

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2021



PHOTO COMPETITION: THE WINNERS!



11–18 winner and overall winner: Louis Benn, *Fire*

Over 18 winner:
Barbara Callway *Pavarotti's Puddle*

Under 11 winner:
Dylan Benn, *The Red One*



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

FROM THE EDITOR



We have learnt a lot over the past 18 months, haven't we? Meetings, for example, have changed. We know now that they can take place

without actually getting together – the no-meeting meeting. And these video sessions can work very well. But we also realise what we miss – the eye contact across the table, the eye-rolling, the conspiratorial raised eyebrow, the supportive smile. Perhaps especially the chat before and after which is often where ideas are sparked, alliances formed and friendships are made. Getting back to real life meetings has been a real pleasure.

And we've also learnt that meetings don't have to happen in offices or cafes. I've had productive meetings with one or two others in Battersea Park and Wandsworth Common – combining work and exercise. Though those meetings may be shorter as the weather grows colder.

Risks

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? I am developing a theory that the way people approach the risks around exposure to coronavirus is related to the way they feel about things generally. We all think that people who either go out/mingle less or more than we do ourselves are either wildly foolish or unnecessarily scared. People I know who are generally optimistic tend to take public transport more, go out to eat and drink and socialise. Those who often expect the

worst, whether in their relationships or work or family, are much more cautious.

Some sad news: Communitech, the charity which ran free Tech & Tea sessions in Battersea Library to help people learn to use computers and smartphones sensibly and safely, has folded. There are other organisations aiming to do similar work in the borough and I hope to cover them in future issues.

I was recently part of the judging panel for our My Battersea photography competition – a very enjoyable perk of being your chair! By the time you read this I hope you will all have a chance to see and enjoy the exhibition at the Royal College of Art.

*Jenny Sheridan
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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden celebrates the easing of lockdown, the pleasures of reading and cricket

As I write we're at the beginning of September. One of the mildly interesting facts about this month is that it has nine letters in its name and is the ninth month – though it was originally the seventh. It's all the fault of the Romans who renamed the fifth month Quintilis as July in 44BC in honour of Julius Caesar and Sextilis as August after the emperor Augustus in 8 BC. This nudged the succeeding months along by two. If they'd added the extra months at the end instead we'd now be celebrating Christmas on August 25th. It's probably a bit late to set things right.

Anyway you'll know better what September 2021 had to offer than I do at the moment. The best we can hope for October is one of those brief periods of warm, mellow weather that enabled the North American Indians to hunt for a little longer than usual. The phrase 'Indian Summer' was first recorded in an essay written in 1778. After that the clocks go back and perpetual darkness ensues.

We were pleased when traffic calming measures were installed in Battersea Church Road, which runs past our flat. There are now two zebra

crossings and some raised carriageway tables. That's a section of roadway raised up to be flush with the kerbs on both sides to ease crossing for those with wheelchairs, buggies, and mobility scooters. Traffic is supposed to slow down as it approaches.

Unfortunately, the major skip-hire company in South London is based in Wimbledon and starting from 6.30am and continuing throughout the day their trucks loaded with empty skips head past on their way north of the river to serve the needs of the resurgent building trade. Without slowing down much the trucks bounce on and off the raised sections causing their cargo to crash up and down in an appalling cacophony of metal. Traffic calming, hardly – temper calming, certainly not. And we are in a 20mph zone!

Entertained

On a brighter note we had a couple of enjoyable forays outside London this summer – a few days in Chichester, and a week in the Cotswolds with our younger daughter and her family, none

of whom we'd seen in person for over a year. We've entertained and been entertained by friends for meals, and we've eaten out a few times, notably at the excellent Lebanese restaurant Al Phoenic which has replaced Pizza Express on Battersea Bridge Road.

What has become noticeable when dining out these days is that the decline in the use of corks in wine bottles has all but removed the pantomime that used to accompany every meal.

Seemingly designed to intimidate the inexperienced it began with the attempt to choose something from a very long wine list which wouldn't involve taking out a second mortgage. When the bottle was presented for inspection it was best to nod wisely even if you'd forgotten what you ordered. The cork would be deftly pulled, and a small amount poured into your glass for you to 'taste'. You swirled it round the glass and sipped it with a confident nod, 'Not as robust as the '95 but still an interesting little wine...'

Of course you didn't, you simply muttered 'very nice'. The main reason for this this palaver was so the drinker could make sure that the wine wasn't 'corked'. With the arrival of synthetic corks and screw caps that's much rarer and the tasting ritual is dying off gradually. Though there's still a bit of a tendency for the waiting staff to grab at the bottle and try to refill everyone's glass.

Enjoy October, and I hope to be back soon. As ever mind how you go.



PLANNING MATTERS: WE'RE ON A TREADMILL

Shared living spaces – it's not housing for all, Monica Tross points out.

Sometimes it seems we are on a treadmill, not just because the developments come thick and fast but because some sites are subject to changes of plan. We will have spent time assessing one set of proposals, and then the site changes hands and new plans come forward. On some occasions this leads to an improvement. Palmerston Court is one such which, while not without its critics, is an improvement on the consented scheme (2016/5422). Another is a plan for the site of the demolished British Lion pub at 28 Thessaly Road, with the new plans sitting more comfortably alongside Carey Gardens. There is no application yet but we had a helpful consultation last month.

SHARED LIVING SCHEMES

Less happy are new plans for a shared living development – rather than housing for all – on the Big Yellow site on the corner of Lombard and York Road. Greystar (the developer) will be doing further consultation but our response to their first round is on our website. Check out the plans at communitystream.co.uk/en/projects/55-59-lombard-road. You can also see more information about shared living on the Planning home page on our website. Those of you who live nearby will be aware that work on 3 Culvert Road came to a halt in 2019. That site has been bought by a new company who are consulting on their proposals, you will find details at www.culvertroad.whatyouthink.co.uk. The Peabody development at Clapham Junction is another one which runs and runs – latest proposals at burridgegardensphase3.commonplace.is

In cases such as the advertising hoarding at William Henry Walk (green area on riverside, opposite Waitrose



Four members of the Planning Committee in the Turbine Hall: from left to right, Mike Radcliffe, Monica Tross, Liz Walton and Michael Jubb plus in the centre Sarah Banham, head of communities & sustainability at Battersea Power Station.

Work is about to go ahead on the pathway through the site to Arch 42 and the new tube station in Wandsworth Road. We very much like the plans for artwork and 'meanwhile' uses and wrote to tell the Council so – check them out at 2021/3578

CONSERVATION AREAS

The appraisals for Battersea Conservation Areas are well worth a read, find them on the

Council's planning page following the link to Conservation. During lockdown I used them to supplement the Society's walking guide and curated my own architectural tours of Battersea. Good as the appraisals are, most were written well over 10 years ago and that for Battersea Square is still a draft. We are pleased that the Council has appointed a new conservation officer, Lauren Way, who will be reviewing the appraisals.

Nine Elms) the applicants just won't take no for an answer. Since 2013 we have objected to this sign on an attractive piece of open ground alongside the river path. A further extension to the lease was finally refused by the Council earlier this year, following which the applicant then appealed against the refusal and, at the same time, put in a further application, 2021/3125. Our response is on our website. One of the applicant's justifications for their appeal is that they are paying rent to the Council – yet the work involved in processing the appeal must cost the Council unnecessary time and money.

NEW COVENT GARDEN MARKET

This is another one which runs and runs but this is because it is such a large and complex site and, unsurprisingly, the owners have concentrated on the market itself rather than the surrounding residential sites. New plans for the Apex site are being developed and we will be looking at these in detail, see under the Development News tab at www.newcoventgardensites.com for more information.

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Finally the big news for us on the Planning Committee is that we were at last able to meet around a table, courtesy of the Duke of Cambridge in Battersea Bridge Road and, as a further celebration, we are having a small group outing to see inside the Turbine Hall at Battersea Power Station. Perhaps we will be able to check out the Northern Line Extension when we are there. Trains are due to start running this month.

Feedback appreciated: We always like to hear from our members so get in touch at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk



BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS AUTUMN 2021

- **Monday 4 October, 6.30pm**
Three Women Authors of Battersea
Battersea Library, 265 Lavender Hill,
London SW11 1JB
A fascinating talk by local historian
Jeanne Rathbone on three women
authors: Ethel Mannin, Pamela
Hansford Johnson and Penelope
Fitzgerald. This talk is part of Library
Week 2021. More information online
at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
- **Thursday 14 October 6.30 for 7pm**
*The St Johns of Lydiard Tregoze and
Battersea*
Sarah Finch-Crisp, Chair of Friends
of Lydiard Tregoze on the history of
Lydiard House and Church, home to
the St John family for 500 years. They
also held the Manor of Battersea
from 1644 to 1763.
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church
Road.
£5 per person payable in advance
online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
or on the door
- **Thursday 4 November, 6.30 for 7pm**
Men of Arts
A talk by local historian Jeanne
Rathbone on artist and cartoonist HM
Bateman, sculptor Charles Jagger
and Sean O'Casey the Irish dramatist
and memoirist.
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church
Road.
£5 per person payable in advance
online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
or on the door
- **Tuesday 30 November, 6.30 for 7pm**
An Evening with Flanders & Swann
A musical evening with Flanders &
Swann songs performed by actor and
pianist Stefan Bednarczyk, with a
special introduction by Alison Smith-
Swann, widow of Donald Swann.
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church
Road.
£5 per person payable in advance
online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
or on the door

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

SIGN UP ONLINE!

Trustee Carol Rahn urges members to re-join through our new website

We hope Battersea Society members like the look of our new website and find it useful and easy to use. If you've not yet seen it, please do check out www.batterseasociety.org.uk. With the new website, members can sign up online for events, read the latest from our committees or order copies of our walking guide, Discovering Battersea's Open Spaces.

As with the old website, people can join the Battersea Society online. Now, however, members will not need to renew their subscription. Payment will

be taken automatically every 12 months, although members are free to end their membership at any time.

In order to have a complete and up-to-date membership database, we now need existing members to join via the new website. The membership database is used to distribute Battersea Matters and Battersea Insider and all other member communications.

If you are one of the members who tried to renew their subscription online but were unable to, we apologise. Please do try again, as the technical problems have been resolved.

batterseasociety.org.uk

MY BATTERSEA PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

Jenny Sheridan was one of the judging panel

What does Battersea mean to you? And how would you express that in a photograph? That was the challenge met by the entrants in the Battersea Society's first photography competition, My Battersea. There were of course representations of Albert Bridge and the Power Station, those two icons of our area. But also of the park in all seasons, of graffiti, tree-lined streets, children playing, building and demolition. The Battersea we all know and love.

In partnership with the Royal College of Art, and planned for spring 2020, but postponed due to the pandemic, the exhibition of the 30 finalists is the first to be held in their Dyson Gallery since before lockdown. Hannah Lambert, community engagement manager at the RCA, said 'We're delighted to support this project. It's been inspiring to work with the Battersea Society over the past few years and great to now host a fantastic exhibition, as well as support local artists and bolster creative networks'.

Judging which of the many entrants would be chosen to exhibit was a hard but highly enjoyable task. The judges were Hermione Wiltshire, senior lecturer in photography at the RCA, Alan Burles, award-winning street photographer

(and long-term Battersea resident) and myself as chair of the Battersea Society. We were hugely impressed by the high standard of the entries and in the end our choices were determined by artistic and technical excellence as well as a sense of place.

Dramatic

Choosing the prize winners in each age category was even harder, and we were astonished when we discovered that our overall winner was Louis Benne, just 11 years old. His dramatic photograph of a sunset over the Thames echoed in the river and counterpointed by a bonfire on the foreshore is outstanding.

Photography runs in the family. Louis's brother Dylan, aged 9, won the under-11 prize with his photo of Battersea Square. Our over-18 winner was Barbara Callway, whose photo of Pavarotti the bulldog in a puddle made us all smile.

Congratulations to the team of Battersea Society trustees who made this competition happen: Duncan Parish, Sara Milne, Clare Graham and Sally Sellers.

WILD CATS, BABY OTTERS AND HARVEST MICE

The Children's Zoo is passionate about conservation, says head keeper Jamie Baker

Battersea Park Children's Zoo was kept busy with babies during lockdowns: in December 2020 our resident Asian otters gave birth to four cubs, Rishi, Whitty, Tia and Bubble. Just a few months ago Cynthia the Oxford Sandy and Black sow had her first litter of two piglets. Cynthia, a friendly and mischievous pig, is an example of a breed developed at least 300 years ago but now rare. Our visitors can see the piglets chasing each other through the mud or cuddling up for a nap.



The past 18 months have been the most challenging in our history. We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the dedication of our team and the generosity of the public. 100% of our income comes from our visitors. It goes directly back into caring for our animals whilst also supporting overseas conservation efforts. One such is Proyecto titi, a charity dedicated to saving the last 200 pairs of wild cotton-top tamarins in North-West Columbia.

Crowdfunding

Three lockdowns spelt long periods of closure without income. We were very concerned for our future and the conservation work we are passionate about. Luckily, the zoo's management acted fast to protect the zoo, always putting animal welfare first. They and we wanted to ensure that our furry, feathery and scaly residents never felt the effects of the pandemic going on outside of the zoo gates. We also had support from across the globe when we launched a crowdfunding campaign to help us keep the zoo going. We were humbled and emotional at the support we received in raising nearly £30,000. The zoo has come out fighting fit and ready to bounce back with our important work.

Many people aren't aware of just how influential modern zoos are in saving wild habitats and the species they hold. The closures and the lack of government support as well as of visitor income has meant many overseas conservation efforts had to be reduced as zoos fund a lot of that vital work.

The zoo is a part of the British and

Irish Association of Zoos (BIAZA), a professional body representing the best zoos and aquariums in the UK and Ireland. As members of BIAZA we are committed to conserving the natural world through research and conservation programmes. We collaborate with the likes of ZSL London zoo and Chester zoo on some of Europe's most important conservation projects. As part of European Endangered Species Breeding Programmes the zoo supports and breeds several species at risk of extinction, such as ring-tailed lemurs, cotton-top tamarins, Bali starlings and Scottish wildcats. The zoo also actively breeds harvest mice and Western European hedgehogs before releasing them back to the wild to support their dwindling populations in Britain.

Conservation

As a children's zoo, we are dedicated to inspiring the next generation of conservationists. We enjoy welcoming 8,500 school children a year to onsite workshops on the food chain, adaptations, habitats and conservation. Some workshops focus on endangered British wildlife including stag beetles, hedgehogs and harvest mice.

The children's zoo was originally developed as part of the Festival of Britain, and was enlarged in the 1980s. Although popular with the public it was threatened with closure by Wandsworth Council in 2003. After a host of objections (including from the Battersea Society) the lease was taken on by the

Heap family, who still manage it, as well as the New Forest Wildlife Park. They want the zoo to offer an opportunity for youngsters to enjoy, respect and learn about animals.

The zoo was proud to be able to support Sandwich Wildlife Park when it fell victim to the lockdowns and had to close permanently. We rehomed family groups of ring-tailed lemurs, squirrel monkeys and wallabies, providing them with a forever haven in the heart of Battersea Park.

Today the zoo is back open as normal, with visitors able to enjoy our packed schedule of friendly keeper talks, educating crowds of Londoners on the natural world and how we can protect it.

See www.batterseaparkzoo.co.uk for feeding times, accompanied by a talk from our enthusiastic and knowledgeable keepers.

BATTERSEA IN HISTORY

The autumn edition of the *Wandsworth Historian* is a cracker! There's an article on Chatsfield Road, off York Road, using interviews and site visits to explore the pre-and post-war history of a small street and its surrounding area, illustrated with a delightful photo of a VE Day party. A piece on the Festival Pleasure Gardens highlights their successes and failures. And there's a glowing review of our own walking guide, *Discovering Battersea's Open Spaces*. Contact editor Neil Robson 020neill119@gmail.com

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE ...

Floods aren't new, says Jenny Sheridan

Buses in water up to their axles, cars almost submerged – this was Queenstown Road in late July after a powerful rainstorm overwhelmed the drainage system.

There's nothing new about floods in Battersea. In the middle ages the Thames frequently invaded the marshy low-lying areas and further inland rivers burst their banks. Indeed the name comes from some variation on *Batrice's eie* or island – a gravelly patch where there was enough solid ground to build a church and manor house. The marshy nature and danger of flooding meant that there was little development north of Lavender Hill until the eighteenth century, when drainage schemes started to be instigated.

During the 19th century there were at least four major flood events. Perhaps the most dramatic was in January 1877, when *The Pictorial World* fulminated 'Either through the red tapeism of the Metropolitan Board of Works or the crass negligence of riparian landlords, south London has been subjected to fresh floods.' (The Board of Works was responsible for most drainage works across London, including the Heathwall and Falcon Brook rivers. Previously open sewers, they had recently been included in Joseph Bazalgette's sewage system). The article goes on to describe 'a poverty-stricken little street opposite the goods yard (at Nine Elms) which suffered great destruction of houses and shops, with cellars under eight to ten feet of water'. Hundreds of people were made temporarily homeless.

In the 1890s pumping stations were built to empty the local small rivers into the Thames but floods continued to be problematic. Twentieth century floods included July 1910, January 1918, 1956, September 1968, July 1973 and June 1992.

In 1968 flooding was so severe in some parts of the borough that boats, the only feasible form of transport, were brought from Battersea Park. In July 1973 Battersea Town Hall (now BAC) was opened as a reception centre to welcome 'a pathetic stream of wet and bedraggled families', according to the *Wandsworth Borough News*.

Dampness continued to be a



Nine Elms, 1877

persistent problem in lower-lying areas, adding to the misery of people living in overcrowded and unhealthy housing. Indeed endemic dampness was cited as a reason for the demolition of so much terraced housing in the slum clearances of the 1950s and 60s.

Torrential

The Falcon has two sources, in Streatham and Tooting. It runs under Northcote Road and down Falcon Road and Ingrave Street to end in the Thames at Battersea Creek (near the present-day heliport). It flooded in July 1997 and again more seriously in July 2007 following a torrential downpour. Water burst out of the drains and streamed down Northcote Road, invading the long-established pet shop among others. Even at the southernmost, highest end of Northcote Road shops reported six feet of water in their cellars. In St John's Road several shops were flooded; passing cars sent waves of filthy water cascading into shops. I remember seeing people emptying bucketloads of water out of their doors.

Floods are likely to occur more frequently in future, in part due to extreme weather caused by climate change. Other factors include the increase in tall apartment blocks, often surrounded by impermeable surfaces such as tarmac. If these spaces were planted or grassed over rainwater would sink into the ground instead of running off. Developments would then be mitigating flood risk as well as encouraging biodiversity and providing places for children and adults to play.

Householders who resist the temptation to use their front garden as a concrete parking lot would enjoy the resultant flood-reducing greenery.

In July, Kensington & Chelsea was hit

hard by flash floods. Some residents there blame the construction of 'super-basements' concealing cinemas or gyms (one is currently under construction on Clapham Common Westside). It is not known how much, if at all, they contribute to the problems but their construction displaces and

concretes over spaces where water previously could drain away.

The completion of the Thames Barrier in 1984 has so far eliminated the danger of the river itself flooding (though apparently the City is looking into heightening the walls of the embankment). In 1978, just four years before the barrier was built, residents of Battersea north of Lavender Hill were warned of potential danger from high tides. But it is surface water flooding from overwhelmed drains that has caused most of the damage in Battersea.

Who is responsible for preventing or mitigating floods? According to Wandsworth Council's Local Flood Management Strategy 2016, Thames Water is responsible for surface water drainage from sewers and for maintaining the sewers into which much surface water flows. However the council 'ensures that highways are drained of surface water and where necessary maintain all drainage systems'. The council says that it takes flooding risks into account when assessing all planning applications. It reports that it regularly clears gullies and that the issues in and around Queenstown Road are due to lack of drain capacity underground.

The Thames Tideway tunnel should help with reducing floods in future. The system includes rebuilding and improving the Heathwall pumping station at Kirtling Street next to the power station, and the Falcon Brook station on the York Road estate. Perhaps we can look forward to a dryer future after all.

SHARE THE LOVE (OF LONDON)

Fran Jukes introduces a volunteering opportunity with refugees

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Katherine Low Settlement, the well-loved community centre on Battersea High Street. We can't operate our wide range of services without the support of our amazing team of dedicated volunteers. That includes our ESOL project – English for Speakers of Other Languages.

We run free classes in English for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from all over the world. There is also a free crèche for children under four. Ninety percent of our students are

women, predominantly from Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria. This is often the first opportunity to study in their lives and they are eager to learn, both for their own benefit and to enable them to support their children in making the most of their education. .

Our current ESOL volunteers are a fabulous and diverse group of people who are doing high-quality work. To add to our formal ESOL classes we want to expand our provision in 2021 – 2122 with two exciting new projects:

Project 1: KLS London Together

In 2019, on an ESOL trip from Battersea to the Southbank by riverboat, we discovered that many students had never left Battersea, and some had never even been to Battersea Park. They simply do not have the time, confidence or money to be adventurous in the city they live in. Many would like to see more of London, but don't know where to start.

We plan to match a volunteer with a student to help them discover the local area and London by bus. They would meet once or twice a week for up to two hours, to go to different places in London by bus. This could be to several different places or the same journey could be done multiple times to build confidence, eventually relying on the student to direct travel plans. The volunteer and the student could decide together on places to visit. This would be an informal way of developing language skills and building confidence and resilience.

We plan to pair 10 – 15 students and



10 – 15 volunteers over the course of a year. Up to five pairs of students and volunteers would discover London each week.

We're talking to local community organisations including the Battersea Society and local faith groups to provide volunteers. We hope that Battersea Society members will see this as an exciting opportunity to share their

Samira has lived in London for more than 15 years. She has spent this time mostly raising her large family. When she enrolled onto our ESOL programme three years ago she virtually couldn't communicate in English at all.

Over this time her attendance has been consistent. She's contributed and joined in with the rest of the class but she hadn't been making a significant improvement until this year, when she's made a real breakthrough. Her ability to communicate in English (speaking and listening, as well as reading and writing) has really improved. Her confidence has grown and she's come out of herself. She can converse more clearly with her fellow students and her teacher.

'When I arrived in UK, I could not speak or write properly. But now I can write and speak, although I am not satisfied yet, I am trying to improve my skills.'

An English language class at KLS

love of London and Battersea while contributing to someone's education.

Project 2: ESOL & Creativity

The role of art and creativity when learning a language is often underestimated. Many of our students report never having had the time or opportunity to be creative and learn how to sew, knit, paint, do photography etc. Many would like to learn.

Before the first Covid lockdown in March 2020, we ran a successful pilot of a cooking project for students eager to learn new vegetarian cooking skills. It was hugely popular and a great opportunity to practice and develop their English language skills in real life. They had lots of fun too.

We are looking for a project lead with a craft or art skill that they could demonstrate and teach to ESOL students on Wednesday afternoons. We're also looking for volunteers to help in craft sessions.

So far we have ex-students who are going to offer crochet and embroidery for beginners.

How to volunteer at KLS:

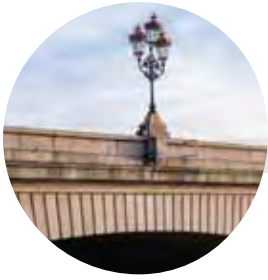
The easiest way is to sign up at our website:

www.klsettlement.org.uk/volunteer

However if you would prefer to have a chat first and see if it's for you, please call: ESOL manager Fran: 07534 962698

GREAT BUS JOURNEYS OF THE WORLD No 30

Mike Roden travels from Putney to Baker Street on the 74.



My journey begins at Clapham Junction station where I take a train to Putney. It's then a short walk down the High Street to catch the 74 bus and set off towards the river. There was a ferry here from the 1300s until the first timber bridge was built in 1729. The current bridge – designed by Joseph Bazalgette – dates from 1870. At the bridge we pass St Mary's Church, in 1647 the venue for the Putney Debates on the English constitution. It was on this bridge that in March 1953 the serial killer John Christie – mentioned in my recent trip on the 52 bus – was arrested.

This is the only bridge in England with a church at either end. All Saints Fulham occupies a site where there has been a church for more than 900 years though most of the current building dates from the late nineteenth century.

Nice café

Heading along Fulham Palace Road we pass Bishops Park where you'll find Fulham Palace, home for 1300 years to the Bishops of London. In 1973 Hammersmith Council took charge and it's now a museum and conference centre (with a nice café). The bus passes Fulham Cemetery – generally known as 'Fulham Old', which opened in 1865. We turn right onto Lillie Road past the Recreation Ground. Sunday league football has been played here for generations.

This road was laid out in 1826 on land owned by Sir John Scott Lillie, but most of its late Georgian housing has long gone. Only its 1835 public house, originally 'The Lillie Arms' is still there. It's one of the oldest pubs in Fulham and was renamed the 'Lillie Langtry' in 1979. Known as 'the Jersey Lily' Langtry was a successful actress and courtesan who lived in this area. One of her many

admirers was Bertie, Prince of Wales (the future Edward VII), who may have popped in for a cup of tea on one of his visits to the nearby Exhibition Grounds.

The site on the other side of Lillie Road was once occupied by the Empress Theatre. It was built in the late nineteenth century for flamboyant Hungarian showman Imre Kiralfy. It was large enough to house thrilling epics such as 'Nero and the Destruction of Rome' but it's not clear how many such shows were actually staged there. After the first world war it reopened as the Empress Hall and became a venue for spectacular shows on ice. It closed in September 1958. It was replaced by a modern commercial office block called the Empress State Building which is currently occupied by a specialist division of the Metropolitan Police.

We pass the ornate frontage of the entrance to Brompton Cemetery which opened in 1840 and is still used for burials. Around 200,000 people are buried here, and among the many notable graves are those of Emmeline Pankhurst, and John Snow, the epidemiologist who demonstrated the link between infected water and cholera. And fittingly Sir John Scott Lillie is also buried here.

Wonderground

Passing West Brompton Station, we're now on Old Brompton Road. The Earls Court Exhibition centre closed in 2014 and has since been demolished. The ambitious development scheme for the area has been delayed, but during the summer this was the site of the London Wonderground. It had a colourful fairground atmosphere, with classic rides, and noisy bandstand performances, and outdoor bars, and street food; perhaps you managed a visit.

On Warwick Road we pass the entrance to Earls Court tube station. Nearby Phillbeach Gardens is a garden square built in 1876 on the site of farmland. Phillbeach Gardens had its fifteen minutes of fame in 1985 when police cornered James Baigrie here. He was an escaped prisoner serving a life sentence for murder. Armed with a sawn-off shotgun he barricaded himself in his van and refused to surrender. After tear gas was fired into the van, he shot and killed himself. The siege lasted 44 hours.

Mansion blocks

There's a Tesco superstore ahead of us now as the bus turns right onto the A4, usually known as Cromwell Road. After half a mile of Edwardian mansion blocks dotted with hotels, convenience stores and occasional restaurants the bus pauses at the stop by the private Cromwell Hospital. This was established in 1981 by the Bank of Credit and Commerce International reputedly to provide healthcare for the Abu Dhabi royal family. It was bought by BUPA in 2008.

The nearby Sainsbury's superstore occupies part of the site used by BEA's West London Air Terminal. Established in 1957 it allowed passengers to check in and receive their boarding passes before being ferried by coach to Heathrow airport. The check in desks were closed in 1974, but bus services to the airport continued from here until 1979.

By the Natural History Museum the bus turns down Queensberry Place and heads towards South Kensington station. It stops briefly then returns to Cromwell Road past the V&A and then the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, better known as Brompton Oratory. This is home to the Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip

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

Left to right: Putney Bridge, Emmeline Pankhurst, buried at Brompton Cemetery; The Cromwell Hospital; Brompton Oratory; the Mound, Marble Arch, Sherlock Holmes statue, Baker street



Neri in London. Neri was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. Among other things he is the patron saint of humour and joy. Rather surprising since he lived as a hermit and ate only bread and water sometimes sprinkled with herbs. Sounds a bit joyless to me!

The Victorian terracotta splendour of Harrods is suddenly upon us. Charles Henry Harrod moved here from Stepney in 1849, hoping to profit from the forthcoming Great Exhibition in nearby Hyde Park. His son built the business into a thriving retail operation and by 1881 was employing one hundred people. Despite a disastrous fire at Christmas 1883 Mr Harrod bounced back and the store was quickly rebuilt on the same site. After several subsequent changes of ownership Harrods is still a magnet for those well-heeled enough to shop there. Needless to say I've never been inside.

Gallows

From Knightsbridge Station, we head for Hyde Park corner which is still relatively quiet. Very soon we're on Park Lane, once a rutted country lane running alongside a tall brick wall which hid the park from view. In 1714 this was known as Tyburn Lane since it ended at the site of the Tyburn gallows where public executions took place until 1793. It was one of several roads adopted and improved by the Kensington Turnpike Trust because they had been so badly damaged by heavy carriage traffic that in the winter they were positively dangerous for travellers.

Improvements to Hyde Park in the 1820s made Park Lane an attractive place for the wealthy to build their London houses. Notable early residents included the 1st Duke of Westminster, the Dukes of Somerset and Disraeli.

Many of their houses are now the site of luxury hotels such as the Dorchester.

Mound

Approaching the Cumberland Gate, Marble Arch comes into view. Originally planned to mark the state entrance to Buckingham Palace it was moved here in 1851. It now has a companion towering over it. This is my first – admittedly quick – look at the installation known as the 'Mound'. It doesn't look too bad to me and is gradually greening up with immature trees clinging hopefully onto the slopes.

It's busy enough – possibly because during August it's free – with a stream of visitors stolidly climbing up the metal stairs towards the viewing platform which at under 100 feet up affords less than stunning vistas of Oxford Street, and the Park. Whether Westminster Council has achieved its aim of increasing footfall here seems doubtful. Costs approaching £6m are unlikely to be recouped. When the Mound is taken down next January, the grass will be reused on green roofs and the trees replanted along Oxford Street. I'm pretty sure the views would be better from the top of Primrose Hill.

We travel briefly along a strangely quiet Oxford Street past Primark – still an improbable presence here so close to Selfridges – and turn up Portman Street and past Portman Square which has been home to at least three dukes, and countless baronets and earls.

For a few minutes we move towards Marylebone along Gloucester Place through Georgian townhouse territory. Notions that the area's name derives from Marie la Bonne, or 'Mary the Good' are probably unfounded. The parish does take its name from its church which was dedicated to St Mary, but it

was originally called Marybourne, since the original church was built on the banks of the Tyburn (or Tybourne).

The bus stops near Old Marylebone Town Hall, completed in 1920. The home of Westminster's Register Office, it's hosted the weddings of over 120,000 couples, many of them celebrities. Paul McCartney married Linda Eastman here in 1969 and his current wife Nancy Shevell in October 2011 and Ringo Starr tied the knot with Barbara Bach in 1981.

And so we reach journey's end at Baker Street Station one of the original stations of the Metropolitan Line which opened in January 1863. The Sherlock Holmes statue near the station was unveiled in 1999. Scanning a QR code from a plaque on this 'talking statue' will send you a simulated phone call supposedly from Holmes himself (actually actor Ed Stoppard). With tourists of any nationality in short supply the statue is largely being ignored today.

Residents of the luxury flats built above the station in 1929 were served by the Chiltern Court Restaurant. It offered – according to an advertisement of the time – 'Perfect Cuisine and Faultless Service'.

Whether the Metropolitan Bar – built into the old headquarters of the Metropolitan Railway – quite fits that description I can't say. It is now a Wetherspoons pub but despite that – according to *Time Out* – it's a 'charming and characterful place', festooned with Metropolitan memorabilia, from decorative ceiling crests to framed Underground posters.

Too early for me to pop in and order a champagne cocktail so I head down to the Jubilee Line to head back to Clapham Junction via Waterloo. But the Metropolitan Bar sounds as though it's worth a visit.

PAY WHAT YOU CAN AT BAC

BAC is becoming even more inclusive and creative says Tarek Iskander

The media has been full of narratives that theatres shut their doors and were completely dormant for 18 months. For Battersea Arts Centre, this couldn't be further from the truth. We know first-hand how critical arts and culture are to a thriving community. We've seen the work we do transform people's lives, sparking positive, long-lasting change. So throughout this pandemic we have constantly adapted to ensure that we can continue to bring joy and creativity to the young people, artists and audiences we work with.

Our creative freelancers have been hit hard by the pandemic, so we've worked tirelessly to help them continue to work, earn a living and reach audiences at home. We gave them rehearsal space, paired them up with experts in technology and performance capture, and paid them to develop exciting new projects. This summer we worked with partners to launch 'Horizon', a new digital showcase of the best of performance made in England. It's a centre-piece of 2021's Edinburgh festival, and helps project Battersea's name across the world. Together with the London Mayor's office, BAC is also supporting 100+ talented freelancers to create live performances across the capital in October half term, bringing magic to families across the city.

Play kits

We also kept our other communities in our minds, asking them what else they needed, as everyone has been affected in different ways. First, we connected with schools and creative organisations to deliver 10,000 Create & Learn PlayKits, so that every child in the borough could develop their creative muscles in this stressful time.

We worked with the NHS to become the Community Vaccination Centre for Wandsworth. As well as a source of hope, we wanted to provide a warm welcome to residents, some of whom may not have left their homes throughout this period. So we commissioned artists to inspire people to reconnect with their community, or feel cheered by a heartwarming story,

a funny sketch, or a burst of colour as they stepped in to the foyer.

Many local residents who hadn't been to BAC before, but were vaccinated here, told us how exciting they found the space and how they look forward to visiting regularly. We see ourselves as a vital local hub where everyone can get together to watch shows, enjoy food or drinks in the bar, host a meeting or use the wifi. Our beautiful shared workspace, the Scratch Hub, is for those who don't want to keep working from home. They were delighted when we re-opened the Covid-secure, airy and professional environment during periods when the Government's guidelines were relaxed.

Improvised lyrics

The pandemic has had a particularly disruptive effect on young people – so we've been engaging virtually with the young people who participate in our many programmes. Now that it's safer to do so, we have restarted in-person sessions for the BAC Beatbox Academy, our music and performance programme for 11 – 29 year olds. It was something special, bringing them back together after so much time connecting via screens. The young artists shared new skills they've been practising to keep them motivated at home, caught up with old friends and welcomed new members. They improvised lyrics about the challenges of lockdown, being proud of their music, feeling creative and alive again, and having a safe place to express themselves away from school or home.

BAC Beatbox Academy is now world famous, with our shows continuing to tour the world. Building on these strengths, we're working with the brilliant team at Impact Dance to launch a pilot for a new Academy this autumn, focusing on street dance and hip hop. We're investing more in creative outlets for Battersea's young people, supporting them to see themselves and their peers achieve great things. So if you know any young people who may want to join our academies, please send



Welcome to BAC's vaccination centre

them our way – we are always on the lookout for enthusiastic new recruits.

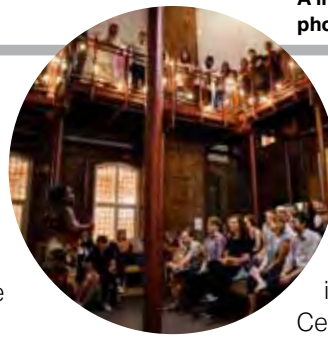
It's wonderful to be able to say that live performance is back at BAC. Until October, we're presenting brand new material from the UK's most inventive and trusted comedians. As well as the charming surroundings of our outdoor Courtyard venue, the magic of this is that everyone who comes to see these shows decides how much to pay for a ticket. If you live nearby you can try something new for as little as £1. Or, if you can, you may choose to pay more to support others' ability to do so.

It's been that way for everything BAC has done since spring, and its great success has meant we're able to extend this, at least until the end of the year. From October to December there will be remarkable performances in the OverCome season, which is finding new ways for us all to connect and shape a better future.

We will celebrate as a collective audience in person again, with highly visceral experiences led by choreographers James Cousins and Hofesh Shechter. Or we'll be inspired by stories of survival, endurance and a new perspective from Figs in Wigs, Heather Agyepong, Charlene Salter and Jennifer Jackson. And family favourites Sleeping Trees will create a pantomystery, *Sleeping Beauty & The Beast*, to brighten up the winter months with some much needed festive fun.

The universal Pay What You Can scheme means we suggest a price, but you can decide to pay more or less for your tickets. The reason we're doing this is simple: we believe that everyone should be able to be a part of the incredible work we programme, regardless of your ability to pay.

It's part of a longer journey at BAC, as



we work to make everything we do more inclusive and accessible. It's a place where people are invited to congregate, be creative or inspired by the creativity of others. Before the pandemic, we became the world's first Relaxed Venue – and this came after years of capital investment to improve our physical accessibility. This new ticket model is just the next step.

It's something we'd been thinking about doing for a long time, so during the pandemic we seized the opportunity. This crisis has been an existential financial threat to our thriving arts sector, especially for the creative freelancers who are its lifeblood, but it has also offered space to reflect and rethink everything. Of course, ticket income is critical for us to keep doing what we do – but it's not the only thing that matters.

At BAC, we know from our rich history that when people meet in a space as equals and the power of collective imagination starts to rumble, it really can change the world. Our audiences and co-creators aren't passive, but vigorous participants in the creative process – and that's worth so much more to us than the price of the ticket.

Unique

The last 18 months have been such a hard time for everyone. All of us, so separated, so physically distant from others for so long. But as we head into the next phase of this pandemic, it can't all be about hugs with loved ones. We

need to do the important work to reflect on what we've lost, and take advantage of this unique moment of possibility and change.

This is where cultural institutions like Battersea Arts Centre really come into their own. They are places where we can all come together, to connect, to share our varied perspectives, to air our differences, and try to find a better future for all of us. That feels like both a profound responsibility, but also a great privilege. So we want everyone, regardless of their financial circumstances, to be part of that creative, artistic process. BAC has its home in a magical building full of huge doorways – we're trying to do our bit to make those doors just a little wider.

Tarek Iskander is artistic director and CEO of Battersea Arts Centre

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BEGINNERS

Battersea Society trustee Duncan Parish encourages members to join the online community

In many ways staying in touch with others has been much harder over the last year as family gatherings, social events, and community activities have all been cancelled in the face of the pandemic. Yet for many it has also kicked off an online revolution with many of us opting instead to connect through technology and over social media, often for the first time.

While our Battersea Society online meetings might be new as a result of the pandemic, we have had an online presence for several years thanks to Mike Roden who set up the Society on both Twitter and Facebook as a means of advertising our events and highlighting issues of interest or importance both to our members and those more broadly with a fondness for Battersea.

And over the lockdowns the online community in Battersea thrived as businesses, community groups and individuals sought to connect with customers, members and friends. Perhaps the most active was Instagram where almost every Battersea business and organisation has a presence, sharing insights, updates, offers and support. We even have our own local 'news' feed, Battersea Beat. Katie de

Salis moved to Battersea two years ago and set up Battersea Beat as a hobby to share what's on locally and support local businesses.

We caught up with Katie between Instagram posts.

To those who aren't on social media, how would you describe 'online Battersea'?

There's a huge online Battersea community, which really cements the spirit of the area. We created the Instagram account Battersea Beat at the start of lockdown in 2020 as a way to promote local businesses and the beautiful spaces on our doorstep. The account has already grown to over 15,000 followers and it's been a great opportunity to connect with locals and discover new places.

What role does social media have in supporting the community in Battersea?

Social media has become an integral part of daily life and is a huge opportunity to reach out to people, not least a younger demographic. For the local area, it's a platform to share what's going on, reconnect with old friends, learn about local history and discover new places.

What's your advice to those who are yet to venture into the world of Instagram?

Instagram is one of the most positive social media platforms. You can choose who you follow to create your feed to fit your interests – from puppies and sunsets to baking and fitness! On our account we also offer local discount codes and competitions. Plus, Instagram is a great way to discover small emerging businesses that are just down the road. All you need is a smart phone to download the app – get snapping, following and sharing and don't forget to tag us in your *Battersea pics* @ *batterseabeat*

The Battersea Society's own Instagram feed: @*batterseasociety*, was set up in 2019 and we celebrated our 1000th follower earlier this year, showing how much interest there is in what we do.

A recent survey of Battersea Society members showed that many of you are yet to join us in our online community. If that's you, then we'd encourage you to log on and sign up. It's free and a great way to stay up to speed with what's going on in the area.



THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY SINCE 1965

THE THEROUX FAMILY: A LITERARY AFFAIR

Janice Morphet reveals Paul, Anne, Louis and Marcel's roots in Battersea

Anne, Paul, Marcel and Louis Theroux are all writers and all but Marcel have written about their time living in Battersea. This was in a house on the Wandsworth borders in Elsyng Road. Anne grew up in Streatham and after Oxford went to Kenya with VSO. Here she met Paul who was born in Massachusetts and was teaching at Makerere University after being thrown out of the Peace Corps. He also made friends with V S Naipaul, who was a visiting fellow there and their friendship continued when he returned home and Naipaul was living in Tooting.

Anne and Paul married and Marcel, their first son, was born in Entebbe. They then moved to Singapore where Paul taught at the University at the invitation of the critic D J Enright who was a friend. Here their second son Louis was born. The family moved to England after two years, settling initially in Catford and in 1975, after failing to purchase a house owned by novelist and critic A S Byatt, moved to a dilapidated house in Elsyng Road which was built as part of a demonstration of house types for the 1851 Great Exhibition.

Autobiographical

As Louis states, this move was supported by the commercial success of *The Great Railway Bazaar*, published when his father was 34. In interviews Paul describes passing through Clapham Junction in 1965ⁱ, never expecting to live there himself a few years laterⁱⁱ. Anne and Louis have both written about Wandsworth in recent autobiographical books; Anne describing living in Wandsworth in her memoir of the year after her marriage with Paul endedⁱⁱⁱ and for Louis, a review of his life in television^{iv}.

Paul Theroux is best known for his

travel books and after *The Great Railway Bazaar* he wrote *The Old Patagonian Express* and *The Kingdom by the Sea*.

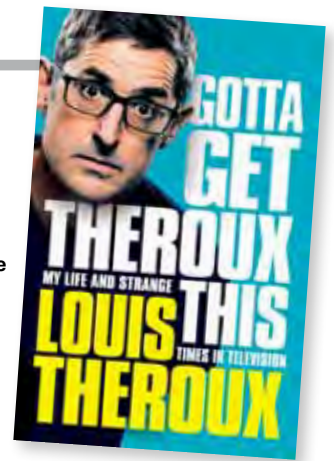
These books meant long periods away from home in Elsyng Road, and Anne was rarely able to travel with him. In this way, Paul's view of Battersea is always that of more distance. Nevertheless, he describes his local pubs as the Beehive and the Fishmongers Arms in St John's Hill and a Sunday family curry at a local restaurant as a particular treat^v.

Observer

While stating that he will never write an autobiography, much of his life and relationships arise in his fiction and short stories such as *My Secret History*, which also discusses the end of his marriage with Anne. As he says: 'Even when he lived in South London, where he raised a family through most of the 1970s and 1980s, he remained discrete, an observer rather than a participant, never an Anglophile. 'What surprises me was that I lived in England for 17 years – happily, I might add – and had such a sense of non-attachment: just a resident alien, a taxpayer without a vote. I felt like the man who fell to Earth – looked like everyone else on the No 19 bus in Wandsworth, utterly anonymous, but in fact an alien, dreaming of returning to his own planet. But I owe England a great deal: great friends, literary opportunities and the education of my children.'^{vi}

Anne, Marcel and Louis are more rooted in South London. Anne describes being taught to swim by her father in Tooting Lido – and after her marriage breakup, walking from Elsyng Road to the pool to check on its status while Marcel, a Tooting resident, states that he swims there every day, whatever the weather. Marcel and Louis attended Allfarthing School, with Marcel appearing in the annual Blue Peter carol concert while Louis's appearance was thwarted by a strike. Louis describes the

left Paul, Anne and Marcel Theroux right Louis Theroux tells all



house in Elsyng Road as 'mysterious and grand, organized over four storeys with weird nooks and draughty sash windows ... it had been chopped up into bedsits and still showed signs of multiple occupancy'.

Autobiographical

For Anne, living in Wandsworth was convenient for her jobs with the BBC World Service in Bush House. The common provided an outlet and her sister lived close by. The house was a centre for Marcel and Louis' friends, providing a return base when they were both at University. When the marriage ended in 1991, Anne started to notice that the house, repaired and upgraded when they first arrived, was now looking dilapidated and part of the roof fell in.

After the marriage ended, Paul and Anne both remarried. What happened to the house? It was subsequently purchased by TV presenter Johnny Vaughan .

i My London: Paul Theroux. Evening Standard 31st July 2003

ii Sunday Times November 16, 2008

iii Anne Theroux The Year of the End (2021) Icon Books

iv Louis Theroux Gotta Get Theroux This, (2019) Macmillan

v My London: Paul Theroux. Evening Standard 31st July 2003

vi No Block on the Landscape for Paul Theroux The Herald 2nd November 2009

heraldscotland.com/default_content/12608968.no-block-landscape-paul-theroux/

vii How Mud man Johnny found a Victoria gem in modern London Mail on Line 16th February 2013
dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2279667/How-Mud-Man-Johnny-Vaughan-Victorian-gem-modern-London.html

JACK STANFORD, THE DANCING FOOL

Jill Stanford, daughter of the eccentric dancer, reveals his Battersea links

In the 1920s and 30s Jack Stanford was a star. He travelled the world as an eccentric dancer, a unique genre, performing in all the famous venues of the time.

Jack Stanford (born Charles Finnegan Williams in 1900) lived at 140 Mallinson Road from the mid-1930s until his death in 1968. He bought the house to give his parents a home, living there himself when he wasn't away working. As his daughter, born when he was 50, I also lived there for over 30 years until my mother sold it in 1984. Soon after we moved out, a Second World War bomb was found under the floorboards.

Eccentric dance started in the 1800s. A dancer needs to be extremely flexible and highly skilled. Jack developed his act and his visual narrative so his dances were wrapped around character, with his seemingly rubber legs. There is an element of pantomime so that it is not so much seeing a great dance routine as watching a story unfold. Jack was hailed as one of the greatest exponents of that time. Many dancers of this era have learnt from watching his filmed routines.

Monte Carlo

His first big hit was in 1925, in Monte Carlo, where he promptly lost all his money at the casino. He then got a job at Capitole Cabaret where he stayed until he danced back his losses. At the Cosmo Club in September 1926, he was billed as 'The Pavlova of Comedy Dancing.' Later he became known as 'The Dancing Fool.'

By 1927, he was at the Folies-Bergère in Paris with Josephine Baker. A review in the *Tatler* said, 'a male dancer who looks like a cross between Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd absolutely to use the be-whiskered phrase, 'brought the house down.' An india-rubber puppet ... but also such humour in his antics that were either too rapid to follow or else curiously rallentando-ed of a moving picture.'

By 1928, he was in Greenwich Village Follies in New York, where, because there was more story telling in his act, he was labelled 'The Absent-Minded Professor.' By March 1929 he was at The Scala Berlin and then in Basle and

Zurich. As his act was purely visual, he could work in cabaret anywhere. In Paris again at Ciro's Club, his engagement was extended due to his great success.

In London he played The Hotel Spendide Picadilly and The Cosmo Club. Dancing at the Brighton Hippodrome, a local newspaper review saw him as 'surely the greatest eccentric dancer of the day. He is at one time amazing and uproariously funny'.

Charles B Cochrane had him top the bill in 'And So We Go On' at the Trocadero and by January 1930 he was in another Cochrane show, 'Wake Up and Dream,' at The London Pavilion with Sonnie Hale and Madeline Gibson. This toured and a review in the *Birmingham Post* on 29 April 1930 said, 'the gayest time of all is when Mr Jack Stanford, who appears to be not merely double-jointed but treble jointed, gives an exhibition all by himself. He is a kind of Mickey Mouse, whose limbs wave with the most delightful freedom, so that he does not move about so much as flow. Like all perfect examples of art, his performance is really indescribable.'

Royal Variety Performance

Jack's personal scrapbook and case of memorabilia is full of reviews like this, photos and programmes which depict his whole career. More highlights include his appearance in 1931 at the Royal Variety Performance, where he shared the honours with Gracie Fields.

As Jack got older and developed his storytelling, his Apache dance with his invisible dancer was a solitude of dancing, full of excellent mime. I also remember a deckchair routine in the 50s. However, it was in the mid-thirties

that some of his work was filmed and can be seen on the British Pathé website: In 1935, *The King of Eccentric Dancers – Jack Stanford* in one of his famous novelty dances, dancing

to Hungarian Rhapsody. In 2016 Greg Ohlback made a version of this to Bruno Mars Uptown Funk which can be seen on You Tube and has helped to bring him to notice again in the dancing world.

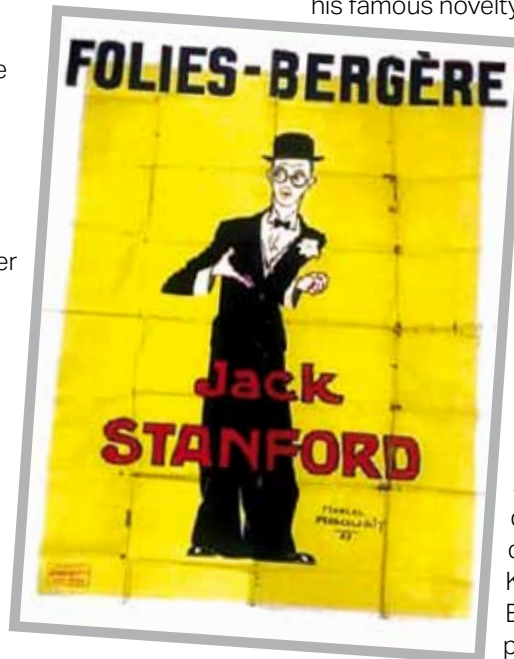
At another Royal Command performance in 1941 at Windsor Castle during the war, Jack danced in front of King George, Queen Elizabeth and the princesses. He was in *Apple Sauce* at the


Holborn Empire which closed because of enemy action and reappeared at The Palladium with Vera Lynn and Max Miller. He was named by Sir Oswald Stoll as one of the very brave people who did not scamper away from performing at the Bristol Hippodrome after a heavy air raid.

In later life, Jack continued to work in pantomime and summer seasons. He also played the jockey in *The Arcadians* with great pathos at the Streatham Hill Theatre in 1955. I remember having cake backstage on my fifth birthday after watching him.

My father's love of Battersea and particularly the funfair in the park is a lasting childhood memory. He married twice, first to Mary Carveth who died in the war, with whom he had my sister Suzanne. And in 1947 to my mother Marjorie, one of the Volonoff Twins, who appeared at The London Coliseum when they were seventeen and with whom he had worked many years before. He also supported her at Sally Spruce, the theatrical costumiers she ran in Soho.

To read more please join my public Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/489256979060134





Wandsworth Common:
restoration in progress
below: Knotgrass

UNDOING THE DENS AND BLOCKING DESIRE LINES

Valerie Selby reports on work to restore our green spaces

Last summer I wrote about the impacts on biodiversity habitats across the borough from the significant increase in user numbers during Covid lockdowns and restrictions. During last winter and spring extra work was put into restoring the worst affected habitats and reducing the impacts from ongoing use in others. This article focuses mainly on Wandsworth Common but the same approach was taken in all the borough's green spaces.

In the woodland areas work has focused on reinstating the dead wood that was moved to make dens last summer. Volunteers from the Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee formed a working party who assisted our Parks Biodiversity Officer by re-creating dead wood log piles for invertebrates, including stag beetles, to use for their larval stages.

Good habitat

They also worked to gather smaller bits of vegetation and wood that had been disturbed or damaged along with the arisings from our planned winter habitat maintenance works to create dead hedges. These have been used to block the erosive desire lines that caused so much degradation of soil and ground cover species. These dead hedges also provide good habitat for small nesting birds and as transport corridors for small mammals. This has proved successful, with habitat recovery being visible and nesting birds once again able to flourish unperturbed this spring. Of course, we won't know for another few years whether the habitat restoration and associated reduction in pressure came in time for stag beetle life cycles – we shall have to be patient on that front. On grasslands the work to reduce pressure has perhaps been more

visible as we have had to resort to using temporary fencing to keep people and dogs out of significant areas of our larger green spaces. We wish to thank the many visitors who have graciously accepted the visual intrusion of these temporary fences and who have by and large kept their dogs and children out of the fenced areas.

Resilience

We also undertook de-compaction work in the worst areas to get air back into the root layers and to create friable soil at the surface once again. This has allowed the seed bank to regenerate and for these new plants to form deep strong root networks which we hope will aid their future resilience.

In areas where the seed bank's natural recovery was poor, we have explored the use of varied seed mixes, including clover along with the more usual grass species. Clover is more resilient than grass to future trampling; it has the added advantage of capturing nitrogen (a useful nutrient in amenity grassland) and the flowers are a well-loved nectar source for pollinators.

Some of you may have noticed that the first plant to re-establish was not a conventional grass but was in many places a plant known as common knotgrass. This widespread plant is in fact in the dock family; it has tiny, pale pink flowers that are easy to miss as they appear so close to the stem, blooming from May to October. Interestingly common knotgrass is also known as 'Iron-grass' because of its tough, wiry roots that make it especially hard to pull up from the ground. It is this trait that made it resilient enough to be the first thing to regrow. In many places

grass is already growing through it.

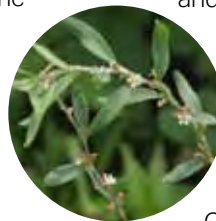
The increased contact with nature experienced by so many people across the last 18 months has engendered a new understanding of and appreciation for the natural habitats in our green spaces. The Friends of Wandsworth Common have captured that newfound momentum by securing significant donations which have been put towards areas of new habitat creation. Parcels of mini-forest and significant tree planting last winter are already providing expanded habitats for our local wildlife. Under the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy these meet the aim of joining up existing parcels of habitat to give them greater resilience to future disturbances. Other funding secured directly by Enable has delivered hedge planting to screen the St Mark's playground on Wandsworth Common and to assist with reducing air borne particulates.

We are continuing this work over the coming autumn by adding in new planting to diversify the neutral grassland species at the St Mary's Battersea Rise Cemetery, again with the ambition to improve connectivity for small birds, mammals and invertebrates across the divisive road networks in this area.

The Enable Parks and Trees teams continue to allocate efforts to the ongoing recovery of the landscapes we love after an unprecedented period of use. We are also working to continue to secure investment in new planting alongside rehabilitation of existing habitats.

If you have any questions please drop us a line via biodiversity@enablelc.org

Valerie Selby is parks development and biodiversity officer for Enable plc, who manage all Wandsworth's green spaces.



CAN BATTERSEA GET TO NET ZERO?

Michael Jubb looks at greening our heating systems

I began thinking about this the day after the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that human activity is changing the Earth's climate in unprecedented ways. Unless we take drastic and speedy action, global temperatures will rise more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, with catastrophic effects. Further IPCC reports are due soon on how to mitigate and how to adapt to climate change. These will feed into the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in November, when governments must decide collectively on actions to avoid the most calamitous scenarios.

Governments and large corporations of course have a fundamental role to play. In 2019 the UK Government set itself a legal requirement to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This year it set a new target – among the most ambitious in the world – to reduce emissions by 60% on current levels by 2035. But the most recent report from the Committee on Climate Change, which advises the Government on progress in reducing emissions, complains that the Government has neither developed the strategies nor implemented the policies needed to achieve its targets. The Energy White Paper published in December last year and the various documents published since then are certainly insufficient; and the Heat and Buildings Strategy has been delayed amid reports of quarrels about how to meet its costs.

Ambitious

London's emissions per person are lower than the UK average, mainly because of its lack of heavy industry, along with the wide availability of public transport; and the Mayor has set a more ambitious target to achieve net zero by 2030. Wandsworth Council has set the same target date, and has joined other London Councils in declaring a climate emergency. Its environment and sustainability strategy covers issues including the energy efficiency of its estates, buildings and services, and promoting walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

What does all this mean for

Battersea? The removal of large-scale industry means that carbon emissions have already fallen significantly. The uncomfortable fact now is that as individuals we are on average responsible for more than a third of all carbon emissions. We clearly need to reduce waste, increase recycling, and eat less meat. But our direct emissions arise from two main sources: the energy we use in our homes, and the transport we use to move about.

Fuel poverty

In a subsequent article I'll concentrate on transport. For now, I'll focus on energy in our homes. UK homes are among the least energy-efficient in Europe. In London, they are responsible for around a third of all emissions. Residential gas alone is responsible for a quarter of them. Reductions in emissions have stalled in recent years, and energy use has risen. This must be reversed if net zero targets are to be met. High energy costs and low energy efficiency have social impacts too: one in eight Londoners has been pushed into fuel poverty.

Things can be better in newly-built homes, and the London Plan requires all major developments to achieve energy efficiencies significantly beyond those set in the Building Regulations. The Battersea Society's Planning Committee looks closely at the proposed energy ratings for all new buildings, and if they don't reach the Excellent BREEAM rating that represents best practice, we ask why not. But the problem of energy-efficient homes can't be solved simply by building new ones. Even if we could, we would create new emissions throughout the building process.

The much bigger problem relates to existing homes: 80% of the homes that people will occupy in 2050 have already been built. So by far the biggest issue is retrofitting existing homes.

Most retrofitting in the UK to date has involved modest measures such as loft insulation or replacement windows. Whole-house retrofit involves a much more radical approach: insulating walls, windows, floors and roofs, and installing new heating systems such as heat pumps and solar panels. Net zero means electricity, not gas. There have been some pilot schemes to encourage such approaches, but in Wandsworth just one house has been retrofitted to meet the international Passivhaus standard.

Even with more modest measures, progress has petered out. Net zero targets cannot be met unless there is an unprecedented programme of retrofitting existing houses, with a rapid transition toward low carbon heating systems. These will only work effectively if radical measures are taken to reduce heat loss through walls, floors and ceilings. At present the UK lacks the policies, the capacity and skills in the supply chain, and the finance necessary to establish such a programme. Recent suggestions that hydrogen could replace some of the gas used to heat our homes would – since the hydrogen is made from natural gas – use even more gas than we do now, unless the hydrogen were to be produced with unproven carbon capture technology or expensive electrolysis.

Wandsworth Council will clearly have an important role to play with homes in Council-owned estates. Whether it will be provided with the necessary resources is not yet clear. For the owners of the Victorian and Edwardian houses across many parts of Battersea, the position is even more complex. We need to make sure that we've done the easy things: topping up the loft insulation, making sure that the doors and windows are draught-proof and so on. But the cost of full retrofitting measures for such houses is high, and also highly disruptive, with the need to insulate solid brick walls, and in most cases to install new radiators and pipes. Hence these houses will require up-front financial support to achieve significant savings in emissions.

Homes that are warmer in winter and cooler in summer heatwaves, with lower energy bills, and at the same time helping to avoid catastrophic climate change. What's not to like? How we get there, and rapidly, is the difficult question.

Michael Jubb is on the Battersea Society's planning committee.



TWO PLAQUES IN A PANDEMIC

Sue Demont pays homage to the saviour of Wandsworth Common

The ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has affected so many aspects of our lives, but it is heartening to see that not all of them have been negative. One of the positives for local amenity societies has been a significant increase in interest in people's local areas; the Battersea Society has already gained 50 new members this year, and the audience for our events – albeit on Zoom - has never been larger.

Many of these events have had a heritage focus, and one of the highlights of the year has been the belated recognition of John Charles Buckmaster. Resident in Battersea for over 45 years, this astonishing polymath counted the campaign to save Wandsworth Common, a vitally important open space for the working people of Battersea and Wandsworth, as just one of his many achievements.

Born into rural poverty around 1819, Buckmaster was labouring in the fields by the age of ten and subsequently apprenticed as a carpenter. Weary of being exploited he escaped to the West Country where he became a passionate advocate of abolishing the Corn Laws – and at the same time, a temperance pioneer who honed his public speaking skills by challenging his audiences to renounce the evils of alcohol.

Teacher

Buckmaster arrived in Battersea in 1844 to study at St John's College, the first teacher training institution in England, where he qualified as a teacher of science. His educative role led him to become a teacher not just of school pupils but of adults, and he also wrote over thirty textbooks including a couple of recipe books; though he admitted he owed much of the latter to his wife.

Buckmaster became highly involved in local Battersea affairs, serving many years as churchwarden of St Mary's, which in turn enabled him to join the Battersea Vestry, precursor to the local council. Unlike some of his contemporaries on the Vestry Buckmaster took his public and civic duties very seriously and was never afraid to challenge what he saw as lax, irresponsible or even dishonest behaviour; the imprisonment of the



Viscount Buckmaster, Jeanne Rathbone, Deputy Mayor Lucy Mowatt, Sue Demont and Sir Peter Hendy

Vestry Clerk for fraud was in no small part due to Buckmaster's campaigning.

Most famously, and with lasting benefit to the people of Battersea, Buckmaster led the campaign to save Wandsworth Common for public use at a time when the disinterest and/or greed of successive Earls Spencer was allowing developers to encroach upon all sides. Buckmaster used a masterly blend of publicity, legal and direct action to draw attention to the Common's plight, including deputations to Earl Spencer and the Lord Mayor of London, until he succeeded in obtaining an Act of Parliament to preserve the Common for public use in perpetuity.

Both the Battersea Society and the Friends of Wandsworth Common were keen to mark the 150th anniversary of the passing of the Wandsworth Common Act in 1871 and John Buckmaster's contribution. On 29th June, the fifth Viscount Buckmaster, Adrian, was invited to unveil a Battersea Society blue plaque on the southern corner of the Brighton Yard entrance to Clapham Junction Station, close to where John Buckmaster lived and raised his family in New (now Prested) Road.

Unveiling

This was a highly successful event, bringing together the Deputy Mayor, descendants of John Buckmaster, Sir Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail, who spoke at the unveiling, and the station manager and staff at Clapham Junction who erected the plaque for us. Fittingly,

the assembled company then made their way to Wandsworth Common itself, where members of the Heritage Committee and Community Group had set up an ingenious pop-up refreshment

tent under a handy willow tree. Sue Delafons of the Friends of Wandsworth Common, and our very own Jeanne Rathbone, reminded us in their rousing speeches that we were standing on the exact site of one of Buckmaster's greatest rallies.

Two weeks later it was the turn of the Friends of Wandsworth Common to stage an unveiling, this time of one of Wandsworth Borough Council's green

plaques, erected on the side of Neal's Lodge. FOWC co-chairs Richard Fox and Julia Bott reminded us of the huge benefits that the Common had brought to local residents during long periods of lockdown and the importance of sustaining its biodiversity to protect this special space for future generations, endorsed by the Mayor of Wandsworth and again by Viscount Buckmaster.



Birthday cake

As the venue also houses the Skylark Café there were some rather lovely refreshments available, the beautiful 150th birthday cake being the *pièce de resistance*.

Both the unveilings had to take place under continuing Covid restrictions, with the number of attendees limited to thirty – but the beauty of a plaque is its permanence. And hopefully the positive working relationship established between the two heritage groups (which probably wouldn't have happened to the same degree without the pandemic) will continue to bear fruit in the years to come.

Should you wish to learn more about John Buckmaster and the fight to save Wandsworth Common, the Friends have published a beautifully illustrated book The Wandsworth Common Story, available from the Skylark Café or via the Friends' website:

www.wandsworthcommon.org

Look out for further walks and talks relating to the history and landscape of the Common in the coming months.