



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

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

## Notes from your Chair

Welcome to the February Belsize Society Newsletter.

It was good to see so many members at this year's carol singing in Belsize Village. We were fortunate to avoid the heavy December rain. We were once again joined by Primrose Hill Community Choir, raising over £300 for the Royal Free charity.

Members will have noticed that the Swiss Cottage pub has been shut down. This historic site, which gives the area its name, is a part of our community that should not be lost. This Newsletter features a piece about what is happening to preserve the pub.

Averil Nottage has contributed a piece about Belsize from 1900 to 1945. This is a taster of what she will tell us in the BelSoc Spring local history walk in April. The details of how you can book for this event using Eventbrite or by contacting us if this option is not possible are inside this issue. Places are limited so do sign up soon.

There are also articles about local initiatives towards cleaner energy and Camden's climate change policies.

We include a piece about the craft club that produces, among other things, the decorations for letterboxes that you will have seen in the area. The article points out that the club is not only enjoyable but brings people from different backgrounds together.

As usual at this time of year, we are getting ready for the AGM. Papers are with this Newsletter. If you are interested in local affairs, or have administrative or IT skills, please do think about joining the Society's Committee. We would also be grateful for any member recommendations for Traders You Can Trust, with a form enclosed with this Newsletter.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and that you can join us at the AGM; details in the right hand box.

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## *Belsize Society Annual General Meeting*

*Sunday, 9 March 2025*

*at 3pm*

*Belsize Square Synagogue,  
51 Belsize Square*

*Followed by refreshments and  
a chance to meet other  
members from 4:15pm*

*Members only*

# BOARDING HOUSES, CINEMAS AND STRUDEL : BELSIZE FROM 1900 TO 1945

*Local historian and BelSoc member Averil Nottage gives a taster of her forthcoming BelSoc walk*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Belsize aspired to be a suburb for the wealthy middle classes. The First World War, the tube, the motor car and competition from newer suburbs all changed that, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The trend began in 1884 when a large empty house in Belsize Park Gardens was pulled down and replaced with the 20 apartments of Manor Mansions. Then early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was accepted that it was better to split large houses into flats or boarding houses than to leave them empty.

After WW1 these changes accelerated. Wealthier residents drove off to more spacious suburbs and were replaced by smaller families and young people setting up first homes. To meet their needs, many large blocks of flats were built in the 1930s in a variety of distinctive styles. Hampstead Borough Council and ratepayers protested that there were already far too many flats in the area. Alternatively, “homely” hotels offered food, comfort and sociability. New Belsize residents may have been less prosperous or younger but were still expected to be “of a good class”.

Improved transport made it easy for the growing numbers of clerks working in Central London to live in Belsize. By 1906 electric trams had replaced horses. Belsize Park underground station opened in June 1907 as part of the Charing Cross, Euston and Hampstead Railway, offering first, second and third-class travel. The platforms provided shelter during the Blitz and by 1944 there were bunks for around 8000 people in extended deep tunnels.

Cinema arrived in 1913 when the Hampstead Picture Playhouse opened at the bottom of Pond Street. In 1934 Oscar Deutsch incorporated a newly built cinema on Haverstock Hill into his Odeon chain. It opened in September with George Robey in “Chu, Chin, Chow”, and was the chain’s flagship cinema until the Leicester Square one opened in 1937. The cinema was in a new parade of shops that extended up to the Town Hall with another new parade across the road. Traders advertised it as one of the finest shopping centres in North West London and vowed to spare no effort to meet every demand made of them.

The Town Hall was a popular venue for talks, concerts and dances. Both Christabel Pankhurst and Oswald Mosely held rallies there. From 1919 until 1932 Cinderella Balls were held every Saturday night during the winter season. In 1926 the Charleston and modified Tango were added to the dances that Jack Hutton’s Manhattan Band played. T.S. Elliot and his first wife Vivien, and Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, were married there.

Some refugees escaped the Third Reich from 1933, but most Jewish refugees were well integrated into German life and didn’t try to leave until after the annexation of Austria and devastating consequences of the Kristallnacht pogrom in 1938.



Odeon Cinema in Haverstock Hill

## CONTINUED...

They found England very strange, but for some the faded grandeur of Belsize Park and Swiss Cottage was reminiscent of the cities they'd left. Forming a community here, they could share memories and reactions to English customs, humour and behaviour.

The Cosmo restaurant in Finchley Road serving continental food was a favourite meeting place. Organisations sprung up to provide advice and social contact and promote German and Austrian culture.

As the refugees couldn't follow anglicised services at local synagogues, they organised their own services in the German Liberale tradition. This started in one room in a boarding house in Belsize Park, but over time became the Belsize Square Synagogue in buildings linked to the old vicarage of St Peter's Church.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BELSIZE BETWEEN 1900 AND 1945 JOIN OUR WALK ON SUNDAY 13 APRIL AT 11.00 AM OR 2.30 PM. DETAILS BELOW.**

### **BELSOC SPRING WALK:**

**BOARDING HOUSES, CINEMAS AND STRUDEL : BELSIZE FROM 1900 TO 1945**

**JOIN US FOR A GUIDED WALK  
LED BY AVERIL NOTTAGE**

**13 APRIL 2025 AT TWO TIMES**

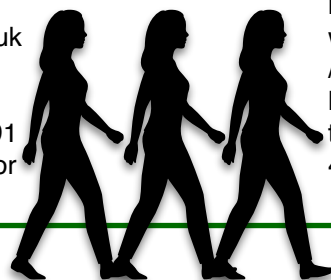
BOOK ON EVENTBRITE OR CONTACT [INFO@BELSIZE.ORG.UK](mailto:INFO@BELSIZE.ORG.UK)

← 11:00 AM

2.30PM →



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### **BelSoc develops its online presence**

The Society has established a Facebook Page. We shall start posting items of current interest and need to build an audience, so please search for "The Belsize Society" and make sure you "Follow" it and "Like" and share any content to that. We also have an Instagram account and will be posting pictures and content to that. Social Media is only of value if used, so we'll try to keep it active and hope it proves its worth in time, keeping people updated and also attracting new members.

We are also upgrading our website, developing the ability to join the Society and make payments online. We'll update members on this at the AGM.

If you have any suggestions or ideas you'd like to see online, please get in touch at [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk).

# Saving the Swiss Cottage pub

With the surprise closure of the historic Ye Olde Swiss Cottage pub, Belsize Society is involved in the campaign to save the pub site for the community. The pub, which gave its name to the area, ceased trading after nearly 200 years, at two weeks' notice, on February 1.



Builders have already removed the wrought iron pub name on the roof and all the wooden signs. The interior is now being stripped out. Immediately before the closure, staff said the historic photos of the area that adorned the walls and anything else of value would be put into storage by Sam Smith's Brewery, which has run the pub since the early 1980s. The Brewery has refused to tell the local and national press, and BBC London News, what will happen to the pub after the sale.

With the closure, BelSoc is attempting to save the pub as an ACV, short for "an asset of community value." The Belsize Society is among those applying to Camden Council for the pub to be listed as an ACV.

As the Ham & High explains in its lead story on February 6, an ACV "is defined as a building or other land whose main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future."

The paper reports that Camden Labour Councillors have also put in an application for ACV status. But Primrose Hill Ward Councillor, Matt Cooper, told the Ham & High that he was not sure whether the Labour group is eligible to apply, and the decision would rest with Camden planning officials. He added: "We wanted to get the application in because the fact that it's in means nothing should happen and officers know that we're looking at it."

ACV status would give the community the right for 5 years to be informed if the pub is put up for sale and the right to bid to buy the premises - if the money can be raised, within six months. But an ACV doesn't stop an owner selling the asset or applying for planning permission to change the building.

The Society has noted that the Tavern is not on Camden's "Local List" of notable buildings. It is asking Camden's Planners to consider this urgently. The pub is not in the Belsize Conservation Area. Unlike the Washington in England's Lane, it is not Listed by English Heritage and internal changes do not need planning permission. The pub has always been in the "Swiss chalet" style. But the current Alpine style woodwork dates from the 1960s.

The sudden closure of the Swiss Cottage pub raises wider questions about the protection of other valued local buildings. Camden's map of Assets of Community Value shows there are no active protections in Belsize Park. The only ACV, the Steele's pub on Haverstock Hill, ran out in May 2020.

Belsize Society is currently considering whether there are buildings locally, not just pubs, that have "social interests," which can include cultural, recreational and sporting interests, where other applications for ACV status could be made.

If you have suggestions, please contact [info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk).



Can members recommend a local trader's work at your home? If so, we would like to hear from you for the 2025 booklet Traders You Can Trust. A form is included with this Newsletter which can also be downloaded from the website.

Alternatively, full details can be sent by email to [tyct@belsize.org](mailto:tyct@belsize.org).

Information should reach us by March 29.

## Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs): an Update

We included a note about EPCs in our August 2023 Newsletter. An EPC is needed whenever a home is built, sold or rented. It contains information about a property's energy use, typical energy costs, and recommendations about how to reduce energy use and save money. It gives a property an energy efficiency rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and is valid for 10 years. It's a legal requirement that your property has an EPC rating of E or above before you can rent it out. Listed buildings don't need an EPC.

For some time, there has been criticism of the existing EPC regime on the grounds that for some homeowners its assessment metrics can appear badly aligned with climate change targets. There are now plans to reform it, with new metrics anticipated to be introduced in the second half of 2026. In December the Government launched a consultation "*Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime*" that includes an analysis of the shortcomings of the existing regime and the current proposals for reform.

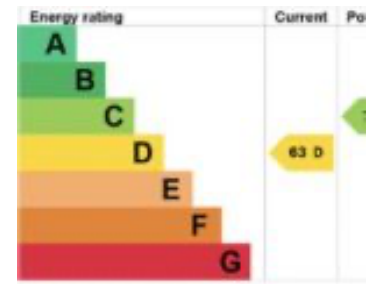
For homeowners who have been looking into heat pumps and other climate friendly heating options, this is your chance to your views. As the consultation document points out: "... installing a heat pump could reduce the Energy Efficiency Rating due to the higher relative cost of electricity compared to gas, despite heat pumps being an efficient low-carbon heating solution". Replacing an old inefficient gas boiler with a new highly efficient electric alternative, fuelled by electricity from 100% renewable sources, can also worsen a property's EPC rating under the existing regime.

The Government has confirmed that all rented properties will have to achieve a minimum EPC grade C by 2030. Currently, unless there is a

valid exemption, it's illegal for landlords to rent out a home with an EPC rating below E. The new C rating requirement will be challenging for some properties to meet, including flats on higher floors in converted Victorian houses, where retrofitting energy-saving measures can be difficult, while also facing planning restrictions if in a Conservation Area.

While owner-occupiers of existing properties will not be forced to meet the C rating, the market attractiveness and value of a property could in future be affected if it does not. Details of the reform proposals and the consultation are available at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-energy-performance-of-buildings-regime/reforms-to-the-energy-performance-of-buildings-regime](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-energy-performance-of-buildings-regime/reforms-to-the-energy-performance-of-buildings-regime).

The Government is proposing that domestic EPCs in future use four headline metrics: fabric performance, heating system, smart readiness, and energy costs, with other metrics provided as secondary information. The online response survey is at <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/energy-performance-of-buildings/consultation-on-reforms-to-epb/>. It's necessary to have read the consultation document in order to complete the survey. Hopefully among the Society's membership there will be individuals with the necessary professional expertise to ensure that the new EPC regime will be appropriate for the sort of older housing we enjoy in the Belsize Park area. The deadline for responding to the consultation is 26 February. Stay in touch on [retrofit@belsize.org.uk](mailto:retrofit@belsize.org.uk).



show the current score and what might be possible with improvements in the property

### Police meeting: Watch your mobile phone

"Watch your mobile phones" - that was the warning urged by police at a recent Belsize Neighbourhood Team meeting.

According to police statistics over the past three months, among the biggest rise in crime in Belsize Park concerned the theft of mobile phones, officially designated as "thefts from the person".

"Stolen phones are being resold for hundreds of pounds, making them more profitable for criminal gangs than drugs in some cases", said a police officer at the meeting.

Consistently, the worst-hit areas of Belsize Park for phone thefts were reportedly around the Tesco stores in England's Lane and Finchley Road Community representatives at the meeting called for greater visible police presence and urged police to consider a more modern version of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme on the lines of local What's App groups.

# Climate Strategy Room in Swiss Cottage

This Borough-wide consultation follows on from a series of local “Strategy Rooms” the Council held last year. One was held in association with the Belsize Society. BelSoc Member Chris Langdon was one of those who took part. Here are his personal impressions:

Should supermarkets be rated for their green policies, or would it be a good idea for private landlords to be obliged to charge “warm rent” (rent plus heating bills) to incentivise landlords to make energy efficiency measures? These are among the question that we participants were asked at a 90-minute “Strategy Room” convened by Camden at Swiss Cottage Community Centre on November 23.

The “Strategy Room” is a fancy title for a public consultation. It was facilitated by Nesta, a charity which describes itself as “UK's innovation agency for social good.” Eight people from all over Camden, three of whom are from Belsize Park, braved the wet and windy weather. Similar events were also held during the month in Kentish Town and Kilburn. One in Somers Town was dedicated to the views of young people.

At the Swiss Cottage Strategy Room, residents raised the problems of doing retrofit. There was a spontaneous and lively discussion about heat pumps, whether they are noisy, and the vexed problems getting planning permission in a Conservation Area like Belsize Park. This wasn't part of the consultation process, which was tightly scripted and briskly moderated. We all were given mini iPads to watch four “films from the future” with actors, and to answer scripted questions.

Participants expressed some concern that the conversation was so tightly proscribed that the issues that really concern residents on climate change weren't being fully heard. We were assured that all comments were noted on two laptops and will be fed into the consultation process leading into the cross-Camden consultation in April.

On balance, my wife and I thought it was worth taking part. We enjoyed meeting a lively and articulate group of residents and we could have gone on longer. We were all pleasantly surprised that the more we talked together the more we reached agreement.

**Urgent message to members about membership fee for BelSoc.** Several members have encountered difficulties in making automatic payments for annual membership fees to the Society. This seems to be because the original standing order made some years back would have been to our predecessor organisation, the Belsize Residents Association, and recent changes in payment authorisations mean that the account name has to be correct, as well as the sort code and bank account number.

Members should make payments to “The Belsize Society”, sort code 090155 and account number 19524004, putting their membership number in the reference. Also, remember fees are now £20. Please contact [membership@belsize.org.uk](mailto:membership@belsize.org.uk) if you have any problems.

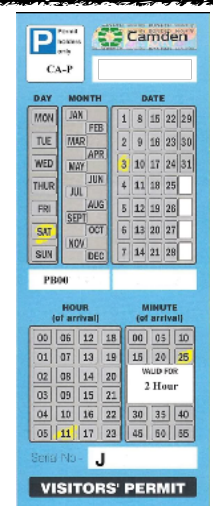
## Scratchcard parking permits: update

Scratchcards will continue in use for at least a year to 18 months, according to Camden officials.

The Council's latest plans to move the current permit system totally online were revealed at a meeting with community groups.

Scratchcards would still be available for those Camden residents lacking either digital skills or online access. A new telephone service with a dedicated number for parking inquiries is also being considered.

Further community meetings are promised before any changes are introduced.



## Retrofit update

Belsize Society members will have a chance to discuss how Council retrofit policies are evolving at a meeting to be co-hosted with Retrofit Kentish Town (RKT) in March. This is a new collaboration. RKT has been active for 18 months. A number of BelSoc members have taken part in their meetings and found them useful and informative.

Locally, the Camden Climate Fund (CCF) is being re-launched. Grants of up to 50% costs are to be available for heat pumps, solar panels and solar thermal (for hot water). To help people apply Camden is offering free pre-application advice.

On the question of retrofitting and balancing heritage constraints, Camden has been training its staff on how updated guidelines from Historic England and the recent National Planning Policy Framework 2024 can be interpreted a little more flexibly in favour of retrofit.

The joint meeting with RTK will give Camden a chance to explain to us what is changing and to listen to residents' views and answer questions. It is likely to be at Kentish Town Library. The details are still being agreed. An email will be sent to members as soon as they are finalised.



Over 50 of us gathered in Belsize village for carol singing. Over £300 was raised for the Maggie's Centre at the Royal Free.

## The artistic side of the Belsize community : Craft for all

*New Newsletter contributor, Clara Dubanchet, writes:*

For the last three years, residents and visitors to Belsize Park have been able to pause in astonishment, amusement, awe, or bewilderment at the sight of peculiar hats topping the red letterbox on England's Lane. Crowned by a cover on which are sewn various items, animals, or characters changing with the seasons or major events, it is not the only one to stand out. On Thurlow Road, another letterbox is decorated, as is the telephone box in Primrose Gardens. Who could be working behind the scenes to produce these original creations?

The Belsize Society's Newsletter wandered over to the Belsize Community Library to attend the Wednesday craft club from 1 to 4 p.m., which produces the designs. Near the large windows overlooking the street, tables have been assembled, taking up the entire width of the room. Women are gathered there in small groups, all busily involved in handicraft activities.

Caroline Chan, co-founder of the club, has been a long-time member of the library, teaching music classes. After 2021, a year shaken by COVID-19 and the repeated lockdowns, a suggestion was made to set up a space for creative people, made available by the library, to bring together those who, like herself, love to work with their hands. The club, which started with a trio, has grown steadily, attracting new members from the neighbourhood and extending their reach to others. It now has around thirty participants, the majority of whom are women.

### **“Talk and let your hands talk”**

While the project's origins lie in the conviviality of cakes and tea prepared by club members, the craft club has taken on a much more powerful dimension. It has become a social project where refugee communities have found a place to meet, socialize, and share their art. For the charities that have joined the club, such as Families4peace for the Ukrainians, Hopscotch for the Afghans, and Gathering Leaves for the Hongkongers, it is a means of putting their talent into practice. It gifts the Belsize community a time for cultural exchange, as much for the delicacies savoured, as for the different artistic techniques and practices introduced by the regulars each week.

Art and craft as therapy, but not only. Who would have thought that this small neighbourhood club could be so beneficial for its members? Young retirees, busy mothers, newcomers to the hustle and bustle of London, art aficionados keen to pass on their passion, despite the language barrier: anything goes at these voluntary weekly gatherings.

As the club continues growing, readers of the Belsize Society Newsletter, keep your eyes wide open. It is always possible to see a new project blossom, one fine morning, around the corner in Belsize Park. And for those who would like to take a look, the doors are wide open!

## Dates for your diary

### Belsize Society

9 Mar, 3pm. Annual General Meeting. Agenda and papers sent to members. Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Square. Members only.

13 April, starting at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Historic walk led by Averil Nottage. Free, but book on Eventbrite using QR codes on page 3.

### Belsize Community Library, Antrim Road, NW3

Thursday, 20 Feb, 7.30pm. Belsize House and other Local Country Estates. An illustrated talk by local historian Averil Nottage. Joint event with Belsize Society. £5 suggested donation.

Thursday, 20 March, 7.30pm. The King, the Queen & the Doctor. Talk by Karin Fernald about the arrival of the Enlightenment in absolutist Denmark. £5 suggested donation.

Thursday, 17 Apr, 7.30pm. The Irish in Camden Town - An Illustrated Historical Talk by Tudor Allen. £5 suggested donation.

Thursday, 15 May, 7.30pm. Book Talk on Orfeo's Last Act: A Novel in Two Parts. A talk by Michelin Wandor. £5 suggested donation.

Thursday, 19 Jun, 7.30pm. Isokon and the Bauhaus in Britain - The Intriguing Story of the only building listed Grade I in Belsize Park. An illustrated talk by Leyla Daybelge and Magnus Englund. Joint event with Belsize Society. £5 suggested donation.

### Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Burgh House bookings on eventbrite.co.uk.

Sunday, 2 Mar, 4.30pm. Opera Prelude: The Tenor. £15. Lyric tenor Matthew Curtis takes us through arias featuring Verdi, others. £25, under-18s free.

Monday, 4 March, 7.30pm. Schubert - Die schöne Müllerini. John Barker (baritone) and Helen Cawthorne (piano) return to Burgh House. £10.

### Freud Museum, 20 Maresfield Gdns, NW3 3DJ

7 Mar. Freud Film Club: Cleo from 5 to 7. Screening of the 1962 film directed by Agnes Varda. £30.

Until 5 May. Women & Freud: Patients, Pioneers, Artists. A dazzling new exhibition that highlights the women who helped Freud invent psychoanalysis and their legacy in its practice – as well as in the arts and literature through to our own time. £25.

## Contact Us

For membership and general enquiries:  
[membership@belsize.org.uk](mailto:membership@belsize.org.uk)

Prabhat Vaze (*Chair*)  
07930 406230  
[chair@belsize.org.uk](mailto:chair@belsize.org.uk)

For Newsletter submissions and letters:  
[info@belsize.org.uk](mailto:info@belsize.org.uk). Deadline for next issue is: **7 April 2025**

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 Traders You Can Trust:  
[TYCT@belsize.org.uk](mailto:TYCT@belsize.org.uk)

For planning matters:  
[planning@belsize.org.uk](mailto:planning@belsize.org.uk)

### VOLUNTEER FOR THE SOCIETY

The Society's activities rely on volunteers and if you're able to spare time to help, that would be welcomed!

Would you like to join our Committee and/or help with events, Newsletter distribution or other tasks? Please email [membership@belsize.org.uk](mailto:membership@belsize.org.uk)

Interested in keeping up with Belsize news and events? If you wish to receive occasional emails from us with news about Belsize and BelSoc and are not already on our list, please send your email address to [membership@belsize.org.uk](mailto:membership@belsize.org.uk)

To find out the latest about Camden Planning:  
<https://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigationenvironment/planning-and-built-environment/>

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