

# BELSIZE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

November 2014

### Notes from your Chair

Welcome to the November Newsletter, which highlights two events where we were delighted to meet numerous members and non-members. First was the BRA stall at the **Transition Belsize Green Fair** (page 3). More recently, we enjoyed Averil Nottage's fascinating **guided "stroll"** through the architectural features and history of the heart of Belsize (page 2) and the tea, cakes and catch-up with many of you afterwards.

We have been having a busy time with **planning**, which featured highly when we met with local councillors. There have been some difficult individual applications, particularly the proposals for 100 Avenue Road, and also more strategic matters, such as what new **Neighbourhood Forums** might offer Belsize.

On **100 Avenue Road**, we are pleased at Camden's rejection of the proposal (see page 4). There now remains the question of what to do with the site, and we await next



Celebrate the season and our 100 Avenue Road victory (page 4); help light up Belsize-on-the-Hill' (page 7)

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steps by the developer. The rejection also affects getting much-needed local community space earmarked for the Winch. We'll keep you informed.

We look forward to seeing - and hearing! - you at the **Carols** on 20 December (see below).

**\*Sing along with us!\***

**BRA Carols**

**in the Village**

**Saturday 20 December  
from 4.30pm**

**SEE PAGE 7**



**The starting point by the Belsize Village noticeboard: our guide, Averil Nottage, outlines the route and takes us back to the 14th century and beyond**

## Strolling together through Belsize

Sunday afternoon of 12 October was fine, though a little grey, as some 70 local residents of all ages gathered for the promised stroll through 1,000 years of Belsize history. Our guide was former BRA chairwoman Averil Nottage, who had helpfully provided us all with a map of the route.

Despite the long and entertaining historical journey it took us on - through manor houses, country retreats, pleasure gardens and 19th century developers - the walk took us only an easy distance, leading along Belsize Park, round Belsize Square into Lambolle Road, then through Eton Garages to the point where Eton Avenue meets England's Lane, before heading back down Eton Avenue in time for tea and cakes. Our thanks are due to our hosts, Sarum Hall School, and - as ever - to the BRA tea-makers, cake bakers and serving team.



**Eton Garages: a handy quiet cut-through for strollers, large and small** Photo: Luke Collins



**Belsize Square meets Lancaster Drive: elegant classical-style housing for the aspiring middle classes built by Daniel Tidey** Photo: Luke Collins

### Could you give a home to our crockery?

We all appreciate the tea and home-made cakes which are such a feature of BRA events, such as the AGM and our local history walks. But the teapots, cups, plates and so on need to be stored somewhere between outings. Athol Hughes (see page 5) has very kindly made a home for them, but will no longer have the space when she moves house. So if you have a suitable empty corner, preferably at ground floor level (in a garage, say), please let us know: [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk).



## TIME TO PAY UP!

### BRA subscriptions are due soon

Membership of Belsize Residents' Association is incredible value at just £10 a year per household - but some members need to take steps now to ensure they don't lose the benefit.

You don't all need to worry, though. People who joined in recent months, at the Transition Belsize Green Fair or our local history walk, for example, are automatically paid up for the whole of 2015. And those who pay by Standing Order need do nothing either because renewal will take place automatically through their bank.

Everyone else has until 1 January 2015 to pay for next year's membership. If you pay by cheque, cash or online transfer you need to act now. Please send cash or cheques to Anne Stevens, Flat 1, 20 Netherhall Gardens, London NW3 5TH. Bank details for online transfer are on the membership form on our website. All payments should be accompanied by your name and address and the membership number which you will find at the bottom of the address label on your envelope, and online transfers must quote it. Don't forget to let us know of changes to your details (address, telephone number, email address). Any problems, please contact Anne Stevens at [membership@belsize.org.uk](mailto:membership@belsize.org.uk); or on 7794 0874.

## PLANNING MATTERS

### Do we need a Neighbourhood Forum?

The BRA Committee has recently been hearing about progress on the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum. Groups of local residents, councillors and businesses are coming together to develop a plan for their neighbourhood, which would be put to a referendum of registered voters.

If agreed, the plan would form part of planning decision-making, something the Hampstead team sees as an opportunity to protect the heritage of their area. They've been consulting about what the community would like in the plan.

We've been considering whether something similar could benefit Belsize, and we'll be raising the subject with BRA members in future. In the meantime, you can see more about what Hampstead are doing on their [www.hampsteadforum.org](http://www.hampsteadforum.org) website.



If you have views about a neighbourhood forum for Belsize, please get in touch via [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk).

## Meeting all-comers at Transition Belsize Green Fair



Welcoming potential new members: treasurer Neil Harris at BRA's stand, in front of our Haverstock Hill noticeboard

BRA joined browsers on Saturday 27 September for the annual green fair run by Transition Belsize - a great communal event. Overheard at one stall: "I was a bit disappointed when I first arrived: I came along today expecting a fair in a park"!



Waiting hopefully: a four-legged Belsize resident guards the noticeboard

## 100 Avenue Road: people power wins round one!

Some 90 residents of Belsize and Swiss Cottage sat expectantly in the public gallery of Camden Town Hall, while another hundred or so waited outside for news. It was Thursday 11 September, and the Council's Development Control committee had spent two-and-a-half hours discussing 100 Avenue Road.

Despite strong views expressed at public meetings and 900-odd objections to the application for a 24-storey building, the planning officials had made an 'on balance' recommendation to accept it. Views and questions from the the developer, officials, councillors and local residents had been batted back and forth all evening, to a chorus of often boisterous commentary from the public gallery. Now, just before 9pm, the moment for a decision had arrived ...

**... and, to a storm of applause from protesters against the development, the Committee voted, by a clear majority, to overturn the planners' recommendation and reject the application!**

The jubilation was tempered, however, by the likelihood that the developer will appeal against the decision. There was also the possibility that London Mayor Boris Johnson would 'call in' the decision - in other words, overturn it. Fortunately, he did not to do so, perhaps not wishing to appear to ride roughshod over so many Londoners' protests.

**BRA's role** Many of those involved in achieving the victory are Belsize Residents' Association members, and our chairman, Prabhat Vaze, was one of the objectors who addressed the meeting. Throughout the process, we had kept members informed by email and posters on our noticeboards. In addition to our own detailed

objections, BRA made a substantial financial contribution to the costs of the independent expert report by Philip Davies. This report was referred to at the meeting and will undoubtedly have encouraged members of the Committee in their citing of the proposed building's overshadowing, bulk, massing, density, and impact on conservation areas as reasons for rejection.

**What next?** This is not, however, the end of the story. The developers have almost certainly not gone away, and we, alongside our allies in Swiss Cottage and South Hampstead, must remain vigilant and prepared to undertake further action if necessary. If the developers exercise their right of appeal against Camden's refusal of permission, we shall be arguing strongly that the Council made the right decision. The developers may also (or instead) submit a new, different plan. If they do so, we shall scrutinise it very closely.

## *Joining forces for better control on basements*

Deep basement developments remain an area of serious concern to members. There is a feeling that planning law does not take account of their lengthy nuisance and structural effects. And when neighbours strongly object to a development, they sometimes come across the worst aspects of our planning systems. Technical, legal and engineering considerations combine with complex policies. Developers may be determined to fight their corner because of the considerable financial interest. Some recent cases show the high cost of challenging basement decisions through the legal process, with costs borne by neighbours and the Council. So a group of residents' associations has met to see if things can be done better. We're proposing ways to ensure that policies work, and meeting with Camden as a group, joining across the Borough from the residents' side. For BRA, this joint approach is a new one and we will keep you informed of any developments (no pun intended!).

## *'I may not feel British, but I do belong in Belsize'*

Belsize Park is home to many ex-pats from North America, but not many can claim to have lived here for over half a century, writes Deborah Buzan, who visited 93-year-old Athol Hughes in her Antrim Grove home. Dr Hughes, who arrived in London from Toronto in 1959, hasn't lost her Canadian accent. 'I don't mind,' she says 'As long as they don't ask me what State I'm from.'

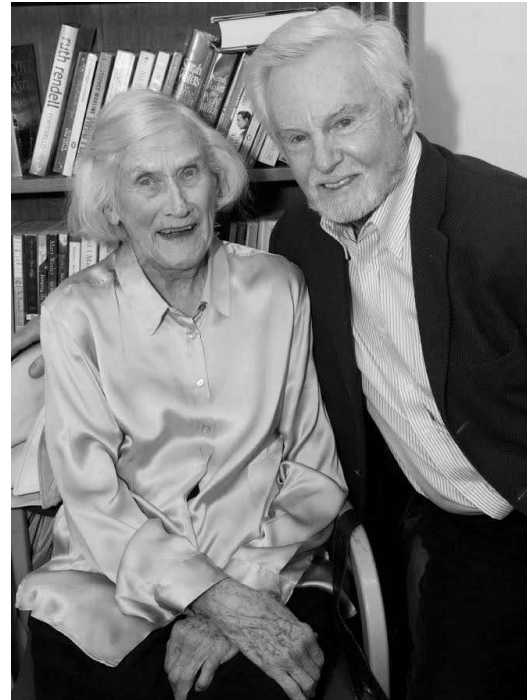
After university in Toronto she joined the Wrens, and worked in operational intelligence during the war, becoming a sub-lieutenant. She then decided to train as a psychoanalyst in Britain.

She assumed in the early days that she'd return to Canada but discovered she liked London, and this part of London in particular. 'It's so convenient for access to museums and parks.' Not to mention Belsize Library, only a few houses away, where she has been a regular visitor. Living in Britain has also allowed her to travel more easily to the continent, especially to Italy, a favourite destination.

She's a fan of Belsize Residents' Association, and not just for *Tradesmen You Can Trust*. 'The embargo on estate agents signs is wonderful, and I'm so glad BRA is trying to stop all those horrible basements.'

Following her PhD at UCL, Athol had a successful career in clinical psychiatry. Her patients were mostly adults but she also helped some children, and has written and lectured widely, for the most part on child psychology.

Athol now has difficulty walking and her eyesight is very poor. She is chipper and positive,



**Athol Hughes in her element: with Sir Derek Jacobi, supporting the Belsize Community Library at its 2013 Christmas Fayre** Photograph: Nigel Sutton

however, and has nothing but good things to say about the NHS, as well as the RNIB, which supplies her with books on CD.

After 44 years in Antrim Grove, Athol will soon be moving to a new home – still in Belsize Park, of course – but on the other side of Haverstock Hill. Also conveniently located for the shops, it's a spacious flat with a large balcony in a block with a lift. So life will be easier.

Does she still feel Canadian after so many years? 'No. I'm a Londoner, but I don't feel British. You really have to have been born at the time of the Norman Conquest to feel British.'

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### PLANNING MATTERS

## *Royal Free building plans - Belsize residents must have a say*

The Royal Free hospital remains a centre of excellence of which we can be rightly proud, but some Belsize members feel that the plans it has submitted to Camden for a major new immunology unit pose problems which had not initially been made clear. We will be contributing to the planning process in order to safeguard the interests of residents and of all those who use this busy part of Belsize. The Council will be dealing with it as a major application, and consultation details should be appearing on the [www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk) website. We'll keep you posted.

# Get involved in your neighbourhood!

## Books, bridge and chat

Interested in joining or helping to start up a book club? Ruth Sands would love to hear from you, especially if your taste is for reading in French or German - as well as English, of course. The club would meet monthly in fellow members' homes.

She'd also like to hear from anyone keen on the idea of regular bridge games in the Belsize area, again in each other's homes.

To discuss either of these ideas, please contact Ruth at [ruthsands@talktalk.net](mailto:ruthsands@talktalk.net).

## Talking French together

Fancy practising your French? Monthly meetings of the Belsize French Club take place on Wednesday evenings at our Belsize Community Library in Antrim Road. The November Soirée Francophone is on the 19th, from 7.15pm to 8.45pm. Entry £5.

Details from the club's new organiser, Cina Aissa, at [belfrclub@gmail.com](mailto:belfrclub@gmail.com); tel:07793 405 566.

## Help our library run smoothly

Could you spare an hour or two on a Tuesday or Wednesday, between 10am and 6pm, to lend a hand in the library that local residents fought so hard to keep?

Volunteer at Belsize Community Library (BCL) and you could be taking on everyday tasks to help the librarian, such as cataloguing, sorting out donations and welcoming visitors. Other volunteering opportunities at BCL involve play and reading activities with young children, focusing on under-fives. For more information, email the librarian, Tony at [belsizelibrary@thewinch.org.uk](mailto:belsizelibrary@thewinch.org.uk) or drop in to the Library at 3 Antrim Road, NW3 4XN.

The library is also open on Saturdays, between 11.30am and 6pm.  
[www.belsizecommunitylibrary.org.uk](http://www.belsizecommunitylibrary.org.uk).

## Put memories in writing

Keats Community Library is starting a small circle to share memories of events, the neighbourhood and people you have known - and to write them down for posterity. No writing or speaking experience needed.

Every second Thursday of the month, 4pm to 6pm. Just ask at the desk: Keats Community Library, Keats Grove, NW3 2RR.



## Let's help make Belsize-on-the-Hill sparkle

For the past few years, people have been asking when we would get Christmas lights on Haverstock Hill, writes BRA member Anne Ward. Other shopping areas were already hanging winter lights – in England's Lane, Steele's Village and Belsize Village itself. 'So a small group of us have been working hard to make our neighbourhood look more festive – and this year we have made a start on what we hope will become an annual event,' says Anne.



Last year, Parkheath estate agents blazed the trail with their lone Christmas tree on Haverstock Hill (left). This year, with the generous support of local businesses – and BRA – Anne hopes there will be several large,

decorated Christmas trees ranged along the shopping frontage.

There will also be a carol concert with the children from Hampstead Hill School, and other events are in the pipeline. We'll keep you informed, so please watch the BRA Noticeboards for more information over the next few weeks.

\*\*\* If you would like to help, there's still time to be involved. And if you'd like to make a personal donation towards the lights, that would be very welcome, too! Email us on [anniew@btinternet.com](mailto:anniew@btinternet.com).\*\*\*

Anne, Deirdre, Linda and Ulrike

## \*\*\*CAROLS\*\*\*

\*\*\*IN THE VILLAGE\*\*\*



Join BRA's seasonal singalong!

Saturday 20 December  
from 4.30pm  
Belsize Terrace

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We'll bring the songsheets and the musicians, so just wrap up well, bring a torch - and maybe a brolly! And be ready to sing heartily and to munch a mince pie or three!

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As in previous years, all proceeds of mince pie sales and collecting boxes will go to our local Marie Curie hospice

# Need to know

## Dates for your diary

### 'The Fateful Year: England 1914'

**+Friday 21 November**, 6.30pm

Mark Bostridge discusses his acclaimed book.  
St Peter's Church, Belsize Square, NW3 4HJ.  
Tickets £8, including wine, from Daunt's  
Haverstock Hill shop or by phone, 7794 4006.

### Camden and the Great War

**+Thursday 27 November**, 7pm

Illustrated talk by Tudor Allen of Camden  
Archives. Free entry.  
Burgh House, New End Square, NW3 1LT.  
Details: [info@burghhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@burghhouse.org.uk); 7431 0144.

### Handel's Messiah, by Merry Opera

**+Friday 5 December**, 7.30pm

St Peter's (above). Tickets £12 (£8 under-16s)  
from St Martin-in-the-Fields box office:  
[www.smitf.org/merryoperacompany](http://www.smitf.org/merryoperacompany); 7766 1100.

### The Hampstead Heath Ponds

**+Sunday 7 December**, 10.30am

Walk led by Marc Hutchinson, of Hampstead  
Heath Winter Swimming Club. Meet at Burgh  
House (above). Email [hhs.walks@gmail.com](mailto:hhs.walks@gmail.com) or  
visit [www.heathandhampstead.org.uk](http://www.heathandhampstead.org.uk).

### Christmas Family Fun Day

**+Sunday 7 December**, 1 to 5 pm

Belsize Community Library, 3 Antrim Road

### \*\*\*BRA Christmas Carols\*\*\*

**+Saturday 20 December**, from 4.30pm

Belsize Terrace, Belsize Village. See page 7.

## How to contact the editor

Comments, contributions and events welcome!

The Editor, BRA Newsletter  
20A Crossfield Road, NW3 4NT  
email: [editorbra@gmail.com](mailto:editorbra@gmail.com)

**February-to-April issue deadline:**  
**\*Friday 24 January\***

## BRA COMMITTEE

**Prabhat Vaze** (*Chairman*)

14C Belsize Square  
NW3 4HT  
tel: 07930 406230  
email: [Prabhat.Vaze@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Prabhat.Vaze@tiscali.co.uk)

**Judith Farbey** (*Secretary*)

**Anne Stevens** (*Membership Secretary*)

Flat 1, 20 Netherhall Gardens  
NW3 5TH  
tel: 7794 0874  
email: [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk)

**Deborah Buzan**

**Gordon Curtis**

**Judith Gubbay** (*Newsletter Editor*)

**Neil Harris** (*Treasurer*)

**Pat Holden**

**Consuelo Phelan**

**Ruth Sands**

**Sheila Wrigglesworth**

## Email contact points

To send posters for noticeboards:  
**[Haverstockboard@belsize.org.uk](mailto:Haverstockboard@belsize.org.uk)**  
**[Villageboard@belsize.org.uk](mailto:Villageboard@belsize.org.uk)**

To send details for *Tradesmen You Can Trust*:  
**[TYCT@belsize.org.uk](mailto:TYCT@belsize.org.uk)**

For planning matters:  
**[braplanning@gmail.com](mailto:braplanning@gmail.com)**

For membership and general queries:  
**[info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk)**

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