



# Residents' Culture

Exploring the minutiae of residents' concerns and encounters

## Belgravian

## Moments



It's 1 March and bird watching is in full swing in the local gardens. On weekends, I take my son's binoculars and pocket guide to British Birds and set off to watch nature in all its glory in Belgrave Square Garden.

Maggies and crows pass overhead and great quantities of blackbirds, blue tits and robins can be seen perched in trees. A great spotted woodpecker can be heard in the garden and Parakeets are moving into the area, too. Local residents have also sighted the song thrush, mistle thrush and long tailed tits.

Come summertime, I have learned from the local gardeners that a pair of mallards also take up residence in our gardens. I have always had a fascination with birds, their graceful flight, the caring of their young and the variety of their plumage and song.

Daffodils are also at their peak in March. From the genus *Narcissus*, the name 'daffodil' has been traced to 'affodell', a variant of the *Asphodel* genus. It is not known where the introduction of the initial 'd' came

from, although a likely source could be a merging of the Dutch article 'de', as in 'De affodil'.

Belgravia's Francis Holland School will celebrate its 133rd birthday this month. During the cold days of November the Francis Holland girls in the Junior School planted single daffodil bulbs in flower pots, caring for them through the winter.

Headmistress Lucy Elphinstone said of the event: 'Daffodils are worn by pupils and staff on our School birthday in memory of our founder, the Canon Francis Holland, who opened the school on 1 March 1881. We can't wait to see the 60,000 bulbs we planted along the Serpentine in Hyde Park come into full bloom. This was part of an initiative involving school children all over London and the Royal Parks Foundation.'

As I visit the school's garden in early spring, I peek inside the flower pots and see green shoots and daffodil buds bursting like rays of sunshine. A young robin perches on the brick wall; the sound of children can be heard: at last, the joys of spring have arrived.

## The word on *the street*

musings by a Belgravian local

It's the 31 of January and I've forgotten to write my auntie a thank you card. It's been 37 days since Christmas and I am on the cusp of the last acceptable day that I could send off this card. My Christmas present to her was an espresso machine; hers to me a set of pencils to a Cambodian child.

My plight: to either invent a plausible excuse for the abominable amount of time it has taken me to thank her or... no, I believe that is my only option.

I pay for my coffee, breaking a twenty because I can't bear to flick the change around in my hand while the waitress bruises my face with a pummelling stare. I needed to find somewhere to by a card.

I spot a taxi. Stepping out to the gutter and extending my arm. It's damn well occupied! The rotten cabbie hadn't put out his light. It stops right bang smack in front of me, as a parked car backs out in front of it. I see the chap in the back and the cabbie staring at me, it's excruciating because my arm is still raised.

I continue to wave and jog absent-mindedly across the road, not even bothering to look to see if I was going to be hit by a car coming the other way, my motive to avoid the impending embarrassment was greater than any care to prevent an injury that could land me in hospital for a month or two.

I return home and prepare myself for the imminent torrent of family accusations, but all that I can think about is the poor Cambodian child with his or her coloured pencils, and no paper.