



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 February Newsletter of the Belsize Society. This is the first of 2021, a year that will be the fiftieth for the Society and its predecessor organisations.

You'll see with this Newsletter the papers for the Annual General Meeting (or you have had the papers emailed). It is hard to believe that a year ago we were meeting at Belsize Square Synagogue, able to talk about the Society and enjoy cakes and tea together. Hopefully, the March AGM will be our first and last online-only AGM. But hope you can make this event. Joining details are on this page.

In this Newsletter, we're looking back at one special experience of the summer, the Belsize Village Stretery, with reflections from the organisers about the steps that paved the way for this. We have also been able to retrieve from our archives some past uses of the village area. In this fiftieth year, we'll try to dip into the Society's history but the festivals organised by the Belsize Residents Association are a good start for this nostalgic look.

You'll see the annual request for recommendations for Tradesmen You Can Trust. Do remember that it is really helpful if you can also let us know about the tradesmen that you have used from TYCT, as that helps us keep the list up-to-date. Other Society business covered in the Newsletter include our new donations policy and an update on the Gift Aid secured by us through members kindly returning forms to us. There is also some news from the 100 Avenue Road development.

Between lockdowns, we were able to commemorate our long-serving committee member Consuelo Phelan with a tree, planted in St Peter's church.

Hope you enjoy the Newsletter.

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Belsize Society Annual General Meeting

*Sunday, 7 March 2021
at 3pm*

On Zoom:

Meeting ID: 999 7151 9089

Passcode: 653397

(At: <https://zoom.us/join>

Or +44 3300 885830)

Members only

We are 50 years old!

It is 50 years since Belsize residents came together to preserve the amenity of Belsize Park.

- **FIFTY YEARS AGO:** A group of local residents ran a campaign against a proposal for a ring road around London that would have destroyed Victorian houses and cut Belsize Park in two. This turned into the BRA in 1976.
- **FORTY YEARS AGO:** The BRA Constitution was adopted in 1982 and a campaign against estate agent boards was started.
- **THIRTY YEARS AGO:** In February 1991, Harold Marks was Chairman. The BRA was contributing to the Camden Borough Plan.
- **TWENTY YEARS AGO:** In February 2001, Gordon Maclean was Chairman. The BRA was campaigning about the Swiss Cottage redevelopment; opposing a major redevelopment of the Load of Hay pub in Haverstock Hill; and welcoming the green recycling boxes (members supported the boxes but did not like the loose lids!).
- **TEN YEARS AGO:** In February 2011, Averil Nottage was Chairwoman. The BRA was gearing up for the formal consultation on HS2; taking action about budget cuts to libraries; and investigating the impact of basement developments.
- **NOW:** The BelSoc Committee continues to meet by Zoom and is arranging the first (and hopefully last) Zoom AGM. Our work on planning applications continues and new ideas for digital content are in train in order to keep up community spirit in a pandemic.



BELSIZE RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

Commemorative tree for Consuelo Phelan at St Peter's Church

Anne Stevens, Committee member, updates us:



Rowan from Belsize Park

Very many members of BelSoc will recall Consuelo Phelan's love of trees, and the care she took to ensure that applications to fell or prune them were rigorously monitored and trees preserved and protected whenever possible. Her family in Melbourne were keen that a tree should be her memorial and kindly passed funds from her friends and themselves to BelSoc so that we could arrange this in the neighbourhood she loved so much.

A Mountain Ash (Rowan) tree has been planted where many of us frequently walk by. Do look out for it in the north east corner of St Peter's church garden, close to the corner of Belsize Park and the east side of Belsize Square: it's sparse and bare now, but will have delicate leaves, white blossom in spring and red berries in autumn. We are very grateful to Kenneth Robbie, the churchwarden, and to Paul Nicholson, the vicar, for arranging this. In a short ceremony in late November, which was necessarily limited to a few members of the BelSoc Committee and an equally small number of Consuelo's friends, her ashes were buried at the foot of the tree. We are delighted to have a beautiful reminder of her and so are her family, who will visit as soon as conditions allow.

Contributing to the Newsletter

Would you like to contribute to a future Newsletter? If you have lived in Belsize Park for 30 years or more and would like to be the subject of an interview on what life was like in previous decades, we would like to hear from you. Please contact info@belsize.org.uk.

JOIN THE COMMITTEE

Would you like to help steer the organisation? We'd be delighted to welcome members to shape what we do through joining the new 2021/22 Committee.

We're always on the lookout for people with an interest in representing residents' views to Camden, organising events and contributing to the Newsletter.

If you would like to find out more about what the Committee does, then please contact us at info@belsize.org.uk.

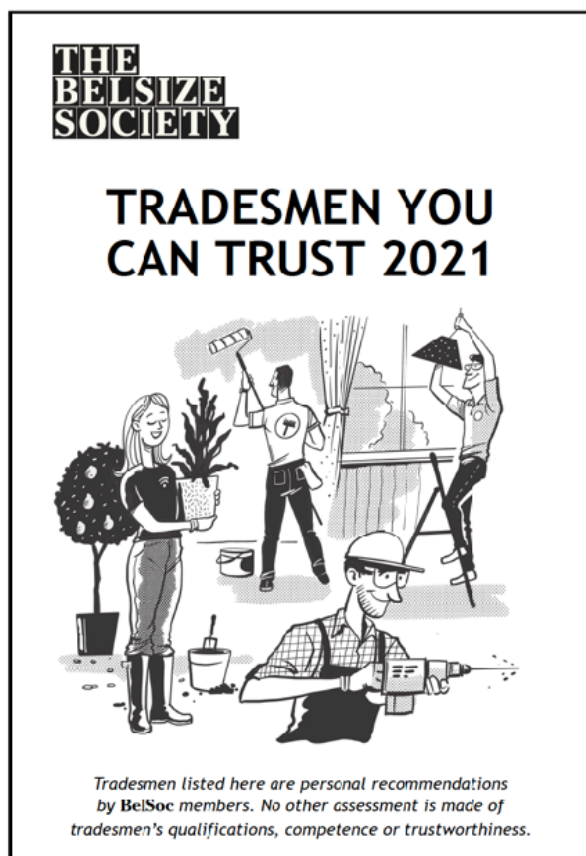


Tradesman You Can Trust 2021

This time last year, we were asking for your contributions to the 2020 booklet which would reach you in May. Little did we know that you wouldn't receive it until August. Not that we're sure about May delivery this year, but hope springs eternal so here we are again, hoping you will send us loads of new recommendations and re-recommendations of local tradesmen you have used in the past year - we need to fill some of those gaps which appeared last time!

Our February Newsletter is being emailed to those of you who have email. Similarly, the TYCT form will be emailed to you but separately. The form can be downloaded and printed from the website as well (www.belsize.org.uk/publications/tradesmen-you-can-trust) and of course you can send a straight forward email with the tradesmen's and your own details to TYCT@belsize.org.uk.

All contributions to be received by 26th March 2021 please. Stay safe and well Everyone.



Belsize Village Streatory 2020

In 2017, Belsize Village was described as being "besieged by burglars" in the Evening Standard. In January, Robert Stephenson-Padron reflected at a Camden Council Meeting on what the Belsize Village Business Association has been able to do to revitalise the Belsize Village area.

The Association was started just over two years ago, a period when Bob had observed numerous businesses closing and footfalls dwindle. Despite the cloud of the Coronavirus pandemic, the past summer was one seeing economic vibrancy return to our Village. He's particularly pleased that the employment created - estimated at 50+ jobs saved or created - were in part associated with commitments to pay the London Living Wage.

At the council meeting, Bob outlined some of the key steps in the changes seen. The first was raising the profile of the Village through social media. Looking at the Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook pages of the Association, there is a lot of activity often centring on photos taken in Belsize Village. We all know the spot is picturesque, the central feature of recent TV ads (remember 2018 Visa advert) but the Association could really highlight the Village's biggest



strength: that all the hospitality, leisure and retail businesses in Belsize Village are independents, benefitting "from the love and passion of the families that run our unique local businesses."

A second stage of the revitalisation has focused on beautifying Belsize Village so the outdoor spaces could be used. Historically, Belsize Village suffered from litter and fly-tipping. Residents in 2015 took Camden officials on a walk to highlight the state of the village area, and working with Camden Council and with volunteers, this has been improved. Perhaps

most recently were the efforts in September as part of the Nationwide Great British September Clean.

That then brings us to the Streatory. With beautiful gardening planters installed, the scene was set for an innovative, new phase for the Village on July 4, 2020, which transformed Belsize Village square into a vibrant hub and led to the economic boom the Association is most proud of. They also see this success as transferable to other communities especially tackling what they view as a largely unrecognised "litter crisis", which blights our communities but could reset such spaces to become more economically vibrant.

Village Business Association recommendations

At the meeting at Camden Council, Belsize Village Business Association pointed at where the Council might help:

- 1) Tackle the litter crisis. Use the council's marketing and enforcement power to make littering and fly-tipping anathema.
- 2) Have a drive to rid the Borough of graffiti-based vandalism and step up enforcement against other Anti-Social Behaviour
- 3) Continue to support the innovative use of public spaces such as pro-actively supporting the Belsize Village Streatory.
- 4) Designate Belsize Village as a Historic Action Zone to help, for instance, install visually attractive Belsize Village signs.
- 5) Provide economic incentives to businesses and/or landlords to upgrade the frontages of their buildings because these upgrades benefit an entire community.
- 6) Pro-actively work on improving community infrastructure, perhaps extending Belsize Village square down Belsize Terrace.

Find out more at: <https://belsizevillage.org.uk/> or social media handle @belsizevillage

The Last Belsize Festival 1989

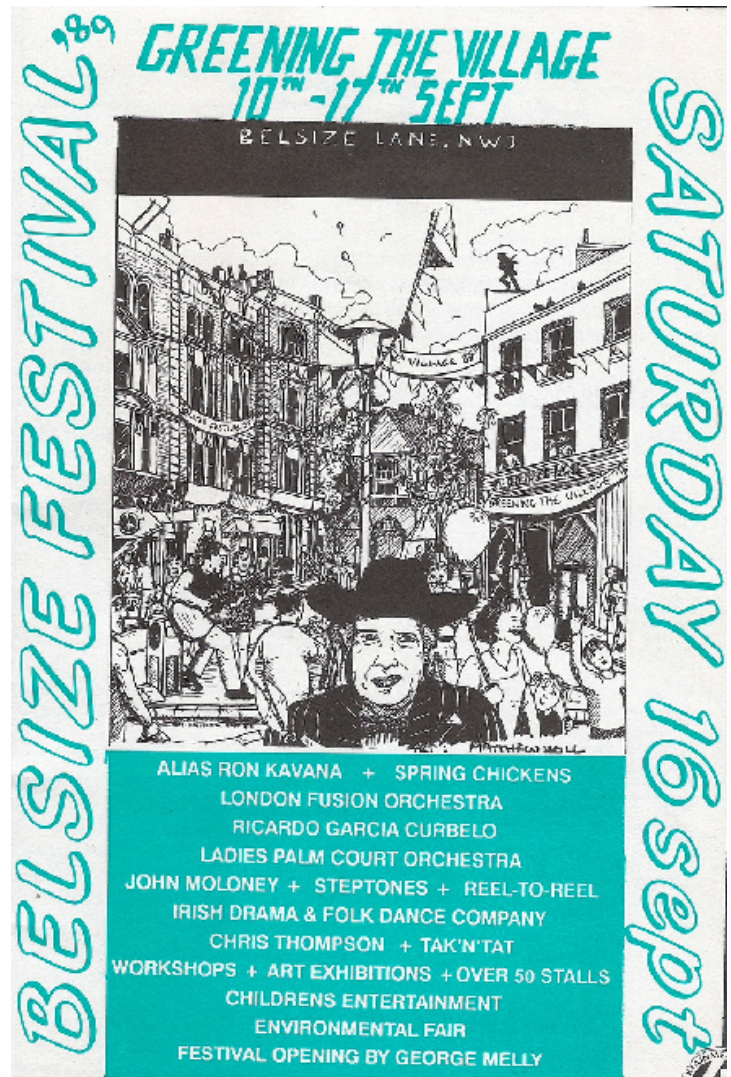
The Village has formed a focus of local activity of many kinds over the years. Developed in the nineteenth century by William Willett, he gave up land in order to open up a triangular village green See "Streets of Belsize", Camden History Society.

Did you know that for many years Belsize Village hosted the Belsize Festival? Organised by local people, and supported by the Belsize Residents Association, the Festival was held for the first time in September 1974 with Belsize Lane closed to traffic.

The picture of the Village which you see on this page was drawn by Matthew Bell and was part of the cover of the 1989 Belsize Festival programme. The Festival ran from 10-17 September. The theme of the Festival was "Greening the Village", reflecting the interest of Belsize residents in the environment which continues to this day. The main day of the festival was Saturday 16 September. George Melly opened the day and Belsize resident Ken Ellis was the MC. Musical events took place in (among other places) the Village and St Peter's Church. There was a grand fancy dress parade, a toy and book market, and roundabout and inflatable castle.

The programme - which is now part of the BelSoc archive - says that Mr Newman "will be there as usual with his donkeys." The Festival raised money for St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, the Simon Community and the London Wildlife Trust. The BRA itself contributed £39.11 to these charities from cake sales - showing that the tradition of Belsize cakes is a long one. The BRA organised a ceremony to hand over cheques to the charities.

This was the Festival's final year. In 1987, the Festival was rounded off by Lord Eric Suggmuu and his Band in the rain. After rain affected the 1988 and 1989 festivals, enthusiasm waned and the BRA Committee decided not to initiate it again.



The sketch for the cover of the 1989 programme showed a Belsize village filled with festival-goers.

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE LAUNCHES ONLINE ARCHIVE

Camden Art Centre was established in 1965 as a place for making, viewing and discussing art. It has launched an online archive of selected exhibitions and projects from 1991 - 2020. For audio, video and lots of fantastic pictures, go to <https://archive.camdenartscentre.org/archive>.

Belsize Community Library Zoom talks

Pat Holden writes:



Thanks to Zoom, the Friends of Belsize Community Library have managed to continue with their monthly library talks since September.

Stephen Duncan, the son of Beata (Susanna) Duncan, spoke about his mother's early life in Germany during the turmoil of Weimar Berlin and read from her poetry collection *Berlin Blues* (Green Bottle Press) reflecting that period. Beata also wrote poems about her life during the London blitz in *Breaking*

Glass (WriteSideLeft.) Beata was a long time resident of Belsize Park and a strong supporter and campaigner for Belsize Library.

Tudor Allen, the archivist, took us on a historical tour of Swiss Cottage and we saw some of the enormous changes that took place during the twentieth century.

Karin Fernald, the actor, writer and performer described and illustrated how Englishwomen such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who were critical of their own society, crossed the Channel early in the French Revolution with high hopes. We saw paintings, portraits and caricatures by French and English artists.

The actors Colin Pinney and Noelle Rimmington performed the story of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath using the couple's own words to show their marriage and its conflicting passions.

The talks are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7.30 and we have the following planned.

February 18 Laura Spinney, the writer and science journalist will talk on "Pandemics old and new: parallels between the 'Spanish' flu of 1918 and Covid-19":

March 18 Josh Levine, who worked on the script of *Dunkirk* (topic to be agreed)

If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive the Zoom link, please email bcltalks@yahoo.com

Belsize Poetry

In these difficult times, we asked Belsize poet, Robert Ilson, for something to give us hope. We are very grateful for the poem which he sent us.

Hope

When children cluster round you, say
It hasn't always been this way :
There was a time when you could
meet
Your friends and neighbours in the
street
And go with them to have a meal.
It was no fantasy ; it was real.
The children may begin to ask
Did everybody wear a mask ?
Not then, you'll say, and shed a tear
Recalling many a former year.
The children will as children do
Try all they can to comfort you
But you'll remind them nought can
stay
For ever as it is today
And just as winter yields to spring
There is a seed in everything
That will if given patient care
Make all things better than they were.

Robert Ilson

Belsize Society donations policy

The Belsize Society is run entirely by volunteers, and its operating costs are met by the annual subscriptions of members, including gift aid. It also occasionally acts as a channel for monies donated, for example by film companies, for the benefit of the community. When its resources exceed its costs and appropriate reserves for contingencies, it sometimes, at the discretion of the Trustees, makes donations to purposes that accord with its charitable aims.

The Committee has recently updated its policy on donations, and the revised document can be found on the website. Donations are not ever for more than £1,000 and often much less, and always for purposes with a direct impact on the local community. The Trustees aim to spread the donations out amongst purposes and organisations, both in any single year and across the years, and to respond flexibly to needs in the local area as they arise. For example, we have recently given money a local foodbank. The Committee is always grateful for specific suggestions from members of purposes or organisations to which donations might be made.

From the Camden Council Safe Travel team

The team have let us know that information about all current safe travel schemes (primarily making cycling and walking easier), and the rationale for them, is available at: <https://www.camden.gov.uk/making-travel-safer-in-camden> with opportunities to comment and provide feedback on "trial" schemes currently in place here: <https://safetravelcamden.commonplace.is/>. The latter site contains FAQs which may be of interest to members. Any new schemes that come forward, including in the Belsize area, will be subject to a consultation period prior to any "trial" or "experimental" initiative being introduced - and in this area the Belsize Society (and local residents) would receive consultation information.

100 Avenue Road

Essential Living, the developers behind the controversial 100 Avenue Road development at Swiss Cottage which was opposed by the Belsize Residents Association, have caused fury by attempting to remove all the affordable housing from the scheme.

The first application 2021/0025/P seeks to scrap all 36 affordable and intermediate rent flats, which were to be run by the Peabody Housing Association, and the developer is also asking to replace the Portland stone specified for the exterior with concrete.

The application to cut costs follows months of delay as work on the site was halted last year due to the coronavirus, leaving demolished buildings including the old Ham and High offices. Essential Living argues that spiralling costs mean the changes are needed to make the scheme viable.

But Swiss Cottage councillor Leo Cassarani told the *Camden New Journal*: "I would say this is completely typical of the developer, and exactly what the community suspected they would try to do. They have turned around at the first sign of trouble and said we're going to not deliver even the tiny bit of community commitment we originally said we'd do."

Cllr Steve Adams (Con, Belsize) said that if the scheme was not viable as originally approved, "then that's a problem for Essential Living, not Camden". Lib Dem group leader Luisa Porritt called the application "an insult to residents who engaged with the developer in good faith".

BelSoc is keeping this under review and will comment on the applications. If any members have particular concerns or points they wish to raise they can do so on the Camden Planning website. Comments have to be made by 14 February 2021.

Dates for your diary

Belsize Society, online via Zoom

Annual General Meeting, Online 3pm, Sunday 7 March. Agenda and papers sent to members by email and post. Zoom Meeting ID: 999 7151 9089
Passcode: 653397. Members only.

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

Launch of the online archive at <https://camdenartcentre.org/archive>. See three decades of highlights from the Centre's exhibitions, projects, videos and residencies.

19 Mar to 6 June, Walter Price - Peal Lines.
Following his studio residency at the Centre in early 2020, American artist Walter Price returns for his first major institutional exhibition in the UK

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

28 Apr to 2 May, Lockdown & Beyond. After months of visual deprivation, a chance to see Penny Elder's colourful abstract and semi-abstract oils and mono-screenprints depict Lockdown, Together Again, and Beyond Free.

Online exhibition: The Prospect of Happiness, Liz Matthews. Drawing together portraits of some beloved London houses and views. <https://pottersyardhouseportraits.com/exhibition-the-prospect-of-happiness/the-prospect-of-happiness/>

Belsize Community Library, Antrim Road, NW3

Online monthly, 7.30pm-9pm, first Mondays from 7 Sept, Belsize Book Club. Reading books from around the world. Email: belsizelibrary@thewinch.org

Online, 7:30pm, Thurs, 18 Feb. Pandemics old and new, Laura Spinney, writer and science journalist, talks about the parallels between the Spanish 'flu of 1918 and our current Covid 19 pandemic. Zoom meeting ID 889 6466 1765, no password required.

March 18 Josh Levine, who worked on the script of *Dunkirk* (topic to be agreed)

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

Images of Belsize at Tate online

Siberecht's picture of Belsize House, thought to be from the 1670s. It is available to view online at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/>

Contact Us

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For Newsletter submissions and letters:
info@belsize.org.uk. Deadline for next issue is: **11 April 2021**

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