

THE BELGRAVIA SOCIETY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 85 | JUNE 2022

THE ONLY
INDEPENDENT
VOICE FOR
BELGRAVIA

175 YEARS

ST BARNABUS' SCHOOL
CELEBRATE THEIR
ANNIVERSARY

FIRST LOOK

A WORD FROM THE NEW LEADER
OF WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL,
ADAM HUGG





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IN THIS ISSUE

JUNE 2021

**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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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



George Waite
Chairman of
The Belgravia Society
and ESRA

Kilmuir House Scheme rejected

On 13th June, Mary Regnier-Leigh, on our behalf, attended the Planning Committee meeting at City Hall. The Planning Committee was to decide whether to consent to the scheme to replace Kilmuir House. It was refused after a vote where the Councillors, six of them, voted three to approve and three against. The Chairman used her casting vote to refuse, on the grounds it did not have sufficient affordable housing.

You may wonder why we are so much in favour of the current scheme. The answer is straightforward. The new proposed building has been designed to meld into the streetscape of Belgravia. Also, importantly, the proposed building is actually marginally lower in height than the current building. We are absolutely certain if the current scheme fails a very high building will replace it. WCC has given consent to a number of exceptionally high buildings almost opposite in Cundy Street.

All the Councillors agreed that the existing building was of poor quality and had reached the end of its life. The officers had recommended giving consent. The current building has 50 flats. The new scheme will give 60 flats of much improved quality.



Proposed Kilmuir House

Of the additional 10 flats, four were offered for affordable housing. It was not viable for the developers to offer more than that and the WCC Officers had confirmed the viability position was correct.

Developers will only do a development that will make some profit. The original application had included over 50 parking spaces. The existing building, we understand, only has 15 parking spaces. The application for 50 spaces was turned down as being contrary to the GLA/Mayor dictat about having reduced/no parking spaces for new build. WCC also restricted the amount of spaces so that only six are permitted for disabled use. The parking spaces, even the current 15, would have generated more income and would have increased sale prices of the flats. The restrictions on parking spaces made it impossible to offer more affordable housing while remaining financially viable.



Residents' concerns that introducing 60 flats instead of 50 would create parking difficulties. Given the existing number of 15 spaces, the likelihood of causing parking problems seems remote.

We were very disappointed with the outcome.

WCC has given consent to a number of very high buildings almost opposite in Cundy

Street. There will be no saving Belgravia from becoming a minor Manhattan with the rest of London.

What next? Maybe the developers will appeal and succeed. Maybe they will come back with another scheme. Inevitably, any scheme, whether by the current developers or another, will involve a taller building and probably lower quality design. ▲



INVITATION TO THE NEXT SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING

We would be delighted for you to join our video meeting. Please let us know by email if you wish to be linked in info@thebelgraviasociety.com. We can only accept a limited number, so first come, first served.

Our next meeting is on 12th July 2022

WANTED!

Writers | Historians | Story tellers

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

ACTION TO TACKLE THE RISE OF ROGUE SHORT-LET LANDLORDS

BY NICKIE AIKEN MP

In June, I was delighted to lead my very first debate in the House of Commons' Chamber on an issue that many Belgravia Society readers have contacted me on: the blight of short-term lets.

Short-term lets allow homeowners to rent a property or room over one or two days. Over the course of a year, homeowners in London are allowed to let their property for up to 90 nights. Whilst these short-lets can be a great way for tourists to visit our Two Cities, I've heard repeatedly from local people across Belgravia and the Two Cities about the misery that out-of-control rogue short-let landlords can cause with some visitors causing anti-social behaviour, rubbish dumping and excessive noise, particularly where properties are rented out for more than 90 nights a year.

Many of you will know that I have campaigned to tackle rogue landlords in the short-lets sector for a number of years and I'm proud to have stood up in the Commons to make your voices heard on this important issue.

It was clear that London is not alone in the explosion of short-term lettings as a number of colleagues from different parties also spoke out to share their experiences, from Kent, London, York and up to Edinburgh.



It is staggering that, between 2015 and 2020, the number of AirBnB listings in London grew by 378% and across six of the largest online letting platforms, by 2019 there were over 73,000 listings in London of short-term lets. Equivalent to one in every 50 homes in the capital. This incredible rise comes at the same time as long-term, secure rental housing is becoming ever-limited in central London, with homes that would have previously been rented out on long-term leases for professionals and families to call home being converted into short-term lets.

During the debate, the Minister for Housing, Eddie Hughes MP, made it clear that he understands and appreciates the issues we are facing because of the abuse of short-term letting. I am encouraged that he will press the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for its consultation on tourist accommodation so that it can also gain an up-to-date understanding of the reality of short-term lets. I will also continue to push for the consultation, and I will share the details as soon as it goes live.

If you want to find out more or back my campaign, there's still time to make your views known by signing my online petition. Visit nickie.news/ShortLets.

Lastly, I am here to work for you. If I can help on any local, national or international issue, please do not hesitate to get in touch by email at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk and keep up to date on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook [@TwoCitiesNickie](https://www.facebook.com/TwoCitiesNickie). ▲

*Painting of Ada
Countess of LoveLace*



ADA LOVELACE

AUGUSTA ADA KING, COUNTESS OF LOVELACE (NÉE BYRON)

Ada was born in 1815 and was the only legitimate child of Lord Byron. He separated from Ada's mother a week after her birth, and went to Greece where he died some eight years later.

Ada was very often left in the care of her maternal grandmother who doted on her. Her education was rather unusual for a girl. She had been privately educated in mathematics and other scientific disciplines. In her teens her tutors noted her mathematical abilities which dominated her adult life. Augustus De Morgan (a leading mathematician) extended her knowledge including study of calculus.

Ada was presented at Court, and she knew many of the notables of her day, including Michael Faraday and Charles Dickens. Her tutor, Mary Somerville, who became a close friend, introduced her to Charles Babbage. In last month's Magazine we referred to Babbage's "Difference Machines" (early 18/19th century computers). The other mathematician referred to receiving the concept of programming, mentioned but not named, was Ada Lovelace. Babbage invited Lovelace to see the prototype for his "Difference Machine". She became fascinated with the machine and used her relationship with Somerville to visit Babbage as often as she could. Babbage was impressed by Lovelace's intellect and analytic skills.

There was no description in English of how Babbage's machines were intended to work, so Ada undertook to translate the paper of the Italian mathematician Luigi Menabrea. She expanded the article to about three times the original length with her own thoughts. Ada came to understand that the Analytical Engine could carry out an extensive sequence of mathematical operations. The example she wrote of one such sequence – how to calculate Bernoulli numbers – is regarded by computer historians as the first computer program.

She even speculated that the Analytical Engine could be used to perform operations on "other things besides numbers," such as musical notes.

While Alan Turing was working at Bletchley Park decoding German communications, he found the translation of Ada's notes on Babbage's work. By then, a hundred years had passed, but the notes were critically important in shaping Turing's thinking in terms of "can computers think?" and him considering the field of artificial intelligence. Ada had realised that numbers and input into the machine could represent symbols, for example, musical notes, so the engine could be used for purposes beyond mathematics so recognising the concept of computation rather than calculation. That is why she is remembered and credited as being the "Mother of computer programming".

Sadly, Ada died aged 36 of uterine cancer in 1852. She left behind three children and, of course, her work. Until recently, her work was largely forgotten, but recently the Lovelace papers were deposited with the Bodleian and those details of her mathematical work studied. With original material and Alan Turing's comments on her work, it was helped back to life.

A computer language was named "Ada" after her. There is a statue of her, but it is on the corner of the seventh floor building at 9 Milbank, London SW1 and you would need binoculars to see it. Perhaps her image should be added to the new £50 note featuring Alan Turing. ▲



Model of Ada with the computer notations behind her



It's going to take a bit of time to get things right, but we want to see the Council talking to people earlier in the process of decision-making and giving them real choices over what happens next, rather than always presenting residents with a fait accompli. We also know there is still further to go to make the planning process easier to navigate for local residents and for its decisions to better reflect people's priorities.

We want to help people tackle the cost of living crisis that so many people are facing. That means we are committed to freezing Council Tax, not just this year but next. We will be providing more support to local food banks, pantries and other groups fighting food poverty. We are looking at ways to make it easier to insulate people's homes and we are working with the planners to make it easier to install suitable double or secondary glazing in Conservation areas like Belgravia. Such changes would not only help people keep bills down long term, but help us tackle the climate crisis too.

My team and I also want more opportunities for people of all backgrounds to build their lives here in Westminster, as I have. This means making sure the Council does all it can, both with its own house building schemes and with the private sector, to build the council homes for social rent and other truly affordable homes that our city desperately needs. But no matter what we are able to build, we know more people are going to be spending longer in the private rented sector throughout their lives, which is why we are committed to trying to get a better deal for private renters.

I am acutely conscious of the privilege we now have in leading this Council. As a new administration trying to make change, we are on a learning curve and we won't get everything right, but we are committed to trying to listen to residents and use their experience and knowledge to help Westminster Council do better in the future. I look forward to working with the Belgravia Society to do that. ▲

FIRST LOOK

BY ADAM HUG LEADER OF WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

It is great to have my first opportunity to write to you as the leader of Westminster City Council, at the head of the first Labour administration in our city's history.

Belgravia is a special place with its own character. The people who live and run businesses here are intensely proud of the area – rightly so. While the West End is hugely important, I also want the Council to focus on the high streets that form the heart of our local communities. My colleagues and I really want to hear ideas from The Belgravia Society members about what would make the wider area a better place in which to live and spend time.



NEWSON'S YARD

The rebuilding of Newson's Yard by Grosvenor is virtually complete and we were invited to inspect it on 22nd June. It must be about six years since Grosvenor decided not to renew the lease on the timber yard and said that they were to re-develop it. You may remember the original plans were to create, amongst other things, two huge retail shops. We opposed that and we also made applications to register the timber yard as a building of special local interest and also get it listed. These applications failed but, thankfully, they helped delay Grosvenor's endeavours.

The first of the new tenants will be working to prepare their own unit from 27th June. You will see from the photographs that the shop fronts have been refurbished and rebuilt entirely in keeping with the area. WCC are completing the public realm work in front of them. There are two

entrances with what we thought were rather spectacular and interesting gates. The interior, as you will see from our photograph, reflects the original building. You can still see the brick pillars and the re-built glass roof. The work definitely preserves the special features of the building and is very pleasing to the eye. This is especially so as the infilled retail shops are crafted to a very high standard and support the retro style of the building.

In some places, re-purposed wood from old buildings has been used to compliment the age of the building and remind us that the building is Georgian/Victorian.

The Odd Chair Shop has moved into the new space and it is very good to see the business will be there. The shop was established 50 years ago and is a family run business making finest furniture served by craftsmen in their own workshops.



Newson's Yard as a Timber Yard



The new Smart Gate to Newson's Yard

We were told by Emma Rogers, Grosvenor's representative who has followed this whole development through the years, that they hoped many of the tenants would support the interior design ethos of the area. Some of the units will be on two levels. This will enable design and materials to be worked on site.

It is also intended that the open space above the units will be a restaurant. It seems to us an ideal place for a restaurant with an interesting outlook over the interior of the development. If the timber yard was to be developed, there could be no better outcome than what we have seen. We only hope that the retailers and restaurant will live up to the expectations. ▲

Editor's Note: *It seems to us a great tragedy that, whilst this excellent development is entirely suitable for the Pimlico Road and the trading there, Grosvenor should be imposing the monstrosity of Cundy Street development in the area too. We can only say again that the height of the buildings is wholly inappropriate to the area, it provides very little additional homes, it will give us shops and other commercial activities that are unnecessary and an area for the senior living could be better placed elsewhere.*

ST BARNABAS' SCHOOL

Anniversary



Friday 10th June 2022 brought the St Barnabas' community together to celebrate the school's 175th anniversary. St Barnabas' School has sat proudly on the corner of Pimlico Road and St Barnabas' Street since 1847 and has a rich and vibrant history that was captured in a range of events throughout the day.

A special service in St Barnabas' Church with the Bishop of London began the anniversary events.

Every class was present at the service, along with parents, staff and governors – the church was full! Bishop Sarah spoke about showing compassion and kindness to one another and then

blessed commemorative anniversary mugs that were presented to every pupil and member of staff.

Children in each year group produced work to contribute to an anniversary exhibition that is currently on display in St Barnabas' Church (www.stbarnabaspimlico.com). Children's artwork, historical research, geographical comparisons (based on maps from 1850 to now) as well as a 3D model of the school have been displayed proudly alongside memoirs of St Barnabas' alumni. Pupils who were taught at the school since 1930 shared their memories, photographs and even pieces of needlework for the school to display at the exhibition.



MP Nickie Aiken (left), the new Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Hamza Taouzzale (centre) and Kate McCarthy, Chair of Governors (right)

Rachel Jewitt, Executive Headteacher, and Lauren Castle, Head of School, have been thrilled with the contributions from pupils, past and present. Log books and diaries from the 1850s were displayed and gave a snapshot of life at the school during the Victorian period.

As the sun shone during the afternoon, every class walked across the road to Orange Square for an afternoon of traditional English dance performances. The Hanky dance, Garland dance, Sword dance and Maypole dancing delighted the audience of parents, local residents, as well as the diners in the nearby restaurant and café!

Violinists from Years 5 and 6 played a range of pieces and were supported by their teachers from Music Masters (musicmasters.org.uk) who have a strong partnership with the school. The new Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Hamza Taouzzale

and MP, Nickie Aiken watched the dances and performances and spoke to parents and staff about the day's events.

At the end of the afternoon, children and parents made their way back to school to enjoy a fabulous St Barnabas' Day Fair. Fairground games, a tombola and raffle helped raise funds for the school. Parents, staff and members of the Royal Hospital Chelsea helped run the stalls, and local businesses and organisations donated some wonderful prizes for the raffle.

The day's events encapsulated the core values of the school's vision – Serve With Hope and Encouragement to Learn and Love.

Pupils will surely remember this special event for years to come as we celebrate the life of St Barnabas in the past, present and future. ▲



MAYOR OF LONDON, SADIQ KHAN, AND TRANSPORT FOR LONDON ARE CONSULTING ON THEIR PLANS TO ABOLISH SIXTEEN BUS ROUTES ACROSS LONDON

Pimlico's historic and iconic route 24 is under threat. Route 11, connecting Fulham, Chelsea, Victoria and the City of London also faces Khan's axe. The threatened routes across Westminster are: 11, 12, 14, 16, 24, 31, 74, N11, N16, N31 and N74. Across wider London, impacted routes include: 4, 45, 72, 78, 242, 349, 521, C3, D7.

Many local people rely on these buses to get to work, to medical appointments, to school, college or to the shops. The disruption to these established routes means forcing people back to using cars, expensive taxis and private hire vehicles, or massively increased travel times using busier buses, with day-to-day commuters, disabled people and parents with pushchairs vying for limited space.

Also, the proposal includes reducing frequencies on almost 60 more bus routes. Mr Khan has himself said that the proposals to cut were the “tip of the iceberg” and there could be a loss of 100 routes unless a new government bailout was agreed.

We have noted that Nickie Aiken, our MP, is now calling for the Mayor, Sadiq Khan to lose control of London Transport and the Tube. She says, “He is not fit to run TfL. I think it is time the Department for Transport looked at taking it off him. We can’t go on like this. Something has got to give! Every few months the Mayor goes cap in hand, without any proper strategy, to turn TfL’s finances around apart from cuts to services.” Nickie has said that she has run a £3bn organisation and knows what it is

MAYOR'S PLANS TO ABOLISH BUS ROUTES

Continued

like to face government cuts. You have to find efficiencies and new ways of working. She says that she has been inundated with concerns from constituents, particularly the elderly.

In an age where we are being advised to “ditch cars” and travel on public transport, it is astonishing that the Mayor considers axing bus routes. The Mayor has already successfully reduced the amount of space on roads for cars, creating extra traffic jams and pollution.

Nickie Aiken MP has joined forces with community activists, local councillors, neighbouring MPs, Felicity Buchan (Kensington) and Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham), and London Assembly Member for West Central, Tony Devenish AM, to put a halt to the plans.

Do the TfL survey and tell Mayor Khan to save our buses. Respond to TfL's consultation by [clicking here](#) and sign Nickie's petition. ▲



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All you need to do to join the scheme is go to **smile.amazon.co.uk**. You can then put our full name – “The Belgravia Society” – in the search box and confirm. That’s all there is to it.

When you next go into Amazon, type in “smile.amazon” instead of just “Amazon”, then just carry on as normal. Nothing else is necessary. The donation is automatic on completion of any purchase.

SUMMER WILDLIFE HAPPINESS AND WELCOMING BUTTERFLIES

BY SARA OLIVER

It is a hot and sunny Thursday afternoon with Ascot in full swing, as I write. I hope you are all enjoying the weather and have managed to get some time to embrace the outdoors and the Jubilee festivities.

Please think about wildlife, bees, bugs, flora and fauna on our doorstep and how they need to be able to access food and water during the summer months. Take time to put a dish of water in the garden, on a balcony, terrace, business, shop, community, school space or even the office outdoors, to keep other species hydrated. We are also asking Grosvenor, shops and businesses to please provide water bowls for visiting dogs and cats in our neighbourhood.

During hot weather, the heat may be detrimental to wildlife, and our furry friends. Please do not leave pets unattended in a hot car for even a minute, especially with windows closed. Animals can overheat quickly leading to tragic circumstances.

Finally, we have started our planting sessions and have spread the love of insect friendly meadow seedballs in neglected areas. You may not notice anything yet but do look out for any splashes of colour in unexpected places.



Did you know that butterflies belong to the Kingdom of Animalia and the phylum Arthropoda? (See Wikipedia)

If you would like to join our meetups, please email us at **hello@rewildingbelgravialondon.com** and we will notify you personally when we next meet. Bring yourself for an hour, armed with a spoon/fork or a small trowel, a bottle of water and we will provide you with some seeds to plant. All we ask is that you keep us informed of your rewilding journey. Join our movement, visit the website to find out what we are doing, and glean resources for your community, school and business.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our future meet ups! ▲

www.rewildingbelgravialondon.com



LIVING HISTORY

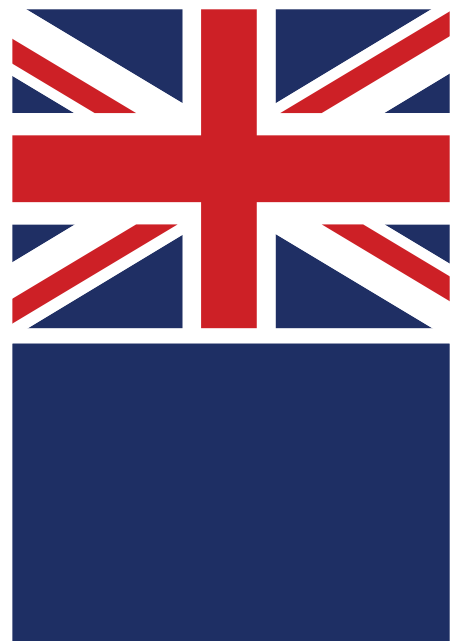
-The Queen's 70 years



I think we all enjoyed the Jubilee celebrations enormously. From pageants to street parties, from concerts to church services. The end of the celebrations was marked by an RAF flypast culminating with the Red Arrows.

The number of people on the streets decked out in Union Jack flags and wonderful costumes was amazing. It was such a contrast with the deserted streets and restrictions that we all endured during the COVID restrictions. Everyone was smiling and just enjoying being with the crowds and the good weather.

What was also very interesting is what so many people said about the celebration and why they were out together to enjoy it.



It was living history and they wanted to join in and have memories of being part of it. Things to tell the grandchildren. It is wonderful to have stories to tell to the next generation and also memories to share with them of some of the world's most important events.

As we get older and see references to historical events which may have taken place many years ago, it makes us realise that we have been living through history. The Platinum Jubilee qualifies. ▲



THE BELGRAVIA MAGAZINE — PANTOMIME & PANDEMONIUM



Belgrave Square in the 1820s

BY PETER WYETH

The original *Belgravia Magazine* was founded in 1866, coincidentally run by a woman editor called Mary – Mary Elizabeth Braddon.

She was already the famous writer of *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), an outrageous story with alarming heroines which had brought her a devoted readership. 'By the unthinking crowd she is regarded as a woman of genius', sniped a competitor. For Braddon it meant a regular income and an outlet to serialise her stories.

It was a vehicle for tales of London, including *St Paul's to Piccadilly* by W. S. Gilbert (of Gilbert & Sullivan) with a predilection for sensational tales of mystery and romance. The *Belgravia* aped other 'shilling monthlies' that took an area for a title *Temple Bar*, *Pall Mall*, *St James's* and *St Paul's*; prestige addresses to add a certain cachet.

Thackeray edited *Cornhill* and Trollope edited *St Paul's* which, along with *Temple Bar*, were known for their tone of witty urban sophistication – as was *The Belgravia*.

However, *Belgravia* was primarily a residential rather than a professional district and, whereas the others had a distinctly male readership, *The Belgravia* was aimed at females, with Braddon well aware that her readers were often bound to the domestic arena, and she opened up both posh and poor London to a middle-class female readership.

The 'sensational' novel was more alarming than its 'gothic' predecessor as it played on the 'mysteries that are at our own doors... the terrors of... busy London lodgings', as Henry James put it.

The city created the need for the sensational as an imaginative escape from the turbulent metropolitan life. An 1869 *Belgravia* article claimed 'No one can be indifferent to [the subject of madness] who considers the likelihood to become insane in this crowding and jostling age, where we tread so closely upon each other's heels, where every nerve-fibre is at its highest tension, and the social wheels are made to revolve at the most terrific speed.' The anxieties within



Mary Elizabeth Braddon

the sensational novel insulated its readers against the real fears found everywhere in the modern city.

Braddon posed as keeper of the city's mysteries, both as writer and editor, and in her first serialised novel, *Birds of Prey*, she sets City cunning against the naïveté of the provincial arrivals, trapped in a web of urban deceit that literally poisons the victim, with the perpetrator marrying his widow for her life insurance money.

Braddon privately admitted *The Belgravia* was 'the best bait for the shillings of Brixton and Bow', admitted by the cover price to 'the fashionable world of the aristocratic rich', while reassuring its middle-class female reader of her moral superiority to the upper-class Belgravians.

In *Swells*, Braddon characterises the aristocratic young as 'in the pursuit of idleness and inanity' and ignoring 'scenes of distress' in the East End, a constant theme of criticising the rich thus offering comfort to the contrasting values of her readership while penetrating The Cut as well as Belgrave Square to her readers' delight – as one article put it – Pantomime and Pandemonium. ▲



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Please fill in the online form by clicking on the link above. Alternatively, print the application form on page 23 and post your completed form to 63 Belgravia Court, 33 Ebury Street London SW1W 0NY

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KNIGHTSBRIDGE & BELGRAVIA WARD



Cllrs Devenish, Rowbotham and Hitchcock

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Membership is open to residents and non-residents and is free

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Second name (if any) email

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Mobile Date

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