

BELSIZE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

August 2013

Notes from your Chairwoman

A lot happens in Belsize, but we don't always know what is on our doorsteps. So in this issue we highlight our local community choirs, the language classes at Swiss Cottage Community Centre (page 7), and developments at the Belsize Community Library (page 5). We also explain, on page 4, the new local policing arrangements and how the decision was reached to close our fire station.



High summer blooms: hollyhocks flourish in Belsize gardens

BRA considers most planning issues when applications are submitted, but for major developments there are often earlier consultations. One such, about which we are particularly concerned, is the proposal to build a 26-storey block at Swiss Cottage. Another is a Council proposal for a 10-storey block of flats in Adelaide Road. Together they could set precedents for more high-rise buildings to the south of Belsize. We would welcome your views (see page 5).

We don't usually make changes to the committee between AGMs, but we need to do so now, as Aileen Barry, our Membership Secretary, is moving from the area. Following some musical chairs, we need a new Secretary and an events organiser. If you might be willing and able, do let us know (page 2,3).

We are fortunate that David Percy, who produced the fascinating film

of *The Belsize Story*, is giving a talk for us about the history of the area, illustrated from his very comprehensive collection of pictures of how Belsize used to look. I hope to see you for his talk at the Belsize Library on Wednesday 13 November.

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SAVE THE DATE!

Belsize in View

An illustrated talk by David Percy

Wednesday 13 November
Belsize Community Library
7.30pm

DON'T BE LATE: First come, first served!

Everything in the garden was delicious

"The scene could not be more idyllic. Neighbours milling around a flourishing Belsize Park garden in sunshine, sharing jokes, feasting on home-made cake and sipping tea." Not our words, but those of Amy Smith of Camden New Journal, who joined us on 30 June for the BRA Garden Party



Were you there? Amy Smith of Camden New Journal captured as many of the 90-odd merry-makers as she could (above); her glowing write-up about BRA appeared with this photo in the next edition



The sun shone all afternoon, Elaine and Peter Hallgarten's gorgeous garden was in its prime, the refreshments were delicious (many thanks to the hard-working cake-bakers, tea-makers and organisers) and the company was great - no wonder our annual garden party earned us a place in the local paper



BRA members Sandra and Andreas, far left, enjoyed last year's garden party so much that they came back for more: seen here sharing tea and cake with committee members Judith Farbey and Gordon Curtis

JOIN THE BRA TEAM!
We're looking for someone interested in organising future events. If that could be you, please contact Averil (see back page).

SITUATION VACANT

Could you be our new Secretary?

Our excellent Membership Secretary, Aileen Barry, is standing down because she is moving out of the area. Anne Stevens has kindly offered to step into that role, but doing so will mean giving up the work she currently does as BRA's Secretary. So what we need now is someone to take her place as Secretary.

If you are interested in getting more involved in local issues, and you have some spare time, please email info@belsize.org.uk or get in touch with Averil (see back page), so we can tell you about what is involved.

Which good cause?

£ Over the last few years we have supported two local good causes each year, in addition to raising money for the Marie Curie Hospice through our carol singing.

£ We like our donations to pay for something tangible that will clearly benefit the local community. So far this year it has been suggested that we might buy something for the Belsize Community Library and contribute to the costs of developing the garden at St Peter's church.

We would welcome any other suggestions before making a final decision. **LET US KNOW!**

Belsize in View

an illustrated talk
by David Percy

Wednesday
13 November
7.30pm

Belsize Community Library
Antrim Road, NW3 4XN

For BRA's autumn talk, David Percy, director of *The Belsize Story* – the first part of which many of us have already enjoyed – is back with another treat, and the promise of more to come ...



In what he describes as “a sneak preview of some of the pictures to be included in Volume 2”, David will be showing us, on a large screen, many of the restored archive images which he has collected for the project.

“Expect to see wonderful engravings, paintings and archive photographs, in some cases featuring buildings and parts of Belsize that are no longer with us, as well as some rarely-seen coloured engravings of Rosslyn House, Pond Street, and other charming street views,” says David.

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED: THE
LIBRARY HAS LIMITED SEATING

UPDATE: *Police service without our local station*

Neighbourhood policing arrangements in Camden have changed, so making contact when you have a problem no longer means visiting your local police station or dialling 999.

The Borough is now divided into three Neighbourhood Policing Areas, each with an Inspector in charge. Belsize, Haverstock and Gospel Oak wards come within the Central Area, while Frognaal and Fitzjohns, Hampstead Town and Swiss Cottage wards are in the North Area. In Central Area, there are two allocated police officers for each of the three wards, with three other police officers and 29 community support officers covering the whole of the area.

Hampstead police station itself has closed and the Grade II listed building was immediately put up for sale. Abacus, our new local Free School, is hoping to develop a proposal for shared use of the building with a developer, but is not receiving preferential treatment. The police are still looking for a suitable venue for a contact point in the Hampstead area.

HOW TO CONTACT THE POLICE

Urgent/emergency: ring 999, as always

Non-urgent: ring 101

Kentish Town Police Station, 12A Holmes Road (opposite Kentish Town station) is also open 24 hours every day.

OR:

Visit the contact point at the Swiss Cottage Safer Neighbourhood Team office, Station House, 9-13 Swiss Terrace, NW6 4RR, (behind the western entrance to the Tube), Wednesday or Thursday between 7pm and 8pm, or Saturday between 2pm and 3pm.

Request a home visit. In the Central Area, 10 slots will be available each day.

Report non-urgent incidents online at www.online.met.police.uk.



WHEN YOU DON'T REALLY NEED 999

Unless it's a genuine emergency, think 101 for police, 111 for medical problems

Slow speed success!

The Camden-wide 20mph speed limit, voted for by most members at the BRA AGM in February, will come into force next April - and with good reason. Transport for London figures showed that when the 20mph limit was introduced in Belsize in 2007, it resulted in a 2.3mph speed reduction and a 22% drop in casualties.

UPDATE: *Belsize fire station*

Despite much opposition, the London Mayor has decided to close Belsize Fire Station. In May, London Fire Brigade published figures showing that if the station were to close, average response times in Belsize ward would increase from 4.37 seconds to 7.59 seconds.

We therefore objected strongly to the closure in our response to the consultation. In fact, 94% of all respondents opposed the cuts, but revised proposals still earmarked 10 stations for closure, including Belsize.

In July, the opposition parties on the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority rejected the revised plan. However, Boris Johnson has now directed that the plan should be implemented by 16 September.



How high should new buildings go?

Most of Belsize is within one Conservation Area or another, giving significant planning protection from unsuitable development. But the areas around Swiss Cottage station and Adelaide Road are not, and we are concerned that two recent proposals could lead to more high-rise developments on our doorsteps.

We objected strongly to the redevelopment of Swiss Cottage in the early 2000s, and the reduction in public space. We are dismayed that it is now proposed to include a 26-storey tower as part of the redevelopment of **100 Avenue Road**, and were among those people expressing our concern at a recent public meeting. We wait to see if the developers take any notice.

In **Adelaide Road**, the Council is proposing to build 80 flats on the sites of the Adelaide Medical Centre and Modern Motors by Blashford tower block. This proposal includes a 10-storey block. There would be a new medical centre on the corner of Primrose Hill Road.

HAVE YOUR SAY: We are concerned that if these developments are agreed, it could give a green light to more planning applications for high-rise developments in the Adelaide Road/Swiss Cottage corridor. **If you are concerned about the proposal for 100 Avenue Road, or the potential for more local high-rise developments, do let us know.**

A library for all reasons

Belsize Community Library is expanding - with a new logo, a fresh layout, extra services, Saturday opening and a mini coffee shop.

The BCL logo gives a clue to one of the ways the library plans to develop. On those



weekdays when there's no library service, the space is transformed into an office-from-home where freelancers and entrepreneurs can work and exchange ideas and skills with others. Co-working days are Monday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 6pm. Fees (£50 a month) help to fund BCL's other activities.

BCL hopes that co-working and the Saturday opening (11.30am to 6pm) will stay after the summer, but no promises! Some things stay the

same: the Tuesday and Wednesday library hours (10am to 6pm), the activities and events for children and adults, and the website: (www.belsize.communitylibrary.org.uk).

Also unchanged is the need for book donations, especially on crafts and travel, baby books and children's books in European languages, and for volunteers. If you have time to spare, pop in and chat with the librarian.



Tuesday knit and natter sessions start again this autumn in the library: 3 Antrim Road, NW3 4XN



The Lawn Road Spies

A run-down “poor man’s Hampstead” between the wars, Belsize Park became the haunt of artists, refugees and, writes Gene Adams, serious Soviet spies. This autumn brings two new glimpses of this intriguing story

Affordable studio-size rooms in charming, tree-lined and peaceful streets had been attracting young artists to Belsize since the end of the First World War: Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson were among those making their home in the area now designated as the Parkhill Conservation Area. Then, in the 1930s, some of those fleeing Hitler, such as architects Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius, arrived - in



time to find flats with their friend Jack Pritchard in his newly-built startlingly modernist Lawn Road Flats (now known as the ISOKON, pictured, left).

Many of those refugees were Jewish intellectuals and ardent Communists, the Party being at that time the only effective organised opposition to racist Fascism, which had become the official creed of Nazi Germany, and later Italy. Naturally, ‘comrades’ in the UK were ready to help refugees, and they found lodgings for some of them in the unfashionable old Victorian houses, by then divided into flats or bedsits. In 1934 Gertrude Stedman, working with the Quakers, found a flat in an old house in Lawn Road for Professor Robert Kuczynski, an economist from Berlin, and his family. Two Russian spies were in the making ...

SPY 1: MELITA NORWOOD

Gertrude Stedman’s daughter Melita joined both the Party and the NKVD (the KGB of its time) in 1934, and became a lifelong spy for

Russia, first against Hitler and Fascism, and later (after the Stalin-Hitler Pact), for the Soviets. This serious espionage involved sending UK information about the latest atomic secrets from her employer, an important metal working firm, to the Soviet Union during the Cold War years. Melita Norwood (her married name) was eventually ‘outed’, aged 87, in 1999 but she was never prosecuted. She died in 2005.

SPY 2: ‘RED SONYA’

Melita’s friend, and later ‘handler’ was Ursula Kuczynski, one of the Professor’s daughters. Ursula, who used several other cover names, also became the handler of the more notorious Klaus Fuchs, and was herself regarded by her Russian spymasters with great admiration, to the point of becoming an honorary Red Army Colonel and nicknamed ‘Red Sonya’. In 1977 as ‘Ruth Werner’, living her last years in East Berlin, she wrote a riveting autobiography describing her life as a spy: safe houses, carbon copies, hollow tree trunks, amateur radio transmissions and all that! Her book also gave a detailed description of her parents’ “dowdy three-roomed flat in NW3” in Lawn Road when she revisited it in 1936.



Ursula Kuczynski (1907-2003), aka Ruth Werner, aka Soviet spy ‘Red Sonya’

Lawn Road and the Soviet spies who lived there feature in Volume 2 of David Percy’s *The Belsize Story*, which also deals with the murky inhabitants of the nearby ISOKON building who were associated with spying activities. Advance copies will be available at the talk on November 13 (see page 3) and for sale generally in December. Dr David Burke’s book on Melita Norwood, ‘The Spy Who Came in From the Co-op’ (Boydell, 2008) is due to be reissued in paperback around the same time, but can be borrowed in hardback through the inter-library service, as can ‘Sonya’s Report’ (English edition Chatto & Windus, 1991), Ursula Kuczynski’s autobiography, written under her pen name of Ruth Werner.

Learn locally, sing out together

Most activities restart
in September: check
before you turn up!

Secret French class on the doorstep

"For some time I had been looking, in vain, for a French class to refresh my grammar and improve fluency," writes Consuelo Phelan. "Then, quite by accident, I found exactly what I wanted practically on my doorstep - at the Swiss Cottage Community Centre. The French classes, at all levels, are run by Westminster-Kingsway for Camden, and Italian and Spanish are also taught there. My class is two hours in the afternoon once a week. The teachers are native speakers, and mine is excellent.

"The only problem is that these classes are badly publicised, and if numbers are not kept up they might be closed - they were threatened a couple of years ago. They seem to be one of Camden's better-kept secrets. And the lesson seems to be: use it or lose it!"

Find out more about these language classes by emailing courseinfo@westking.ac.uk. Or visit the Community Centre in Winchester Road or its website at www.yourswiss.org for details of these and many other classes and activities held there, from Scrabble to Zumba.

Choose your choir



You don't need to audition and they all claim to be friendly and welcoming, so get in touch, go along and join in!

Belsize Community Choir

Choral music, sacred and secular, with occasional public performances.

Thursdays, 7-9 pm

St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3 4HJ

£30 per term

www.belsizecommunitychoir.org.uk

Voices on the Hill, the Hampstead Community Choir

Contemporary songs from 70s soul to 90s pop, with occasional public performances.

Mondays, 7-9pm

Hampstead Town Hall (see U3A, below)

Small charge (the first session is free).

info@wac.co.uk 7692 5800

Fleet singers

No singing experience or ability to read music needed. Occasional public performances.

Mondays 7.30-9.30pm

Gospel Oak Methodist Church, Agincourt/

Lisburne Road, NW3 2NT

£60 for 12 weeks

www.fleetsingers.org.uk or 7485 6990

Just for the pleasure of learning together

What's 30 years old but can't be joined until you reach 60? The answer is U3A or the University of the Third Age - and there are no marks for getting the answer right because, despite the name, it doesn't give degrees or certificates. Run by volunteers, U3A consists of groups of men and women no longer in full-time employment who enjoy getting together to study. "It's a university in the original sense of a community of people engaged in studying and learning from each other, just for the pleasure of learning," says Ruth Sands. "Once the annual fee (£67) has been paid, there are no other charges (except for some optional events). One can attend any, and as many of the 180-plus study groups as one wishes without further payment." The original idea of U3A came from France, but the British version differs in that we now have 800 autonomous U3As. The London one is based at the Hampstead Town Hall.

U3A London, 213 Haverstock Hill, NW3 4QP; 0207 692 5440/1; www.u3alondon.org.uk

Need to know

Dates for your diary

Open House London

+Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September

See inside interesting local buildings, including: 8a Belsize Court Garages, originally a late 19C coachman's living quarters and stable, now an architect's studio and maisonette; and The Coach House, 2a Belsize Park Gardens, a Victorian house retro-fitted to save 70% carbon. Details www.openhouselondon.org.uk

Belsize Green Fair

+Saturday 28 September

10am to 4pm

Outside Budgens on Haverstock Hill

For more information and offers to help organise this annual event, please email info@transitionbelsize.org.uk.

Belsize Village Music Festival

+Saturday 5 October, 7.30pm, and Sunday 6 October, 4pm

Classical concerts featuring local musicians performing works by Brahms and Schumann. St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3 4HJ.

+Sunday 6 October, 7.30pm

Jazz in Belsize Terrace.

Details from ian.jewel@hotmail.co.uk.

*****Belsize in View: illustrated talk*****

+Wednesday 13 November, 7.30pm

Belsize Community Library, Antrim Road, NW3 4XN. See page 7 for more information.

BRA COMMITTEE

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(see page 3).

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Deborah Buzan

Gordon Curtis

Judith Farbey

Judith Gubbay (*Newsletter Editor*)

Pat Holden

Consuelo Phelan

Ruth Sands

Neil Harris (*Treasurer*)

Prabhat Vaze

BRA WEBSITE

www.belsize.org.uk

How to contact the editor

For correspondence relating to any issues raised
in this Newsletter, please write to:

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We welcome contributions and event listings.

****November-to-January issue deadline: Friday 25 October****