missed.

# TRADESMAN YOU CAN TRUST 2020

Thank you for patiently awaiting the 2020 TYCT and extra thanks to all members who contributed recommendations of new and existing tradesmen. The booklet still covers 20 pages, but some categories are well spaced out, as one way and another, there are fewer entries than for some years, including a number caused by non-payment of the membership fee.

There is one change which is due to a thoughtful member, who found the method of showing the three-year rule to be clumsy which it was. But when challenged, he proposed



Meanwhile, keep those tradesmen working and keep them and yourselves safe and well.



## A Celebration of Robert Stephenson

Peter Darley of the Camden Railway Heritage Trail introduces us to local industrial heritage

There had never been a project approaching the size and complexity of the London & Birmingham Railway (L&BR), the first railway authorised to extend into London as far as the New Road (now the Euston Road) for passenger services. Yet Robert Stephenson (1803-1859) was appointed engineer-in-chief for the whole line in September 1833, when not yet thirty.

He spent the next ten years working for the L&BR, living first in Downshire Hill in Hampstead, and then from 1834 to 1843 at 5 Devonshire Place, one of a pair of semi-detached villas on the west side of Haverstock Hill, close to the corner with Belsize Grove. The house had a stable attached (out of view to the left of the photograph of 1903) where a groom, a carriage, a phaeton for his wife and one or two horses were accommodated. The photo (CLSAC) shows part of the turning circle in front of the house. The site is now part of the modern block of flats called Romney Court.

His wife Fanny, whom he married in 1829, died childless in 1842 and is buried in the cemetery of St John's, Hampstead, the church where they worshipped. Robert is buried in Westminster Abbey beside Thomas Telford, another highly distinguished civil engineer.



He was not only the Chief Engineer for the L&BR, establishing the construction technology for the railway age: he also took personal responsibility for the Primrose Hill contract, the first nine miles from Camden Town. This most difficult section of line, including Primrose Hill Tunnel and cutting, had driven the appointed contractor into bankruptcy after problems with ground conditions, particularly the swelling of blue London Clay exposed to the atmosphere. Stephenson must have walked this section of line innumerable times while supervising the direct labour he employed to replace the contractor's workforce.

The opening of passenger services from Euston in 1837 signalled the decline of longer distance commuting by road. But the stimulus for construction of the L&BR was goods traffic, a competitive threat to which the Regent's Canal Company responded by insisting that railways take goods traffic no further into London than the canal. Camden Goods Station was therefore built adjacent to the Hampstead Road alongside the Regent's Canal and rapidly developed into an important interchange depot.

Both the mainline railway and the former goods depot have left a remarkable heritage, with which Camden Railway Heritage Trust (CRHT) has been involved for 15 years. Primrose Hill Tunnel east portals and the stationary winding engine vaults, both works by Robert Stephenson dating from 1837, have joined the Roundhouse as Grade II\* listed structures. They form part of the Camden Railway Heritage Trail described on the CRHT website and in a pocket trail guide. It was the focus of a BRA walk in 2008. The railway heritage trail can also be found on the Belsize Society website.

The former goods depot, re-designated as the Chalk Farm Railway Lands, is an area in flux, with greatly intensified commercial and residential developments approved for the Morrisons site and proposals in the pipeline for the adjoining Juniper Crescent and Gilbey's Yard. Reconfiguring

the former railway lands creates a unique opportunity for new through routes that serve the wider community and provide planning coherence across these diverse developments.

Foremost among such routes is Stephenson Walk, a proposal CRHT has long espoused. The Walk extends from Oval Road and the Regent's Canal towpath to Regent's Park Road bridge, with a possible extension to Primrose Hill Road. It creates new links between communities as well as providing access to the heritage facilities along the Walk, notably the Winding Engine Vaults and, at a later stage, the Primrose Hill Tunnel east portals. The Walk will provide carfree through routes for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users.

Despite his long and fruitful association with the area, and the major monuments he has left us, Robert Stephenson is virtually uncelebrated in this part of Camden. The Stephenson Walk will correct this oversight. It will not only reconnect the public to the area's history but foster acivic pride that will offset the sense of loss that urban intensification can engender.



5 Devonshire Place in 1903

#### Belsize Park air quality survey - the results are in

Teresa Poole, BelSoc Committee Member who oversaw the pollution monitoring project, writes:

Results from the community air quality monitoring study in Belsize Park / Swiss Cottage show three of our 10 locations breached the annual legal limits for nitrogen dioxide  $(NO_2)$  and several other sites experienced high levels during winter months.

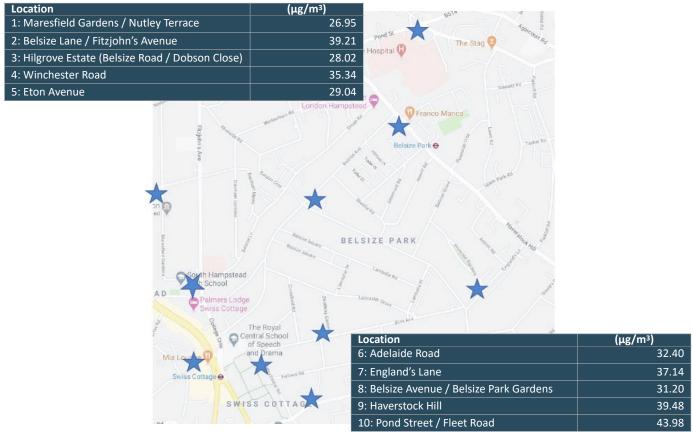
These data are available thanks to the nearly 30 local volunteers who during 2019 every month dutifully retrieved diffusion test-tubes placed high up on kerbside lampposts / signposts, posted them back to Camden for analysis, and installed new tubes. Despite some tubes disappearing and occasional vandalism, a remarkable 93% of the 360 tubes deployed during the 12-month study were not tampered with and provided good data.

Our 10 monitoring locations are shown on the map. The statistical analyses produced two types of data. The overall 'bias-adjusted' annual mean concentrations are shown in Table 1 and have been standardised using a Defra adjustment factor to improve accuracy. The more detailed "raw" average monthly  $NO_2$  concentrations are shown in Figure 1 for each of the locations and have not been bias-adjusted.

Table 1 shows how the bias-adjusted annual mean of nearly 45  $\mu$ g/m³ at the corner of Pond Street / Fleet Road breached the legal limit for NO<sub>2</sub> (40  $\mu$ g/m³), while the monitoring locations at Haverstock Hill (40.39  $\mu$ g/m³) and Belsize Lane/Fitzjohn's Avenue (40.11  $\mu$ g/m³) were also slightly above the permitted limit and allowing for statistical uncertainty these locations arguably also look unhealthily high (95% confidence intervals for these annual means are not calculated by Camden Council). England's Lane was the next worst and Winchester Road had the highest single month's raw value (February).

While the monthly fluctuations shown in Figure 1 are not bias-adjusted - and so cannot be compared with the  $40 \,\mu g/m^3$  threshold - it is evident that several sites recorded a number of high monthly readings, particularly during the winter. The seasonality of the data varies at different types of monitoring locations. Generally, sites on a busy road (such as Adelaide Road and Pond Street / Fleet Road) tend to exhibit less seasonality as traffic levels are roughly constant throughout the year. In comparison, sites on a residential street (such as Eton Avenue and Maresfield Gardens / Nutley Terrace) are more strongly influenced by  $NO_2$  from domestic boilers and have  $NO_2$  profiles more closely linked to seasonal weather (albeit with some contribution from road vehicles).

Table 1: 2019 Annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> concentration\*



<sup>\*</sup> Bias adjusted using the Defra April 2020 factor: <a href="https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/bias-adjustment-factors/national-bias.html">https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/bias-adjustment-factors/national-bias.html</a>

The survey was funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy and Belsize Society was supported by Camden Council's Air Quality Officers, to whom we owe our thanks. The coronavirus lockdown meant we could not hold the planned public meeting with Camden's officers to discuss the survey results so instead Tom Parkes, Senior Air Quality Officer, kindly responded to questions submitted by the volunteers:

Q: The legal limit for NO2 (40µg/m3) applies to bias corrected average annual data. Is it not of concern, however, that every one of the sites tested showed the limit was exceeded for some or many months?

A: Not necessarily – NO<sub>2</sub> levels vary throughout the year in response to weather conditions (e.g. low wind speeds reducing ground layer mixing) and heating demand. NO2 is almost always higher in winter and especially at residential locations where a greater portion of overall NO2 emissions are from boilers. The  $40\mu g/m^3$  limit is for annual mean exposure and it is assumed that the actual NO2 levels will drop above and below this at certain times. If we had one particular month where the NO2 concentration was extremely high compared to other months then this might cause some short-term health effects such as exacerbation of existing respiratory conditions (such as asthma etc.) and would indicate that something awry had happened locally (e.g. a local generator or roadworks, or persistent idling

Q: More generally, is Camden Council concerned that there are many locations with several months where the raw measurements are above 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>?

A: The individual months have not had the bias adjustment factor applied, so they are likely a slight overestimate of the actual NO2 level. However, short- or medium-term exposure to elevated concentrations of air pollution may still trigger the symptoms of existing respiratory conditions. Therefore while the raw month-average NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations measured in this survey are not unexpected for residential areas in London, the data still indicate that air pollution may impart a more significant effect on respiratory health during certain times of the year.

Q: The Maresfield Gardens / Nutley Terrace site is not a constantly busy road but nor is the number of boilers in the vicinity very high given the immediate built environment. So is there another explanation for the pattern found in the survey for Site 1?

A: This was the least polluted of the survey sites and at lower concentrations it can be more difficult to infer the pattern. However NO2 levels will always be a product of local emissions with a background contribution from longerrange sources of NO2 and its precursor chemical species (e.g. there is a complex atmospheric relationship between ozone and NO2, as well as volatile organic compounds from other sources). Nevertheless this site does exhibit the seasonality described above.

Q: How does Belsize Park compare with other areas of London and elsewhere insofar as information exists?

A: These results are fairly typical of predominantly residential areas in London. The area is outside the central area where even residential streets may have NO2 levels above the National Air Quality Objective  $40\mu g/m^3$  annual mean limit. Air quality continues to improve throughout London and I strongly suspect this is the same in Belsize Park. London has comparatively 'clean' air compared to many other major cities, but that doesn't detract from the fact that air pollution in London and the UK still imposes a significant mortality and quality of life burden which we need to address. It also disproportionately affects deprived communities: there is a very clear demographic and equalities element to air pollution.

Q: Given these results, does Camden have any estimates that would allow us to infer which, if any, of our locations are likely to breach the WHO/EU rule of a one-hour 200 μg/m³ limit not to be exceeded more than 18 times a year?

A: If the NO<sub>2</sub> annual mean at a diffusion tube site exceeds 60µg/m3 it is assumed that the short-term National Air Quality Objective 200µg/m³ one-hour limit has been exceeded. That said, our Euston Road automatic monitoring site measured an annual mean of  $70\mu g/m^3$  but only exceeded the one-hour limit seven times during the calendar year. The only Belsize Society monitoring site with an annual bias-adjusted mean above 40µg/m³ was Pond Street / Fleet Road and that measured well below 60µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is very unlikely that the 200 $\mu$ g/m³ one-hour limit was exceeded at this or any of the other monitoring locations at any point during 2019.

Q: If timed recordings had been possible, some sites (Maresfield Gardens / Nutley Terrace and Eton Avenue, for example) may well have indicated that most NO2 emissions are linked to school run traffic to independent schools in the vicinity, with a reduction in air quality particularly at the start and end of the school day during term time. If it were possible, it would be useful to do some time-specific monitoring near schools. Diffusion tubes, while cheap, are blunt measuring instruments. Could a more detailed survey be done with commercial sensors as a future study?

A: Commercial 'low cost' sensors are still expensive and also have issues with uncertainty, replicability etc. Diffusion tubes all perform the same and allow us to compare likefor-like across many sites and over long periods of time, despite the lack of temporal granularity. The Council is very aware of the air quality impact of traffic flows to and from schools in Camden and the Frognal / Fitzjohn's / Hampstead area in particular. Colleagues in Transport Strategy continue to work on schemes to protect health by limiting vehicular access to congested school streets at drop-off and pick-up times, while supporting behaviour change initiatives to encourage uptake of alternative modes of transport.

Q: What range of possible actions may Camden take in response to these results, especially after the coronavirus emergency is over and, presumably, air pollution returns to the high levels experienced last

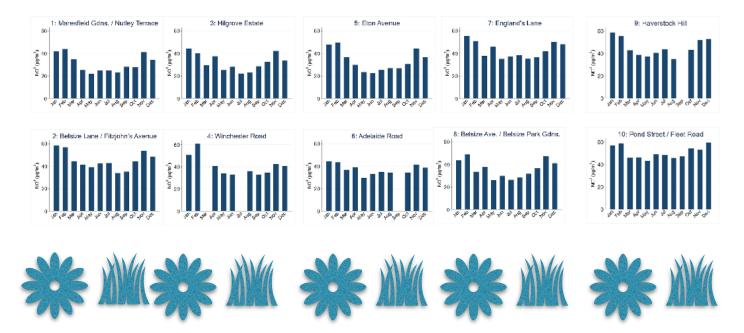
A: Camden's Transport Strategy (CTS) seeks to achieve a borough-wide reduction in annual traffic mileage by promoting and facilitating a modal shift towards journeys on foot and by bike (or other means of active travel). The CTS was developed in tandem with five other action plans, including a Walking & Accessibility Action Plan, a Cycling Action Plan and a Freight Action Plan, all of which will have an impact on vehicular traffic and air quality. Furthermore, the Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCP) Action Plan sets out the intention for the deployment of EV infrastructure in Camden, which will help to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> pollution.

Camden's Clean Air Action Plan, CTS and Climate Action Plan are mutually supportive and will all deliver improvements to air quality in Belsize Park and elsewhere in Camden. It's crucial to note that everybody contributes to air pollution, so it requires a collective effort to understand how we impact air quality and how it affects us, and for everyone to try to play their part in protecting personal and public health. For instance, avoiding burning wood or coal fuels at home (or garden waste), avoiding driving wherever practicable, insulating homes, replacing boilers with ultralow NOx systems or, better still, heat pumps or electric heating alternatives, will all help to improve air quality.

#### Belsize Park air quality survey - the results are in (continued)

Figures 1 - 10: Monthly mean raw (no bias adjustment) nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations (µg/m³) for the 10 locations monitored by the community air quality survey volunteers in 2019.

Each monthly value is produced by calculating the mean of the concentrations measured by three diffusion tubes at each location. Out of the 120 monthly mean values, four are shown as missing in the charts (no bars) due to all three tubes at those locations being taken or vandalised that month. Two locations in August 2019 each had two tubes taken so those reported values are from the single remaining tube. There were a further 11 instances over the year where one tube was taken from a location and for each of those results the mean of the remaining two tubes is presented. Overall, 93% (333/360) of the tubes deployed were not tampered with and provided good data during the 12-month study.



# Planning Matters

### Update on the future of Queen Mary's House, Heath Street

As part of the marketing exercise launched in 2018 to gauge potential levels of interest in Queen Mary's House among buyers and developers, the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust is seeking to confirm the current planning use for the site which is currently used for offices and staff accommodation. As is common with buildings of this age, there is no clear evidence of the lawful planning use of QMH on Camden Council's records. The trust has therefore submitted an application for a certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development (CLEUD) to the council. Planning Class C2 includes 'use as a hospital or nursing home', so the trust has asked them to certify the use of the site as C2 residential institution with ancillary staff accommodation.

#### 100 Avenue Road: Pause in Construction

Many will have noticed the removal of cranes from the 100 Avenue Road site. The developers - Essential Living held a Construction Working Group meeting in July to update local groups and councillors about plans. The phase of removing the old building and putting in place foundations has ended and work at the site has been paused.

Essential Living is reviewing next steps for the site alongside their construction plans across a portfolio of properties, in the context of the effects of Covid 19. No decisions had been made about 100 Avenue Road and Essential Living could not outline their options. However, they were in discussions with Transport for London and Camden Council, especially on what would happen should there be a long delay in moving to the next phase of constructing the development. Discussions with Transport for London focus on the bus routes and the lanes of the A41 (Finchley Road) used for the development; the Council are being consulted about the effect of any long pause in construction on the Swiss Cottage open space and other nearby areas.

# **Hampstead Hopper Bus**

Valeria Bettina Pensabene writes on behalf of Green School Runs

The Hampstead Hopper Bus (HHB) is an unincorporated community organisation of local residents, composed of members of the Heath and Hampstead Society, Hampstead's local councillors, Green School Runs and the Hampstead Transport Partnership (Registered Charity No. 1189167). They are seeking to gauge appetite for a new community bus initiative, that they would then work to launch in the latter part of the year. They aim to set up a subscription-funded bus serving an hour long route around NW3 and which would take in Hampstead and parts of Belsize Village.

HHB would be most grateful if you could fill in this very quick survey taking less than 1 minute to complete. They will need at least 500 interested people to make this a viable project - so please feel free to forward this on to anyone who might be interested, and ask as many of your family, friends and neighbours as possible to complete it.

The deadline is Monday 31 August 2020. Survey available at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/ 1FAIpQLSfnDxvUFatJJnWx31FgnJCiPl6LcRCtM\_sh2euFLJuPN4iQjw/viewform?usp=sf\_link

## New Book about Belsize: The Harlots of Haverstock Hill

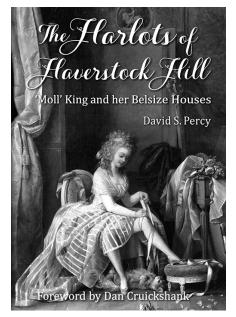
The drama series "Harlots" features Georgian London's most valuable commercial activity - sex. Series one and two will be aired back to back on BBC Two from August. Significantly, Belsize had its own Harlots in the 18th century, and this fascinating story is told in the new book by David S Percy, The Harlots of Haverstock Hill.

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

Bold and opportunistic, Moll King was a woman who mixed with harlots, courtesans and lords of the land, who was painted by Hogarth and defied the norms and restrictions of the day to pursue wealth and success on her own terms. This account of her life, written in part in the first person as she

might have recorded it, includes new information and facts which have never before come to light regarding what happened to Moll King's Belsize houses - especially her villa.

"Moll" King and her Belsize Houses by David S Percy, with a foreword by Dan Cruickshank, will be out on 1 September and available in all Daunt bookshops plus Waterstones, Hampstead, £10.99.



#### Donations made by the Society

As members will know, every year BelSoc makes donations to causes that the Committee believes, on your behalf, to be worthy of our financial support. This year's events, of course, have meant that a huge number of organisations, large and small, have been unable to engage in their usual fundraising activities and so have faced financial difficulty. With this in mind, we have already made substantial donations to the Chalk Farm Food Bank, Marie Curie, and to Camden Giving. This last is a charity that has set up a dedicated Covid-19 fund to help address the challenges the pandemic has thrown up in the borough to charities, social enterprises and community groups (more information can be found at www.camdengiving.org.uk). We have asked that our contribution be aimed particularly at supporting the charity's adult care activities.

There is still ample time this year for BelSoc to make further donations. As ever, we invite members to contribute their own ideas about who might benefit from these.

#### Gift Aid and the Belsize Society

As a charity, BelSoc will shortly be making its first claim to HMRC in respect of its Gift Aid entitlement. If any member has not yet submitted a Gift Aid declaration form, and wishes to do so, do get in touch at membership@belsize.org.uk or give Anne Stevens a ring on 020 7794 0874.

# Dates for your diary

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

Online at <a href="https://www.botanicalmind.online/">https://www.botanicalmind.online/</a>. 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 on 12 Aug, 7pm. Public Knowledge: The Self-Enquiry Inquiry Commission. Nervemeter, a magazine sold on the streets by the homeless, host the Select Committee, creating a history of the present from digital ephemera. Free.

#### Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

16 Sep to 7 Mar, A Nest of Gentle Artists. Exhibition draws together works by Hampstead's Randolphe Schwabe, his students and contemporaries, from the early 20th century. Free.

20 Sep to 4 Oct, 5 Ways with Colour. Brings together the works of five artists with a passion for colour, displaying prints, collage, glass, ceramics and textiles.

Online exhibition: The Prospect of Happiness, Liz Matthews. Drawing together portraits of some beloved London houses and views.

Online exhibition: Artists who love trees, Robert Eagle Fine Art. Art from a diverse group of contemporary artists, taking inspiration from trees. www.roberteaglefine.co.uk/artists-who-love-art

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

Online monthly, 7.30pm-9pm, first Mondays from 7 Sep, Belsize Book Club. Reading books from around the world starting with "God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy. Email: belsizelirbrary@thewinch.org

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

Sunday, 16 Aug, 6pm: Caroline & Will Alone Together. Musical evening to help raise money to keep the Library open. Instagram: @minibeatmusic

#### Images of Belsize at Tate online

Siberechts picture of Belsize House, thought to be from the 1670s. It is available to view online at: <a href="https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/">https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/</a> siberechts-view-of-a-house-and-its-estate-inbelsize-middlesex-t06996

#### Contact Us

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For Newsletter submissions and letters: info@belsize.org.uk. Deadline for next issue is: 25 October 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: <a href="https://">https://</a> www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/ navigation/environment/planningand-built-environment/

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