

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2022



RE-THINKING FOOD WASTE

Camilla Ween describes an innovative local charity

Did you know that in the heart of Battersea there is a project tackling food waste? Several years ago Hadas Hagos, a long-term Battersea resident, was shocked at the mountains of food waste that get sent every day to incineration from New Covent Garden Market. So she took things into her own hands

It started with a home-schooling project for Hadas's daughter and a few local children. The Inside Out school explored science and maths and language through children's desire to learn. The kids would identify issues that they were wondering about and learning was built around their chosen topics. Hadas describes it as a democratic circle, equal and with no hierarchy. Food poverty came up and lessons and activities were devised to explore the subject. A visit to a homeless charity revealed that much food that is thrown away can be eaten. Then, during a visit to New Covent Garden, they saw skips full of food destined to be thrown out. They took away what they could carry and shared the good food they made.

Game-changer

For Hadas this was a game-changer; how to stop this absurd waste spurred her on to create a new project – Waste Not Want Not (WNWN). The idea is to prevent good produce going to waste. She is passionate about waking people up to the issues. New Covent Garden Market sends most of its waste (produce that is close to sell-by date) to incineration or animal feed, but 90% of this is perfectly fit for human consumption.

Hadas collects this surplus produce from the Market and gives it to anyone who is willing to take it. There is no means testing – you don't have to

be poor or homeless; by taking and eating it you are preventing waste. That's the conviction that drives her. What cannot be used is composted locally and distributed to community gardens, and in time she would like this to be a small side-line earner for the project.

Currently WNWN shifts 700 – 1,000kg of fresh food per week; most gets eaten. She sees the enterprise as an environmental project; she is very clear that WNWN is not a food bank or food aid, but a campaign to reduce food waste. But, of course, food poverty is an issue in Battersea; 2,000 households in poverty have been helped by WNWN at some point.

WNWN is a registered charity with hundreds of mostly local volunteers. It is based in the Platform One Café on the north side of Clapham Junction Station. Since 2020 Hadas has held a licence from the Council, but she needs a 5-10 year lease so that she can justify necessary repairs to the property and build a commercial-grade hygienic kitchen. During lockdown she was producing 200 meals a day for homeless people and local residents, but for this to be sustainable she needs a commercial kitchen in the café.

Hadas raised £34,000 to fix up The Venue community centre on the Doddington & Rollo estate, and she believes she can raise funds to improve the Platform One Café, provided they have a secure lease. In my opinion this should be forthcoming from the Council urgently.

Collecting food requires vehicles. Through a fundraiser,



**Above: An array of food saved from waste
Inset: Hadas with the cargo bike**



WNWN has bought an electric van and they have the use of a cargo bike when there are no available drivers for the van.

A long-term aspiration is to deliver regular pick-ups and drop-offs to those who need it. She would also like to establish a partnership with New Covent Garden Market. She hopes one day to be open seven days a week (currently it's three days) to provide evening hot soups and free school meals at half-term and in school holidays. During lockdown she ran a weekly Healthy Eating Café at Providence House for homeless people. WNWN hopes to start inter-generational Healthy Eating classes this summer holiday.

Hadas has many strings to her bow. In 2011 she worked with Spacemax Wandsworth, a community organisation which helps families living in overcrowded homes by providing professional help to upgrade their living spaces.

Hadas describes herself as a pacifist and against traditional conventions and hierarchies; she wants to be an instrument of good in Battersea.

www.wastenotwantnot-battersea.org
Twitter : @WasteNotProject, Instagram: @wastenotwantnot_battersea



Visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

FROM THE EDITOR

Have you ever been out litter-picking? It may not sound like the most glamorous of occupations, but in fact it is meditative and also brings an enjoyably smug sensation of doing something useful.

Most Monday mornings (not too early, around 10) I go litter-picking with The Litterati, a group brought into existence by the enterprising Friends of Wandsworth Common. I collect my picker and my two bags (one for rubbish, one for recycling), put on my gilet jaune – the yellow jacket that identifies us as bona fide pickers – and set off for an area of the common, decided in a vaguely communal fashion with the group co-ordinators. Which will it be? Bellevue Field is a wide open space, easy to see larger items of rubbish but a bit dull. Or the woodland between there and Trinity Road, where in the early days post-lockdown we found numerous dens and camps. These are frowned on by Enable as they risk disturbing nesting birds and ecologically important insects



and bugs. But I felt a certain sympathy for children doing what we used to encourage children to do – be just a little wild, live in nature, do something creative and fun.

Glades

The Scope, on the far side of Trinity Road, offers birdsong in dusky woodland glades, but venturing along narrow paths means tripping over brambles and ploughing through nettles. Near Wandsworth Prison there's an area where eagle-eyed pickers can find impressive caches of beer tins. Sunny weekends yield Coke cans and water or

fizzy drink bottles, though Prosecco and Champagne are less common than in 2020 when post-lockdown celebrations were popular.

It's tempting to be competitive about picking, comparing the number of bottles and cans with those from last week, or even a fellow picker. But the joy of it is the slow walking in our urban countryside, eyes down, concentrating, not thinking of wars or politics or home worries, just on what's in front of you. Mindfulness in action, plus making the common a nicer place for humans and wildlife. And you can combine it with other interests, like bird-watching or tree-admiring or elderflower gathering, not to mention adding to your daily step count.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the famous Battersea Society summer party on 14 July. Hopefully there will be warmth and a glorious sunset as well as good food, wine, music and a chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

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INSPIRING WOMEN OF BATTERSEA

Sue Demont introduces the Battersea Society's latest publication

Battersea Society stalwart Jeanne Rathbone has been on a mission to put Battersea's inspiring women on the map ever since discovering that not one woman in the historic borough had been commemorated by a blue plaque. Between them the London County Council and English Heritage had found 17 men worthy of recognition, but no women.

Jeanne has been campaigning to put that right ever since, and thanks in no small part to her efforts the Battersea Society has acted as a trailblazer by putting up its own blue plaques to commemorate women such as Hilda Hewlett, the first female pilot, Caroline Ganley JP, MP, CBE; and the novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson. Coming up is Wilhelmina Stirling, author and founder of the De Morgan Foundation, who showcased her remarkable art and ceramics collection at Old Battersea House.

The next step was to tell the stories of the women behind the plaques; and with encouragement from the Society's

Heritage Committee Jeanne was persuaded to commit her impressively detailed research to a book, *Inspiring Women of Battersea*, launched on 7 June at Battersea Arts Centre as part of the Wandsworth Heritage Festival. In her foreword the acclaimed journalist and author Zoe Williams captures the spirit of the book with her assertion that 'Nothing will make your heart sing more than the story of Charlotte Despard, whose fearless campaigning spored from one cause to another; universal suffrage, peace, animal rights, socialism.'

Remarkable

This book takes you on a journey through the lives of an extraordinary group of women who at different times lived and worked in Battersea. You'll encounter novelists, political leaders,

artists, a hero of the silver screen, and two real life heroes who rescued Jews from Nazi Germany. Others include the first female civil servant, a 19th century forerunner of women priests and the remarkable Duval family whose matriarch Emily and three of her children were imprisoned for their activities in support of women's suffrage.

Skilfully designed by another Society member, Suzanne Perkins, the book is organised into twelve chapters and is handsomely illustrated with contemporary photographs. The inside back cover folds out to display a walking guide by Karen Horan which encourages the reader to visit the sites associated

with these fascinating women, including in several cases the very homes in which they and their families lived. *Sue Demont, is chair of the Battersea Society's Heritage Committee. To order your copy of Inspiring Women of Battersea for £8.60 inc p&p, visit www.batterseasociety.org.uk/battersea-society-shop*



ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP OF THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY

Michael Jubb and Carol Rahn outline their new role as co-chairs

Since 2018, mainly because of the pandemic, there has been no change in the Society's officers, and little among the body of trustees who make up the Executive Committee. But before the Society's AGM in March, Jenny Sheridan and Sue Demont announced they would retire from their respective posts as chair and secretary of the Society. Jenny remains as a trustee, but Sue has retired from that rôle too, while staying on as chair of the Heritage Committee. Two other trustees – Duncan Parish and Sara Milne – also retired, though Sara remains chair of the Events Committee. At the AGM itself, Jenny Boehm, Mark Hodgkinson and Barbara Simmonds were elected as new trustees to take their place. You can find a full list of trustees and committee members on the website.

Jenny and Sue will be much missed as chair and secretary. Few even

among the trustees were aware of quite how hard they worked over the past five years. At the trustees' meeting in April, Michael Jubb was elected as secretary. But the rôle of chair is for the current year split between two co-chairs, Michael and Carol Rahn. Carol takes responsibility for the trustees' meetings, while Michael takes on – in addition to his work as secretary – the more public-facing roles of the chair: relationships with the Council and with other local organisations, representing the Society at key events, and ensuring that the Society is not only an effective organization, but one that is well-regarded in the community.

Experiment

We cannot be sure precisely how our joint roles will work out in practice over the coming months, but we seem to be operating effectively so far. We know

how closely Jenny and Sue worked together as chair and secretary, so we have good precedents to draw on. But our joint roles remain a short-term experiment.

There will be new trustee elections at the AGM next year. In preparation for that we are reviewing the profile of skills and experience across the trustees, and how rotation of officers and trustees might work for the future. It's very important that the officers and the trustees should properly reflect the membership of the Society, representing their interests as well as ensuring that the Society works to deliver a clear mission, along with achievable aims and objectives. We shall both try our best to achieve that over the coming year.



BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS JULY – NOV 2022

For any event enquiries please contact events@batterseasociety.org.uk

- **Thursday 14 July 6.30-9pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
Battersea Society Summer Party – great food, wine, live music, good company plus stunning river views. £10 entrance, payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door (includes first drink and canapés)
- **Monday 12 September 11am**
Spencer House, 27 St James's Place, London SW1A 1NR
Private tour round Spencer House – an 18th century aristocratic town house, recently restored. £13 per person, payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
- **Thursday 22 September 6.30 for 7pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
Talk by Extinction Rebellion: Heading for Extinction and What to Do About It £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Thursday 6 October 6.30 for 7pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
New Covent Garden – Past, Present and Future by Jo Breare, General Manager of Covent Garden Market Authority £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Monday 11 October at 10am**
Stationers' Hall, Ave Maria Lane, London EC4M7DD
Private tour round Stationers' Hall, a stunning livery hall with magnificent rooms and a secluded garden. £12 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
- **Thursday 20 October 6.30 for 7pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
Chris Orr MBE, RA, artist and printmaker who has exhibited worldwide and published over 400 limited editions of prints £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Thursday 3 November 6.30 for 7pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
Biodiversity in Battersea Parks and Commons by Annabel Osborn, Parks Operations Manager at Enable £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Wednesday 9 November 6pm**
Online talk: Swimming with the tide – the story of Battersea's Lost Baths by local historian Sue Demont Link available at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
- **Thursday 24 November 6.30 for 7pm**
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
The Georgians: How 18th century Britain became a world hub for exploration, invention, literary creativity and contentious trade by historian and author Penelope J Corfield. £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door

CELEBRATING THE JUBILEE, LOOKING FORWARD TO THE OPENING

The Power Station welcomes local communities, says Sarah Banham

It was lovely to watch so many people, including many local familiar faces, join us to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at Battersea Power Station. Over 80,000 visitors came to the new riverside park to take part in the celebrations hosted throughout the bank holiday weekend, which included entertainment from our very own and talented Battersea Power Station Community Choir, among a range of other great bands and performers.

Watching Battersea's Marlene Price represent the local community and light the Power Station's Jubilee beacon alongside the Malaysian High Commissioner, was an incredibly special moment. It was a testament to the commitment of our Malaysian shareholders to the value they place on our local community and neighbourhood. Our community brings a real sense of life and purpose to what was once a deserted wasteland – albeit with a fabulous building at its heart – and it was truly wonderful to see everyone come together to be at the centre of our celebrations.

Bustle

Circus West Village, the first completed chapter of the regeneration of Battersea Power Station which opened in 2017, is just the beginning. For the first time ever, in the autumn of this year, anyone will be able to walk into Battersea Power Station. The sight and sound of construction workers in hard hats will soon be replaced by the bustle of shoppers, day-trippers, tourists, heritage lovers and thrill seekers.

Having worked on the project for nearly sixteen years, it is so exciting to get to the stage where we can finally share with everyone the extraordinary restoration of the Power Station. So much care and attention has been put into bringing this monumental building and its original features back to life, whether its Turbine Hall A's faience, Control Room A's dials or Control Room B's stainless steel. The restoration



Spectacular bubbles were part of the Jubilee fun. Photo Charlie Turner

The employment programme gives local people the opportunity to live closer to their workplace, work in amazing surroundings, with many opportunities for career progression, and in many cases in better paid jobs.

With these jobs also comes opportunities to inspire the next generation, which is another priority for us. Our schools programme uses the Power Station's history to inspire children and young people to think about how they could be part of its future. The school children I spoke to when I first started on the project are now leaving education and embarking on the next stage of their career, and I hope some of them will want to come and work here.

Opportunities

There is still a huge amount of work for us to do in the future. Once the Power Station and Electric Boulevard opens, there is still over 18 acres of the new town centre left to bring forward in the coming years. These plans will offer many more opportunities for our communities as we build on the momentum of the Power Station opening and widen the range of uses in the new town centre. Tackling climate change remains the highest priority and will be at the heart of these plans as we continue to embrace the latest developments in sustainable practice.

For now, if you are one of our many regular visitors to Circus West Village, thank you for your continued support. If you haven't visited Battersea Power Station for a while, I'd love you to come and visit us sometime. We currently have a fun-filled summer programme that offers something for all ages. We then hope you will join us later in the autumn to make history and be one of the first people to walk through the Power Station's doors and to agree that the power is most definitely back on.

Sarah Banham is Head of Community & Sustainability at Battersea Power Station Development Company

process has taken a long time, but we hope the community's consensus is that we have kept our promise and done the building justice.

The Power Station's current architects WilkinsonEyre had a challenging job, paying homage to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's original architecture whilst simultaneously transforming the building into a multitude of new uses. However, by retaining so much of both the fabric and the character of the original building along with the placing of old industrial plant you are constantly reminded that you are indeed inside the great Battersea Power Station.

The building's official opening to the public later in the autumn brings to a close the long-running chapter of the restoration of this iconic landmark, and the start of the next stage of the story. For me this is even more exciting as Battersea Power Station becomes a sixth town centre for Wandsworth and a major place of opportunities for local people. In addition to the Power Station, the first part of the new pedestrianized high street, Electric Boulevard, will open and exciting brands such as high-street favourite, Zara, will open their doors for the first time south of the river.

Local people

With over 100 shops and restaurants opening in the coming year, Battersea Power Station's employment and recruitment team, BASE, are busy working in partnership with the Council's job brokerage Wandsworth Work Match, to put forward local people for the hundreds of vacancies that are currently being advertised.

HIGH ASPIRATIONS, SOUND VALUES, LOW COUNCIL TAX

Simon Hogg, the new Leader of Wandsworth Council, outlines his plans

Wandsworth council changed hands in May for the first time in 44 years. I promise that I and my Labour colleagues will work hard for all local people.

A decent home is the foundation of a good life. Our top priority is making sure all local people have a genuinely affordable place to call home. We will defend the rights of renters, tackle our homelessness crisis, and build the kind of homes that local people really need.

Our first act will be to build 1,000 new council homes – guaranteed for local people and their sons and daughters. We'll make developers build homes which meet the needs of our residents, not overseas investors. We will set an ambitious target of 50% affordable housing on all new developments.

Scandal

No one should be homeless in our society. We will build on the successful 'Everyone In' programme that gave all rough sleepers a safe place to stay during the pandemic. It's a scandal that more than 3,000 children woke up homeless this morning in Wandsworth council temporary accommodation. By expanding our prevention team we will reduce this number for the first time in a decade.

Wandsworth must become more equal. We will pay our workers a living wage and keep council tax low.

Wandsworth must become more sustainable. The next four years will be crucial if we are to meet the climate change emergency. Later this year we will convene a Citizens Assembly so that we are truly all working together towards finding solutions to the climate crisis and the poor air quality that blights our borough.

Our children are our upmost priority and all our policies will have them at the centre. This summer we will provide a comprehensive package of activities that all our young people can enjoy. Targeted support will include free meals for the most vulnerable.

And of course we will do all we can to keep our residents safe, happy and healthy. People's life expectancy should not be determined by where in the borough they live. Our Health Bus will be

travelling the borough providing health tests, inoculations, and information.

You can't live a fulfilled life if you are living in fear. We will take robust action on crime. We will hire more law enforcement officers, increase our CCTV network, double domestic violence support and invest in youth workers. This ambitious package will be paid for from contributions from property developers. We believe in growth and investment – but anyone building in our borough must contribute towards stronger communities.

In Nine Elms, a staggering 85% of the first 800 flats were sold to overseas investors, almost half of them in 'high corruption risk' jurisdictions. Do you know of any local family that has moved into the Battersea Power Station site?

What will Labour change? Well, to deliver results, our planning system has to be transparent and honest and listen to the voices of local people. All Planning Applications Committee meetings will be broadcast live online. Deals made with developers should be public and uncensored. We'll create a new Town Hall team to enforce agreements with property developers.

We will keep your Council Tax low for the long term by making the council's assets work harder. We'll open up the books, cancel wasteful contracts and spend every pound of your money wisely.

I'm delighted to have a principled and experienced team of councillors

who truly represent our community in Wandsworth. A century ago, Battersea gave Britain people such as John Archer, London's first black mayor, John Burns who rose from the slums to become a Cabinet member and Charlotte Despard, suffragette and peace campaigner. A group of outsiders, who our community had welcomed, absorbed – and in the end chose to elevate and celebrate.

Not to forget local boy Sadiq Khan, our Mayor of London. Sadiq, who grew up on the Henry Prince estate in Earlsfield, started his political career serving 12 years as a Wandsworth councillor, followed by 11 years as Tooting's MP. His service as Mayor is important. There are children growing up on council estates – in Wandsworth and across Britain – who may feel like outsiders, because of where they come from. A child being called names because they look different and their parents don't have as much money as some other families at school. But now that child will know the Mayor of London has been in their shoes. And that in Wandsworth there's no ceiling for achievement for anyone.

I look forward to working closely with the Battersea Society and I'm grateful for the excellent work you do for the benefit of local people. Please do get in touch with your ideas for making our area an even better place to live.

Cllr Simon Hogg



The Barbara Hepworth sculpture normally sited beside the lake in Battersea Park is currently on display in Amsterdam (BM spring 2022). During its absence groups of students from the Royal College of Art will show their sculptures, which respond in some way to the Hepworth. Each will be shown for approximately four weeks.

The picture shows the Locuscope during its residence in June. The current sculpture (no photograph yet available) is titled *The Visible Invisible*.

THE LOST BATHS OF BATTERSEA

Sue Demont dives into the history of the Nine Elms and Latchmere baths

The 19th century saw many districts of London, including Battersea, transformed by industrialisation, which led to thousands of families living in filthy conditions. In partial recognition of this, the Public Baths and Washhouses Act was passed in 1846, enabling local authorities to appoint commissioners to establish baths and washhouses for public use. It was three decades before the Battersea Vestry voted to adopt the Act, spurred on by the appalling living conditions in industrial north Battersea. Enlightened Vestry members were keen to provide washing facilities for Battersea's hard-pressed working classes but had to overcome prolonged opposition from various ratepayers' groups who disdained the idea that 'their' money should be spent on the poor.

Striking

Eventually a site was identified on the site of the Latchmere allotments and plans were approved. The baths were to be built by the Holloway Brothers of Queen's (now Queenstown) Road and the scheme comprised a suite of male and female individual slipper baths and a first- and second-class swimming baths behind a striking Queen Anne style entrance block. In 1889 the Latchmere Baths opened with a grand ceremony featuring the 'Empress of the Sea' Miss Ada Webb, who gave a swimming and diving exhibition which she had previously performed for an audience of 18,000 at the Alexandra Palace.

The Latchmere Baths had to be extended as numbers grew. The original assumption that providing timed slots for 'ladies' bathing' would be adequate soon proved false, with so many women and girls turning up that a bespoke ladies' pool had to be opened in 1904, constructed on the amphitheatre model for onlookers to be close to the action in the pool. Two years later a laundry block was built by the Vestry's successor, Battersea Borough Council, as one of the first projects assigned to its newly established Works Department.



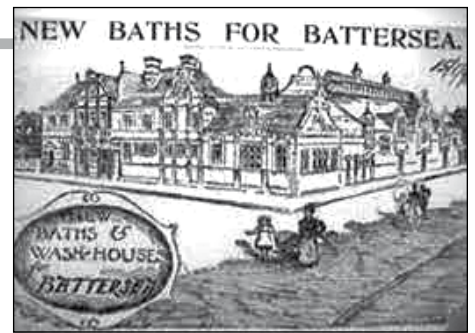
Miss Ada Webb, shown on a cigarette card

There were a few teething troubles. A proposed mixed bathing club was approved by the Baths Committee only to be overturned by the full Council after an apparently 'amusing' discussion. An experienced swimming 'instructress' was so incensed by the Baths Committee's questioning of her abilities and motives for working that she resigned in disgust at the behaviour of 'such a Committee of men' and went to work for Wandsworth instead. And the slipper bath rules from the 1900s suggest that the behaviour of bathers was far from perfect, evidenced by a lengthy list requiring users to refrain from trampling on or 'unnecessarily dirtying' the towels and threatening with prosecution those who 'wilfully' rang the bells.

But overall the Latchmere Baths were a resounding success, with tens of thousands of local school children learning to swim there over the decades. One early star pupil was Patrick Stitchener, who not only won several prizes but also put his skills into practice by rescuing three men and a boy from drowning in the Thames, earning him a citation from the Royal Humane Society.

So effective were the Latchmere Baths that a clamour began almost immediately for a similar provision at Nine Elms, the poorest and dirtiest district in Battersea. The Ratepayers were once again aggrieved but proved no match for the local Progressives led by John Burns MP, who laid the foundation stone on the corner of Cringle Street/ Battersea Park Road; as the son of a washerwoman he was acutely aware of the need for these facilities.

Civic competitiveness between London boroughs was at its height in the Edwardian era and Nine Elms Baths reflected this, costing an eye-watering £56,000 (c£7 million today). Unlike the initially modest Latchmere Baths, the new development was ambitious from the start, boasting over 50 wash house compartments, a fully equipped laundry, a reading room and even a creche to enable mothers to use the facilities. The crowning glory was



Opening of Latchmere Baths in 1889, swimmers in 1935

an astonishing 150-foot-long swimming pool, the largest indoor bath in the country. When covered over during the winter the space could accommodate 1,500 people.

Unsurprisingly the cost of this Renaissance style building, of red brick dressed with Portland stone, was much criticised. The Daily Mail weighed in, aghast at the amount of money being spent on 'magnificent baths' in such an impoverished area. But the Battersea Vestrymen who had commissioned the scheme were unrepentant, citing the findings of their local sanitary inspector that only one home in the whole of Nine Elms had a bath, and that swimming baths were urgently needed due to the number of children who had drowned in the Thames.

Both Nine Elms and Latchmere Baths flourished throughout the inter-war years, when despite the Depression the Council continued to invest in improvements, such as a new filtration plant at Latchmere and new roof glazing at Nine Elms. Unemployed workers were allowed free use of the slipper baths and swimming pools.

Evacuation

But things began to look different after the Second World War, particularly at Nine Elms where heavy bomb damage had forced the evacuation of entire streets, significantly reducing the population. In 1956 the viewing balconies were demolished due to structural problems, and in 1970 the Nine Elms Baths were closed and pulled down.

Latchmere's situation was rather different, with the pools still being used by dozens of schools and swimming clubs when the Council first proposed to redevelop the site as a modern-day leisure centre. The planned demolition of the Victorian baths, which were still

in good condition, caused an outcry and a vigorous campaign, remembered by some Battersea Society members, succeeded in delaying the plans for a while. The baths were eventually destroyed in 1980 and replaced by today's Latchmere Leisure Centre. A

pamphlet produced for the campaign by the local Trades & Labour Council noted that the original Latchmere Baths played an important role in the recreational, social and political life of Battersea.

Sue Demont is the chair of Battersea Society's heritage committee.

FORGET YOUR TROUBLES AND DANCE!

Ballet-lover Viv Redhead visits the Royal Academy of Dance on York Road

The Royal Academy of Dance is one of the most influential dance education and training organisations in the world. But it is also rooted in Battersea, and it wants to engage with its local community.

Nationally, it has over 1,000 students studying RAD teacher training programmes and globally thousands of pupils study its syllabus and take its exams. In Battersea it has moved from Battersea Square to much larger premises housed in the ground and first floor of the new Coda Building on York Road, near the end of Plough Road.

As a first instance of local engagement, RAD held an open day on 8 May. Free taster sessions and activities were available to all comers as well as scavenger hunts and film screenings. Youngsters were offered various dance styles - hip hop, Afro dance and drumming. For people over 55 there were Pilates and jazz inspired classes.

For the first time ever, an open RAD audition took place in front of a panel of professional dancers, including their president, Dame Darcey Bussell. Three local budding young dancers were awarded free dance tuition at RAD for a year, including uniform. This is part of the ongoing commitment to increase accessibility to dance and to strengthen local ties.

Another community initiative was an art competition for Wandsworth primary schools. Pupils were asked to submit artwork inspired by 'how dance makes you feel'. The winner was Richard, aged eight, from Alderbrook Primary, who presented his work to the Duchess of Cornwall during her visit in March.

The new building gives RAD a great opportunity to display some of the objects and images from their collection of over 75,000 artefacts, books,

programmes and costumes. There will be a charge for using the archive, with a reduction for local people. Currently a large number of items are on show at the V&A's free On Point exhibition which celebrates RAD's centenary. This closes on 29 August, after which some of the items will be displayed in the new building's huge foyer.

Mirrors

All ceilings in the building are high and a special air flow ensures an environmentally sound cooling and heating system. Mirrors abound and there is a wonderful sense of light and space, especially in comparison to the Battersea Square site. The foyer/reception

area includes a large shop and is also adaptable for events and displays. This was admirably used on the opening night of the Wandsworth Arts Fringe

on 10 June. A balmy sunny evening saw a wonderful cavalcade along the Thames with young percussionists, poets, soul singers and flamenco dancers in renditions of 'Down by the riverside' with a finale inside the RAD building. The power of dance was illustrated by flamenco dancers performing in the 193-seat studio theatre. It is intended that the theatre will be used by external performers in due course.

RAD is not only for ballet. They wish to reach more and more people through the transformational power of dance. As well as improving their

own fitness by taking classes, I hope members will encourage any children or grandchildren to experience the joy of dance. For teenagers into street dancing there is a great video on www.royalacademyofdance.org

They offer an extensive dance programme for children and adults, with ages ranging from three to 93, and opportunities for all abilities. Silver Swan classes for those over 55 are fully booked until August but there may be availability for children, such as Dance to your Own Tune for three-four year-olds. These are lively but structured dance classes which develop kids' physical skills and encourage them to move with control, coordination and confidence and help an appreciation of music. For older children there are commercial jazz dance classes. RADiate will offer dance sessions for children with special needs. There are dedicated boys' classes led by a male teacher and designed to break

down negative stereotypes.

For adults, as well as the Silver Swan classes there is contemporary dance combined with yoga and a Move to the Musicals summer workshop in August.

There is no parking available at the York Road site but the 295, 44 and C3 buses stop nearby and it's not far from Clapham Junction. There is a light and airy café that will open to the public in August: another example of the RAD including the local population. They are determined to show that dance does not have to be elitist, as is often perceived. It can be for one and all. As John Dryden said in the 17th century, 'Dancing is the poetry of the foot'. Or Bob Marley: 'Forget your troubles and dance!'

Viv Redhead is a member of the Battersea Society's heritage committee.



GREAT BUS JOURNEYS NO 33

Mike Roden takes the long ride from Waterloo on the 76 to Tottenham via Ermine Street



The 76 bus from Waterloo Road to Tottenham attracted me because it takes in bits of London never before included in any Great Bus Journey (GBJ). So here we go, past the BFI Imax building with its huge screen. At the end of July the BFI will resume management from Odeon Cinemas who have run it since 2012.

At the end of Waterloo Bridge the bus turns onto the Strand towards Aldwych. This section of the trip has formed part of many GBJs so I'll sit back for a while. We enter the City of London on Fleet Street, passing the pedestal topped by a dragon, symbol of London since the 1300s. Temple Bar once stood here – a physical barrier regulating trade with the City. The baroque arched gateway which filled the gap from the 1700s until 1880 was re-erected in Paternoster Square in 2004.

The heart of the newspaper industry has long since stopped beating here, though every street name seems to echo reporters bellowing 'Hold the Front Page!' Just one example: Bouverie Street was the home of the *News Chronicle* which closed in 1960. The *News of the World* was here too, until Wapping claimed it in the mid-1980s.

From the twelfth century the massive Carmelite Whitefriars Priory stood here. Remains of its crypt were discovered in 1895, and restored in the 1920s when the *News of the World* developed their offices. Later the ruins were moved but apparently there's a window in the basement of 65 Fleet Street from which they can be viewed.

No time for St Paul's Cathedral today as we turn onto New Change and head on past St Paul's tube station. On King Edward Street we encounter one of London's hidden gems – Postman's Park. Opened in 1880 this contains

a memorial with 54 plaques, each dedicated to an 'ordinary' person who gave their life in an attempt to save someone else. It was the brainchild of eccentric artist G F Watts who took the view that 'The material prosperity of a nation is not an abiding possession: the deeds of its people are.'

He originally planned for 120 plaques. The most recent was added in 2009; it honours Leigh Pitt from Thamesmead who drowned after rescuing a small boy from a canal. So there are still 66 places to go. Feel free to make a nomination.

Just beyond the park we pass St Bartholomew's Hospital. No space here for its fascinating history though I can't resist reminding you that a laboratory here was where – as recounted in *A Study in Scarlet* – Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson first met.

Memorial

At Moorgate tube station on 28 February 1975, 43 people were killed and 74 seriously injured when a southbound Northern City Line train crashed into the end of the dead-end tunnel beyond the platform. The accident is probably the worst ever on the underground network. We're passing Finsbury Square now where you'll find a memorial to those who died. On City Road we pass Bunhill Fields, a Nonconformist burial ground dating from the 1660s. It's the final resting place of John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake, along with many other leading intellectuals and radicals. It closed in 1853.

After the slow grind round the City Road roundabout we find ourself on New Road, passing Shoreditch Park before turning right onto Baring Street alongside the Regents Canal. Streets of terraced housing were created for canal

workers and their families. Wartime bombing devastated much of the area and in 1945 the bomb damaged homes were cleared and prefabs were erected to house the many families made homeless. This temporary solution lasted for nearly 20 years before the prefabs were finally condemned. The site was redeveloped between 1964 and 1973.

The bus heads north on Southgate Road past Rosemary Gardens, a much needed green space for playgrounds and a sports area. This area is known as De Beavoir, after the family who sold this land for development in the 1820s. The housing here is more established, with a rather gentrified feel. Locals refer to this area as Beavertown, which craft beer fans will recognise as the brewery which produces Neck Oil. The Beavertown Brewery was founded in 2011 by Logan Plant, son of Robert, the voice of Led Zeppelin.

Soon the bus arrives at the busy A10. This follows Ermine Street, the Roman road that ran from Bishopsgate to the legionary strongholds of Lincoln and York. Here it's called Kingsland Road and though it changes its name a few times, this is our route for the rest of this trip.

Turkish

We're in Dalston – one of the villages which eventually formed Hackney Parish. With the arrival of the railways the farms and fields disappeared and it merged into the ever-expanding city. The much-hyped café-cocktail bar vibe which characterises this part of London is missing at this time of day. I pass so many Turkish eateries and Caribbean shops I give up taking notes. Just to give you a flavour, I spot The Rocksteady 'a venue for people who want a good time

Left to right: The former Daily Express building, Fleet Street; a plaque in Postmans' Park; John Bunyan's tomb, Bunhill Fields; Turkish restaurant, Dalston; interior of the Rio cinema

Note: All of the Great Bus Journeys have been cleverly extracted from *Battersea Matters* and can be downloaded from www.batterseabus.co.uk



with good people', or Stunt Dolly – an ethical hair salon, 'vegan, cruelty free, organic, gender neutral, sustainable'. Pizzerias rub shoulders with halal butchers.

At the junction with Balls Pond Road and Dalston Lane we pass Dalston junction station and the A10 becomes Kingsland High Street. This stretch is slightly more downmarket, with a couple of betting shops and a pawnbrokers. But opposite that establishment is a promising, though shuttered, site. The sign above the shop reads F Cooke Live Eel Importer. A local history site tells me it was a traditional pie and mash shop, established in 1862. Now it's a branch of Draughts, the board game café. Very Dalston

It's the same mixture as before until the bus stops at the popular Rio Cinema. In 1909 this was an auctioneer's shop which the enterprising Clara Ludski purchased and turned into the Kingsland Palace cinema. After buying up neighbouring properties Clara was able to open the Kingsland Empire in 1915. It's now a registered charity and as part of its recent refurbishment the new basement bar was named the Ludski in honour of the cinema's founder.

The A10 transforms itself into Stoke Newington High Street. One thing I haven't seen much of on this stretch of the trip is pubs. And here is the White Hart. Its exterior is late Victorian but there has been a pub here since at least 1625.

Carrying on through endless small shops and cafes it dawns on me that although the occupiers are different there would have been just as many small businesses here in the 1890s as now. Our own Battersea High Street, now almost entirely residential, was lined with shops a century ago

One business which is largely absent from most local high streets these days is the bookshop. But not here in Stoke Newington. The bus stops nearby so I can glance at a clearly thriving business. This 'proudly independent and award winning' bookshop has been here since 1987.

And there's another pub – the Coach and Horses which dates back to the 1700's. Its major claim to notoriety is that it was one of the hangouts of the Kray twins and their gang.

Wilderness

Leafy relief from the endless built up area comes with Abney Park Cemetery. Some time ago we passed Bunhill Fields, which like all inner London cemeteries was fated to close eventually. To provide an alternative a group of City nonconformists bought this site which opened in 1840. Anyone could be buried here regardless of their religion and it quickly became the main Dissenters' burial ground. It was originally laid out as an arboretum and after 1970 when the cemetery company went bust and the place was abandoned it became a wilderness haven for wild life. It's now owned by Hackney and managed in partnership with the Abney Park Trust.

The bus heads up a gentle hill through a mainly residential area. In the 1200s this was Sandford Hill, where a sandy ford crossed a tributary of the river Lea. Now known as Stamford Hill, in the late eighteenth century it attracted wealthy merchants, notably Moses Vita Montefiore, an Italian Jew who died here in 1789.

From the early twentieth century the Jewish population increased, as people moved from the East End. It has a large, fast growing population of

ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jews now usually known as 'Haredi'. They have their own schools, places of worship and kosher food shops. The men wear frock coats and black hats and it is the sole British Jewish group still to speak Yiddish. Their desire to stay completely separate and administer their own laws and justice has caused some friction with the local authority and the police – especially when the community chose to ignore all lockdown restrictions.

We're now on the edges of Tottenham with a mixture of everything from late Victorian terraces to thirties semis and post-war flat developments. Tottenham is generally thought to refer to Tota, a farmer, whose hamlet was mentioned in the Domesday Book. 'Tota's hamlet' over time became 'Tottenham'.

At the junction with Seven Sisters road we pass the overground and tube station of the same name. Apparently the name derives from a circle of seven elms planted in the seventeenth century with an ancient walnut tree at their centre.

There's an open feel here to what has become a very wide road. Like most London villages, Tottenham's rural nature vanished with the advent of the railway and mass development of housing for the lower-middle and working classes. The bus is now passing through the main street of a bustling small town which sums up everything we've seen on this trip. Since the mid-twentieth century Tottenham has become one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Britain and as in Dalston and Stoke Newington it shows in the huge ethnic range of shops and eateries.

A calm leafy green space appears: Tottenham Green was laid out as a park in the early 1900s. The war memorial contains 499 names of those who died in two world wars.

The elegant Edwardian baroque town hall was placed on English Heritage's 'at risk' register in the early 2000s but with careful restoration the building has been transformed into an attractive and useful venue for the local community.

And that's almost it. A few minutes later the bus finally leaves Ermine Street and turns down Monument Way towards the bus station. I work out that the quickest way home is to take the 76 to Seven Sisters station and return to Victoria and the trusty 170 which will drop me outside my door.

ROBERT MOLTENEO 1943 – 2022

Greg Lanning remembers
an influential campaigner for
pedestrians in London

On an usually crisp, sunny February day over 150 people gathered at the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park and set off to walk along the Thames path to St Mary's Church. They walked in small groups, discovering old friends, meeting new people. Many had travelled across the country to join the walk, some from further - Paris, Geneva, Copenhagen, Cape Town. They had gathered to celebrate the life of Robert Molteno, following the route of one of his favourite early morning walks. At St Mary's scores of others were waiting for them; by the time the memorial event began there were over 250 people.

Along one side of the church was a washing line strung with photographs, and people were invited to contribute cards with their memories of Robert. One of them said, 'Look at this crowd. How did you touch so many of us, each feeling 'special' to be among your friends?'

Many of those friends were local, for Robert had lived in Battersea for 45 years. Despite his demanding job as editorial director of an academic publisher, he consistently made time to be active on local issues. He was on the PTA of his children's school (usually making the tea), and a parent governor (refusing to stand for chair of governors of a girls school, saying it should be a woman.) He founded and chaired the Wandsworth Association of School Parents to campaign to save Inner London Education Authority from abolition. He was a volunteer for the Battersea Labour Party at election times, initiated local environmental campaigns for Friends of the Earth, was an active member of the Battersea Society, and co-founded Wandsworth Living Streets. In each of these were people whom he had personally recruited, who were drawn in by his warmth, enthusiasm and infectious humour, and who admired him for his incisive intelligence and his commitment.

Robert was driven by the belief that 'We live in this world to enjoy it; to understand it; and to make it a better place for all of us.' He worked tirelessly

to do this throughout his life, in three countries. Born on 11 January 1943, he came from a notable Cape Town family which included the first premier of the Cape Colony and an MP and human rights lawyer.

At the University of Cape Town Robert was active in the strongly anti-apartheid National Union of Students, and at 19 was a member of its national executive. There he met and in 1966 married fellow student Marion Marquard. They left South Africa to study in the UK, and after he had completed an MSc in Political Science at Manchester University they moved to Zambia in 1968. As a lecturer in politics and public administration at the University of Zambia he created new courses and materials desperately needed in the newly independent Zambia.

Imprisoned

His time in Zambia came to an abrupt end in 1976. When student demonstrators protested against Zambian government policy in Angola, President Kenneth Kaunda closed the university and detained some 30 students. Robert enlisted 72 staff members to sign a petition in their defence. Unimpressed, the government arrested Robert and five other lecturers on spurious charges. He was interrogated, and then held in solitary detention in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison for two months, before being deported to the UK.

After this traumatic experience the family settled in Battersea, and Robert was invited to join the newly established independent publisher, Zed Books. Over the 27 years that he was Zed's editorial director, he and his colleagues built it into the pre-eminent radical academic publisher concerned with Third World issues. His editorial policy was to seek out 'social campaigners and engaged intellectuals who, against enormous odds struggle to make their countries more democratic, more confident, and independent, less poor, and with hope and strategies for a better future.' He commissioned over 1,000 books, always with Zed's distinctive radical critical ideas from a Global South perspective. It became one of the most innovative publishers in the world.

Throughout this time, the network of friendships and contacts he had developed through his involvement in local education campaigns had inspired



him with the potential of community action. When he retired, concerned by the dangers of climate change, he looked for ways to engage local people in reducing the dominance of cars, and thus the level of carbon emissions. In 2010 he and Susie Morrow set up Wandsworth Living Streets to press for safer and more user-friendly streets. Over the next decade he recruited a growing group of volunteer activists. He built public support, organised petitions, talked to teachers and parents at school gates, and tirelessly lobbied councillors, road engineers and transport planners.

These efforts contributed to a significant shift in Wandsworth Council's policies. In 2020 it began trials of School Street closures, and in 2021 it expanded the scheme, and introduced a blanket 20 mph limit across all residential roads.

His influence extended well beyond Wandsworth. In 2016 he co-founded a London-wide Living Streets group to strengthen the pro-pedestrian movement across the capital. The group pressed the Greater London Authority and TfL to improve pedestrian crossings across London. In addition to his persistent, detailed engagement with the engineers and planners, Robert organised teams of volunteers to interview 4,000 people at 45 sites around London. In 2019 TfL reviewed over 600 traffic signals to make the crossing times safer and to save people thousands of waiting hours.

The national Living Streets website summed up Robert's contribution:

'If you press a button on a crossing in London and you don't have to wait as long as you used to ... that is Robert. If you walk along a street in Wandsworth and see 20mph signs and traffic sticking to it...that is Robert. If you benefit from a school street in your area to encourage and support families

to walk to school and reduce traffic at the school gates ... that is Robert.

In short, he is alive in the changes he made in our streets.'

In the view of Will Norman, GLA Commissioner for Walking and Cycling

'There is no doubt London is a better and safer place thanks to Robert Molteno.'

Robert died suddenly on 31 January 2022, at the end of his morning walk along the Thames. He is survived by his

wife, the prize-winning novelist Marion Molteno, his daughters, May and Star, six grandchildren, his brother Frank; and many friends.

You can see a fuller obituary on the website of Wandsworth Living Streets.

PLANNING MATTERS: A NEW COUNCIL TAKES THE REINS

Monica Tross stresses the need for affordable family housing

As you all know, this May a new Labour administration took over from the Conservatives and following this the proposed ward changes came into effect. In the short term this has resulted in the planning committee team having to get to grips with the changed geography and, for the time being, a slowdown in the Council's weekly lists of applications and decisions appearing on their website. Overall there has been a reduction in the number of smaller applications made, although the number of 'non-material amendments' coming forward for approved schemes doesn't diminish.

The big changes will take time to become clear and as a first step we have written to the new Leader, Councillor Simon Hogg and the new Chair of the Planning Applications Committee (PAC), Councillor Tony Belton, to ask for a meeting so we can discuss – and we hope influence – emerging planning policy. In that letter we asked for their views on the way in which the Nine Elms and Battersea Opportunity Area has developed and if there is scope for any changes to be made. We hope to hear if there are policy changes likely in relation to the Local Plan and stressed the need for housing to remain a priority, not least affordable family housing.

On a more day-to-day note we will discuss ways in which the Community Planning Forum and the Wandsworth Conservation Areas (Advisory) Committee can be more effective both for ourselves and for councillors and officers. In strategic terms we emphasised our concern at the growing number of applications made – and approved – for co-living apartments and for student housing. These are usually at the expense of family housing and

further exacerbate the way Battersea is becoming home to an essentially transient population.

Members of the PAC from Battersea wards include three new councillors, Jamie Colclough from St. Mary's, Mathew Corner from Nine Elms and Emmeline Owens from Northcote. Plus Councillor Belton from Battersea Park, a stalwart of the PAC over many years.

We are pleased to see that Councillor Govindia has decided to join the PAC. Many years ago, before he became Leader, he was chair of the PAC and former members of the Society's Planning Committee found him approachable and engaged with their concerns. Not that then or now we necessarily agreed with the decisions taken – something we suspect is unlikely to change in the future.

We will keep you in touch.

BUS ROUTE PROPOSALS

Interest in TfL's proposals for major changes to routes in Central London has been so high that the consultation period has been extended, now closing on August 7. You will find the proposals at tfl.gov.uk/busreview. Our analysis of the changes is on the Society's website and our formal response to TfL will be there too in due course. I am sure views on the overall proposals will be mixed but on balance they seem well thought through. No date for implementation has been given but it seems unlikely that changes will be made before 2023. We will keep you informed.

The good news is that there is no proposal to move the start and finish of the 19 route back north of the river, although there are some changes to the route. Perhaps TfL learnt from the response to the earlier consultation which included major changes to the 19

which we and many others resisted. (As ever, success has many parents, failure is an orphan but I am confident that it was the Society's efforts which led to the retention of the 19).

PLANNING UPDATES

Mostly bad news here. Egregious plans for 3 Culvert Road (2021/5013) have been approved and the revised plans for the Booker site, 2022/1835 are for much taller buildings with mostly student accommodation rather than family housing. At the time of writing, plans for the Dominvs hotels in Nine Elms (2021/4900) are recommended for approval. Plans for Thomas's School, 2022/0358, were approved despite considerable concerns by ourselves and others about the travel plans. And an increase of the number of 1-bedroom flats from 36 to 82 for 100 York Road was approved at the expense of larger units (2022/0249).

I will end on happier news. An application to demolish the Cottage in Rosenau Crescent (2021/5439) has been withdrawn and our application for 7 Alexandra Avenue to be listed has been successful (see more details on our website). An application to restrict access to the river at Battersea Reach (2021/5234) is recommended for approval. Check out the minutes for the PAC on 28 June on WBC's website to see what happened to this and the Dominvs application. *Feedback appreciated. We always like to hear from our members. Get in touch with your concerns, queries – or even criticisms, at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk*



Cllr Simon Hogg and Marsha de Cordova MP with the Jubilee beacon in Battersea Park

GOING AGAINST THE CURVE

Janet Bonthron enjoys a game of bowls on Wandsworth Common

If the verdant swards at Lords and Wimbledon's immaculate grass have left you yearning for some pristine turf, why not grab the opportunity now to revel in the ultimate summertime lawn activity – lawn bowling?

This traditional sport is played on a square grass green, divided into six lanes, known as 'rinks', each around five metres wide. Standing on a mat, each player in turn rolls ('delivers') their bowl, within the rink, from one end to the other of the lawn. Players have two, three or four bowls each, depending on how many people are playing. An 'end' is the term for once everyone playing has delivered their bowls and you've all moved to the opposite side of the green. The objective of the game is to get your bowls closer to the 'jack' – a small white ball placed in the rink – than your opponent's.

Hazard

Rolling a bowl requires a relatively natural physical movement, which sounds easy enough. However, the catch is that the dratted thing doesn't go straight, because of the 'bias', the way the bowl is cut when it's made, so that it curves either left or right when rolled. With opportunities to end up in the ditch at the end of the rink or to get knocked out of place by an opponent's bowl, these hazards make it a satisfyingly challenging and tactical game for both beginners and experienced players. The rules are simple – you get a point for any of your bowls that are nearer the jack than any of your opponent's bowls.

When we played, as beginners, determining which way the bowl was going to curve was a challenge, particularly as we were playing with hired bowls. Supposedly, they are marked with a sticker or small circle on one side that indicates which way it will curve, but we struggled to work it out!

Legend has it that Francis Drake was playing bowls when he was told about the advancing Spanish Armada but chose to finish his game before mounting his defence: evidence of how

compulsive it can be to play. Basically, it's a very do-able game that can be played by anyone and can last from one to three or four hours depending on how many are playing. It doesn't demand huge physical skill or effort, but does get you out in the fresh air doing some exercise.

Although sometimes regarded as an old person's sport, in fact it is a fun game to play with young and old alike, making it a great game to play with your friends or family. Age and gender have little influence, and it is generally very sociable, with the occasion to chat to players in the adjacent rinks and to have drink or cup of tea at the end of play. Many bowls clubs offer a free taster session. It doesn't require lots of expensive gear or kit to play – if you get the bug, a set of bowls and joining a club can set you back around £250. You must wear soft soled shoes on the green.

Lawn bowls features in the Commonwealth Games, England currently being second on the all-time medal table, behind Scotland. Bowls England, the national organisation, has announced several increased participation initiatives, scheduled to tie-in with the 2022 Games starting at the end of July in Birmingham. Watch this space <https://www.bowlsengland.com>

There used to be several places to play in Battersea but sadly the green in Battersea Park is now used as an event space and is not running bowls games. Likewise, the green on Clapham Common by Clapham South tube is closed to play and is an overgrown travesty of the manicured lawn and rose garden it used to be.

Social

Happily, on Wandsworth Common, next to the Skylark Café, the All Star Bowls Club has been set up as a joint initiative with The Friends of Wandsworth



Common. You can play on the bowling green there regularly or join a social session over the summer. These started in May and run every Sunday 3 – 5pm, priced £5, or £40 for season pass. Outside these sessions lane hire is £8 per person. Contact 020 8871 4706 or visit the website here.

For those who want to get more into it, joining a local bowls club is a good idea. They will welcome new members and will offer matches, coaching, competition leagues, and social events. As with many community clubs there will doubtless be opportunities to volunteer for committee positions too.

Apart from the All Star Bowls Club on Wandsworth Common, you will have to go outside Battersea for a local club, the following are all in Wandsworth:

South London Bowling Club (Lyford Road). A 120-year-old club, with £130 annual subscription and matches most Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Contact website.

Heathfield Bowls Club (Sandygate Road). Annual subscription £120, social bowls and matches. Contact website

Magdalen Park Bowls Club (Magdalen Road) Offering first year membership free. Contact Sharon Wilson (07957 657220) or via Facebook.

MADE IN BATTERSEA

The only brown child on the block: Esua Jane Goldsmith tells her story

Growing up in 1950s Battersea on the Shaftesbury Park Estate, I did all the things the other kids did in what was then a working-class neighbourhood. Saturday morning pictures at the Granada on St John's Hill, Brownie parades at the Town Hall on Lavender Hill, reading Janet and John at Shaftesbury Park school, looking for shrapnel on the bomb site, and riding my scooter up the road to visit my cousins. My Nan took me to see Father Christmas at Arding and Hobbs - although I never met my real father until years later.

In truth, I was having a very different experience from my peers. The mixed-race daughter of a white, single teenage mum, I spent the first six weeks of my life in an unmarried mothers' home. My mother possessed extraordinary strength and determination to keep me, despite the pressures on young women in those days to have their 'illegitimate' children adopted. Eventually we came home to live with my extended family in my grandparents' house.

One-off

As the only brown kid on the block, I had my fair share of challenges. I was an 'only-one.' 'Onliness' is not just loneliness. It's a feeling of being visibly and existentially a one-off. There were no role models, books or stories at home or in school that reflected my experience or the way I looked, to give me a sense of my history or who or what I could become. I got racist comments in the street and in the playground - woggy, blackie, darkie, coon, golliwog, and who's-been-rolling-in-dogs'-muck, but there was no-one I could talk to about it.

In Brixton, just a few miles away, the Windrush generation had been putting down roots, but as a small child I rarely saw another black or brown face. Communities were tightly-knit; people worked, shopped, and socialised and went to school locally with family and neighbours. It was very different from the multicultural Battersea we

know today. I was loved, that's for sure, but there is a difference between being loved and feeling you belong.

From early on, I knew I was different. At the age of four, I first came across another little black girl around my age, walking on Clapham Common with her family. It was a revelation - there were other kids who looked like me in the world, and they came in whole families!

In my late teens, my grandad told me about John Archer, born to a Caribbean father and Irish mother, and elected the first black mayor in London in 1913. Grandad met Archer frequently at Socialist meetings at the Town Hall. In those days Battersea was a hub of left-wing activism, and my family was no exception. Grandad was a Communist Party and trades union activist, Uncle George used to drive the local suffragettes to meetings in Hyde Park Corner in his lorry and Mum became an early feminist. In his election speech Archer proclaimed, 'You have made history tonight. Battersea has done many things in the past, but the greatest thing it has done is to show that it has no racial prejudice, and that it recognises a man for the work he has done.'

But forty years later I was still encountering racial abuse on the streets of Battersea. Nevertheless, as a young woman with an emerging political consciousness and a hunger to work out my identity, Archer was the role model I was looking for. A mixed-race man who looked like me, and dedicated his life to all the things I believed in. That set me on my activist path for life.

I was thrilled to be invited to speak at the Battersea Society meeting at Saint Mary's Church in March this year, bringing back so many personal memories. Aged



13, I was my cousin's bridesmaid in that church; and my grandad worked as a bricklayer at Morgan's Crucible Company in Church Road, spending his weekends in the Fox and Hounds where my aunt and uncle were landlords.

From my Battersea childhood, I moved to different parts of the country and different parts of the world. But in all my adventures as an adult, the 'onliness' stayed with me; a feeling that I was looking for something I couldn't quite explain, something just out of reach.

Complex

Being mixed-race shaped people's expectations and perceptions of me in different ways, from 'I don't see colour' to 'what are you and where do you come from?' It shaped my understanding of the world, and affected my ability to form relationships and friendships. It wasn't until I finally met my dad in Ghana, in my late 30s, that I began to create a complex picture of who I am. Recently, connecting with other mixed-race people has helped me weave together my multi-layered identities into a whole self. It's a life's work.

I was made in Battersea. I learned to become a citizen of the world.

Esua is a British-Ghanaian feminist author, campaigner and facilitator, and director and founder of Anona Development Consultancy
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JOAN BRITTAIN 1928 – 2015

Richard Brittain describes the life of his late mother

My late mother Joan Brittain was a member of the Battersea Society for over a quarter of a century. She lived in London SW11 for more than twice that long, in fact since the late 1950s when she moved here from Chelsea with my late father when I was born and they needed a larger residence. She came to appreciate the culture and history of Battersea and became a devoted advocate of its interests and well-being. Her life-long passions included: nursery education, the arts, the environment (both natural and built) and her social circle. Her first home in SW11 was in Park Mansions in Prince of Wales Drive. She also lived in Albert Bridge Road and finally in Bridge Lane where she ran the famous Bridge Lane Montessori Nursery school for several decades, and where she later passed away.

Joan originally hailed from South Wales. She was proud of her Welsh heritage but her teenage years there were profoundly marred by the isolation necessitated by the war-time restrictions. Although she was academically gifted, and was considered likely to be able to gain admission to university (relatively rare for women in those days), she insisted on leaving school and Wales and coming to London.

Retail

She started her working life as an administrative assistant in Oswald Mosley's office. As a rural teenager, she had no idea of his extreme political views and would have despised them. The post was found for her by an aunt who was a friend of the late Prince of Wales (later briefly King Edward VIII). Later she distinguished herself in the retail sector by being appointed in her mid-twenties as a department manager in the former Daniel Neal's Store (a high-quality children's clothes provider). Her age and sex made this an unusual appointment at that time. Next she embarked on her roles in education that comprised the majority of her career.

My mother was one of the initiators of pre-school Montessori education in SW11 (Montessori is a form of holistic development based on



nurturing children through experiential learning and sound principles of child psychology). She started the first Montessori nursery school in SW11 with her long-term friend and colleague Elizabeth Hood in 1960. These schools continued until the late 1980s when their two founders retired, leaving a profound legacy in SW11. Hardly a day passed when my late mother was alive when we would not bump into some of her former students in SW11 – or parents of her former students and in due course children of her former students.

She was an institution in SW11 education and wore that mantle with great pride. Her role as an educator also included adult education and for a time, she taught City and Guilds professional women's' tailoring qualifications in the evening as well as nursery school in the mornings. When teaching became a graduate profession, with her usual tenacity she completed a BA (Honours) in Psychology at the Open University after many years of part-time study. I fondly remember the family trip to Wembley Arena to see her receive her degree.

Joan Brittain was always a great free-thinker and innovator, ahead of the

curve on many fundamental developments that occurred during her life, and that radically shaped the world today, including the campaign for nuclear disarmament, the value of educating women, the appreciation and preservation of our heritage and the nurturing of our environment – hence her commitment to the Battersea Society and its objectives.

Innovative

My mother had the ability to be a great team player whilst never compromising her principles. She loved people and until her later years was something of a *bon vivant*. Her dinner parties in the 1970s based on French cuisine and wine in lieu of the then ubiquitous meat and two

veg with beer, were well known, well regarded, innovative and ahead of the time, as well as being great fun!

Some Battersea Society members will remember the late PC John Johnson, a local community police office. My mother was a good friend to him and was deeply saddened by his untimely and tragic death.

Her principal legacy is the education, love and memories that she left to all those who knew her - as colleagues, friends, family and Battersea Society members among others. But she also left a modest legacy to the Society to mark the value that she placed on its activities and her respect for its objectives. She would have approved of the Society's decision to invest her legacy in a project for early years education to benefit the young children of Battersea. It is very satisfying to think her values and aspirations are still shaping the activities of the Battersea Society. I like to think that she is perhaps looking down on us with a smile and a thumbs-up indicative of her approbation.

*Dr Richard Brittain LLB
On behalf of the estate of the
late Mrs Joan Brittain*

A LULLABY FOR LONG COVID

Jenny Sheridan learns how opera skills can reduce breathlessness

Long Covid is a recently recognised syndrome with a myriad of different symptoms. One is breathlessness, with associated anxiety. We all remember those harrowing accounts and pictures from the pre-vaccine days of patients in Covid wards on ventilators because they were unable to breathe. But intermittent, frightening breathlessness can in some cases persist for months.

People with breathing difficulties after covid may be surprised when their medical team prescribes a course with an opera company. But that's what is happening to hundreds of patients across the country, including some from St George's and Chelsea & Westminster hospitals.

English National Opera's Breathe Programme offers a six-week live online course of breathing and gentle singing exercises led by voice specialists from their learning and participation programme. I met up on Zoom with the company's head of strategy and engagement, Jenny Mollica. 'We co-designed it with Dr Sarah Elkin, the lead respiratory consultant at Imperial Healthcare NHS Trust. We already had a relationship with Imperial as our brilliant costume department had been making scrubs and PPE for their frontline teams. The Breathe programme arose out of our conversations with GPs – we were wondering how we could be useful.

Connection

'Although it doesn't seem obvious for an opera company to be involved in social prescribing, actually it's not surprising: we have such expertise in the physiology of breathing. When you pare it back, opera is rooted in two things: breath and emotional connection. Our singers understand breath in a very profound way.'

I asked Ms Mollica what the programme consists of – are the participants taught to sing arias? 'Definitely not! It's a mix of breathing exercises and some of the techniques that are used in the training of opera singers, but in a very accessible and

inclusive way. And all the singing is done on mute, so people who may feel embarrassed or awkward about their voice needn't worry. We use lullabies a lot – both from folk backgrounds across the world and from operas. Summertime from *Porgy and Bess* is a favourite. We give the members resources to use between weekly sessions, including both exercises and playlists of soothing lullabies to enjoy.'

Breathlessness is often accompanied by anxiety, in a vicious circle: the person finds they can't breathe easily, which is frightening, so their breathing becomes shallower which leads to more anxiety. An attack often happens in the middle of the night or when walking upstairs. The Breathe programme offers strategies to help the person regain control over their breathing, thus also reducing anxiety and putting them back in the driving seat.

The programme is not for everyone, Ms Mollica explains. People are accepted onto the course via a referral from their post-covid medical team. They then have a one-to-one Zoom meeting with one of ENO's team to discuss whether they are likely to benefit from the programme. People with severe fatigue (a common feature of post-covid) may not be able to handle an hour-long weekly session.

How successful is the programme? A recent study published in the *Lancet* showed improvements in breathlessness, particularly on exertion, and also in anxiety and in quality of life.

'We are very proud of the programme', says Ms Mollica. 'It's hard to get evidence for an arts-based intervention. We're very pleased to see the impact we can have beyond the opera stage. Our collaboration with Imperial is key. The programme is a combination of medical and musical expertise.'

Referrals

'We're exploring the possibility of involvement in other conditions and contexts. This was our first programme in the area of health and wellbeing but now it's an important strand of our work in participation and learning, along with working in schools and the criminal justice system. We have these extraordinary resources in our chorus and orchestra and their skills lend themselves well to social prescribing. We are a national, publicly funded organisation and we take that very seriously. We want to matter to people at various points in their lives, especially when they need us. I'm fascinated by the idea of opera arriving in your world when you don't expect to find us. It shifts perceptions of who opera is for.'

ENO Breathe has worked with over 1,400 people since its first outing in autumn 2020, and there are almost 200 people on the waiting list for a place on a course. Twenty three referrals have come from St George's Hospital and 43 from Chelsea & Westminster.



THE CUNNING GARDENER

Have you got a tiny garden or balcony? Dorcas Murray shows you how to keep it looking good throughout the year

It takes a lot of hard work, not to say cunning, to keep the gardening show going throughout the gardening year'. So said the late great Christopher Lloyd, the master of succession planting. Our garden is hardly Great Dixter. Like many south London gardeners we have only a miniscule plot and some ugly outlooks to contend with. Ensuring that your plants earn their keep can be challenging in such a small space.

Ours is a typical 'between the commons' Victorian semi, with the front garden in full sun. In 2018 we turned it into one large stone-walled planter. It's the size of a good bed – 1.2m by 4m – and sits over a metre higher than the pavement beyond.

Because we look out onto the garden every day, it was important that it always offered something visually and so the quest for effective succession planting began. Four years and lots of mistakes and heartache later, here are five key things I've learnt about keeping the garden blooming when you only have an itty-bitty area to play with:

1 Get planning

The rhythm of our garden is, roughly, woodland anemone and vinca under the tree and bulbs along the path in spring. Then tulips growing up through dark cow parsley. In early summer, allium dominate: stately white giant, then delicate sphaerocephalon, morphing from green to purple. From mid-summer, agapanthus, gaura, campion and perowskia repeat among angel's hair grass, followed by salvia which lasts till winter. Then the garden rests on its bones: a multi-stemmed amelanchier and evergreens – agapanthus foliage, thymes, muehlenbeckia, chamomile and ferns. We leave the seedheads on for as long as possible and the dried bundles of grass to provide contrast.

I would like to claim this is all the result of detailed planning. It isn't. It comes from watching the garden every day and seeing where and when the gaps appear then ogling other gardens and pouring over plant catalogues to work out how to fill them. Taking regular photos or keeping a garden diary helps hugely. And some plants are just good

value. The vinca, gaura, salvia and Mexican fleabane keep on giving month after month.

2 Right plant, right place

Beth Chatto was so right. This is partly about soil, aspect and climatic conditions but also about what you want from your garden within the confines of these external factors. We have watched unsuitable plants die. An acer preceded the amelanchier and succumbed to the heat and verticillium wilt in year 2. Even in the deeper shade against the wall, the hart's tongue ferns pant and fade in the heat of summer. By contrast, the grasses, the agapanthus and the gaura love the sun and the rich soil.

I had a romantic vision for the garden: I wanted planting as exuberant as Piet Oudolf's Highline in New York. My partner was more sensible and wanted some privacy and to mask eyesores. So, the planting is exuberant and tall enough to block out the roofs of cars parked in the street, while the tree obscures the signage of the pub beyond.

3 Be open to change

I am never satisfied with my garden. There is always another plant I want and something that could look better. The fiddling never ends. Last year the tall plants got out of hand and threatened to topple into the street. So, we moved things around: tall plants consigned to the centre and lower planting around it. The structure is more stable and now we get a better view of the immaculate fritillaries and later the delicate astrantia.

Christopher Lloyd loved planting in pots because they could be easily shuffled. Good advice but you need somewhere to move your expired pots to.

4 Don't be afraid to go big

Just because it's a small space doesn't

mean you can't have drama. Put in a sizeable tree. Plant masses of tulips. Plants for impact: use the same plant over and over. Plant one colour per pot. Cram the garden full.

5 Water well

I can't stress this enough, especially for a garden in full sun. Generally plants don't like being in planters and won't get enough water even when it rains cats and dogs. We have a hydration system and still do some top-up watering. An outdoor tap - or better a water butt - is your best friend.

Succession planting is hardly low maintenance gardening. That's the fun of it. Keeping your garden going throughout the seasons certainly requires the rigour of some planning ahead. But it also comes down to trial, error, enthusiasm and the profound belief that there is always room for one more plant!

