

THE

ISSUE 102 | NOVEMBER 2023

BELGRAVIA SOCIETY

MAGAZINE

THE ONLY INDEPENDENT
VOICE FOR BELGRAVIA

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

TO ALL OUR READERS!





Registered Charity No: 1168619
Patron: Lord Fellowes of West Stafford DL

Welcome to The Belgravia Society magazine, covering all aspects of village life in Belgravia and beyond.

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This magazine has been independently produced by the Committee of The Belgravia Society on a voluntary basis with regular contributions from local residents and other authors in and around Belgravia.

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NOTE FOR THE DECEMBER MAGAZINE

Owing to Christmas holidays, our December Magazine will be published later than usual. You should get it in the first week of January. In the meantime, all of us at The Belgravia Society send you the best of good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



George Waite
Chairman of
The Belgravia Society
and ESRA

E-bike illegal parking

This Society is a member of the Westminster Amenities Society Forum (WASF), our Editor regularly attends WASF meetings, and the matter of E-bike (dockless bikes) illegal parking continues to be raised with Westminster City Council (WCC). The following important points were recently suggested (by a member of the WASF Committee) for the ongoing discussions with WCC:

- all problems with 'dockless bays', e-scooters and e-bikes should be reported to dockless@westminster.gov.uk to get recorded officially.
- TfL refuses to allow 'dockless bays' along their red-routes so they are forcing their problem into residential streets.
- the main demand and obvious place for 'dockless bays' is on or immediately adjacent to main arterial routes.
- 'dockless bays' should not be located in residential areas because it drags the e-bikes and e-scooters into the small streets (where their speed and nuisance are exacerbated)



and creates a problem when they are (badly) parked. The solution is not bigger bays deep in residential areas.

- what consideration has been given to the adverse impact of locating dockless bays in Conservation Areas, International Centres or adjacent to Listed Buildings e.g. creating eyesores?
- what is being done by landowners or public bodies who are generating and encouraging this e-traffic e.g. universities or stations (Victoria) where e-bikes are dumped in their hundreds on 'boundary roads'? Why are they not increasing cycle parking on their estates?
- it would be great if Nickie Aiken's Pedicab Bill could include an amendment to give necessary powers to London to tackle e-bikes and e-scooters.
- The problem that I continue to read is that local Councils have limited legal powers to prevent e-bike companies operating and very limited powers to remove bikes inappropriately parked.

I accept that local Councils are starting to allocate 'dockless bays' but there are simply not enough bays available, and this is not stopping those riders that are intent to cause inconvenience to others, not to mention those of our community who are mobility or sight impaired and risk serious injury.

I understand that the best solution for prompt removal is to contact the rental companies directly:

- Tier: support@tier.app | 0808 304 4069
- Forest: cs@humanforest.co.uk | 020 8157 7491
- Lime: support@li.me | 0800 808 5223

In any event all incidents should continue to be reported to: dockless@westminster.gov.uk because, unless we keep up the pressure on local Councils, Government, and the e-bike/scooter companies the problems caused by illegal parking will continue to blight our streets. ▲



WE ARE TAKING THE LONG-TERM DECISIONS TO DELIVER FOR OUR COUNTRY

NICKIE AIKEN MP

In November we had the King's speech, the first in 70 years, where the King unveiled the Government's long-term plans to address the challenges we face as a country. I've written before in *The Belgravia Society Magazine* about the need for wholesale reform of the leasehold system, so I warmly welcome the announcement of the Leasehold and Freehold Bill which sets out to make it easier and cheaper for property owners to extend their leases or buy their freehold. I am working incredibly closely with ministers on this legislation, so if you haven't already, please complete my leasehold survey at www.nickie.news/LeaseholdReform so that I can ensure the legislation reflects your lived experiences.

The King's speech also unlocked the way forward in our campaign for a pedicabs' licensing scheme with the King announcing a new pedicabs law. Whilst pedicab riders are not often found vying for business in Belgravia, they can be found just a stone's throw away around Buckingham Palace or in the West End. Our new scheme will ensure pedicab operators abide by a set of rules and mandate riders and vehicles to undergo safety checks. The Bill has already begun its legislative journey and I hope, working with colleagues from across all parties, we can have our scheme running by the summer. Please read more at www.nickie.news/Pedicabs.

Further critical legislation announced in the King's speech includes the Renters' Reform Bill which I have been scrutinising line by line over the last month during its Committee Stage, as well as legislation to enhance animal welfare,

grow the economy, strengthen our society, and keep people safe. Please read more at www.nickie.news/KingsSpeech23.

With the King's speech delivering an exciting national agenda in Parliament, I'm also continuing to work on our local priorities including making our streets safer. In my meetings with police officials and leadership, one message is key; report every crime you witness or experience. Whilst I know many readers are frustrated that there may not always be an immediate response, we must report all crimes and incidents. This is because it builds into intelligence reports and ensures the Police can allocate resources appropriately. They can only do this with reports received by the public. In a non-emergency, you can tweet @MetCC on X (formerly Twitter), report online at met.police.uk, or dial 101. In an emergency, always dial 999.

On the final edition of *The Belgravia Society Magazine* of the year, before we reach the end of 2023, I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and healthy new year and my best wishes for 2024.

If I can be of any help on any issue, please get in touch. Email me at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk or write to me at Nickie Aiken MP, House of Commons, Westminster, SW1A 0AA. Keep up to date and be the first to know what I'm up to by following me on Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube @TwoCitiesNickie. Also sign up to my community newsletter to get the latest community news directly to your inbox at www.nickie.news/SignUp. ▲

INVITATION TO THE NEXT SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING

We would be delighted for you to
join our next meeting in person on

**5th December at 5pm
at the at Caledonian Club.**

Please let us know by emailing
info@thebelgraviasociety.com
if you wish to attend.



If you have a CAF account, it is an easy
way to donate to the Society. Please
do help us to maintain our work for
Belgravia and our community magazine.

PLANNING ADVICE

If you get a notice of a planning
application near you and you want
advice, telephone our dedicated
helpline: 07578 969509

WANTED!

Writers | Historians | Story tellers

Do you enjoy writing? We would be
delighted to receive articles and short
stories about Belgravia / our neighbours
/ London and beyond – all voluntary, of
course. Discuss your ideas with us at
info@belgraviasociety.com



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the present,
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and opportunity to vote

**[www.thebelgraviasociety.com/
online-membership-form](http://www.thebelgraviasociety.com/online-membership-form)**

Please fill in the online form by
clicking on the link above link.

Alternatively, print the application
form on page 23 and post your
completed form to

**63 Belgravia Court
33 Ebury Street
London SW1W 0NY**



THE CENOTAPH

The Glorious Dead

We have heard much in recent days about the Cenotaph. We remember its importance to us as a Nation. It was the subject of much concern that it should not be disrespected. It is a symbol of a Commonwealth of Nations coming together to remember all those who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy today.

The word 'cenotaph' is derived from Greek, meaning 'empty tomb'. Most of the dead were buried close to where they fell. The Cenotaph symbolises their absence and creates a place for public remembrance as well as personal mourning. Calls for a temporary Cenotaph to be rebuilt in permanent form began almost immediately after 1919.

After some debate, the Government agreed and construction work began in May 1920. Sir Edwin Lutyens added entasis (curvature) but otherwise made minimal design alterations.

The Cenotaph is on Whitehall and was designed by Lutyens as a permanent memorial. It was unveiled by King George V on 11th November 1920 as the United Kingdom's national memorial to the dead of Britain and the British Empire of the First World War. It was rededicated in 1946 to include those of the Second World War, and has since come to represent the Commonwealth casualties from those and subsequent conflicts.



The Cenotaph is a grade I listed building. Dozens of replicas were built in Britain and other Commonwealth countries. While there was no set or agreed standard for First World War memorials, the Cenotaph proved to be one of the most influential models for such structures. The memorial is austere, containing almost no decoration.

I recall as a small child being on the top of a bus in Whitehall with my father when I saw men taking off their hats. I asked my father why, and he told me about the Cenotaph and the men who died in war so we could all be

free and democratic nations. These men were remembering and saluting the dead and those who they had probably served alongside. In the course of researching the article, I understand that this was common practice in the 1920s and 30s. However, the practice did last into the 1950s as the men, I would guess, were honouring their lost colleagues.

The Cenotaph is built from Portland stone, is austere, and contains almost no decoration. It takes the form of an empty tomb chest atop a rectangular pylon, which diminishes as it rises. Three flags hang from each of the long sides.

The memorial met with public acclaim and has largely been praised, although some complained of its lack of religious symbolism. Lloyd George emphasised that the structure was to be non-denominational. He was well ahead of his time in recognising that the dead represented many faiths and none, from many different countries, but all had acted for the common good of humanity in fighting for the freedom of all for generations to come.

The Cenotaph is the memorial we must cherish for generations to come. ▲





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CRIME: THE NO. 1 CONCERN RIGHT ACROSS LONDON – **PLEASE REPORT ALL CRIME**



**SAYS
CLLR TONY
DEVENISH AM**

In my 17 years as your local ward City Councillor, my two colleagues Cllrs Elizabeth Hitchcock and Rachael Robathan and I can rarely think of a time when crime, or the fear of crime, in all its forms, has been so high up local people's very real concerns. We have reached one million crimes a year in London, up from 780,000 just 7 years ago.

First the good news. After 7 years as your constituency GLA Assembly Member (and local Councillor), holding Mayor Sadiq Khan and the Met Police to account, we have record numbers of police in London (part of the 20,000 more police) within the 2019 Government Manifesto; a promise that has been delivered! In addition, I do think Sir Mark Rowley, the new Met Commissioner, "gets it" far more than recent holders of that office, as do recent local Borough Commanders. I sit on the Police and Crime Committee for London.

Secondly, the bad news. We have a long way to go to achieve what Sir Mark summarises as “More Trust, Less Crime, Higher Standards”. The proof will be in the pudding. Positive change will take several years. Should you be free on 30th November, A *New Met For London* event is taking place in Pimlico. I’ll be there. Details on [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com). I attended the first rounds of such events over the summer. I was impressed that the Met was in listening mode.

However, from car crime to burglaries, to visible drug dealing in broad daylight, and the very worrying every-weekend protests on Israel-Gaza, I could go on and on (and on), there is much to do. Our sole Police station locally is in Charing Cross after our Belgravia station closed in 2019. Thanks to Mr Khan.



There is ONE MESSAGE I cannot stress enough – please report EVERY CRIME on 101 or 999.

Our police, like all modern public services, continuously measure performance. If more crimes are reported elsewhere, there is a very real danger that the number of police officers will be moved to where crime is greater, for example, where it is reported more. Only this week a Council colleague in the North of Westminster obtained another Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), the support staff for much so called low level police work, after campaigning for more resources, backed up (I stress) by rising local crime figures.

Do please drop me a line anytime on email tony.devenish@london.gov.uk; full updates are on social media X (formerly Twitter) @tony_devenish (or Google me).

Finally, without in any way being Party political, did you know 2024 doesn’t only include a likely General Election, but a fixed Election for the Mayor/GLA, who’s remit is Policing, Transport, Planning/Housing and the Environment on Thursday 2nd May. Whether you live in Belgravia full-time or part-time, and whether you vote in local elections elsewhere in the country, you can (also) vote here in London. Note at a General Election it is illegal to vote in more than one address.

Voter link to register: [Westminster.gov.uk bit.ly/WCC-Vote-Reg](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/bit.ly/WCC-Vote-Reg)

It is a huge honour to represent Belgravia – thank you from Elizabeth, Rachael and Tony. ▲

WINTER AND NATURE, OR THE NATURE OF WINTER!

BY SARA OLIVER



As winter closes in and Christmas fast approaches, we thought we would look at a few traditions and symbols associated with nature.

But first we reveal the results of the **Big Butterfly Count 2023**. The Red Admiral tops the lot with a record of 248,077. Gatekeeper followed (222,896); Large White (216,666); Small White (292,929) and Meadow Brown (162,396).

The positive results mark an increase to twelve butterflies per count, after an all-time low in 2022, where just nine individuals were spotted per count. The abundance of butterflies may have been helped by this year's plentiful green plants for caterpillars and nectar-rich plants for adults. Good news for butterflies.

During autumn and winter when little else is about, **holly and ivy** provide shelter for the **Holly Blue Butterfly** as well as the holly berries providing an important food source for insects, birds, bats, and other small mammals.

At the Winter Solstice holly was used to ward off evil spirits and celebrate new beginnings. The prickly leaves are symbolic of the crown of thorns Jesus wore when he was crucified, and the berries represent the drops of blood shed by Jesus, caused by the thorns; the Scandinavians call holly the Christ Thorn.

Robins have become synonymous with Christmas. There are many myths surrounding the UK's favourite bird. One such story relates to the Bible, the baby Jesus

being attended by the kind-hearted robin red breast tending to a fire. The red uniforms of Victorian postmen who delivered Christmas cards were also associated with robin redbreasts.

Mistletoe was symbolic of love and friendship in Norse mythology and the British custom was to kiss under a sprig of mistletoe. However, a less romantic fact: the mistletoe is a parasite which attaches itself to a tree and then grows out of the branch.

The **Mistle Thrush**, a large songbird found in woodland, parks and gardens, derives its common name from the mistletoe, enjoying the sticky berries from the tree.

The evergreen **Fir tree** has become the traditional tree of choice for celebrating winter. In the Christian calendar it has become a sign of everlasting life with God, hence the name

being Christmas Tree. Romans used fir trees to decorate their temples at the festival of Saturnalia, and Pagans used the branches to decorate their homes during the winter solstice as a symbol of forthcoming spring.

When '**decking out the halls**' of your home and tree this year, why not try using some of the above natural materials from your garden or nearby wild patch to decorate. Look out for twigs, pine cones, leaves, ivy and holly sprigs. When out foraging, do please gather only as much as you need whilst leaving plenty for the wildlife! ▲

Sources

The Nature of Christmas

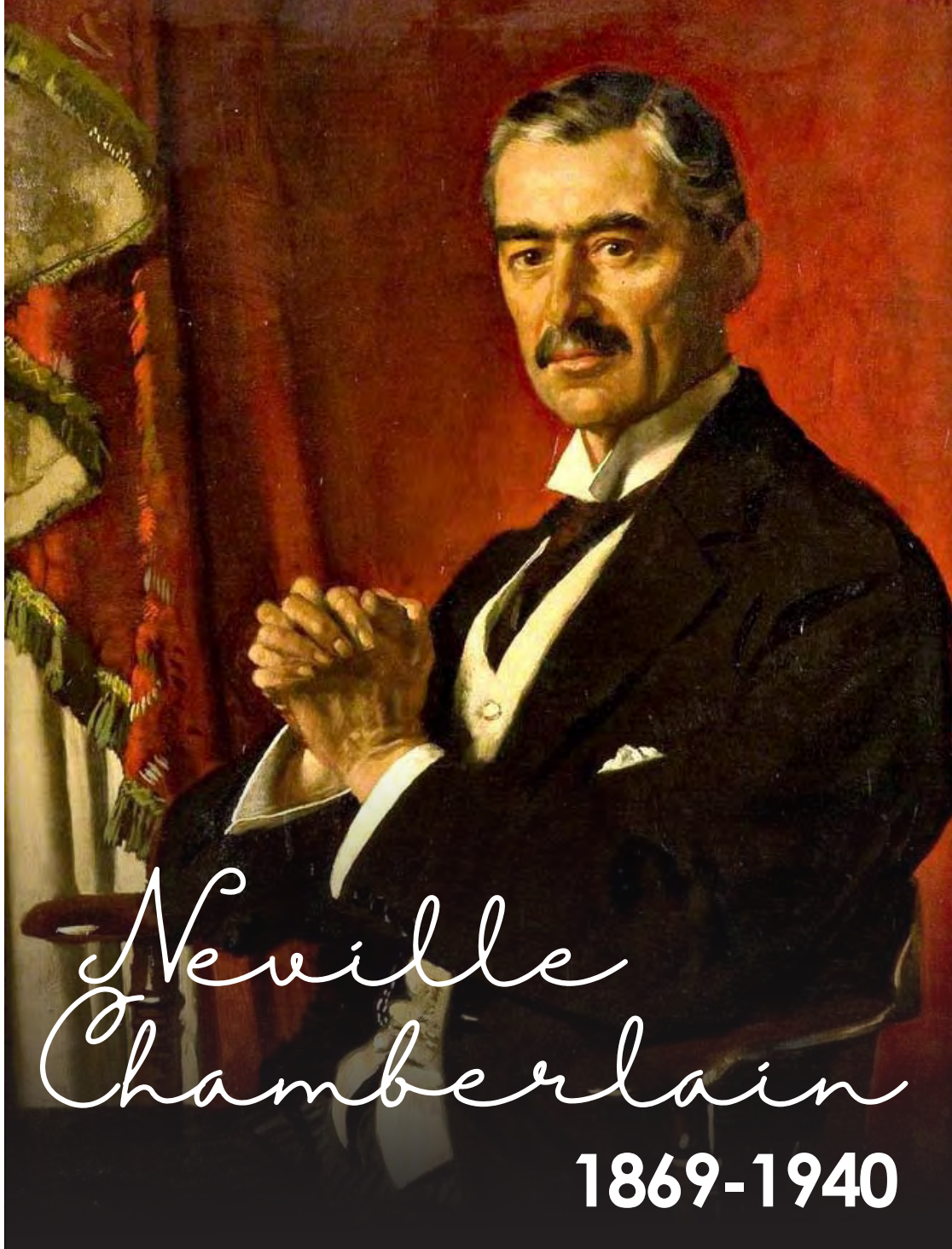
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

Butterfly Magazine – Butterfly Conservation

<https://butterfly-conservation.org>



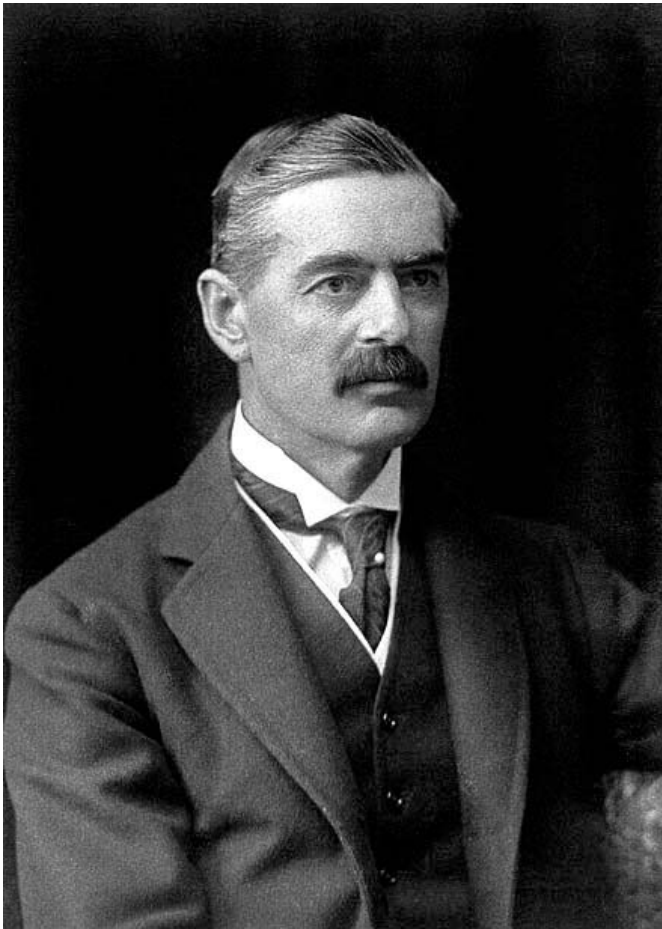


BY PETER WYETH

Best known for signing the Munich Agreement in September 1938, ceding the German-speaking region of Czechoslovakia to Hitler, Arthur Neville Chamberlain was 40 before he fell in love, 49 before he became an MP, and 68 when he became Prime Minister.

The Chamberlains were Birmingham royalty, his father a Lord Mayor and Cabinet Minister, plus five uncles were Lord Mayors.

By 1935 he was convinced about rearmament, urging the strengthening of the Royal Air Force as the English Channel was no defence against air power. Chamberlain's policy was to pressure Czechoslovakia into making concessions, as Britain was in no position to go to war. Chamberlain sent a message to Hitler, who demanded the annexation of the Sudetenland, but Chamberlain won a breathing space: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging



"So far as my personal reputation is concerned, I am not in the least disturbed about it."

the British coast was operational by 3rd September 1939.

But two days earlier Hitler invaded Poland: "Our enemies are small worms. I saw them at Munich."

Chamberlain's statement to the Commons made no mention of an ultimatum and attempts to dispel fears that the French were weakening failed: "In those few minutes he flung away his reputation."

Chamberlain admitted: "Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life has crashed into ruins."

In July 1940, a polemic, *Guilty Men*, attacked Chamberlain as responsible for the disasters of the early part of the war. It went through 27 editions. Also in July 1940, Chamberlain was diagnosed with terminal bowel cancer, and resigned in September. Offered the highest order of British chivalry, Chamberlain refused, saying he would "prefer to die plain 'Mr Chamberlain', like my father before me, unadorned by any title."

"It was the hope of doing something to improve the conditions of life for the poorer people that brought me, at past middle life, into politics. So far as my personal reputation is concerned, I am not in the least disturbed about it. Without Munich, the war would have been lost and the Empire destroyed in 1938. I should not fear the historian's verdict."

Chamberlain died on 9th November 1940, aged 71. ▲

trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing."

Chamberlain got the famous piece of paper signed by Hitler promising peace, but Hitler confided to his generals: "That piece of paper is of no further significance whatever", whereas Chamberlain declared: "I believe it is peace for our time. Now go home, and sleep quietly in your beds".

He thought "It would be madness to stop rearming", but resisted calls to put industry on a war footing, when Hitler claimed he wanted a "long peace".

Germany then invaded Czechoslovakia, with Chamberlain's response "feeble", but he soon warned that Hitler was attempting to "dominate the world by force". He doubled the size of the Territorial Army, created a Ministry of Supply for the armed forces, and conscription. 200 bombers were ordered and radar girding

PEACEFUL, ADVANCED NEOLITHIC COMMUNITIES



Karahan Tepe

In our world today there has always been a war somewhere and a skirmish or two. Since the end of the Cold War Europe has thankfully not been involved. However, last year Russia invaded Ukraine claiming it was part of Russia and they wanted to cleanse it of Nazis. After years of sending rockets from Gaza into Israel, Hamas decided to brutally attack Israel, murdering civilians in the most barbaric way. Thousands have died in Gaza as a result of Hamas's actions.

Europe is inevitably involved. When will peace come? We face a doubtful future and the first casualty of any war is truth.

However, archeologists have found what appears to be an extremely unusual and definitely a good news story.

New excavations in Turkey suggest that peaceful advanced Neolithic communities did not engage in warfare. These recent excavations in Turkey's southeastern Anatolia Region are challenging prior perceptions about Neolithic civilisation. Archaeologists from Istanbul University have made groundbreaking finds at Karahan Tepe and Göbekli Tepe in two ancient sites dating back between 9,600 and 8,000 BC.



Karahan Tepe showing figure

In September, a 2.3 metre-high sculpture of a man seated on a stone bench adorned with a leopard was unearthed at Karahan Tepe, dating to approximately 8,500 BCE. This could be among the oldest known three-dimensional human figures. Karahan Tepe is at the heart of a complex of some 20 sites that were home to thousands of humans during the Stone Age, up to 12,000 years ago.

Another noteworthy find is a life-sized painted sculpture of a boar at Göbekli Tepe, potentially dating back to 8,700-8,500 BCE, which may be the oldest of its kind.

According to Necmi Karul, an archaeologist at Istanbul University, these discoveries indicate a higher level of sophistication among Neolithic people, both in architecture and large-scale art. The evidence also points toward advanced culture and religious beliefs. Furthermore, the absence of warfare artifacts suggests these ancient communities may have lived peacefully with their environment. Abundant resources and fertile land likely aided their cultural development.

It is emphasised that these finds open a new chapter in understanding these ancient sites, many aspects of which remain a mystery.

The main focus of recent research has been in the upper Tigris and Euphrates region in the southeast, which appears to have been a major centre of early cereal agriculture, preceded by population growth, sedentary villages, and a dramatic swelling of ritual observations. Also what appears to have been ancestor worship. To discover more, Turkish archaeologists have embarked on excavations at over twelve other sedentary villages in the area. This semi-arid region was once a woodland area, where food resources were abundant.

Karahan Tepe, one of the sites now being investigated, dates to about 9,500 BC and covers about 10 hectares. Carvings here, as at Göbekli Tepe, are three dimensional sculptures, the monoliths forming concentric circles.

It appears that in this region, elaborate, permanent monumental villages came into being before agriculture began – and not after, as was the old assumption. The new Turkish researches are set to revolutionize our knowledge of the origins of food production, which led, of course, to the development of cities and states. ▲

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

As Editor, I do not often add much to our Magazine by way of personal comment. This month is an exception as so much is happening around us that affects our lives on a day to day basis.



Firstly:

I would like to reclaim our streets. I think we all know that in a wonderful liberal democracy like ours people must be allowed to protest. However, the frequency is outrageous. Since the pogrom of 7th October in Israel, our streets have become impassable on Saturdays. One protest should be enough, perhaps two, but on only one Saturday since then have our streets been open for us to use. Try to get a bus in central London after 11am – impossible. You

can't even walk on the pavements without being shouted at by one protestor or another waving hype and disinformation, etc., under our noses.

Peaceful vigils and rallies are one thing BUT constant marching protests must be limited so that businesses can be available to all, visitors welcomed to a usually peaceful city, and those who live here can get on with their daily lives.



“... we want to congratulate Nickie Aiken MP on the success of seeing that her bill to licence pedicabs is part of the legislation ...”

Secondly:

There are several more points to be made on the articles we are printing today. Two are requests for you, our readers, to take action.

The first relates to Tony Devenish’s article asking people to report criminal activities to the police. We all acknowledge the chances of any police response is unlikely. However, the actual act of reporting adds to the crime statistics.

Crime statistics matter and the more crimes reported in an area, the more likely it is to get police cover. It is vital that any criminal activity is reported to the police and that you get a crime number. That way you will be helping to increase policing in the area.

The second relates to the Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan. Our Counsellors have mentioned it and you will see the article in the Magazine (see page 18) reminding you. It is so important that you vote in the referendum. Please do.

The third is we want to congratulate Nickie Aiken MP on the success of seeing that her bill to licence pedicabs is part of the legislation which was included in the King’s speech. She has steadfastly pursued this legislation having tried to bring it in as a private members’ bill. It was overwhelmingly approved by Parliament. Nickie promoted it twice, but being a private members’ bill, just one MP voting against was enough to prevent it proceeding. In this case, that MP was Christopher Chope, a long serving MP for Christchurch. No doubt his constituents had never suffered the problems caused by pedicabs. Now the Government has adopted it and will treat it as a single bill. That means that it should pass more quickly into law. So Nickie must be congratulated for her persistence, perseverance and determination for her work on this.

(Incidentally we understand that Christopher Chope also scuppered possible legislation to punish “up skirting”)! ▲



WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE **BELGRAVIA PLAN**

The Belgravia Plan is nearing completion and its adoption will be put to a vote of local electors early in 2024.

If live in the Belgravia area and are registered to vote at council elections, this means YOU!

So, what exactly is this Belgravia Plan?

It is an important document which sets out a vision and policies to guide planning decisions in our area to 2040. **It's been developed by local people, with the input of local people.** After five years of extensive public consultation (including surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and pop-up events) and discussions with Westminster City Council and major stakeholders, the Plan is in its final stages. Once ready, and approved by the Council, it will be put to a vote in a Referendum of local electors to confirm its adoption.

Who has developed the Plan?

It has been researched and written by a local group, the Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum, which is a body designated by the Council for this purpose. The Forum has over 200 local members and is led by a Steering Group of twelve, comprising residents, local business and community representatives, elected by the members. See www.thebelgraviaforum.org.

What is in the Plan?

Its key objectives, based on community feedback, are to conserve the character of Belgravia's built environment and to maintain its unique and pleasant village ambience, which is of key importance to residents. Major policy areas and themes of the Plan include:

- guidelines for building design (with Design Codes to ensure buildings are in harmony with their surroundings)
- protecting Belgravia's village feel and daily life for residents
- reducing levels of through traffic
- guidelines for major development projects
- encouraging sustainable construction
- minimising construction disruptions

Why it matters?

It's not just a dry report which will sit on a shelf. Once adopted by Westminster City Council, it will have binding, statutory force. This means that any planning applications in the Belgravia area will need to take account of the policies in the Plan to gain Council approval. Knightsbridge, Mayfair and Pimlico already have their neighbourhood plans in force. Now it's our turn!

Do you care about ensuring the future of Belgravia as a great place to live and work?

Do you want to see its unique charm and character conserved?

The Belgravia Plan aims to achieve just that.

If you are registered to vote in the Belgravia area you will be able to vote in the Referendum to adopt the Plan. Once the date is set in early 2024, you will receive polling cards or a postal vote, just as in any other election. **Please use your vote.** A strong turnout of resident voters will show that the community cares about this neighbourhood and demonstrate robust democratic representation.

To see the Plan and the Design Codes, please go to our or WCC's website. Just Google 'Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan'.

We are looking for volunteers to help us promote the Plan ahead of the Referendum. If you can help or just want more information, please email us at chairman@thebelgraviaforum.org.

Thank you. ▲

BELGRAVIA AND KNIGHTSBRIDGE WARD NEWS FROM OUR COUNCILLORS



Councillors Elizabeth Hitchcock, Tony Devenish and Rachael Robathon

Following on from a very well attended Street Surgery on Montpelier Street, we held a walkabout with the local police team to look into some of the issues raised by people living in Knightsbridge.

In addition, we were also able to raise the problem of speeding around Belgrave Square, with the police committing to monitor this more closely. We will shortly be conducting another walkabout with the police in South Belgravia, so do let us know of any particular issues of concern.

Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan

We joined Nickie Aiken MP at a meeting with the Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum to discuss the Plan for Belgravia.

The plan seeks to protect all that is special and valued in the area with a strong focus on sustainability and quality of design. The Plan is currently being independently examined before being subject to a local referendum when people living in Belgravia can have their say. See the plan **online** and find out why it's important for local people to give their views.

Pedicabs



It has long been an issue for people living in the West End in particular. Not only are they potentially dangerous, but some drivers have been charging unsuspecting tourists hundreds of pounds for only a few minutes' ride. Equally awful is the amplified music the pedicabs have been playing throughout the night and after the Council's noise threshold of 9pm.

In the short term, we have been working closely with Council officers and the police to prosecute pedicab drivers who play loud music, which has resulted in over 50 fines being issued and thousands of pounds payable.

We are delighted this week to hear the King announce that 'a bill will be introduced to deal with the scourge of unlicensed pedicabs in London'. This is a huge victory for Cities of London & Westminster MP Nickie Aiken who has been working with local people, community groups, residents' associations and her parliamentary colleagues in calling for this for years. The bill will mean all pedicabs are subject to a licensing arrangement. ▲

Tony, Elizabeth and Rachael

Contact us by **email**

Like our Facebook Community Page to stay up to date about our area, or call 020 7730 8181.

MARKS & SPENCER IN OXFORD STREET



We all thought that the issue of the future of M&S flagship store in Oxford Street had been resolved. After the intervention of Michael Gove there was to be no demolition of the store and the replacement with another building.

However, now Marks & Spencer (M&S) has been given permission to proceed with a legal challenge against Michael Gove's decision blocking the demolition of the flagship store.

The levelling up, housing and Communities Secretary refused the controversial plans in July, rejecting Pilbrow & Partners' 10-storey replacement scheme over heritage and design concerns, as well as its embodied carbon impact. The High Court has now given M&S permission to proceed with a judicial review against the Government over the decision, *The Telegraph* reports. According to the newspaper, the substantive judicial review hearing is expected to take place next year. For a successful challenge, M&S will have to prove to the Courts not that the Government's decision was wrong, but rather that it made an

error in its decision-making. This could include convincing them that Gove missed material that was relevant – or else considered material that was irrelevant to the case.

However, setting out his decision for refusal, Gove said the 10-storey replacement scheme conflicted with policies on heritage and design.

He also specifically highlighted the embodied carbon impact and waste involved in the plan, something raised extensively by the AJ's RetroFirst campaign and by SAVE Britain's Heritage at last year's public inquiry into the proposal.

Having read both arguments, all I can say is that it is a very interesting case. The fact that the Court has granted a Judicial Review to M&S does not mean that they are bound to win but only that they have an arguable case. What outcome can be guaranteed is that the lawyers, whichever side they represent, will take home a great deal in fees!

Watch this space. ▲

CHRISTMAS IN *Belgravia*

Christmas, as usual, starts in November. We have some lovely decorations. Some we saw last year but that does not take away the special season so we can enjoy them just as much this year. We have put the clocks back and it gets dark so very early, but we have the benefit of the special lights and decorations.

Father Christmas came to welcome children in Elizabeth Street and see the lights go on. He brought his reindeer with him and plenty of parcels to be delivered. The street looks lovely and the shops have their windows dressed for the season too.

It is difficult to pick the best, but *Peggy Portion* is phenomenal. *Bayley and Sage* had a great display of Christmas fare in their shop. As usual their flowers were up to standard. Eccleston Yards is home to a market too. We are not sure when the market is open, but it is worth a visit.

We also happened to be in the Strand where the decorations are lovely and we also saw those in the Savoy Hotel. They are well worth stopping by if you are in the area. ▲





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