

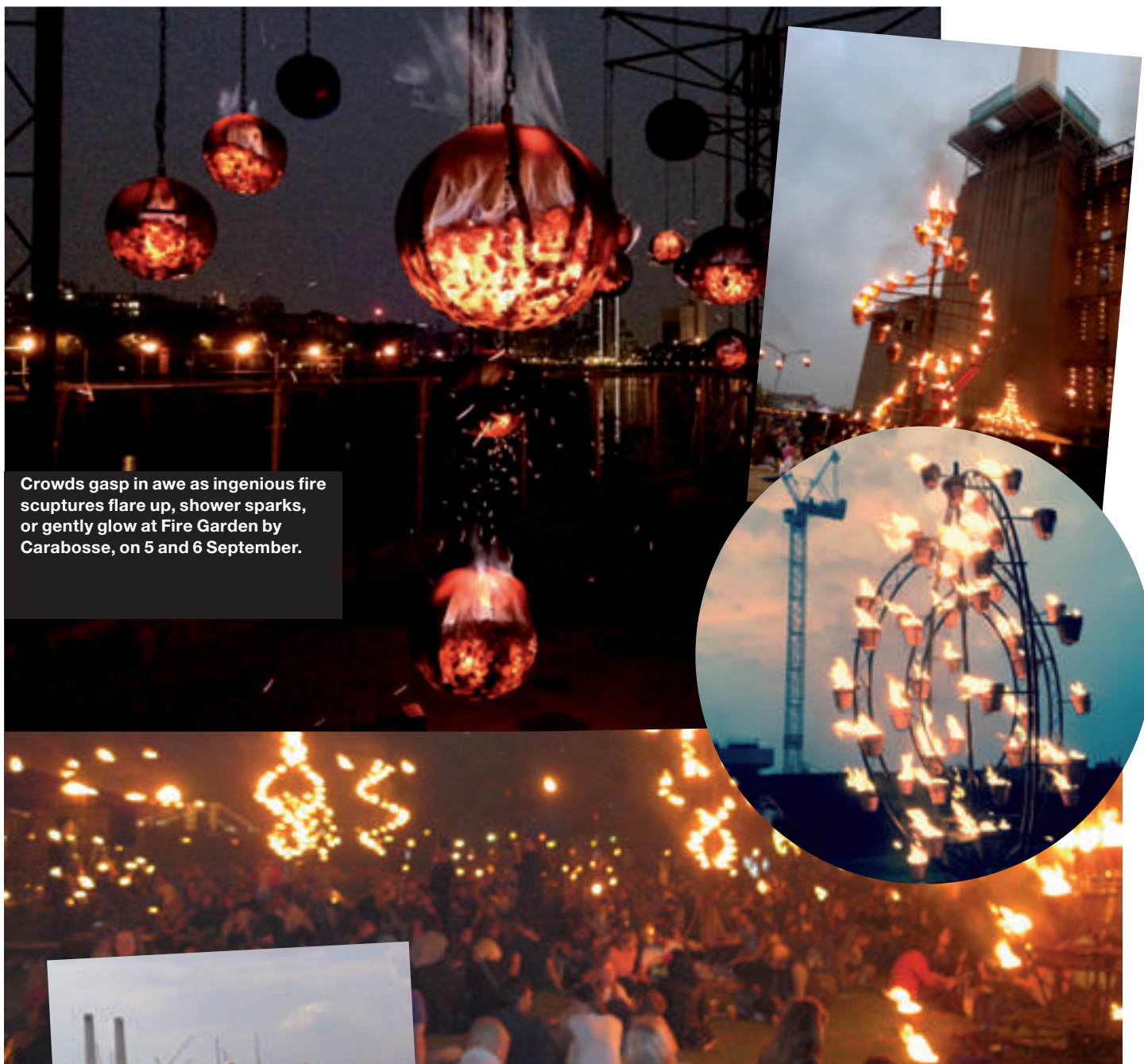
Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society AUTUMN 2014



Great balls of fire!

Battersea Power Station hosts Fire Garden as part of the Totally Thames Festival



Crowds gasp in awe as ingenious fire sculptures flare up, shower sparks, or gently glow at Fire Garden by Carabosse, on 5 and 6 September.

And a hippo in the Thames!



Don't forget to visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk
for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

From the editor



We live, alas, in interesting times. The Middle East, ebola and the Islamic State all causing anxiety and in some cases

tragedy. Three years ago we had our own disturbances around Clapham Junction; three people with deep local involvement reflect on the riots and their aftermath on page 10. It is greatly to the honour of the businesspeople, the shops, the council and local residents that the great majority of

shops on Lavender Hill and St John's Road are still here, and busy.

Shocking

This time last year I reported on the new Wandsworth Foodbank; now Carol Rahn (*page 4*) feeds back on its first few months. Just over a quarter of the foodbank's clients live in Battersea. Battersea, where the average property price is over £800,000; where a loaf of bread can cost £3, where crowds throng the pavement outside bars most days of the week. This is shocking, but what surprised me even more is the fact that only 16% of Wandsworth council's social fund, intended for

people in desperate need, has been used.

What are the reasons for this apparent waste of resources? I guess the people to ask are our councillors, two of whom appear on page 8. We are lucky that intelligent and public-spirited people continue to put themselves forward for a role that can seem thankless but may also be deeply rewarding.

As you will see from the front page, *Battersea Matters'* designer and I were lucky enough to attend one of the last public events at the Power Station before its redevelopment. It was magical.

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The Man on the Bus: What I did in the holidays

Mike Roden does his best to make a quiet August sound interesting

Every time I sit down to write this report from the Battersea front-line, it reminds me of the first day of a new term at school when we were told to write a composition on what we'd done in the holidays. So, taking the top off my leaky fountain pen, here goes ...

On a recent day-out to Rochester we boarded the open-top bus to see the local sights. A recorded commentary by Brian Blessed was augmented by snippets of information from a local guide dressed as a Victorian policeman, who regaled us with tales of spectral visitors. Charles Dickens appears more than once: he's often seen checking his watch under the town clock, or searching fruitlessly for his tomb in the cathedral.

We learned about a phantom actor who disrupts performances at a local theatre (presumably he died many times on stage while he was alive), and a white lady who leaves the faint odour of lavender in her wake. Disappointingly, Anne of Cleves, who stayed here briefly, doesn't make an appearance which would have let us see what Henry VIII had against her.

Anyway she's buried in Westminster Abbey, along with Dickens, so I like to think they get together occasionally when the spirit takes them.

Like us, some of you will have had lunch in a pub now and then during the holiday season. Generally advertised as 'freshly cooked and home-made', the meals conjure up a cheery, ruddy-cheeked farmer's wife wearing a sensible pinny, her sleeves rolled-up, dusting the flour off her hands as she puts the finishing touches to steak and kidney pie.

Reality can be more prosaic, and the chef is sometimes seen loitering round the back door, cigarette in hand, wearing a grubby striped apron, and flicking the ash into a large tin which used to contain industrial quantities of home-made gravy or a plastic container which once held fresh cut frozen chips.

But hopefully that's a rare occurrence, and not long ago we did enjoy a very good, genuinely freshly cooked meal in the café of a local farm shop. We'd taken a couple of our grandchildren up to our favourite blackberrying spot in the Cotswolds. This involved a round trip of about 200



Statue of John Betjeman at St Pancras station. Photo: Peter Weis

miles in heavy rain and in retrospect we would have done better to venture into the countryside closer to their home in Kent. Anyway, it seems that summer really did come early this year and we discovered that the first luscious crop of berries had long gone to be replaced by a second, smaller crop. Though we managed to harvest two kilos of fruit, it was less than half last year's haul.

Blackberry wine

So the shades of autumn are creeping upon us, with the smell of bonfires in the air. But life without our changing seasons would be very dull. John Betjeman understood that the melancholy of autumn is as important to our lives as the frivolousness of spring. There was a lovely programme about him recently, full of film of him striding about London in a battered hat and shabby raincoat making the case for the places he wanted to save from the wrecking ball. He didn't win them all of course, and the Euston Arch was demolished (although it seems it's on its way back) but he (with a little help from the new Battersea Society) was at the forefront of the successful campaign to save Albert Bridge. So let's raise a glass of blackberry wine to Mr Betjeman.

See you next time. Mind how you go.

Planning Matters: Vauxhall bus station is under threat

Make your views known, says Monica Tross

Do you remember Vauxhall transport before the bus station?

Ten years ago catching a bus at Vauxhall or changing to the underground or the train station was a dreary and unsettling business. Many of us took other routes home after dark in order to avoid it and during the day stood on windy corners hoping it wouldn't rain before the bus came.

Opinions of the Ove Arup designed superstructure may differ but most of the people we've

heard from agree that the bus station works. It makes changing between buses and other forms of transport easy

and it is mostly undercover. It is not surprising that it is second only to Hammersmith in the amount of use it gets with Ove Arup reporting that when they designed it there were over 2000 buses, 730 overground trains and 712 tube trains arriving each day.

Now the interchange is under threat and we have linked arms with our neighbours in the Vauxhall Society to make our views known to TfL, Lambeth Council, our own council, our MP and our neighbours in the Clapham and Wandsworth Societies. Check out the Vauxhall Society website which gives our letter in full (as does our own website of course) and if you agree with us, do sign the Vauxhall Society's petition.



CLAPHAM JUNCTION STATION

A new entrance, changes to the main entrance, lifts and extended platforms all make the station more accessible – but it isn't perfect yet. What would you like to see changed or improved? For a start I'd like better staffing at the ticket offices – and perhaps a return to an information window rather than being held up while someone plans a rail tour of southern England. And what do you think of the toilet facilities – that is if you have ever found them. Please email your suggestions and comments to planning@batterseasociety.org.uk

COVENT GARDEN MARKET

A fuller application has been made for the redevelopment of the market, 2014/2810. In our view it is not yet sufficiently detailed and includes worrying proposals for increased height and a grudging amount of affordable housing. Check out our full response via the planning section of the Society's website.

PRINCE OF WALES/TESCO, BATTERSEA BRIDGE ROAD

It does seem that Tesco is almost wilfully going out of its way to estrange its neighbours. The latest instance was a licensing application for seven day operation 6.00am to 11.00pm, Tesco having previously assured neighbours that they wouldn't open until 7.00. They subsequently changed it to a 7.00am start but we remain opposed to such long opening hours in a residential area,

especially on a Sunday. The licensing committee meets to decide this on 23 September. The application for an ATM in the façade of the building was refused on the grounds of damage to a building of heritage significance. Tesco appealed against the decision and regrettably the Inspector has allowed the appeal, see his report at 2014/1744.

CONSULTATIONS AND UPDATES

An application has been made for the major redevelopment of 'Battersea Park East' which includes a new pedestrian link between Battersea Park Road and Queenstown Road station with a public square, cafes, housing, offices and a rebuilt primary school. See 2014/4665. The Old Imperial Laundry application is in limbo waiting further information (2013/6478). Heliport House (2013/6052) was approved much to the dismay of many, not least ourselves, however the owners are bankrupt and the site is up for sale.

Finally a big thank you to the members in the Battersea Square and Battersea Park Conservation Areas who offered advice on their area. It would be good to hear from members in other conservation areas who could offer local knowledge from time to time.

Please contact us at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk. We hope to hear from you about bus and train stations, conservation areas and any other planning and transport concerns you may have.

Demolition has started on the south-west chimney of Battersea Power Station and will take five months. A visually identical replacement should be in place by summer 2015. Demolition and replacement of the other three chimneys will start once the new chimney is half-way complete.



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'Feeding their children comes before feeding themselves'

Carol Rahn describes the work of the Wandsworth Foodbank in its first year

In May 2013, Wandsworth Foodbank opened in partnership with Trussell Trust, the largest network of foodbanks in the UK. In March, Wandsworth Foodbank commissioned a study of its first seven months. The findings underscore the importance of the lifeline offered by foodbanks in times of crisis and raise the question of whether too much of the primary safety net is shifting from government to charitable organisations.

In seven months, the Wandsworth Foodbanks at St. Mark's on Battersea Rise, and in churches or church-owned premises in the Doddington Estate, Putney, Roehampton and Tooting have provided emergency food to 1,551 people, of whom 652 (42%) are children. Over twenty-two tonnes of food has been collected and 300 volunteers help run the foodbanks.

Voucher

To receive food, an individual – a guest, as Foodbank calls them – must be given a voucher by one of the Foodbank's 154 partners. These partners are local care professionals such as teachers, GPs, social workers and advice agency staff.

The mission of the Foodbank is to provide food only to tide over in a crisis, and help guests see where they can get help to untangle the underlying cause of their food shortage. One voucher means enough food for the household for three days and three vouchers is the most any household can be given. In fact, on average each household received 1.6 vouchers, meaning most people come only once or twice.

The exceptional reliance on a foodbank – and many guests come to the door with trepidation and embarrassment – does not mean that hunger is anything new. The report supplements statistical data with interviews of 25 guests – three-quarters of these related that they had often been forced to get by without enough to eat in the past 12 months. Paying the rent comes before food; feeding their children comes before

feeding themselves.

Nationwide trends included in the report reflect this squeeze on food. As of 2012, the poorest 10% of households spent 40% of their income on food, housing and energy. This is up 9% from 2003. (In contrast, the richest 10% spend only 17% of their income on these items.) At the same time, while the spending of the poorest households on housing and energy has increased, their spending on food has remained constant, although food costs have been rising since 2007. In other words, the poorest households are buying less food and they are often substituting cheaper, less nutritious food in what they do buy.

Precarious

This situation has been exacerbated by the Welfare Reform Act of 2012. The introduction of new programmes and phasing out of others, changed eligibility criteria and benefit levels – all of this frequently translates into empty pockets for recipients, whether because of delay, sanction or permanent reduction. The interviews conducted as part of the study reveal many different life stories, but with the common thread of precarious financial circumstances, easily tipped into crisis by even small changes.

Thus, a full 42% of Foodbank guests are referred because of reduced benefits, whether due to delay or change. Yet interviews

revealed that those referred to the Foodbank are generally unaware of sources of emergency financial support. A Freedom of Information request from the *Guardian* revealed that although Wandsworth received £950,000 in 2013 – 14 for its Discretionary Social Fund (DSF), it spent only £152,000 (16%).

Onerous

Today, this Fund is only available to benefits recipients. The Wandsworth Foodbank recommends that Job Centre Plus staff proactively inform all clients experiencing benefit delay of the relevant Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) provisions available and help people through the onerous application processes. Wandsworth Foodbank also recommends that Wandsworth Council revise its DSF criteria so that people in need can more easily access this fund and that DWP revise its procedures so that when people are moved from one programme to another there is no break in assistance.

Families with dependent children make up 40% of the Foodbank's guests, and of these, nearly two-thirds are single-parent households. More surprisingly perhaps, 47% of guests are single. The number of single people coming to the Foodbank has risen dramatically since its early days and continues to rise. Single guests are also likely to have applied for help elsewhere but been turned down.

Over the seven months of the study, the percentage of white guests has steadily declined, from 68% in May 2013 to 40% in March 2014, while the percentage of black guests has grown to 42% and is now the largest ethnic group receiving help. Comprising only 11% of the overall population of Wandsworth, black people are disproportionately represented among those turning to the Foodbank.

Residence is not a criterion in offering a Foodbank voucher, but 75% of those who have

Reason for needing Foodbank	% of guests
Reduced benefits	42%
Low income	22%
Debt	9%
Unemployment	6%
Homelessness	4%
Domestic violence	3%
Other	14%

used the Foodbank live in Wandsworth. Of those living in Battersea, 48% live in Latchmere, 17% in Shaftesbury, 14% in Queenstown, 13% in St. Mary's Park, 4% in Northcote, 3% in Fairfield and 3% in Balham.

Strengthened

Referral partners and guests alike give high marks to the service provided by Wandsworth Foodbank, which says it is 'pleased to be part of a local community response helping people in crisis', but at the same time underscores that 'we strongly believe that the local and national social security system should be strengthened to continue to ensure it is the primary safety net for all Wandsworth residents and our



recommendations reflect this.'

In addition to the recommendations that would ensure fewer breaks in benefit coverage, the report asks Wandsworth Council and local

Volunteers at Wandsworth Foodbank

businesses to become Living Wage employers.

wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk

London identities

An art project takes schoolchildren into the past. Zoe McLain explains

How do children learn about the history of their city and how their family and their culture fit in to it? A collaboration between an art gallery and a museum can be a creative learning tool.

Between March and July this year, Wandsworth Museum and the Mall Galleries worked with 50 year 5 children from Falconbrook Primary School in Battersea and Rosendale Primary School in Dulwich to explore the diversity of their local communities and their own family history.

Famous

The children researched their own or a friend's family history through conversations and looking at personal objects. They then learned about famous people from London's past including John Archer, London's first black mayor and Olanuda Equiano, an ex-slave who was a central figure in the abolitionist movement. In school they created an enormous mural exploring London and Londoners' identities featuring places and people who they felt were significant to the city or to themselves. These varied from Big Ben to Battersea tower



Children from Falconbrook Primary School with their mural at the Mall Galleries.

blocks and from London's Mayor to the children's grandparents.

Back in Wandsworth Museum the groups took part in workshops where they explored the lives of five migrants to Wandsworth over the past 2000 years: a Roman, a Huguenot, a Jewish child from Poland, a Victorian laundry maid from Ireland and a nurse who arrived on the Windrush from Jamaica in 1948. The pupils enjoyed games demonstrating the philosophy of 1920s Battersea MP Sharpurji Saklatvala, who campaigned for the rights of working people.

The next part of the project was in the Mall Galleries, in Westminster. The children travelled to the galleries for a day of arts activities exploring Westminster's diverse history. The children created their own campaigns based on a need they felt existed in their communities, ranging

from providing tree houses for homeless people to encouraging more environmentally aware actions. The classes took a guided tour around a portraiture exhibition and created paintings of the people they would like to involve in their campaign.

In July, Mall Galleries put on an exhibition of all the art work made while at the Galleries as well as the huge murals made at the schools. All the children, their

teachers and many parents came along to celebrate the children's achievements. This was a great opportunity for the pupils from both schools to get to know each other and to show off their art work. Many of the children said how much they had enjoyed the project and staff commented on how much they had learned about the history of the boroughs.

'I enjoyed this project as we went on lots of trips and I learnt a lot of important facts. I loved it,' said Zeinab from Falconbrook. Milly from Rosendale commented that 'the best thing is learning about all the different cultures in London.' And Bilal from Falconbrook said, 'I enjoyed working on London because it's where I live.'

Wandsworth Museum and The Mall Galleries hope to build on this project and work together again in 2015. *Zoe McLain is the learning and access manager for Wandsworth Museum.*

Great Bus-less Journeys No 1 : From Clapham Junction to Clapham Junction

Mike Roden and friends ride the Overground (with the odd diversion on the way)



Dangling high above the river, we swayed as the wind caught our frail craft. Two of my companions had their eyes shut tight – one might have been praying or was perhaps cursing his folly on joining this expedition, the third smiled back at me, enjoying the experience to the full.

(Don't worry, all will be revealed later). In the spirit of explorers we board the Overground at Clapham Junction just before ten. This merging of different sections of line into an orbital whole has proved remarkably efficient – it's still too crowded during rush hours, but new and longer trains are in the pipeline.

Industrial

The bench style seating means that my view is somewhat blocked by the heads of those seated opposite, and picking out interesting landmarks is difficult. However, much of the Overground passes through industrial and development areas, and close to the line there isn't a lot to see.

We cross the river over the Grade II listed Battersea Railway Bridge. This is the old West London line which goes via Imperial Wharf (opened in 2009) West Brompton and Shepherd's Bush to Willesden Junction. This sprawling, unprepossessing station has been here since 1866, but it's hard to find much to say about it. It was called Tenway Junction – the site of the suicide of Ferdinand Lopez in Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister*. And in 1910 a collision between two passenger trains killed three people and injured forty.

We forge onwards into north-west London. The built-up area round West Hampstead station was once

a tiny rural hamlet with a scattering of houses known as West End. The coming of the railway changed all that.

Our short stop at Finchley Road and Frognal station reminds me that although Mrs Thatcher was the local MP, she preferred to live in Chelsea and then Dulwich. However, the area has its fair share of famous residents. Charles Dickens wrote Martin Chuzzlewit while staying in Finchley, and Spike Milligan and George Michael were born here. And General De Gaulle spent two years in Frognal during the war.

At weekends and on bank holidays Hampstead Heath station was used by up to 100,000 people per day. It's just a ten minute walk to Hampstead Ponds and Keats House is nearby. You can see the tree under which the poet is said to have written *Ode to a Nightingale*. While staying here he fell in love with Fanny Brawne, the girl next door. Soon afterwards he took himself off to Rome to die tragically, but romantically, from tuberculosis.

John Wesley

The name Gospel Oak derives from a local oak tree, under which John Wesley is reputed to have preached some of his outdoor sermons. The oak is recorded on an 1801 map, but vanished sometime after that. Local celebrity Michael Palin organised the planting of a new oak in the late nineties but the tree did not survive.

A couple more stops and then we disembark at Highbury and Islington and stroll up Holloway Road, which contains more than its share of small cafés full of builders eating breakfast, and there are a number of fascinating

junk shops. We reach the elegant church of St Mary Magdalene which was built in 1814 and then head back towards the station in search of a coffee shop.

Refreshed, we get on our way, and head south through Canonbury and Dalston Junction. The Domesday Book records Haggerston as Hergotestane, possibly of Viking origin. Nowadays foreign newcomers are more commonly from South East Asia than Scandinavia, and this area is noted for its Vietnamese restaurants. At Hoxton we disembark once more. It was on Hogsden (sic) Fields in September 1598 that Ben Jonson killed an actor called Gabriel Spenser in a duel. At the Old Bailey the playwright proved his ability to read a bible verse. This allowed him to be tried in a church court, and thus avoid the death penalty. His thumb was branded instead!

We've left the train to visit The Cornershop in Bethnal Green, a short walk away. Artist Lucy Sparrow works mainly with felt and wool, often creating over-sized soft versions of existing objects. In this case she's taken over an empty shop for a month, and stocked it with felt replicas of all the goods usually on sale in a local convenience store. It's engaging and funny and everything – from sweets, sandwiches, soup cans, detergent to newspapers is weirdly convincing. [Note: *The shop closed at the end of August*]

It's lunchtime, and we walk back to the Geffrye Museum, just a short walk from Hoxton station. The main body of the museum, which opened in 1914 is housed in the almshouses of the Ironmongers' Company, built



in 1714. The museum itself shows the changing style of the English middle-class domestic interior in a series of eleven displayed period rooms from 1600 to the present day. During December the rooms are decorated as they would have been at Christmas. There is an excellent café here which is where we spend the next hour.

Docklands

Another short trip on the Overground through Shoreditch and Whitechapel brings us to Shadwell and into Docklands. We're now going off-piste for a while, and we transfer to the Docklands Light Railway for the next stage of our journey. Many of the station names recall London's maritime history, real or imagined. Limehouse, for example, where a large Chinese community was established. The area was notorious for opium dens in the 19th century – at least according to writers like Dickens, Conan Doyle and Sax Rohmer.

Poplar was the location in 1921, of the Poplar Rates Rebellion, led by the Mayor, George Lansbury, who was later elected as leader of the Labour Party. In the first daylight bombing raid of World War II in June 1917, a squadron of Gotha bombers targeted the East End. A direct hit on a Poplar primary school killed eighteen children, sixteen of them aged between four and six.

Blackwall was an important centre for shipbuilding and repairs until the 1980s, with a long seafaring history. Walter Raleigh had a house here, as did Horatio Nelson.

East India station recalls the dock

which was once the landing place for commodities such as tea, spices, indigo, silk and Persian carpets. These were the first London docks to close, in 1967. By the mid-eighties as containerisation took hold and traffic moved downstream to Tilbury, London's once thriving docks were part of history.

We disembark at Royal Victoria and walk to the Emirates Air Line (the Thames cable car). Since it opened two years ago there has been a steady decline in use and the queue is very small here, despite being the middle of the holiday season. During the rush hour this kilometre long journey takes five minutes, today it's a more leisurely ten, and we're soon 90 metres above the river, with great views of Canary Wharf and the O2.

Swaying

There is a certain, slightly unsettling swaying in the wind as we reach the top, but two of us keep taking pictures while the other two keep their eyes closed. We make it safe to *terra firma*, and stride past the rather longer queues here on the Greenwich side of the river, safe in the knowledge that we will never have to do that again!

The Jubilee line whisks us back to Canada Water and the Overground. Our diversion has missed out two stations – Wapping and Rotherhithe, and we don't get to travel through Brunel's tunnel under the Thames, but you can't have everything! Our stop at Surrey Quays once known as Surrey Docks, reminds me that when Battersea Park was being laid out, a vast amount of material excavated from here was used to raise the level of the site.

Left to right: The Overground roundel; Mr Pecksniff from Martin Chuzzlewit, by Charles Dickens, illustrated by Solomon Eytinge Jr; Ridley Road Market, Dalston Junction; Sir Walter Raleigh by Nicholas Hilliard; the Emirates Air Line; the Falcon, Clapham Junction

We're now on the homeward stretch, through Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and Clapham. I travelled this way on the bus in 2012, just before this stretch of line opened. You can read all about that 345 journey in *Battersea Matters* Winter 2012. That trip took nearly an hour, today we're back in Clapham Junction in about 15 minutes.

That's progress, I think, and sufficient reason to pop into the Falcon for a celebratory drink. Cheers!

COMING UP THIS AUTUMN

- **20 – 21 September: London Open House weekend. Katherine Low Settlement, Battersea Arts Centre and the Pump House Gallery will be open**
- **20 September: St Mary's Church fair**
- **4 – 5 and 11 – 12 October: Wandsworth Artists Open House**
- **23 October: Battersea's Big Society of the First World War. Battersea Society talk at St Mary's church.**

‘You think about it all the time’

Jenny Sheridan asks two of the new councillors what drives them

On 22 May we elected the new Wandsworth council. Many of the new councillors had never stood for public office before. Why did they decide to give up their time to the borough? And what kind of people are they?

I spoke to two of them, Conservative Jane Dodd and Labour’s Sally-Anne Ephson.

Jane Dodd, 45, represents Northcote ward and has lived in Battersea for over 20 years. Why did she want to become a councillor? ‘I was in the Territorial Army for 20 years and



reached the rank of major. When I left I wanted to continue doing my civic duty and giving something back to society. It’s quite similar in some ways: you’re trying to make things better, you’re serving a community and it needs similar organisational skills. I expect the time commitment to be similar too – lots of evenings and weekends mainly and you think about it all the time.’

Actor

Before standing for the council Jane had little involvement with politics. She trained as a solicitor (‘The law has always paid my mortgage.’) and then as an actor. She has combined the two by presenting training videos for the College of Law and has presented the Lord Mayor’s Show for the BBC, wearing her TA uniform. She has also appeared in a TV advertisement for Macmillan Cancer Care – ironic, she says, as she is currently making a good recovery from a breast cancer operation at St George’s, where she had ‘excellent care’.

Jane is on the planning and licensing committees of the council and is also involved in Active Wandsworth. She is keen on fitness

and admires the new free gym equipment placed prominently on Clapham Common by Lambeth Council. Having a dog, a miniature schnauzer called Rosy, means she takes frequent walks. While she has a car she only uses it when essential and prefers to cycle. Cycling safety will be one of the areas she hopes to pursue in her new role. Another is litter; ‘one of my bugbears is the mess of cigarette ends outside shops and restaurants. I’d like to see children and adults being educated on taking care of their own environment.’

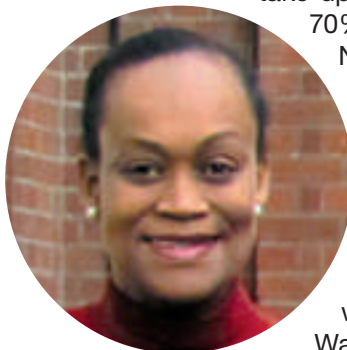
JDodd@wandsworth.gov.uk

High streets

With her acting background, Jane is interested in the arts. She will present a reviews programme for Wandsworth Radio when that gets off the ground and she takes a keen interest in the plans for a Northcote community bookshop. ‘I’d love a cinema here too. It would be great to have a cinema you could walk to.’

What does she hope to achieve on the council? ‘Just to make things a bit better, really. I want to protect our high streets and shops. It’s interesting that so few applied for business rate relief of £1,000 a year for two years. We’ve been working on that and

take-up is now up to 70% of shops on Northcote Road’.



Sally-Anne Ephson,

46 who represents Queenstown ward has lived in Wandsworth ‘since

I was a baby.’ After 30 years in Battersea she has moved to be near St George’s Hospital as she has medical needs due to sickle cell anaemia. She used to work as an administrator in the hospital but health problems forced her to stop and she now considers being a councillor is her job.

Sally-Anne finds being a councillor

‘quite daunting. I’m different from the others. Lots of them went to public school. And there’s my disability though it’s not a visible one. I do think it makes it easier though to get along with people. Many people see councillors as ambitious and just wanting to become MPs. And politicians have a bad reputation.’ She is beginning to make links with community groups and charities and would like to become a school governor.

Active

Why did she stand for the council? ‘My dad was very active in the Labour Party and our home was always full of leaflets. He wanted my sister and me to take over but I decided to campaign for sickle cell instead. Then I went on a Sickle Cell Society course about being active in your community and I realised that politics was a way of making a difference.’

Encouraged

I volunteered with both Tooting and Battersea Labour parties and I was encouraged to stand by the Labour women councillors. Campaigning is really hard. You put your heart and soul into it and it is devastating if you lose.’

Sally-Ann serves on the licensing and education committees and is also on the grants overview sub-committee. She wants the public to be more involved in local politics and also hopes that MPs will listen more to councillors, who are nearer to the grassroots.

‘Being a councillor takes up all my thoughts. It has even changed how I shop: it’s in Wandsworth now. In my ward there is a lot of casework, especially around social housing, with maintenance and repairs. My surgeries are very busy.’

SEphson@wandsworth.gov.uk

Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale their infinite variety

Sue Leigh introduces the University of the Third Age

People who are retired or semi-retired have a lifetime of experience and a wealth of knowledge to share. The University of the Third Age (U3A) is based on this idea. Set up in France in 1973, it is now an international organisation which provides opportunities for people to meet, learn and enjoy social activities.

Local organisations, such as the lively and flourishing Wandsworth U3A, set up small self help groups in a variety of topics matching up members' expertise and interests.

Wandsworth U3A has a membership of over 300 people from all parts of the borough. We meet either in small focus groups (astronomy, spoken foreign languages, current affairs, crafts are just a few), to visit theatres or art galleries or to go on rambles in the countryside. These small groups usually take place in members' homes and it is often the individual members who research the topics. In addition there are monthly meetings for all members where information and news is exchanged and a speaker is booked.

Research

As well as local groups, a wide range of activities is available with other London U3As. Members can take part in summer schools and study days both nationally and in London. Shared learning projects are another feature where members can apply to do short-term research, usually for about three months, for local or London-based institutions. Recently research has been carried out for the British Library, Kings College and the Museum of London. With an understandable interest in Wandsworth's past, we have a thriving local history group. We have also been researching into a number of projects locally.

A working partnership between Battersea Arts Centre and Wandsworth U3A started two years

ago when BAC asked if we would be interested in working on the archives in their basement. Very soon a small group of people was beavering away going through the boxes of programmes, leaflets, flyers etc under the supervision of the archivist Foteini Aravani. These documents went back to the origins of the Arts Centre and dust had certainly settled! As a result, much of the archive collection is now digitally converted.

War effort

This was followed by research into the role of Battersea Town Hall during the First World War for an exhibition in the BAC. The main focus was on the Town Hall's role in recruitment, entertainment for the war effort and adjudication for non-combat requests. However it was the stories of the people of Battersea that grabbed the group's attention. The microfilms of the *South Western Star* at Battersea Heritage Services provided a rich source of material. We were enthralled by the articles on local servicemen, the struggles of their families, and also sadly the loss of life - as well as local grievances about the new restrictions on drinking hours!

Now another group, under the guidance of the BAC's Rose Alexander, is researching for unsung heroes for the Our Good Neighbour project (*Battersea Matters* summer 2014). This is proving to be more difficult as, by the very definition of 'unsung' heroes, people who have done something of value but who are not recognised at the time tend not to be reported in newspapers. However both BAC and Battersea library's Heritage Services are extremely helpful in providing ideas for resources for research and a few names are slowly emerging out of the mists of time. This project will form part of a celebration of the variety of people who have contributed towards Battersea's heritage.

Another project Wandsworth U3A is involved with is at the Pump House Gallery in Battersea Park. Hannah Conroy, its curator, asked if a small team from Wandsworth U3A would like



U3A members meet up at BAC

to take part in a series of workshops leading up to the gallery's winter Open Exhibition called 'The Trouble With Painting Today'. Hannah is aiming to produce a community-focused venture with Wandsworth U3A members who share a passion and some experience or knowledge of art.

The group who assembled for the first meeting at the end of August certainly had decided views on art and also first-hand experience of either creative art or the history of art. The five workshops, followed by a session on displaying, will introduce the issues of curating art exhibitions. Eventually the team, under Hannah's mentorship, will select pictures from submissions by local, national and international artists, in response to an Open Call press release.

The course will introduce the group to the process of putting on an exhibition, a rare opportunity for lay people. Why is one picture selected and not another? Individual taste, whether the picture is liked or disturbs the viewer are all contributory factors. The U3A curatorial team will choose pictures which they consider best fit with the question implied by the exhibition title: what is the trouble with painting today? They will then decide on the display of the selected paintings in the gallery.

Sue Leigh is chair of Wandsworth U3A

*The Trouble with Painting Today
Pump House Gallery
30 November – 14 December.*

To join U3A, email wandsworthU3A@hotmail.com or phone 020 8878 5783

*Monthly meeting, 2pm, third Monday of each month, Penfold Centre, Neville Close, Wandsworth.
Membership costs £16, couples £28*

Riots at Clapham Junction

It is three years since the riots of August 2011. Three people who watched them happen describe the events, their aftermath and what should happen to prevent a recurrence

JANE ELLISON MP

On that Monday, 8 August 2011, as I walked home down Falcon Road, there was a palpable tension in the air. Even though disturbances had already scarred areas like Tottenham, no-one, including the police, really saw it coming in Battersea. The police at Clapham Junction station around 7pm confirmed there were already trouble spots. Determined to do something practical, I went door-to-door along Falcon Road and Battersea High Street, passing on the police information to the small shops and takeaways unaware of the threat.

As night fell, I witnessed much of the looting first-hand - the sight of a young man going past with a stolen TV balanced on the bars of a Boris Bike will live with me forever! As will the young girl calling her friend and asking what size trainers she took. What struck me at the time, borne out by the hundreds of court cases which followed, was that many looters were not local, with gangs arriving from outside the borough. What was stolen from Clapham Junction and Lavender Hill was mainly designer goods, shoes and electronics with, famously, Waterstones left untouched. It was greed, not need, for most.

Common sense

But the next day, the good people of Battersea responded. I was out early in the morning with the Council leader as, magically, the 'Broom Army' began to assemble, eager to reclaim their streets. I liaised between the police and Council and, thankfully, common sense trumped health and safety concerns! The Broom Army became a national icon of community spirit, the Prime Minister describing them as the 'best of British'.

In the days after, we had the emergency debate, and the Government announced support for looted businesses. I hand-delivered packs of information; most businesses proved resilient, but sadly a handful never reopened. Some struggled with the archaic requirements of the Riot Damages

Act, another lesson. Some local employers offered work placements, the Council undertook a comprehensive review, Big Local came to SW11 and, phoenix-like, the famous Party Shop rose from the ashes. The police knew their reputation was badly dented, but began to restore it with hundreds of successful prosecutions.

The reasons behind the riots were complex and, arguably, not the same in every area. In ours, I think opportunism was the biggest factor; some, not all, local young people joined in, unaware or uncaring of the consequences of their actions on hardworking shopkeepers. Creating job opportunities is important, and Battersea's youth unemployment is well down on 2011. The police have also succeeded in reducing crime across London, and in Wandsworth.

The criminality of that August night was dreadful to witness, but the defiantly wonderful response to it made me proud to be Battersea's MP.

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ROBERT MUSGRAVE

Monday 8 August

On the way back from Devon with a group from Providence House, I received a text saying that according to social network information, riots would begin at Clapham Junction at around eight pm and I should avoid the area. Taking a back way through Wandsworth, we arrived on Plough Road to see a herd of youths marching furiously and then attacking the shuttered storefront of a local shop. There were girls among them but no faces I recognised.

We closed the youth club and I left for home. On the news I saw graphic images of looting on St Johns Road, so I went back to Providence House. I watched some youths looking through their 'trophies' by the side of the road and then one of them came over and asked if I was police - 'No, I'm just making sure my youth club is safe.' He looked from behind his red bandana with a sort of recognition: 'I used

to come here as a kid. No-one will trouble this building.' His companion called my name and wandered off. Perhaps there is some sort of twisted comfort here.

Trusting the building's security to God and to some youth villain's moral code, I drove slowly round the estate then up to Clapham Junction. Along Lavender Hill the whole shopping parade was smashed, with large scale looting; later, the Party Shop was ablaze.

Tuesday 9 August

When I arrived at Providence House I was relieved to find the building secure. The corner shop had been looted but the rest of the parade - the Red Cross shop, the cafes, the undertakers and the motorbike repair shop - was untouched. This was a day of talking and hearing eye witness accounts. Several people had been there as audience to a spectacle of theft, of aggression, of destruction. I confess I succumbed to this new kind of tourism. Among the glaziers and carpenters boarding up it was a weirdly peaceful and friendly scene. But shop after shop was smashed; hardly a store escaped along St John's Road.

Wednesday 10 August

I spoke with a young man today who had been present during the lootings. He commented that the looters hadn't stopped to think that when some of these shops are forced to close and the Junction declines as a business concern, it will be their mum or brother who no longer has a job.

Friday 12 August

Today Providence House hosted a forum for young people's views about the riots. Maybe 40 young people were there, almost half of whom had walked down the road from the mosque. Clearly they had not participated in the lootings and some of these young Muslims spoke very eloquently, expressing coherent views on justice. Equally clearly, some of the young people present had been there on Monday night and may have been more than bystanders. Clearly they

had not grasped the moral enormity of what had happened. In the future we should hold more of these forums with young people.

Thirty years ago almost to the weekend there were two nights of riots in Battersea. I can distinctly recall three features among the rioters then: deliberate confrontation with the police, underlying resentment against authority and the chance to loot. Perhaps it is a sign of how things have moved on that it is the latter that is now most prominent.

These extracts are from an account written by Robert Musgrave on Sunday 14 August 2011. Asked for his comments now, he writes:

A number of things have happened since the disturbances that may make them less likely to recur:

Physical changes at Clapham Junction town centre have made it a more modern open space

The dominant local gang is less of a force, either through police targeting or natural decline

Efforts from different bodies to understand and to help build networks

Eventually, the re-development of the Winstanley and York Road estates will dilute social issues.

On the other hand, there is not as much social togetherness as there might be; groups and classes live alongside each other rather than together.

Young people in particular do not feel they are stakeholders and this feeling of disconnection can prompt unsocial activity.

Having said that, Battersea continues to be a great place to live and work.

Robert Musgrave MBE is a youth and community worker at Providence House youth club on Falcon Road. He has worked at the club for 40 years.

WILL MARTINDALE

The evening of Monday 8 August 2011 started like any other. I left work, taking the train from Waterloo. At Clapham Junction, the atmosphere was tense. The mobile phone shops had their grilles down, the bar across the road was closed. Large groups of teenagers were hanging around,



hoods up. Commuters hurried home, including me.

On TV, I watched hundreds of looters tearing apart our local shops. Out of my kitchen window I watched a helicopter circle above, filming the chaos that was streamed live across the nation. I felt sick. The Party Store was on fire. For thousands of Battersea residents, it was a frightening night.

Dozens of shops were wrecked. Across London, over 2,000 arrests would eventually be made and hundreds jailed. The police and the courts were right to punish those convicted for crimes that damaged our community, but it falls on all of us to stop it happening again.

We live in the best-educated constituency in the country, and one of the richest. The average asking price of a home has passed the million pound mark. How could riots happen here?

High on the list of explanations was opportunism. It was the school holidays, the evenings were warm, and the police were elsewhere. Another cause, a much more complex cause, is inequality.

The Kinghan Report, commissioned by Wandsworth Council in the wake of the riots, stated

that Battersea's Winstanley Estate is in the one per cent of worst places to grow up as a child in the UK. Being born on the wrong side of the tracks can affect your education, health and job opportunities.

After the riots, a series of positive policies were put in place: compensation for businesses; mentoring programmes for young people; a £100m

regeneration that will rebuild much of the Winstanley Estate.

Battersea's community groups, many of which my father remembers from the 1950s and 60s, remain strong. But for all the fine work of volunteers, Battersea's stubborn deprivation remains, and is becoming more difficult to tackle. Last year, the local Foodbank, at St Mark's Church, served 1,551 local people

with food parcels. Two in five were children.

Battersea's rise and regeneration has been swift, but it will always remain incomplete if we leave behind some of our neighbours.

Job opportunities

If the riots was Battersea at its worst, the clean-up, just 12 hours later was Battersea at its best. Friends and neighbours, from all Battersea's communities, stood together.

Young people in north and south Battersea should share the same schools, green spaces, and job opportunities. New developments, particularly those at Nine Elms, must be mixed, integrated communities.

At the time of the riots, I was working for a French bank, BNP Paribas. The French term used for rioters is 'jeunes de banlieue', literally 'youths from suburbs'. It's a damning indictment of Paris; poor suburbs far away from the jobs and cultural life of the centre.

London and Battersea are better than that.

Will Martindale is Labour's parliamentary candidate for Battersea. www.willtwin.org.uk



Can the school run be fun?

Walking or cycling to school is good for children as well as the environment, says Susie Morrow

We care for our children, don't we? We keep them safe from harm by putting them in as solid a car as we can get and by driving them to the school gate each day. What thanks do we get? Grumpy, whiny kids and a bad start to the day. Perhaps something's not quite right here.

Where has all the freedom gone?

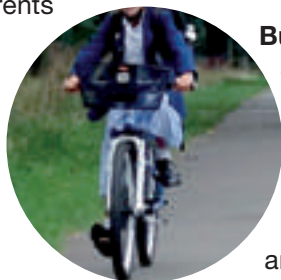
For some time now every generation of children in Britain has had less freedom than the previous one. Think back to what you were allowed to do as a child. Then think back to what your parents and grandparents did... The streets now are just not as safe as they used to be. There are many reasons for this, but we can do something about it. We know it doesn't have to be like this, since other countries do things quite differently. We can give our children opportunities to experience independence and autonomy – supervised at first, of course – and give them the chance to be able to recognise and deal with the dangers on the street that they will have to face sooner or later. Walking, cycling, scooting or using public transport for the school run is a great way to start.

Most journeys to school are short, and many can be walked in about the

time it takes to drive. You can talk to the children, they can meet and chat with their friends and everyone is happier.

Free range kids are healthy kids

Reduced stress is not the only benefit of leaving the car behind. Even a little gentle exercise has huge benefits for health. One in three Wandsworth children aged 10/11 are currently classified as 'obese' or 'overweight', according to Public Health England. Walking will help prevent this and have life-long benefits.



Busy streets are safe streets

By walking you will also be improving the streets for everyone else. One fewer car means less danger, less air pollution and a more pleasant environment. Busy streets provide lots of eyes and ears to deter crime and anti-social behaviour and give opportunities for people to get to know their neighbours and help create more friendly streets with a sense of community.

If you don't already, give it a go

It can be hard to change a habit, and it's easy to think of reasons not to change how you do things. But with so much to gain, why not give it a

try – you may be surprised at how much fun you have! The start of every school term, or after the mid-term break, is an opportunity for a fresh start – why not take it?

Lots of information and resources are available; I've listed some below.

If you would like to get involved in campaigning locally for safer and more attractive streets for people of all ages, Wandsworth Living Streets would welcome your active support. *Susie Morrow is chair of Wandsworth Living Streets, wandsworthlivingstreets.wordpress.com or @WandsLS on twitter*

*Wandsworth Council organises Walk to School Week
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/downloads/download/163/school_travel_plan*

*Most schools in the borough now have school travel plans in place
schooltravelplans @wandsworth.gov.uk*

Living Streets has a national programme of walk to school activities including Walk once a Week badges: www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school/

Sustrans promotes walking and cycling and campaigns for safer streets: www.sustrans.org.uk/safetoschool

Let me out: How to enjoy the school run, Ann Kenrick, *Lollypop Publishing Ltd, 2009*

Children's independent mobility: a comparative study in England and Germany (1971 – 2010) *Shaw, Watson, et al: www.psi.org.uk/site/news_article/851*