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# The changing face of our area

by Stephen Williams, NNA committee member for planning



▲ 13 Netherhall Gardens, one of the few original large houses in our area, now for sale and redevelopment.

LAST YEAR, before the NNA AGM, I decided to walk around our few streets and survey the conservation area. With the large number of planning applications coming in regularly, I was concerned that the character of our streets was changing beyond recognition.

When applications come in, they tend to be judged on an isolated basis, case by case, with little regard for the overall look of the neighbourhood. My growing fear was that the area was changing by stealth and that it was time to engage with Camden's planners and conservation officers, as well as local residents, to halt this process.

I was amazed to see how much development had taken place in our streets, some as far back as the 1960s

and 1970s, with contemporary houses, large apartment blocks and institutional buildings such as Netherhall House.

Modern additions had also appeared on buildings that had since become schools and institutions. In recent years, houses too have been extensively redeveloped with applications for large extensions, basements and extra storeys becoming commonplace. This had resulted in the loss of original buildings which contributed to the character of our conservation area.

As a result of my 'survey' – and after an ad hoc conversation with Councillor Clare-Louise Leyland – a meeting was arranged with David Joyce and Bethany



▲ 26 Netherhall, awaiting a decision on whether it can be demolished and replaced with a modern building; the NNA has objected to the plans.

Cullen at Camden Council to discuss the issue. Other local groups also participated as their concerns were very similar to my own. A dialogue was started and we are now awaiting some follow-up proposals from the Council.

Councillor Siobhan Baillie also took up the baton and has managed to get some funding from Camden's Community Investment Levy for a new

## NNA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Wednesday 25th April 2018 Danish YWCA, 43 Maresfield Gardens

6.45pm **RECEPTION:** drinks and savoury canapés

7.15pm **UPDATE on new plans for the Freud Museum**

Carol Seigel, Director, and Emily Ardizzone, New Projects Manager

7.30pm **AGM:** 2017-18 overview, election of officials, Q&A, any other business

8.00pm **SHORT BREAK:** drinks and sweet canapés

8.15pm **GUEST SPEAKER: Dr Nicola Stacey on 'Restoring London's heritage'**

Nicola Stacey is Director of the Heritage of London Trust, London's independent heritage charity which restores buildings and monuments across the city. The trust focuses on Heritage At Risk projects – vulnerable sites of historic or architectural interest, listed or unlisted. Nicola will discuss selected projects and their contribution to London's beauty and character.



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## Founder's farewell



Photo: Palle Pedersen

“WARM, WISE AND WELCOMING” was how Jenny White described her neighbour Pat Whitehouse at the reception held in January to thank Pat for 35 years of service to the NNA.

Pat, a Netherhall Gardens resident since 1963 and now in her mid-80s, was about to move to Oxford to be nearer her son and his family. Her husband, Ronnie, who was also active in the NNA, died 10 years ago.

A co-founder of the NNA in 1983 and former chair, Pat more recently co-ordinated the Association's 'Good neighbours' group in which capacity she was responsible for encouraging many new residents to join. With her friendly manner and

## Waste and recycling

Following local dissatisfaction with Veolia's waste and recycling collection services during the Christmas period, Camden environmental services officer Winfield Greenidge makes a couple of helpful suggestions for residents:

ON FESTIVE OCCASIONS such as Christmas and Easter there may be an excess of recyclable refuse which will not all fit into recycling refuse bins. However, please note that additional recyclable refuse placed in black bags cannot be collected. Indeed black sacks cannot be recycled and are a major source of contamination. As a result even just a few black sacks going into the back of a recycling truck leads to the whole load of recycling being rejected at the tipping point by the waste authority.

In fact, because contaminated recycling loads are being cracked down on at the tipping point, any recycling wheelie bin with black sacks in it should not be taken by the crew and the bin has to be labelled as contaminated.

If you regularly have excess recycling material that won't fit into your wheelie bin, you can request clear recycling sacks from Camden, as pictured right, and present them at the side of your wheelie. This can be done via the Camden website or phone 0207 974 2202 – just state that you need a roll of 'clear recycling sacks' to help with excess recycling.



### Leaves from street trees

Where a resident has lots of leaves from trees in the street land on their property during autumn/winter, there is a seasonal initiative from Camden's policy team to deal with the problem. Camden will post out six single-use orange sacks per resident for them to bag up the leaves from the street trees which have fallen in their driveway or front garden. Once the orange sacks have been filled, they need to be presented on the 'general rubbish' collection day, alongside the black wheelie bins, and not on Saturdays with the garden waste collection.

Any resident interested in this option should email their name and address, with 'Leaves' in the subject box to [street.environment@camden.gov.uk](mailto:street.environment@camden.gov.uk) and the bags will be sent out.

◀ Patricia Whitehouse (right), co-founder of the NNA in 1983 and Netherhall Gardens resident since 1963, showing off her gift of a print of Hampstead by artist Matthew Wright at a reception held in honour of her move to Oxford earlier this year. She is seen here (l to r) with (now ex-)neighbours Margaret Richards and former NNA secretary Ruth Stone.

practical skills, Jenny told the crowd of family, friends and neighbours gathered at the Maresfield Gardens Danish Centre, Pat personified what a neighbourhood association should be.

As a token of appreciation she presented Pat with a picture of Hampstead, notably the top of Fitzjohn's Avenue, by artist Matthew Wright, whose work has often been displayed locally. Matthew personally inscribed the print, thanking Pat from the NNA "for all you have done over the years to bring neighbours together and help the community."

Meanwhile, just weeks after her move, Pat is already on the activities committee of the retirement home where she lives.

# Our changing face

continued from page 1



▲ Top: no 2 Maresfield Gardens in the throes of redevelopment; below: no 28 Maresfield which has also received approval for major redevelopment.

survey into the Froggnal and Fitzjohn's Conservation Area. The last one done in the early 2000s is out of date as it does not take into account current planning legislation. An inspector is being appointed to carry out this review and should report back later in the year.

As can be seen from the photos in this article, a number of redevelopments are currently under way in our streets.

We are also awaiting planning applications to go in for the redevelopment of the recently sold three Anna Freud Centre houses in Maresfield Gardens, as well as the large Southwell House on the corner of Fitzjohn's Avenue and Nutley Terrace. This property extends for the whole block, backing on to Maresfield Gardens; we understand that development plans will be submitted in the next few months.

Other properties are either currently on the market or 'ripe for redevelopment', for example 13 Netherhall Gardens, pictured on page 1.

## Coherence destroyed

Whilst the NNA is not against development in the area *per se*, we are worried about the amount taking place. Sympathetic development is very different from the prospect of one house in the middle of a grouping being demolished – notably 26 Netherhall Gardens – and being replaced with a modern building completely altered in height, massing and frontage (not to mention additional basements and loss

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▲ Southwell House, on the corner of Fitzjohn's Avenue and Nutley Terrace, built in 1885 and described in sales literature as a 'large period property with extensive grounds, with considerable potential for residential development'.



▲ 21 Maresfield, which, along with numbers 12 and 14, formed the Anna Freud Centre. The centre is moving to Kings Cross and all three buildings have been sold to developers.

of garden space), thus destroying the coherence of the row of houses.

Along with neighbours, we have objected strongly to this application and are awaiting a decision from the Council.

We are aware that conservation officers at Camden, who are very overworked and under-staffed, are often not brought into the planning process until late in the day. Pre-planning meetings take place between developers and planning officers, where some design changes /comments are often agreed before an application is made. The question of how a planning application affects the overall conservation area is often not given enough weight until it is too late and permission is virtually granted. We will be urging the Council to bring the

conservation department into the process much earlier so that their voice can be heard and taken into account.

Planning guidelines are also being eased by the Government, which makes conservation more difficult, and councils are afraid of litigation if permissions are refused. We have seen several applications, refused on good grounds, being mystifyingly overturned by inspectors on appeal.

## Not preserved in aspic

The character of the area is one of the reasons we live here. It obviously cannot be preserved in aspic but needs to grow with sensitivity and care. We at the NNA are doing our best to alert residents to contentious applications – although we do not get involved in neighbourly disputes – and to object where necessary.

However, we also support schemes that we feel add something to the area, like South Hampstead High School's new building designed by the well-known architectural firm, Hopkins Associates.

We need to be aware of what is happening and will continue to monitor what is going on in our streets. We look forward to the Conservation Area review in due course.

NNA



▲ 34B Netherhall, now vacant and a potential development site.

# Investing in philanthropy

*Massachusetts-born investment manager Ric Lewis has devoted much of his life to helping disadvantaged black kids achieve the kinds of educational aspirations and opportunities that he was bright and lucky enough to benefit from*



**M**aresfield Gardens resident Ric Lewis hails from Salem, Massachusetts, notorious for its witch trials. While these occurred way back in the 17th century, perhaps there is still something in the water there, as I emerged from our meeting in his Berkeley Square office quite spellbound. Spellbound in a good way, that is, of course, as I was suddenly possessed of a sense of the world as my oyster in which I could achieve anything I set my mind to!

Words like ‘inspirational’, ‘passionate’, ‘creative’ and ‘transformative’ have all been used in descriptions by clients, colleagues and those lucky enough to be mentored by a man who has twice come second in the annual Power List of Britain’s most influential black people.

Last year he was pipped at the post by Gina Miller, who successfully quashed the British Government’s attempt to implement Brexit without Parliament’s approval, and the year before by technology entrepreneur and educational philanthropist Tom Ilube.

Criteria for the award are how influential nominees are in their immediate sphere and how far beyond that their influence reaches. The original idea was to provide professional

role models for young people of African and African Caribbean heritage.

Ric Lewis actually has two key spheres of influence. On the one hand he is an extremely successful investment manager – founder, chairman and chief executive of London-based Tristan Capital Partners, which specialises in pan-European property for institutional and private investors and is regarded as one of the leading real estate private equity investment firms in Europe.

On the other, outside of ‘work’, he volunteers most of his time to organisations concerned with improving access to and the quality of education for children from less advantaged backgrounds. For over 11 years he has served on the board of the Eastside Young Leaders Academy, dedicated to enabling students, but notably BME boys, to do well at school and go on to become transformational leaders and global citizens, and in 2009 he set up his own charity, the Black Heart Foundation, which grants educational scholarships to those in need.

## Star student

So what drove him to be so driven – and indeed what brought him to Hampstead? Born on Christmas Eve 1962, Ric is the eldest of three boys. His father was a firefighter (as is Ric’s youngest brother) and his mother a telephone executive; both believed passionately in the importance of education. Ric turned out to be a star student and became class president at Salem High School.

However, he would probably just have gone on to a local college had it not been for family friend Dan Wholley, who was head of guidance for the city of Salem and, seeing Ric’s potential, persuaded him to apply to the Ivy League universities.

No-one in his extended family having ever been to university, it is that sort of encouragement and support that he sees lacking from so many young people’s lives even today. “Barriers to

aspirations, never mind to achievement, are rarely the fault of the children,” he says. Hence his involvement in schemes such as the New York and Boston-based ‘I Have a Dream’ Foundation, of which he was formerly a director, as well as the Institute of Imagination which plans to establish a new ‘cultural space’ in London where children and families can let their imaginations run free.

Anyway, Ric duly got into Dartmouth College, consistently ranked among the greatest academic institutions in the world. Dartmouth, of which he is now a trustee and where his eldest daughter will be going in the autumn, had particularly strong language programmes, so, in addition to reading economics (“I was excited by the prospect of getting to understand how business and finance work”), Ric took Spanish. This involved a year in Mexico, where his Spanish became proficient, although he now also speaks French, German and Italian.

His wife, Iliana Singh, Honorary Secretary of the NNA, is half German and both the couple’s daughters, Alessa and Liana, have grown up bilingual.

Ric’s first work experience was a two-year training programme in a bank and, while this convinced him he did not want to be a banker, it was here that he learnt many invaluable lessons about the business of investment. Also while at university he obtained a summer internship with a Boston-based property investment company, and it was from this that his interest in and knowledge about real estate stems.

After graduation and his bank training he joined investment management business Aldrich Eastman & Waltch (AEW), where he rose to become a senior vice-president. And then, just before his 30th birthday, he was appointed president and chief executive of a new financial services firm, Capital Management Resources, set up in partnership with the US Federal

Government, to manage and liquidate all the assets and liabilities of two insolvent New York banks.

This involved finding an office, hiring over 50 members of staff, establishing systems and procedures for information management, financial control, reporting and auditing to meet both business goals and government standards; also creating an assets, operations and disposition plan, setting the pricing strategy and chairing the investment/disposition review committee. Three years on, the enterprise had far exceeded capital recovery goals and shareholders' revenue and profitability expectations.

## Harvard

At this point in his career he took a year out to go to Harvard to do a full-time management development programme. He had in fact applied 10 years earlier but the new job got in the way. Now AEW agreed to fund half the cost and he had enough experience under his belt to know what he wanted to get out of the course. Too many young people, he feels, undertake such courses too soon. He thinks they are much more valuable when students have had real life business experience to which they can apply the learning. Particularly with degrees like the Harvard MBA, he adds, there is a strong temptation to take them just for the brand.

Back at AEW his real estate investment management career really took off and, at the same time as restructuring and reinvigorating a 50-employee group responsible for a portfolio representing \$8 billion worth of US-based assets, he wrote a plan for building a similar international business. Although still the group's youngest partner, not surprisingly it was Ric who was asked to implement the plan.

He had met Ilina in Boston while she was doing a PhD at Harvard (after his time there) and they got married in 1998. The following year, when she was pregnant with their first daughter, the couple came to London. Initially they lived in what Ric calls the US 'ghetto' of South Kensington but later moved to St John's Wood, then Maida Vale and ultimately in 2008 to Maresfield Gardens. "We wanted to be nearer the girls' school (South Hampstead High) but never imagined we'd be right on its doorstep."

Meanwhile Ric spent his first 10 years here growing the new international business from nothing in 1998 to a real

estate investment portfolio worth €18bn at the 2008 year-end, at which point it was ranked fifth in Europe.

Though AEW Europe was based in Paris, the 260 staff worked out of 11 offices all over west and central Europe and Ric, as chief investment officer, worked predominantly from London.

Unfortunately, however, the parent company was bought by a French business, and Ric felt it was time for a career break (he is an extremely keen golfer and more time indulging this hobby was an appealing prospect). He spent the best part of a year working on his exit and hiring a successor but, when it came to the point, his clients didn't want to leave him and he finally agreed to set up his own company, with his clients negotiating the 'lift out' from AEW on his behalf.

So, Tristan Capital Partners, the third company he has started from scratch, was born in 2008, with Ric as chairman and chief executive. The deal was that he would take just a few of his old clients and staff members in the first year, but in the event after two years they all joined him.

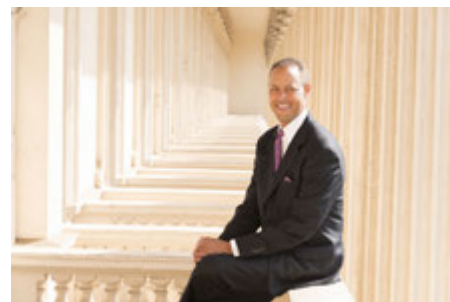
## Colourful crazy people

Building organisations and teams is what really turns Ric on rather than property investment *per se*. "Everyone thinks they can 'do' property," he says, so "it tends to attract a lot of colourful crazy people." But there are also plenty of thoughtful, sane professionals, he points out, "people who understand the great moral hazards associated with the 'creativity' the business generates."

He says he "happened to become expert in property investment through circumstances," but claims the sort of corporate leadership skills he has acquired over the years could equally have been applied to manufacturing or even sports coaching.

A former basketball player, as his near 7' height would immediately suggest, an avid golfer, Arsenal ticket holder and regular participant in yoga, pilates and gymnastics, not to mention father to two serious track and field athletes, he certainly still factors sport into his life.

What he loves, though, is "the feeling and aura of a team accomplishing what was previously thought impossible, of outperforming expectations." So he has tried to build that sort of culture into the organisations he has worked in. Tristan's infinitesimally low labour turnover is clearly evidence that people like working there.



Half of Tristan's investors, whether pensions funds or exceedingly wealthy family trusts, are based in the US, and the rest in Europe, Asia and Australia, so he still travels a lot to see them. But the firm only invests in Europe, despite suggestions it should branch out. "We always say 'no', because you can't be an expert in the whole world," he insists. "If you diversify too widely, you risk failing to spot the risks that you would see clearly in an area you know inside out."

The kinds of properties in which Tristan invests can be large-scale residential estates, shopping centres, office buildings, student accommodation ("but not houses in Hampstead", he says) and revenue comes from both rental and sales. The company invests £1 for every £10 that its clients invest, so due diligence goes without saying and, as chair of the investment committee, Ric sees every deal himself.

But, for instance, the Grenfell fire made them double-check cladding on all their buildings, even though they hadn't thought they were affected (they weren't). And Tristan had partnered with the now insolvent construction and facilities management company Carillion on a project in Manchester ("they were very good at what they did"), but another company now has the contract for the second phase.

## Brexit

The biggest issue for most British-based companies now though, of course, is Brexit. But it is the current uncertainty that worries Ric most. "Wherever we end up," he says, "it will be great to get there already. Then we can get on with making the best of whatever happens. But it is the uncertainty that breeds volatility." He equates what is happening to a 'slow motion car crash' – "no fatalities, but there will be injuries."

He certainly has no wish to leave London; "we have 65 employees from 17 countries and it seems inconceivable to have to repatriate out of here." But like most sensible businesses there is a contingency plan – in Tristan's case,

*continued overleaf* ►

► should push come to shove, it is to re-base in Luxembourg. “Other finance houses – Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs – are already moving people to Frankfurt and Dublin.”

But he finds it hard to believe that the UK government would mess with the competitive advantages we have as a nation – the rule of law, obviously, the fact that this is a safe place to store capital and to transact business, not to mention our heritage, health and educational record. “We know people don’t come here for the weather!”

So, does he sound like a politician manqué to you? The family certainly have an air of the Obamas about them! “No way would I go into politics,” he insists. “Not least thanks to social media, you get ripped apart when you’re trying to do good. Why would you do it?”

So he sticks to philanthropy, working within communities and his own Black Heart Foundation apart, the list of boards on which he currently serves, either as trustee or director, let alone those on which he has served over the years, leaves one breathless. Yet in this regard, compared with his birth country, we pale into insignificance. He says for what he does, he would not make the top 100 power list, nor the top 1000 philanthropists in the States.

### Cultural differences

Another major cultural difference between the UK and US, he points out, is how we behave around our neighbours. After 20 years here he is still coming to terms with British politeness, minding our own business, our not wanting to bother people.

Some passers-by stop to talk when he and his daughters decorate their Christmas tree and “dogs are happy to relieve themselves in our front garden”, but in the main people tend to keep themselves to themselves. And he feels it is not his place to try to change that culture.

Which is a shame, because he could clearly charm the birds off any trees in the NNA area. Also, with a wife who is an Oxford professor in neuro-ethics, setting ethical guidelines in medicine, defence and education (she was off to see the Pope when Ric and I met), he says he is probably home more than Ilina, so (my words) would be well-placed to encourage more neighbourly interaction. With a neighbour like that, I suspect we’d all be up for a small culture change! He only has to wave his magic wand...

*Susanne Lawrence, NNA*

# Finchleystrasse:

*Five years ago Mike Berlin made a BBC Radio 4 programme entitled an Ode to Finchleystrasse, intended as an evocation of a lost world when the Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road area was home to thousands of Jewish refugees from the Nazis. Here he presents edited highlights from that programme and from his subsequent talk at the JW3 cultural centre*

**M**y ‘Ode to Finchleystrasse’ was to be devoted to those who came from Austria after the Anschluss. But there had been a thriving German community in NW3 since the early 1930s.

In fact the Jewish presence goes back to the late Victorian era, when Finchley Road was being constructed and the first middle-class families living in large detached houses settled in the area. Even before that, in the early 18th century, Daniel Defoe had recorded the presence of a prosperous though very small community of German and Sephardi Jews in Hampstead.

However, it was the Viennese presence that was distinctive. Research by historian Tony Grenville reveals that 1 in 4 of pre-war Austrian Jewry who survived the war did so by finding refuge in Britain.

But why specifically NW3? Aside from the already existing German presence, housing was a key factor. In the pre-war decades areas such as West Hampstead had seen the decline of large middle-class single-family households with servants.

The rise of interwar outer London suburbia, epitomised by the development of the famous Metroland estates, and the post-1918 social conditions that had caused the so-called servant problem, led to the break-up of the great houses into flats, small hotels and boarding houses, which were in abundance in the area. When the war broke out, the sub-division of the great terraced housing of the Victorian era continued apace. It was into this world that the Viennese settled.

### Cosmopolitan cafes

As Dannie Abse wrote in his novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Simmonds and Dr. Glas*: “For the most part they lived in single shabby rooms around ... Swiss Cottage and instigated and supported the cosmopolitan cafes on the Finchley Road where they met, laughed, quarrelled and led their fractured lives.”

Edith Argy, who arrived in London just before the outbreak of war, moved to an unfurnished one-room flat in Arkwright Road. She loved the Heath and the library at the bottom of the road and the sense of belonging that living in this enclave of refugees gave her.

“You felt a closeness to people who had shared your experiences, who spoke your mother tongue, although we usually spoke English together in public; also practically

everybody had lost somebody they had loved and that was a feeling that drew us together.”

Some of the refugees offered what Tony Grenville has called a ‘conditional willingness to assimilate’, that is, an openness to the host society combined with a fierce desire not to lose the best of the culture they left behind.

Whether it was in the music of the Amadeus Quartet, the work of the historian Eric Hobsbawm or the philosopher Karl Popper, the new arrivals were keen to make their mark, but not by completely losing themselves in their adoptive culture.

Grenville has talked about how for this generation, German high culture, the world of Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Bach, was a kind of secular religion. They sought to preserve this while seeking to become a distinctive part of their host society.

Here, in the streets of the refugee heartlands of NW London – Haverstock Hill, West End Lane and above all Finchley Road – they re-created the institutions and ways of living of the cities of their birth. The communist-influenced Free Austrian Movement, for instance, had a base in Eton Avenue and a young workers hostel and social centre in Primrose Hill; the Left-wing



▲ Portrait of Gabriele Tergit by her sister-in-law Adele Reifenberg who fled to London from Berlin in 1939. Tergit’s husband Heinz Reifenberg was the architect of the Otto Schiff house in Maresfield Gardens.

Paintings courtesy of the Ben Uri Gallery

# back in the day

John Lewis Partnership Archives



▲ More than just a store, John Barnes was a focus of the community.

Social Democrats had a separate club in Fitzjohn's Avenue run by Mary Koestler, later to be a prominent SD MP; and there was also the Labour club and Jewish Arts Centre in Broadhurst Gardens, allied to the Austrian Social Democrats, which opened its doors for tea and dinner dances.

The local branch of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen had a club in Circus Road, where bands such as Isy Geiger's gypsy orchestra entertained courting couples and newly-weds, and a Mr Kay provided food and drink off gingham tablecloths.

The Association of Jewish Refugees, founded in 1941 and still going after 70 years from its headquarters in Fairfax Mansions, ran clubs, youth groups, an employment agency and welfare service, and, as time passed, day centres and care homes.

For the faithful, and occasionally observant, there was and is the Belsize Square Synagogue, originally the New

Liberal Jewish congregation, founded in the heart of the community in 1938.

School was seen as the key way into British culture. Those frequented included the House on the Hill and Anna Freud's famous kindergarten in Maresfield Gardens.

## Indelible impression

Arriving penniless, former retailers and skilled tradesmen rebuilt their lives by providing specialist services to the community. And it is their shops that leave an indelible impression of Finchleystrasse.

There were refugee tailors, upholsterers, radio repairmen, suppliers of ladies' foundation garments (Madame Lieberg's exclusive salon of corsetry and lingerie), boarding houses (Rosemont, 17 Parsifal Road, 'the boarding house with culture'), and refugee dating agencies including the Moderne Matrimonial Agency 'for the life partner of your choice'.

John Barnes department store, opened in 1900 and closed in 1981 (now Waitrose), was a local temple of consumerism. Refugees interviewed fondly remembered 'Johann Barnes', with its doormen, where prams were routinely left outside the entrance, and where the staff lined up at the stairs at Christmas.

More than a store, it was a focus of the community where friends would meet. Ladies in Persian lamb coats, some increasingly threadbare in the late '50s and '60s, saw the visit to John Barnes as part of a weekly routine.

Edith Argy found English food when she first arrived, in her words, "unspeakable". She was perplexed and horrified by tasteless salad, awful meat and singularly inedible malt vinegar. It is not difficult to see why the new arrivals were grateful when refugee-run food shops started up in the post-war years, especially in the '50s when rationing eased.

Fondly remembered today are places such as Appenrodts and Lessiters chocolate shop, two of the oldest in the area, which predated the great migrations of the 1930s.

For those interested in food for the mind there was Libris books, Dr Joseph Sushitsky's temple of German literature



▲ The Cosmo, 1937-1998, specialised in goulash, schnitzel and strudel.

in Boundary Road. The son of a Viennese bookseller who died in Auschwitz, Joseph came to London with his brother after his own internment in Dachau and Buchenwald.

Viennese and German traditions were also kept alive in the little refugee theatres that opened during the war, linked often to the various political tendencies in the exile community.

The Laterndl, founded by exile actors in March 1939 in the West End, was based on a tradition of *kleinkunstbühne*, cabaret theatres of Vienna and Berlin specialising in avant-garde agit prop, vignettes and sketches of the life of the refugee, to give voice to the anti-fascist Germans and Viennese, to fight for an independent Austria and a sense of hope to the refugees.

However, the performers were affected by the 'Collar the Lot' internment order of June 1940 and re-established themselves in a defunct music and ballet school at 153 Finchley Road before relocating to the Free Austrian Movement's centre in Eton Avenue.

Later the Blue Danube Club was founded as a breakaway from the Laterndl by the Viennese librettist Peter Herz, who after internment found that he disliked some of the attempts to control the repertoire exerted by the CP-dominated Free Austrian Movement.

The Blue Danube, where Lotte Lenya among others performed, settled into a long residence at the now-vacated music school on Finchley Road and provided a series of well-remembered performances that poked fun at the mores of the 1950s.

## Cosmo v Dorice

Above all the life of pre-war Vienna was kept alive in the cafes. Ernst Flesch, a self-confessed 'cafemensch', recalled frequenting the Cosmo and its neighbouring rival the Dorice, but also Coffee Cup in Hampstead, the Hampstead tea rooms at South End Green, the Cordial, the Winter Garden, the Glass House and later the Montmartre.

Here we reach the vexed question of Cosmo versus Dorice, both in the stretch between Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road tube stations.

It is important to get the context right. The Cosmo, reportedly a favourite of Sigmund Freud in the short time he lived up the road in Maresfield Gardens, was the older of the two. Originally opened by a Hungarian as a coffee bar in 1937, it soon became a restaurant too, specialising in goulash,

*continued overleaf* ►



▲ Portrait of Charlotte Melnikov by Julius Rosenbaum, artist husband to Adele Reifenberg. The couple established what became known as the Belsize School.

► schnitzel and strudel. In 1957 it passed into the ownership of the Manheimer family and then the Brauns. The Dorice was opened by breakaway Cosmo waitress Doris Balacs and is still extremely fondly remembered by its habitués and their offspring.

It is clear that the two places had slightly different clienteles. The Cosmo seems to have been considered the sanctum sanctorum of the rekindled flame of Viennese literary culture, but also attracted the wider non-refugee literary and would-be literary world.

Welsh poet Dannie Abse, who lived in student digs while studying at Kings in the late '50s, and went on to be a columnist for the *Ham & High*, said he visited the Cosmo "because of the pretty girls and the congenial interesting company. One might encounter youthful novelists but also established refugee writers such as future Nobel prize-winner Elias Canetti or the poet Erich Fried."

Those dubbed the Cosmo Writers Brigade included Abse, Iris Murdoch, who was in love with Canetti, Alex Comfort, Peter Vansittart, Immanuel Litvinoff, Bernice Rubens and her then husband Rudolf Nassauer, who lived in Compayne Gardens with writers John Silkin and David Mercer.

Also, according to Abse, Vienna-born actor and musician Theodore Bikel, who came to London in 1945 to study at RADA, used to play his guitar and sing at the Cosmo.

The waiters there were a heterogenous group, including refugees from Franco's Spain, among them the young Flamenco guitarist Paco Pena. And at the height of its fame the Cosmo was attracting British film and TV actors such as Kenneth Williams, James Mason and Dirk Bogarde.

The Dorice seems to have fewer associations. Norbert Brainin, first violinist and leader of the Amadeus String Quartet,



▲ The first plenary session of the Council for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Jews from Germany held on 16 June 1947 at the Embassy Theatre in Eton Avenue, now the Central School of Speech & Drama.

regularly ate there. Author Fay Weldon, who attended South Hampstead High School from the age of 14, worked there, while her mother worked at the Cosmo.

As opposed to its "supposedly classier rival", the Dorice was, according to Weldon, "on the wrong side of the road", a Berlin-style restaurant where "no one but me spoke English. The orders were for dishes I did not understand, including Königsberger Klopse and such like, and I couldn't tell a dessert from an entrée. You had to go downstairs to the hell hole of a kitchen and be hollering your orders at the overworked, sweaty, furious chefs who would ignore you if you could not out-yell and out-bad temper the other waitresses – and in German too."

**H**ow then did this community disappear? Our interviewees were clear that, as people had children and grew more secure and prosperous, their life choices changed. The new suburbs beckoned.

But also some made the move to Israel or America or elsewhere.

Ian Norrie, a local historian writing in the *Heathside Book* (1962), wrote that the community "gradually came to be accepted and they themselves, shedding some of their native habits, became largely assimilated. The mattresses hung out of windows in the Belsize Park area in the mornings grew fewer and fewer and the bus conductors on routes 2 and 13 ceased to call out 'Finchleystresse'."

But did they ever? Of my interviewees only one, Joseph Horvitz, remembered hearing it. On the other hand, Werner Ravenstock writing in the *AJR Journal*, August 1957, recalled a ride on a 31 bus from Earl's Court in 1947: "Approaching Swiss Cottage, the conductor yelled, 'Swiss Cottage: have your passports ready, please!' I, for one, having just acquired my British nationality, got off the bus in a paroxysm of laughter!" **NNA**

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*In the making of the Radio 4 programme with BBC producer Beaty Rubens he spoke to several people who either lived or had lived in the area, as well as "drawing shamelessly" on the expertise of historians of the community, Dr Anthony (Tony) Grenville, editor of the AJR Journal, and Dr Bea Lewkowitz who curated an exhibition, Continental Britons, at the Jewish Museum several years ago and who conducted a series of interviews with Jewish refugees which has formed the 'refugee voices' project now lodged at the Wiener Library.*

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