



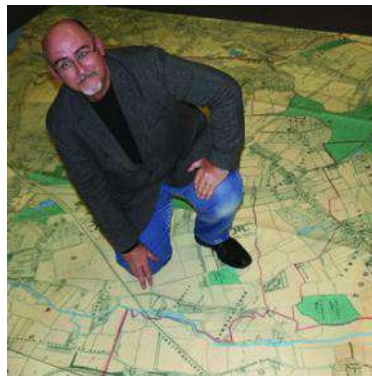
## Rhino skull and silver treasure on display as new Wandsworth museum opens its doors

The new Wandsworth Museum opened to the public on 3 September 2010. It was officially opened two days previously by London mayor Boris Johnson, with speeches by Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Edward Lister, leader of Wandsworth Council. Battersea Society members will remember that it was the Council that closed the original museum in 2007. The collection was saved by a generous donation of £2million from Michael and Dorothy Hintze.

### Donations

The new museum promises to be lively. Museum director Andrew Leitch's first exhibition will be *Wandsworth through 100 objects*. "This will be a great chance for the public to get a sense of the museum's collection", he says. "I am thrilled with the recent donations we have been given, mostly by local people. For example we have the medical kit that was used on D Day by a soldier who was later one of

the first medics to go into Bergen Belsen. We have some moving and fascinating letters from the Somme between April and October 1918, written by a man at the front to his wife back home in Wandsworth. People have found amazing things in their attics."



Andrew Leitch at the new museum

### Star exhibit

The permanent collection will be made up of the original museum's collection, recent donations and gifts or loans from the Wandsworth Historical Society, the Museum of London and the De Morgan collec-

tion. The skull of a woolly rhinoceros, found in the borough and loaned by the Natural History Museum, is sure to be a star exhibit. "We have a beautiful building, the former West Hill library, which we've transformed," says Andrew Leitch. It will include a shop and a "fantastic" café. The Council has waived rent for the first five years and Mr Leitch has hopes that this arrangement will continue. With a staff of five plus an apprentice (for whose salary the museum has received a grant), the annual running costs are estimated at £250,000. Visitors will be charged £8 per person, with concessions at £6. People who can Gift Aid their entry fee can then visit free of charge for a year. A number of secondary and primary schools have signed up to subscribe for the educational programme. The projected annual number of visitors is 30,000 - similar to the original museum and a

*Continued on page 3*

The Battersea Society's annual garden party in the grounds of St Mary's Church enjoyed fine weather this year. The river sparkled and members and friends enjoyed dancing on the grass to music from the talented Sound Minds band.

### Special guests

As usual the Events committee came up trumps with their delicious canapés. Special guests

## Garden party goes with a swing as the sun shines

(pictured with Society chair Tony Tuck) included Cllr Piers McCausland, Mayor of Wandsworth and Prunella Scales—one of the Society's founder members—who drew the raffle.

You can get a flavour of the action from our YouTube video at:

<http://tinyurl.com/39h4urc>



Photograph: Dennis Jackson

Don't forget to visit our website: [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk)  
for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events & planning matters

## From the Editor

Alas! I have been discovered in an act of editorial incompetence – or rather an omission of an act. Failing to do my research, I proclaimed Jane Ellison as our first female MP, only to be informed that Caroline Ganley was Battersea’s representative as early as 1945. See page 7 for the true story.

### Call to action

Suzanne Perkins (back page) hits a timely note with her heartfelt diatribe against street clutter. The government has strongly backed Civic Voice’s Street Pride campaign; Communities Minister Eric Pickles has written to all local authorities asking them to commit to reducing clutter and over-signage. He urges them to adopt clear design policies for streets and to involve

community groups in carrying out street surveys like the one Suzanne describes. Sounds like a call to action for the Society!

### Celebration

As I write this, the new Wandsworth Museum opens in a week. It is time to put the bitter struggle to save the old museum behind us and to look forward to celebrating the new one. The trustees and Andrew Leitch and his team are certainly putting a huge amount of effort and imagination into creating something really special.

### Literary quest

As the man with the Battersea brush describes below and on page 8, the SW11 Literary Festival starts shortly. One of its highlights is the quiz, to be held this year on Monday 27 September. The Society



has done well in previous years – fourth place in 2008, third last year. Will this be the year for triumph? Anyone interested in helping make up a Society team, please contact me.

Jenny Sheridan  
[newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk)  
 020 7350 2794

Often seen on the foreshore near Old Swan Wharf is a gentleman who gathers up plastic bottles for recycling. His personal contribution perhaps to making this a cleaner and brighter borough. Like the chap we spotted the other day by Battersea Park using his feet to shuffle the remnants of a broken bottle out of the path of joggers, children, dogs and bikes. Of course they are both practising the principle of the big society that others merely preach. But perhaps we could all join in, with a little help. Which is why I am using this piece to announce the launch of the Big Brush Society, which aims to make available an array of



## The Man with the Battersea brush

Mike Roden muses on big societies, superhighways and matters literary

brushes, brooms and dustpans at colourful docking stations throughout Battersea. Is there a bank out there which could spare a few pounds from its precious coffers to sponsor this venture in support of those who feel the occasional need to tidy up the landscape? I know this might be seen as equivalent to doing a little light dusting when the whole place needs a thorough spring clean, but every little helps.

### Where no grass grows

Battersea’s first Cycle Super-highway (otherwise known as St Mary’s Churchyard) is a sad sight after heavy rain as that ever-widening ribbon of bare, compacted earth becomes a small lake. Of course this short-cut saves cyclists a minute or so on their way to work, but I don’t believe that is a sufficient reason to deprive us of such a delightfully situated patch of

greenery. Something must be done, and I hope the Battersea Society can come up with an answer.

### Sloganeering

The SW11 LitFest is upon us once again, and their competition this year invites us to create a Slogan for Battersea. Those of us lucky enough to attend the Festival launch party were encouraged to scrawl our own entries on the wall (visit the Doodle Bar and that sentence will make more sense). *Battersea is Better than Balham*, certainly stood out on grounds of alliteration, but may be rather too inflammatory. Then what should I spot in one corner, but the slogan you see over to your left. Whether or not it is likely to win, I suggest that if you believe it’s true you should all sign up for the Big Brush Society...

See you next time  
 Mike Roden

## New museum opens cont'd from front page

a marketing campaign will aim at boosting visitor numbers.

One of the museum's projects is on the villages of Wandsworth, and Battersea will of course be included. The Museum has been offered a treasure of mediaeval silver coins found in Battersea.



The museum's Caroline James with a Victorian fan

### Virtual museum

Mr Leitch's original plans made much of a virtual museum, and he says that this is part of the forward planning and will happen within the next couple of years. The website is still currently under construction but should be live by the time the museum opens.

### History and mystery

Mr Leitch has fallen in love with the area. "The longer I live here, the more I realize what a beautiful place Wandsworth is and how historically significant. It's also under-appreciated, even by people who

live here. Mammoths wandered up the High Street. In the Middle Ages most of London's flour was milled along the Wandle. I believe that if people realized the history and mystery of the place they would appreciate it more; they wouldn't let there be empty derelict shops or piles of litter. Some people say that museums are just about the past but I see them as forward-looking, instrumental in building a sense and pride of place."

Sheila Allen, chair of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum and a trustee of the museum, says that it is a worthy successor to the Court House Museum and a local amenity to be proud of. She urges local residents to support it.

Wandsworth Gas Works played a pivotal role in early aviation. It became a base for early ballooning from 1880 onwards. It was "a popular launching point for those seeking adventure in the skies. This may have been because Wandsworth Gas Company sold its product at cheaper rates than other companies in the London area. The relative sparsity of suburban building developments to the south and west may have been another factor attracting balloonists."

### Short Brothers

"In 1906 a filling and launching site was established next to the Battersea Gas Holder Station ...and was a significant factor in local aviation history." Until the Great War Battersea had a major balloon ground, on the site now covered by the currently waterless gasometer. Among the firms that used the facilities were the Short Brothers who established the first aircraft factory in Britain in the Battersea Railway Arches, A V Roe, and Charles Rolls, later to join with Royce. As an indication of their popularity, it is reported that "Messrs Short Bros conducted 155 balloon ascents from the 4<sup>th</sup> of January to the 4<sup>th</sup> of October from their works in Battersea.

## Balloons and bi-planes above Battersea

Drawing on research by local historian the late Patrick Loobey, Tony Tuck gives an introduction to the borough's role in aviation history

*The number of aeronauts was 483 and nearly 7,000,000 cubic feet of gas were used."*

### Powered flight

1908 was a key year. The Wright brothers had made their first successful powered flight in 1903, but their practical demonstrations of flying at Le Mans in 1908 fired the enthusiasm of Europeans. The Short brothers built six aircraft to the Wright brothers' designs, earning them the princely sum of £1,200. Shorts subsequently designed and built several other bi-planes.

Patrick Loobey details a range of other balloon and aircraft manufacturers with sites at least initially in Battersea or Wandsworth. He also notes that Battersea boasts the only heliport in central London where trial flights in 1952 resulted in a brief service in 1955-56 and a proper heliport from April 1959.

### Exuberance

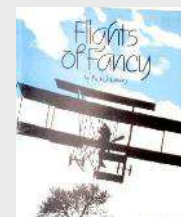
What is so extraordinary now in 2010, roughly a century later, is the sense of exuberance and rapid

change that the pages of this pamphlet describe. We think of the Edwardian era as a period of genteel stability, a sort of 'Victoriana Plus' – but in fields such as aeronautics it was clearly catch as catch can, and devil take the hindmost. At the same time automobiles were being rapidly developed, and the engines that would power them and their sister aircraft.

Come 1914 and the pace of war changed everything dramatically. But that is another story...

### Reference

*Flights of Fancy*; Patrick Loobey. Wandsworth Borough Council 1981. Long out of print there are currently a couple of copies available on [Abe Books](#).





## Frustration for some, peace and quiet for others

The closure of Albert Bridge is not all negative, finds Jenny Sheridan



Albert Bridge under wraps during restoration

It is blissfully quiet in the garden of the Prince Albert pub, where drinkers sink contemplative pints. Out front on the pavement people sit at tables and sip a glass of wine as they watch a rollerblader glide out of the park opposite and across the road, almost without watching out for traffic. "It's like being in a village," says bar supervisor Mark Woodroffe. "It's safer for kids, we can have tables outside, there's less pollution and far less noise. Our regulars are all local and we haven't lost any trade."

### Economic downturn

Despite claims to the contrary, the closure of Albert Bridge since February has not been entirely bad for trade. The Prince Albert is next door to the bridge, yet has not suffered. Ransome's Dock on Parkgate Road was affected at first, says restaurant manager Graham Munton, with regular customers from Chelsea dining less often. But he adds that with the economic downturn and the holiday season, business is unpredictable at the moment in any case.

The long-established Buchan's Restaurant closed in June but this is not thought to be due to the bridge closure. According to some local

people it had become "a cliquy bar" and was not attracting enough custom.

### Deterioration

Albert Bridge, described by John Betjeman as one of the beauties of the London river, was built in 1873. Even then it was not strong, as attested by the well-known sign (below right) requesting soldiers to break step while crossing. Over 130 years later it is rusting badly and the timber deck is rotting. It is in urgent need of strengthening and refurbishment to prevent deterioration to the point of being unusable.

Responsibility for the bridge lies with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (K & C) and there has been much criticism of the length of time the work is taking - February 2010 to July 2011. According to K & C the bridge is in such poor repair that the heavy machinery needed can only work on a small section at a time. And a channel needs always to be kept clear for boats to pass underneath.

### Small traders hit

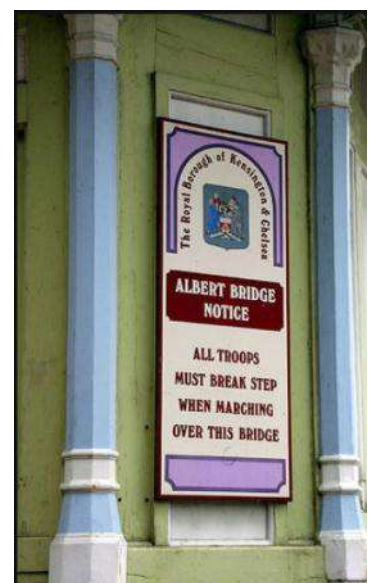
Battersea MP Jane Ellison points out that small traders who need to travel swiftly and efficiently around

the local area are suffering from the increase of traffic on Battersea Bridge and the closure of Albert Bridge. People traveling to and from work by bus are also affected. She has made representations to K & C about the length of time for repairs but says she can have little influence as long as they are the decision-makers. "In my view it is an anachronism that any one borough should control a bridge, given that they are strategic crossings. They affect so many people apart from those who live alongside them."

### Silver lining

Businesses and residents in Battersea Bridge Road are certainly being battered by the increase in noise and pollution from the increased traffic. The bar manager of the Draft House, on the corner of Westbridge Road, complains of severely delayed deliveries. But even here there are lighter aspects. He has plans to lighten motorists' rush hour burden by serving coffee to their car windows.

Perhaps if the situation worsens with the winter months he will be able to offer complete drive-by meals, a unique Battersea experience.



## Wildlife on Wandsworth Common

Valerie Selby, Wandsworth's principal parks officer for biodiversity, describes the varied wildlife on the common and how it is managed

Wandsworth Common is of borough importance for wildlife. Key wildlife habitats include native broad-leaved woodland, standing water, rough grassland, dense scrub and acid grassland. A volunteer local bird recorder, Peter White, has spotted more than 100 species of birds over the last ten years either on the common or flying above it. In summer, for example, you might see a green woodpecker, goldcrest and goldfinches and hear a sedge warbler. We have records of many invertebrates, and this is the best site for bees, wasps and ants in London, with a total of 88 species. But for a non-specialist, perhaps the easiest place to spot wildlife on the Common is the lake.

### Gravel workings

A lake has been present on the Common since the 1860s when it is marked on the map as gravel workings. Work was undertaken in 1999 to restore a basin to the northern end of the lake. I say 'restore' as historical documents indicate that the lake was previously roughly equivalent to its present shape and size but that at some stage the top end was filled in. Thus by the late 1990s we were continually trying to manage an area which flooded

each winter and was unusable and unsightly in spring and autumn. A successful bid for funding enabled us to enhance the area for both people and wildlife.

When we undertook a consultation many residents spoke about how they remembered the lake as children; the fish they caught, the wildlife they saw and so on. This information influenced the final design and more importantly the type of planting. The restored end was planted with wetland vegetation such as Norfolk reed, to provide secretive places for the smaller ducks and waterfowl to hide and nest in. The plant life also enables dragonflies and damselflies to breed – the plants giving them something to climb when they are ready to emerge from their wetland life as nymphs to their airborne life where we are more familiar with their dazzling colours and nosey ways.

### Wildflower grasslands

We have tried to ensure the middle basin is attractive with colours throughout the year: rhododendron on the island, yellow flag iris around the edges and wildflower grasslands running up to the lake edge. We also included dense

scrubby planting as a buffer zone to give waterfowl additional security and as perching places for dragonflies and damselflies. The shrubs also act as singing posts for smaller birds in the spring.

Despite strong recommendation to the contrary, a beach area was created with the intention of providing a route in and out for a range of wildlife, particularly amphibians such as frogs and toads. Sadly this beach is heavily used by dog walkers, who encourage their dogs into the lake for a swim. This is devastating to wildlife and over the years we have lost many ducklings to dogs. It is also useless for amphibians, which use the restored basin instead. When the new dog control orders are brought into force later this year, dogs will be banned from these areas to prevent this happening in future.

### Fishermen & fishing birds

The southern basin has been designed to minimise the conflict between anglers and other users. We have put in angling platforms both to regulate the number of anglers and so that other users can avoid tripping over rods and equipment. We manage the fish in this basin to ensure that the water does not become overloaded – too many fish would suffer in a crowded lake and would be detrimental to other wildlife. As well as being popular with the anglers, this end of the lake is the best place to spot the other fishermen on the common: the cormorants and the heron.

Next time you are on Wandsworth Common, allow yourself five minutes to sit or stand by the lake and observe what is going on. I hope you will be pleasantly surprised at the amount and variety of wildlife you can spot. Indeed some if it will probably make its way across to watch you at the same time!



## Planning Matters

Large new developments have a major impact on us. Monica Tross explains how the Society also fights the corner on small-scale applications

### Battersea Power Station

Revisions were formally submitted at the end of June and consultation closed on 5 August. We all want to see work started on this site but the changes do not meet the objections the Society has already expressed. A major concern has always been the way in which the Power Station would be surrounded by buildings on all sides other than the north and would be hidden from Nine Elms except for glimpses between the buildings surrounding it. It is significant that the majority of the views of the new development in the townscape document show views from the north, across the river or from the north side of Chelsea

Bridge. There are two views from Nine Elms Lane, one from Vauxhall Bridge and three further views from the south, one of which is from Brockwell Park.

Having worked through the many new documents our response can now be seen on the planning section of the Council's website, number 2009/3575, where you can also see our earlier comments and those from other organisations.

### Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework (VNEB)

The Council hosted two meetings to present their overall vision for this area, both held within the Queens-town Ward. We have made the point to the Council that with 16,000 new homes planned, 10,000 of them in Battersea, this development will have a major impact on Battersea way beyond Queens-town. We hope to bring you more news after the summer break. In

the meantime, you can go to [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/nineelms](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/nineelms) for more information or to be put on the mailing list for new information as it becomes available.

### Bus Countdown Indicators

I was wrong to say in the last issue that the consultation between TfL and the Council has the aim of adding to the countdown network. The



likely outcome is that the same number of countdown displays will be available but some may be re-positioned. I have put in the requests I have had from members but am not hopeful that new indicators will be added. Apparently it costs £10,000 to sponsor a countdown so I don't think too many of us will be rushing to do this.

### Bus Stops at South Kensington

Despite our best efforts, the new stop for the 49 and 345 south-bound will remain in Harrington Road. Good news is that a bus shelter will be added to the stop.

### Recent planning applications

The proposals for the new hotel in Falcon Road and a small block of flats in Mossbury Road have been approved. We added our voice to the many objecting to the application for a Sainsbury's local at 165-167 St John's Hill and are delighted to see that this application has

been withdrawn. (Reference 2010/2198 for more details). We also objected to the proposed replacement of the garage at 76-80 Chatham Road with four houses.

### Job Centre, Beechmore Road

Sad news of this graceful neo-Georgian building (pictured): the Council has waved through the owner's application to demolish it.

A notice of intention to demolish was posted on the building with a deadline of 23 August for comments. While it is not listed, we have previously urged its inclusion in the Battersea Park Conservation Area and we repeated this in our objection to demolition, which we sent to the Council well before the deadline. No planning application has been made and we urged that at the very least demolition should be postponed until

agreed plans were in place. We understand that legally the Council cannot refuse permission for demolition. However we were dismayed to read on the planning website that agreement was communicated to the site owners on 17 August ie before the deadline for comments. As far as we can see the Council made no attempt to ask Shanley Homes, the owners, to reconsider, at least by retaining the façade to preserve the streetscape.

As many of you will know, the site of the Ralph West Hall of Residence remains derelict. We would have hoped that the Council's planners might have considered this in their dealings with Shanley Homes.

If you have any comments or queries on any planning or transport matter, please let us know at [planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org.uk)



## Caroline Ganley, MP, campaigner and councillor

Jeanne Rathbone and Jenny Sheridan tell the story of the woman who really was Battersea's first female MP



Jane Ellison is not, as mistakenly stated in the Summer *Battersea Matters*, Battersea's first female MP. Back in 1945 Caroline Ganley (pictured above) was elected as Labour MP for South Battersea, a

seat she held until 1951.

### Radical politics

Born in 1879, Mrs Ganley lived in Battersea with her husband James from 1904 until her death in 1966. As a young married woman, and supported by her husband, she was involved in radical politics and opposed the Boer War in 1906.

During the First World War she joined a group of anti-war women's suffragists, a courageous stance as women who did so were attacked as unpatriotic or sneered at for not understanding the male preserve of war.

After the Great War Mrs Ganley became a councillor in Battersea and chaired the health committee. She was instrumental in setting up the maternity home in Bolingbroke Grove. She also became one of the

first female JPs and was prominent in the London Co-Operative Society, becoming the first female president of the UK's largest retail society.

Twenty four women were elected to Parliament in 1945, and Caroline Ganley was one of 21 Labour women. Health continued to be a major interest and as an MP she campaigned vigorously for national health care.

### Pioneer

After her parliamentary defeat in 1951 she was re-elected several times to the Council. When Battersea was incorporated into Wandsworth she wrote a poem lamenting its passing as a borough. Caroline Ganley both took part in the struggle for equal rights and took full advantage of them. One of her obituaries remarked that "she was a great pioneer ..... at a time when few women took part in public life."

Open House London does pretty much what it says on the tin. For one weekend each year hundreds of buildings of all types and periods open up their doors to all, without charge. This year Wandsworth has thirteen buildings open. Buildings in Battersea are listed below, with brief details of opening times etc.

**Battersea Arts Centre**, Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN Saturday 7pm-10pm—  
Regular architectural tours

**Emanuel School**, Battersea Rise, SW11 1HS Saturday 2 – 4 pm.

**Foster and Partners Studio**, 22 Hester Road, SW11 4AN Saturday 10am – 5 pm. Regular tours

**Opera Extension**, 61 Sudbrooke Road, SW12 8TQ Sunday 11am – 1 pm. **Pre-book through Open House**

## Visit inspiring buildings for free

Mike Roden casts an eye over what's on offer locally at Open House weekend 18-19 September

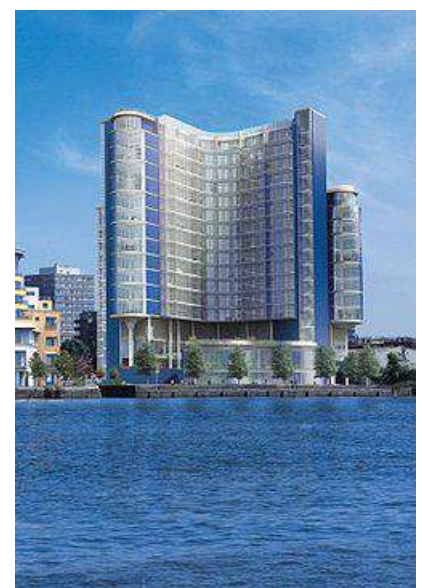


**Pump House Gallery**, Battersea Park, SW11 4JN Saturday & Sunday 11am-4pm.

**Rafayel Hotel** (pictured), 34 Lombard Road, SW11 3RF. Sunday afternoon. Architect led tours. **Booking through Open House essential.**

**Royal College of Art**, Sackler Building, 14-22 Howie Street, SW11 4AY Saturday & Sunday 1-5pm

For fuller details visit [www.openhouse.org.uk](http://www.openhouse.org.uk) or pick up a brochure from your local library.



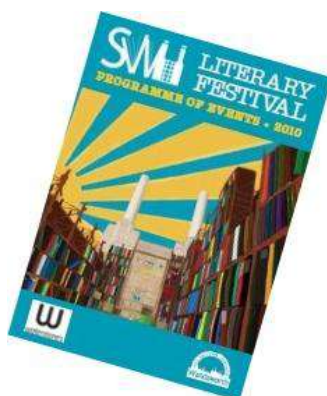
Rafayel on the Left Bank  
'Eco-friendly 5 star riverside hotel'

## September brings a feast of literature to SW11

At Battersea's Doodle Bar on 13 August a lively crowd of literature lovers helped to launch the SW11 Literary Festival. Organised jointly by Waterstone's and the Clapham Junction Town Centre Partnership, the festival begins in earnest on 9 September, when Will Self – a self-styled 'obsessive-compulsive flaneur' will be at the Battersea Arts Centre reading from and talking about his latest book *Walking to Hollywood*.

### Poetry workshop

Entertainment at the launch party was provided by festival poet in residence Paul Lyalls, who will be hosting a poetry workshop at Northcote Library on 11 September, and can also be seen on 19 September at BAC heading up Poetic Frenzy, an extravaganza of live verse. Paul's latest collection is *Catching the Cascade*.



The festival continues until the 30 September, ending with a Local Authors' Book Fair.

### What's happening

Just to give a brief flavour of what else is in store: the legendary literary quiz is on 27 September, at the Latchmere pub; this year's literary lunch on 25 September at Chez Manny on Battersea High Street features cookery writer Josceline Dimbleby, and local author Isabel

Losada is at Waterstone's on St John's Road on 21 September talking about *How to Get Published*.

### Text a slogan for Battersea

This year's festival competition is looking for a slogan for Battersea in no more than 15 words. Text the winning entry, and next year your slogan will be used on Literary Festival t-shirts. Start your text with **Battslog** then a space, followed by your slogan and text it to 07786 202 844. (No more than 15 words please!) This is a normal mobile number so texts will cost no more than your usual rate.

Get the full programme with booking details for all events, at any library, or download it from <http://ow.ly/2t7ls>

Many of the books featured during the festival are available from the Battersea Society bookstore at [batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore](http://batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore)

Pheasant, like mussels, is one of those extravagances which are not actually hugely expensive. It can be dry if roasted, so it's worth trying a braise or pot roast. This serves four people (or two if very hungry or greedy).

1 pheasant  
4 endives  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 eating apple, roughly chopped  
1 tbs dark brown sugar  
Juice of ½ lemon  
1 glass dry white wine or vermouth  
½ small carton crème fraiche  
Elderflower cordial or maple syrup

Halve the endives lengthwise and fry them in a casserole with the onion and sugar till they are slightly caramelised. Fry the pheasant so

that it is golden all over – it is probably easiest to do this in a large frying pan. Put it into the casserole with the endives and onions. Add the apple pieces, lemon juice, wine and crème fraiche. The liquid should come roughly half way up the bird if it fits into the casserole snugly. Season with salt and pepper and bring it to the boil, let it simmer briefly then put the lid on and



cook it gently either on the hob or in a low to medium oven for an hour.

Take the pheasant and as much as you can of the vegetables out of the casserole and put them on a dish that you can carve from. Keep this warm while you reduce the sauce in the casserole. Add about a tablespoon of cordial or syrup and boil the sauce down until it is amalgamated and thickened. Taste to see if you need to add more lemon. Pour over the pheasant or serve the sauce separately.

Why not suggest a recipe for the next edition of *Battersea Matters* [recipes@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:recipes@batterseasociety.org.uk)



## Over 50? Try belly dancing!

Jenny Sheridan visits a multi-activity centre across the river

Chelsea is not exclusively the preserve of millionaires. Around the corner from a Rolls Royce and Bentley repair garage and an estate agent advertising villas in Cannes is the New Horizon Centre. Set in a Guinness Trust estate near Sloane Square, this multi-activity centre offers a huge range of classes and other activities for people over 50, including those from our side of the river.

### Flower-filled garden

On a warm May morning sunshine streamed into the bright, modern building, converted from the estate washhouse. Café tables stood invitingly in the small flower-filled garden. Volunteers and members arrived and studied the book swap table (payment by honesty box).

Deputy manager Lily Ostasiewicz showed me round. She explained that the centre opened in 2007, following a long gestation period. Although Kensington and Chelsea became one borough around 50 years ago, there is still a psychological and transport divide between the north and south of the borough. Most of the community organizations are in the north and older people in Chelsea had few places to go. The centre was set up by a partnership between Open Age, Sixty Plus, The Guinness Trust, the local authority and the NHS body.

### Active lifestyle

The aim of New Horizons is to promote active lifestyles and independence, keeping older people healthy and having fun. There is no fee for joining and charges for classes are kept low, at between £1.35 and £2.50 per session. "Most of our members are probably in their 70s or 80s but we have a good number in their 50s and 60s" said Lily.

"They may have left work early due to redundancy or illness or early retirement. Sometimes we have 150 people here in a day, sometimes it's quieter." Classes vary from British history to belly dancing, with the most popular classes being art, jewellery making, dance and current affairs. In February House of Commons speaker John Bercow addressed the current affairs group about his mission to rebuild public trust in Parliament. Language classes sometimes organize outings to consulates, and art groups visit galleries.

### Poetry readings

There are drop-in sessions for computer use and tuition. Young volunteers mentor older people on any IT-related issue, with the older person's needs dictating the lesson plans. There are sessions on digital photography and mobile phone surgeries.

Other activities include monthly poetry readings and occasional visits from theatre groups. The police come to offer advice on personal safety within and outside the home. A toenail cutting service is provided by Age Concern and there is a My Memories café for people with dementia and their carers. Alternative therapies include Indian head massage, shiatsu and reflexol-

ogy. A counselling service is available once a week and there are NHS health checks.

The café offers good value, with soup for under a pound and a hot lunch for less than £4. The homemade food often includes herbs from the centre's own garden. The café also offers training to people with learning disabilities, who work towards NVQs in food-related topics.

### Confidence

Margaret Malone lives in south Battersea and travels to New Horizons by the 319 bus. "The Words and Music literature class is brilliant," she says. "The tutor does an hour on a topic – say Spanish writing, and then we have an hour of relevant classical music, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to modern. The people who go to the centre are really lovely. There's an ex-Tiller girl in the line dancing class. She's 92 and she also does Tai chi and yoga. It's good having a range of ages, from 50 up.

"I did a four-week digital photography course which gave me confidence in how to use the camera. I have the highest praise for the place. It's really inspiring"

For more information about New Horizons visit their website: [www.new-horizons-chelsea.org.uk](http://www.new-horizons-chelsea.org.uk)



## All change in the Health Service

Sue Marshall on how national decisions are reflected in local facilities

Wandsworth Primary Care Trust's plans for improvement to health services in Battersea were almost totally axed prior to the change of government. However two initiatives remained, the development of the extended hours GP-led health centre, and the refurbishment of the Bridge Lane surgery. (See *Battersea Matters* summer 2008, winter 2008, spring 2009 and autumn 2009 for articles on the original plans).

### Walk-in provision

The local GP group which hoped to win the contract for the GP-led health centre was unsuccessful. The contract was awarded to a private company, Care UK (now owned by private equity group Bridgepoint. Ed.) Currently the facilities are in a temporary building at Sendall House car park behind the Grant Road entrance to Clapham Junction station, before moving to permanent accommodation under the railway arches. Several Battersea Society members have already found the new walk-in provision useful and much more convenient than visiting hospital when they

need out of hours GP advice. The surgery and walk-in clinic is open from 8am to 8pm every day, including bank holidays.

### Bridge Lane development

The objective of the Bridge Lane development is to create more clinical space to expand the range of services, including some currently provided in hospital. These include ophthalmology, diabetic medicine,



rheumatology and oral surgery. This ongoing development will be finished by the end of the year. The new health white paper, *Equity & Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, was published in July. This shifts responsibility and budgets for commissioning all health services from the primary care trust to GPs. Several GPs nationally have already expressed concern about their ability to commission services, espe-

cially for those with mental illness. In Wandsworth there will be three commissioning groups. The Battersea group will consist of 12 surgeries, covering approximately 100,000 patients.

A key element of the new structure is the proposal for the engagement of patients in the process. A principal aim of GP commissioning is to make decisions more responsive to the needs and wishes of patients and the public. All GP practices should have a patient involvement group through which patient views are sought which then influence service delivery.

Other changes which impact directly on patients are the right to choose your GP practice (no geographical boundaries) and choice over treatment options, including the team carrying out the procedures.

While most of the above sounds positive, a major driver of the changes is the requirement to save recurrently some £20bn by 2014. "Every penny saved will be a penny re-invested for the benefit of patient care," Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said. But is now the right time to pursue such wholesale root and branch change, which will be very distracting for our largest and most expensive service?

The Society's AGM on 15 July was well attended, with over 50 members present in St Mary's Church. Secretary Harvey Heath, standing in for chair Tony Tuck, thanked the active members and hoped that others would come forward to become more involved.

### Planning

He said that the planning committee, chaired by David Lewis and Liz Walton, has been very busy, studying and commenting on the Power Station, Nine Elms and the new US embassy as well as the normal slew of planning applications. The group also participates in coun-

cil meetings, conservation areas and on advisory committees. The Society continues to monitor development in open space and the environment. It will also watch developments in health and play a part in the consultation process.

### Events

The events and marketing committees continued to raise awareness and organised a series of stimulating talks and visits during the year. The website and Battersea Matters had gone from strength to strength.

Cynthia Newman has stood down as trustee after 12 years (but re-

### Battersea Society AGM

mains on the events committee) and Frederick Roth was agreed as a new trustee.

A wide range of topics were covered in the question and answer session, including how to encourage new and younger members, traffic and cycling issues.

After the AGM Susan Stuart gave a well received talk about Thrive, a charity supporting people with disabilities to rebuild their lives through gardening, including in Battersea Park.

## On the street where you live

Jenny Sheridan finds out about an interactive website that aims to bring neighbours together

Relatively few members of the Battersea Society, I would guess, are keen followers of Facebook, with hundreds of 'friends' on the social networking site. But perhaps a Battersea website would be more attractive? Streetbook describes itself as "your local community, online" and aims to be a major source of local information and a way for people to communicate with their neighbours.

### Deals & discounts

Subscription to Streetbook is free for residents, while businesses pay for inclusion. Subscribers receive email notification when a business offers a special deal (half price bottle of wine, 10 per cent discount on decoration work and so on). There is also an SW11-wide forum, where people ask for and receive recommendations for window cleaners, IT help, plumbers etc. So far, so Which Local (though more genuinely local). Where

Streetbook has interesting potential is the ultra-local. By registering your home address you can join Street Chat, an online group of people restricted to the street in which you live. Only those with verified addresses can join, giving confidence that the people one is talking to are genuine neighbours who can be trusted (and met, face to face, in real as opposed to virtual space). This forum could be used to organize a street party, discuss neighbourhood security issues, ask for garden-watering help during holidays or offer a skill swap.

### Neighbourhood

Chris Morgan-Locke from Lavender Gardens, a long and well-populated road with many large houses divided into flats, is an enthusiast. He comments that through Streetbook he has met more neighbours than in the previous three years. A noisy pub generated comments and complaints, a local councillor joined in,

a meeting was organized and the problem was dealt with. In the process he met people who he can now say hello to on the street. He has also used it to advertise an unwanted computer and a garden bench. "It's free, it's easy and it works," he says. "Anything that brings people together is a good thing."

### Community

Nina Whittaker, Streetbook's marketing manager, explains that Streetbook was founded by Battersea-based Rupert Jermyn. It was launched in May, targeting SW11 only, and they aim to roll it out to the whole of Wandsworth. She acknowledges that starting up is a challenge. Only about 35% of their 750 members are verified, so Street Chat is not at present fully effective, however she says that it is proving useful for example for Neighbourhood Watch coordinators. It could also, she suggests, be helpful for community organizations such as the Battersea Society, which could have a secure forum for conversation, comment and feedback, similar to the very well-used Putney SW15 forum.

[www.streetbook.com](http://www.streetbook.com)

Hello Battersea...  
Have you heard the latest?



Northcote Road was closed to traffic on 13 June for what will hopefully become the annual carnival. After MP Jane Ellison opened the carnival there was a children's parade (pictured). Bands and dancers entertained the crowd of locals and visitors from all over south London from noon to 10pm.

### Fortune-telling

Small children explored a fire engine and tried on helmets and beamed on the old-fashioned merry-go-round. Larger ones shrieked on a terrifying ride or bounced on a trampoline. Adults had their fortune told, watched an artist paint



## Carnival time on Northcote Road

scarlet flowers and bought tomato plants from Belleville School's stall.

### Food and drink

There was much to eat and drink. The Eagle Ale House dispensed beer, Gary Hennessey's family was out in force to carve and serve a fine hog roast. There were ice creams and spectacular cup cakes (Eton Mess cake, anyone?), burgers and chorizo sandwiches. An Italian market complemented the regular weekend fruit and vegetable stalls. And the sun shone.



## Signs of the times?

Suzanne Perkins rails against railings and the signs on them

### *"I know, let's put up a sign!"*

Are these most frequently used six words in the English language?

As Battersea residents the urban streetscape is our world: the source of our sense of place, enjoyment of architecture, history, human nature and even some wildlife. The scene that greets us as we step out of doors subtly affects our mood and our self-esteem, and has an impact on the success of businesses, as well as everyone's mental health.

The council is aware of its importance, and on the one hand rightly tries to remove graffiti, chewing gum and chicken nugget boxes as fast as it can.

### Signage blight

Unfortunately, on the other hand, a different kind of squalor of seems to be encouraged: the ever-spreading blight of bossy, ugly, ill-considered, contradictory, repetitive and often wonky signage. Add to this hideous road markings, and the result is a degraded, brutalised urban scene.

Civic Voice is a campaigning organisation, working together with English Heritage, with a vision that "by 2015 everyone lives somewhere they can be proud of". As a relatively new member of The Battersea Society, I decided to attend their all-day Street Pride Campaign Workshop in a drab basement in Farringdon. Wendy

Deakins also attended, so Battersea was well represented.

At first, being with of a group of people from all over England who "saw", rather than "read", their surroundings, was a huge relief. After a lively discussion, we had inspiring talks from Penny Heath of Cambridge, Past, Present and Future and Vanessa Gregory of the



St Albans Civic Society. I was awed but dismayed by descriptions of six years attending council committees to achieve the removal of a signage plague. I soon realised the complexity of the problem.

### Street survey

We were sent out in pairs to complete a 'street survey' of Cowcross Street, listing every post, railing, bollard, rubbish bin, A-board (outside cafés and shops), street light, and sign. We were

asked to hazard a guess as to who had the authority to erect each one, and whether it was legally required or arbitrary.

It was daunting, like the difference between being annoyed at a dog scratching, and actually getting down and counting the fleas. It did raise useful discussions about creative ways that half of the clutter could be eliminated, with no loss of amenity, allowing the streetscape to emerge and breathe.

After lunch we were addressed by Dick Bate from Green Balance, and given a rapid run-through of campaigning strategy and tactics. A couple of us had "form" from way back in peaceful direct action and stunts. Tactics like this were not dismissed, but soberly included "at the right time and place".

### Clear objective

Dick stressed how crucial it was to have a clear objective, so that it was clear when it had been achieved. I left in a very pensive mood, seeing the struggle ahead more realistically.

Could the Battersea Society undertake a survey of clutter in a historic street, with a view to restoring its dignity?

Arriving home, the parking notice stuck on the lamp post outside my house had been joined by a red and white sticker, with a picture of a dog pooing, with either steam or a stink coming up from it. It made me feel I might prefer the real thing.

## The Battersea Society

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