

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SPRING 2014



Battersea? Or Bilbao-on-Thames?

Jenny Sheridan reports on Phase 3 of the power station's redevelopment

Frank Gehry, the world-famous architect of the Guggenheim Museum that has revitalised the northern Spanish city, is one of the two star architects designing Phase 3 of the power station development. The other is Wandsworth-based Norman Foster and Partners, designers of the Great Court of the British Museum and the Gherkin.

At the launch of Phase 3, Foster's senior partner, Grant Brooker said that their long wave-shaped building beside the railway line would build 'a whole new community' for south London. It will include 103 'affordable' units, just eight per cent of the whole. Mr Brooker stressed that these would be a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom flats which will be under the same roof and have access to the same amenities as the other flats. Unfortunately the definition of social housing has not yet been decided. It is unlikely to be affordable for most citizens of Battersea.

Roof garden

Foster & Partners' building will be topped by a spectacular – if perhaps windy – roof garden, accessible to residents and guests of the luxury hotel at the northern end of the building. The building will include balconies, winter gardens and transparent viewing spaces, visible from the railway line.

Gehry's design features five blocks, one of which he described as 'the flower', with variably coloured titanium petal-like roofs – a typically sculptural Gehry flourish. The other blocks will be white, to reflect other



above left Power Station phase 3 from south above Power Station Electric Boulevard left Gehry Prospect Place & The Flower



as being a destination that will attract visitors from all over London. Rob Tincknell, CEO of the Battersea Power Station Development Company, emphasised the developers' commitment to great architecture and to building a real community.

Acknowledging concerns

that the flats will be bought by eastern or Russian billionaires who will not live here, he said 'empty flats is definitely the last thing we want.' 30,000 new jobs will be created, he said, and space has been allocated for two primary schools and a health centre.

Spectacular

He believes that the spectacular architecture and the shopping and leisure opportunities – bars, cafés, a cinema, the linear park running from Vauxhall to the power station – will attract visitors and retain residents.

www.batterseapowerstation.co.uk

high-end London addresses such as Nash's Regent's Park terraces. At the north end will be a playground, for which Gehry promises to design some 'crazy animal sculptures' for children to climb on. At the south end a community centre (inevitably called a 'hub') will provide space for cultural and community activities.

The chimneys will be demolished and replaced by concrete replicas. The south-west chimney, the first to go, should be rebuilt by summer 2015.

There is considerable and apparently genuine emphasis on making the area a real place for people to live, work and play as well



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

From the editor



I have always loved Battersea Power Station – its elegance, its relation to the river, its sheer pink bulk, its steam the

backdrop to my Chelsea childhood. Like so many of us, I have been helplessly furious at its neglect and worse by Council and a long series of developers who often appeared to be deliberately allowing it to fall into complete ruin.

Now at last it seems pretty certain that it is going to have a new life, along with the surrounding area. I have decided to welcome the inevitable. The buildings and infrastructure

proposed for Phase 3 by Gehry and Foster are really rather splendid. And although we in Battersea will be largely deprived of distant views of the power station, we will be able to get up close to it in a way we never could in its original state. Standing in front of it and gazing up at the chimneys against a blue sky is a thrill. Work is already going on to preserve the mighty interior.

The big problem, of course, is who is going to populate the new buildings. The Battersea Society has campaigned passionately for a greater proportion of affordable housing. There will be none at all in the Gehry building, and a mere eight per cent in the Foster one.

And what is 'affordable' anyway? The Government's 80% of average local rents hardly makes it affordable for most.

The Skyline campaign (page 4) calls for a strengthened planning system for London and for the Mayor to call in for review more tall buildings. The taller the building, the more impact it has on views across the city and the more likelihood of dead space at its base. The campaign also acknowledges the segregating effect of such towers. As we know, they are not conducive to family living, however spectacular for gilded youth. And on the 25th floor, how much do residents care what goes on beneath them?

A date for your diaries: Saturday 17 May. Katherine Low Settlement in Battersea High Street will be celebrating its 90th birthday with the unveiling of the Battersea Society's plaque to Miss Low.
batterseasociety.org.uk
020 7350 2749

Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden puts on his Easter bonnet and watches the BBC test card

At the beginning of the 1970s a building society's callow trainee clerks (including your hapless correspondent) were given a tour of the northern headquarters where the staff all wore wing collars and wielded quill pens. Then somewhere in the bowels of this drab Victorian edifice we stumbled into the future and stared speechless at a science fiction array of gigantic reels of magnetic tape spinning constantly, lights flashing, overseen by men in white overalls seated at consoles like high priests at a pagan altar. I now know that these computers were little more than adding machines with pretensions, with less processing power than the sort of smartphone pressed to the ear of half the passengers on a bus near you.

These days I can't be bothered to rant about listening to one person contact another just to announce that they're on the bus and will be a bit late. At least you can tell what they're saying. But without insisting that everyone on the bus speak English (and I'm sure nobody would ever suggest such a thing!), perhaps we should all be equipped with



Original testcard and modern picture of Carole Hersee

Star Trek type instant translation devices. The knowledge that the rest of the bus could understand him would hopefully have quietened the young Italian whose painfully noisy phone conversation with a fellow countryman engulfed a bus I was on the other day.

Easter is over for another year. The secular rituals attached to this festival are now as deeply ingrained as the religious. As a child I had some idea that Maundy Thursday was when the Queen polished the shoes of a number of old people and they gave her sixpence for her trouble. I'm pretty sure now that's not right. Today the hot-cross bun is virtually an all-year round fixture but once they were just for Good Friday – always with too much butter, thus spoiling

your appetite for lunch. On Sunday the chocolate eggs arrived and your appetite for lunch vanished. On Monday it always rained and in the corner Judy Garland bumbled away endlessly about Easter parades, with boring Racing from Redcar on the other channel.

Of course these days you can waste a whole 24 hours watching TV if you choose. And my word – the ingenuity which goes into devising programmes to help fill that time. I'm told that the next big thing is called *Bake me a Balaclava* combining knitting with cookery and a very topical potted history of the Crimea.

Muzak

O Tempora O Mores. Gone are the dear, dead distant days when the only thing on the screen was the test card with the rather sinister little girl playing noughts and crosses with a toy clown. I recently discovered that there's a society devoted to tracking down and listening to the musak which used to play while it was on (probably in small clandestine groups). Membership details on application. I also discovered that the little girl on the test card is not at all sinister, has grown up and is called Carole Hersee and lives with her family (I don't know about the clown) in the New Forest.

You learn something new every day, don't you? Mind how you go .

Planning Matters: It's not all about Nine Elms

Monica Tross reports some successes in the Society's efforts to preserve our built heritage

This year we have commented on a number of important yet slightly smaller applications, some of which have aroused strong feelings. We share the concern of many on the potential loss of the Old Imperial Laundry (2013/6478), a vital part of Battersea's heritage. We have recommended it should be added to the local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. We are told that this development is not intended to be the start of full scale development of the site but retains a core of the original building and space for a reasonable number of small businesses. If so we would not oppose the current application, particularly if this includes the restoration of the Battersea Park Road frontage.

We were pleased to see that plans for the development of the former Battersea Bridge Road police station (2014/0910) include retaining the existing building and an upgrade of Hyde Lane. We have concerns about the lack of on-site parking and some elements of the proposed design for the new building to the rear of the Police Station.

Plans for the Mount Carmel site (next to Battersea Park Station) have been changed from those we saw a year or so back and we wrote to object to the dominance and design of the proposed new residential building (2014/1471). These plans complement the extensive Battersea East project to the south of Battersea Park Road. More on this next time.

The Ransome's Wharf development has already had planning permission but there are revised proposals. These appear to be a sensible upgrading of the consented plans. No planning application yet.

KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH

The Society's website has a dedicated Planning section where you can find details of our responses to consultations and to all but the smaller applications. You will also find guidance on how to access Wandsworth Council's planning



Vauxhall Bus Station: under threat
Photo: Suzanne Perkins

website, where our own and other comments are posted on the application's entry. We staff the planning@batterseasociety.org.uk email and routinely reply to queries from members and others. We like to hear from you so while it was good to hear questions from members at the AGM, don't think you have to wait till the next AGM if you have any questions or comments.

PLANNING UPDATES

Queenstown Circus Roundabout is to be redeveloped and we met the team responsible. Overall we think it will be an improvement but we have some concerns and wrote to Wandsworth Council to detail them. Our views are shared by the Friends of Battersea Park. You can find the letter on our website.

The Council has published revised planning documents, amended to conform with the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Cyril Richert of the Clapham Junction Action Group has, together with other local societies, written an open letter to the Prime Minister detailing the shortcomings they see in the WBC planning process. We decided not to be a signatory in this case; not least because we felt the timing, in the run up to the

local and European elections, would compromise the Society's resolutely a-political stance on planning as on other matters. We do have our own concerns about the planning process and we will be raising these directly with the Council – and with central government via the recently announced Select Committee consultation into the NPPF.

The Vauxhall Society asked for our help in raising awareness of the threat to the Vauxhall Bus Station from Lambeth's draft plans which we gladly gave. We wrote to Lambeth when the plans were first published to object to any diminution of this bus/rail/underground interchange – so much better than waiting in the dark and wet before it was built. Go to the Vauxhall Society's website to see more.

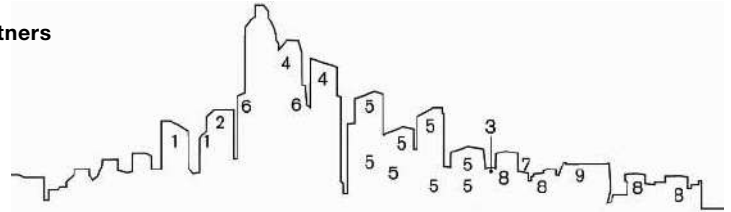
Lastly (and far from least) we are likely to object to the detail of plans for alterations to the front of the Prince of Wales proposed by Tesco and other operational matters. We haven't had a chance to look at them in detail yet but the main application number is 2014/1743 with other applications at 2014/1742 and 2014/1744.

*Get in touch via planning@batterseasociety.org.uk.
We like to hear from you.*



New towers proposed for Nine Elms:

- 1 Vauxhall Cross Island Towers, 41 and 31 storeys, Squire and Partners
- 2 New Bondway, 50 storeys, Kohn Pedersen Fox/Tavernor
- 3 Nine Elms Sainsbury's, 37 storeys, Rolfe Judd Architects
- 4 One Nine Elms, 43 and 58 storeys, Kohn Pedersen Fox
- 5 New Covent Garden Market, (Northern Site), 26 storeys, SOM
- 6 Vauxhall Square, 50 storeys, Allies and Morrison
- 7 New Covent Garden Market, (Apex Site), 26 storeys, SOM
- 8 Embassy Gardens, 23 storeys, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris
- 9 US Embassy, 12 storeys, Kieran Timberlake



200 tall buildings: can London take it?

The Battersea Society joins the call for a stronger planning system for London

Over 200 very tall buildings are planned for London. They range in height from 20 storeys to over 50 (the circular St George Wharf Tower at Vauxhall has 50). The New London Architecture Foundation, supported by the *Observer/Guardian* and the *Architects Journal*, has launched the Skyline campaign. There has, they say, been 'a shocking lack of public awareness, consultation or debate'. The planning system is too weak to stand up to the might and wealth of developers and to the current political consensus that favours development at any cost.

Not too late

According to the campaigners, it is not too late to stop the march of the tall buildings. They want the Mayor to call in more applications. They also say that 'existing powers allow local, city and national government to refuse tall buildings of poor quality and in inappropriate locations, and these powers must be used more rigorously.' The campaign calls for a mayoral Skyline Commission to review and enable well-designed development.

Observer architectural critic Rowan Moore goes further. He says London should have a pro-active

planning system that states where height is acceptable and where not. Developers of tall buildings should be forced to demonstrate how they relate to their immediate surroundings.

Paris

Moore also debunks the argument that tall buildings are the only way of achieving high population density, a point long made by architect and Battersea Society member Peter Deakins. Paris has a much higher density with many fewer towers,

The planned Ram Brewery development



Moore points out. And as the great majority of the planned new towers will be luxury apartments, they will go nowhere to solve London's housing crisis.

To date, Battersea has few very tall buildings, but we will be affected by several, such as the St George Tower and the Ram Brewery (36 storeys), which has planning consent. The Battersea Society backs the Skyline campaign. The planning committee's David Lewis says,

'London's skyline needs to be protected. We do not want London to end up as a pale imitation of the umpteenth Chinese boom town. Hitherto campaigns to oppose individual tall buildings have most often failed: almost all the 200 new buildings of more than 20 storeys that have now been identified across London are either already being built or have received planning permission. But there will still be further battles to be fought. A Skyline Commission could help us in defeating further undesirable proposals. We therefore support the current campaign to establish a Skyline Commission.' *New London Architecture's free exhibition, London's Growing Up! 26 Store Street, London WC1E 7BT Open till 12 June*

Restaurant review: Dalila

Christopher Morgan-Locke enjoys Lebanese food in Queenstown Road

My wife and I had heard good things about a new Lebanese restaurant in Battersea, so we thought we would try it out. As we arrived at Dalila in Queenstown Road we could see it was new and very smart. Walking in, we were immediately welcomed by Malik who took us to our table. All the staff were very attentive, offering the level of service you would normally only find in London's very best restaurants.

Dalila has an extensive Lebanese menu offering a huge range of hot and cold mezze (meat and vegetarian), a choice of soups, salads, a large selection of meat main courses (and two vegetarian mains) and a range of fish and seafood. They offer a range of Lebanese deserts and teas and coffee including Lebanese coffee.

There are four suggested set menus, priced at £14.95 for a Light Mezze which includes eight starters.

Then at £16.95 they offer the Light Meal which included four starters and a main course then for £19.95pp (minimum two people) you can opt for the Dalila Mezze which includes seven starters and a main course. For those really hungry they offer the Dalila Gourmet at £24.95pp (minimum four people) which includes ten starters and two main courses.

Flavoursome

We decided on the Dalila Mezze at £19.95 each which we thought was great value. The seven starters included hummus, tabouleh, falafel, kibbeh, sambousek cheese, moussaka and jawaneh. For those not familiar with Lebanese food some of the starters are hot and others cold, quite a few being vegetarian. Most dishes are not hot like curry but they are very flavoursome, with some including garlic and chilli.



The main course was a selection of charcoal grilled skewers of lamb and chicken cubes. Each dish was delightful and in truth by the time we had polished off the starters we were quite full so we asked for a doggy bag. The main course was enough for a light meal the next day. They also offer a good selection of wines including a very pleasant Lebanese wine. At the end of our meal we met Tony Nakhoul the manager, who was charming and clearly passionate about offering great food and good service at a reasonable price.?

By the way, we did not tell them we would be writing up a review until after we paid and were leaving.

Dalila, 123 Queenstown Road, SW8 3RH 020 7622 0555

Hobby helicopters and feathery hats

Jenny Sheridan explores the individual shops of Queenstown Road

Queenstown Road is the long road reaching from Lavender Hill under two railway bridges to Chelsea Bridge. One side is in SW11, the other in SW8. Mostly residential, it has two retail stretches. A Battersea Society member commented plaintively that *Battersea Matters* has largely ignored the area. She was right, and we hope we have made up for it by the review of Dalila above and this overview.

Among the usual mix of dry cleaners, chemists and restaurants I found some individual and interesting shops. There's a very Battersea mix of the practical, the extravagant and the surprising. Starting near the Lavender Hill end I found Barkers Home and Building Supplies, one of those useful shops where you can buy a broom, a packet of screws, a light bulb or a tin of paint. Barkers has been run by the same family since 1922.

On the SW11 side of the road is Hoverfly, home of radio-controlled flying toys and hobby models. Trevor Johnson is the owner and manager of this specialist store. He says, 'I opened here eight years ago because

this is the area I grew up in. I'm Battersea born and bred. Many of our customers are local, though people – it's mostly men and boys – come from all over London. We sell planes and helicopters but cars are our best-selling item, ranging in size from eight inches to a metre long. You can run them in the park if by-laws allow.'

Hand-made

A far cry from the techno, masculine atmosphere of Hoverfly is Edwina Ibbotson Millinery. Peering into her shop I see hats so beautiful you could hang them on your wall, though they obviously look better on a bride. Ms Ibbotson, whose hats are just as



lovely but less outrageous than Philip Treacy's (his studio is a few streets away) has been at 45 Queenstown Road for 19 years. Her hats, worn at weddings and Ascot, are

all hand-made; Ms Ibbotson does most of the work herself. A hat takes between two days and a week to make, and can be colour-matched to a dress. They are not, of course, cheap.

Perhaps this part of Battersea is becoming a hatters' hub (What's the collective noun for milliners? A tea party of hatters? A brimful?) A few doors away from Edwina Ibbotson is Jessica Mary Designs, a new shop selling feathery hats, many with pretty veils, as well as jewellery and framed photographs.

Shipton & Heneage is an upmarket shoe shop, selling mainly shoes for men (or 'chaps' as co-owner James Cookson calls them). Their brogues, handsomely made in the traditional shoe town of Northampton, take eight weeks to craft. 'We offer a wide choice and keep prices sensible. Shops in Bond Street that sell these shoes have quarter of a million in rent to pay.' Their brochure has a nice line in understated humour: the half brogue is 'a favourite of the diplomat, the lawyer, the broker and the white collar criminal.' The shop has been in Queenstown Road for 25 years. www.hoverflyrc.com www.jessicamarydesign.co.uk www.shiptonandheneage.co.uk

Book review: **Battersea Part 1 & Battersea Part 2**

Penelope Corfield hails a sumptuous production about our area

Battersea Part 1: Public, Commercial and Cultural, Survey of London, Vol. 49 (ed. A. Saint), pp. 480

Battersea Part 2: Houses and Housing Survey of London, Vol. 50 (ed. C. Thom), pp. 500 (Published for English Heritage by Yale University Press, 2013)

To call these two large volumes a sumptuous production is a gross understatement. Yale University Press has done the editors, the contributors and the sponsors, English Heritage, absolutely proud. The books are elegantly designed and admirably supported by plentiful maps, clear diagrams, and superb illustrations. As a paired set, they offer a cornucopia of invaluable information about Battersea's topographical and architectural history.

True, these weighty volumes are not light reading, in either sense of the phrase. They follow the Survey of London format in their Victorian dedication (the series began in the 1890s) to amassing immense detail. As a result, some of the general wood does get lost in the trees. And a lot of social/cultural history is glimpsed, tantalisingly, in the oblique gaze of the architectural historian, rather than confronted directly. Yet it is pointless to demand of a long-established research series that it be something other than it is. So this reviewer has delved into the volumes to survey the Survey as it will interest readers of *Battersea Matters*.

Gentrification

Volume 49 starts with a short overview of the area's long history, observing correctly that 'The Thames holds the key to Battersea's origins as well as to its industrial development' (p 11). It ranges from early manorial history, speeding on to the political career of John Burns, the first working-class man to gain cabinet office in Britain, and on to the area's gentrification in the later twentieth century.

In a welcome innovation for the Survey, the chapters in this volume are arranged not topographically but thematically. They survey in turn: Battersea's public buildings, especially the impressive Town Hall;

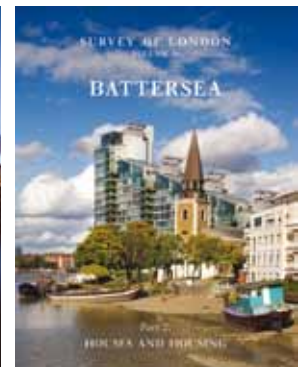
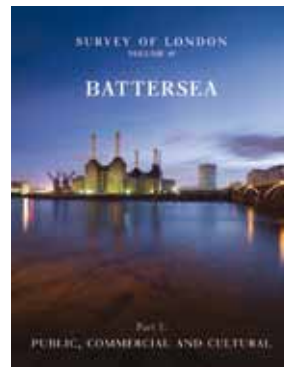
its buildings for health and welfare; its churches; and its educational institutions. Among these, there is a very brief notice of the pioneering one-room infant school built at St Mark's in 1866 (p 124) – which is now in urgent need of care and attention. Two good chapters then offer information about parks/open spaces and buildings for entertainment, before a weighty trio punch out more data relating to railways; industry and engineering; and the ever-photogenic Battersea Power Station.

Boots

There are plenty of fascinating snippets for local history quiz questions. Did you know that the footwear worn by Wellington's troops at Waterloo were made in Marc Brunel's high-tech Battersea boot-factory and that the coming of peace left him bankrupted with an excess of unwanted boots? Well, read about it on pages 342–3.

Hardly pausing for breath, the Survey's attention turns to commerce. Shopping in Clapham Junction is an obvious theme; as is the infrastructural role of the relocated New-Covent-Garden-Market-in-Nine-Elms. Close to the end, the heliport gets a brief two pages. And this volume offers a final six pages on current plans for the redevelopment of Nine Elms, with the cautious verdict 'too soon to judge'.

Volume 50 slices the cake topographically. While this makes it good on local detail, it is more difficult to keep the overall picture in mind. Hence the introduction provides an essential framing to the two big periods of building boom: the later nineteenth century and the later twentieth century, continuing, especially along the riverside, into the twenty-first century. The history is well told. But there is one striking omission in the account of the 1970s turnaround in the area's residential desirability. The disappearance of the once-notorious 'Battersea Smell',



once the 1968 Clean Air Act came into implementation, is not highlighted. (It only appears as a detail in Vol. 49, p. 358). But the passing of the 'Battersea Smell' was crucial in freeing the area for more fashionable residential development, even while it signalled the disappearance of many industrial jobs. The odour was a true blight, which seemed to cling to the skin. It was compounded from a mix of factory effluents, brewer's yeast, oil-refinery fumes, laundry vapours, coal-dust, smoke, gas, traffic exhaust, and smelly rubbish depots, all bound together by the particularly cloying, sickly, viscous stench from Garton's Starch Factory. Phew! Once smelt, never forgotten.

Workers' houses

Volume 50 divides its detailed material on Houses and Housing topographically, starting with north and east Battersea, before moving onto south and west. The well-loved Shaftesbury Estate gets a fine chapter to itself (pages 251–75) while shorter sections deal, turn by turn, with less famous areas, such as the Poyntz Road Triangle, 'an oasis of 1870s houses' with its 'pinched mid-Victorian workers' houses ... now quite rare' (pages 181, 185–6).

Between them, the efforts of landowners, builders, developers, speculators, industrialists, traders, public institutions (both secular and religious), the utilities, the municipality, and the various layers of planning controls, plus of course the successive generations of residents, including those who neglect and those who redevelop whether airily upwards into loft conversions or

downwards into basements in the Thames gravel-beds, have produced a pell-mell history of change, which shows no sign of ceasing. But there are also continuities, partly dependent upon the terrain and location, which emerge throughout the interstices of the story.

Lastly, a note on tone: the brisk chapters all appear to be written by middle-class outsiders to the area, who view themselves as somewhat intrepid social explorers. Thus the contributors to the volume generally have kind words for owner-occupiers,

who care for their buildings, while tending to be a bit sniffy about tenants, especially on the Council estates. (See for example, its account of the Doddington Estate in Vol 50, pages 175–7). The fact that great cities need an industrial, commercial and service workforce which also forms an integral part of any urban community is underplayed. Battersea is said, accurately enough, to have lost its old socialist tradition, created in the early twentieth-century by the workers employed en masse on the industrial riverside. But the

area is also declared, challengingly, to have lost since then its 'sense of independent identity' (Vol 49, p 25).

Perhaps that's what things look like from north of the river. Yet Battersea residents do not regard the south bank as dangerous terra incognita. It is a fascinating area with more than one identity today – and perhaps in the future its multiple identities may be re-forged into one.

Penelope J Corfield is script-writer/ co-director of the local history DVD Red Battersea (2008)

London's river: how has it changed in 185 years?

Jenny Sheridan anticipates a new Thames Panorama

Living on a bridge-less island (or 'ait') in the Thames has clearly given John Inglis and Jill Sanders a passion for the river which even survived February's floods. At their presentation to the Battersea Society on 14 March 2014 they started with a photo of Jill wading up to their home through swirling waist-deep water. The topic of the presentation was their extraordinary project: a guide to the riverfront through London in 2014 and 1829.

Jill explains: 'Back in 1829, a London bookseller called Samuel Leigh published a panorama in book form depicting the Thames from Richmond to Westminster, known as the Leigh Panorama. It unfolded to 60ft. The Panorama of the Thames Project brings this forgotten treasure into the 21st century.'

John and Jill are creating a digital restoration of the work, including history and insights into the landmarks and buildings from local



Westminster comparison, below City of London comparison

historians, to create a Guide to the Georgian Thames through London. After nearly three years, this work is almost complete.

John is complementing this restoration with contemporary photographic panoramas of the riverside, from Hampton to Tower Bridge, again with the addition of information attached to every interesting feature. The panoramas will be publicly available on a special website: the past and the present, for the future. It will show all the major settlements, islands and 33 bridges in high

resolution. John hopes the website will be available for September 2014.

Battersea Society members at the presentation felt that this immense project will be of huge interest to anyone who lives near our river or who loves it.

The team are looking for funding to complete the project. To contribute, or for further information, contact info@panoramaofthethames.com



Battersea men drowned

On August Bank Holiday in 1912 four young Battersea men, aged 19 – 21, were drowned in the sea near Brighton while on a trip organised by the Caius College Mission. The story

of the tragedy is told in the spring 2014 edition of the *Wandsworth Historian*. The newsletter also includes an account of a Battersea steam boat company.

An in-depth history of the 1960s changes to Wandsworth town centre starts with the words 'How did Wandsworth High Street

become an unpleasant car-dominated and aggressive place?' It offers a useful background to the current Ram Brewery plans.

The Wandsworth Historian can be obtained from Neil Robson ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk

Great Bus Journeys of the World No 10

Mike Roden takes a trip on the 319 from Chelsea to Streatham Hill



The driver of the 319 bus folds his paper, and sets off to pick up the handful of passengers waiting in Sloane Square near the station. We're whisked away from the Royal Court Theatre, the spiritual home of new playwriting for over sixty years. During that time it saw the debuts of John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Athol Fugard and Howard Brenton and others too numerous to mention.

The bus heads down the King's Road, which started life as Charles II's private pathway to Kew. There are, as you know a lot of shops here. Anyway we stop at Duke of York Square. Charles Saatchi has had a bad press recently, but his contemporary art gallery, open freely to all, continues to host a range of thought provoking exhibitions, show-casing the work of artists from round the world. The current exhibition is called Pangaea, bringing together the work of artists from Africa and Latin America.

Trendy

The bus stop near Carlyle Square is a reminder that a quick walk down side-streets to Cheyne Walk will take you to Thomas Carlyle's Chelsea home. This lovingly preserved mid-Victorian house is worth a visit especially if you know nothing about Carlyle. The literati of London sat at his feet and marvelled at his intellect. His work is rarely read now – largely because most of it is unreadable.

And so we leave trendy King's Road behind, and Beaufort Street takes us to Battersea Bridge. The main change to report on this stretch of road is the closure of the Prince of Wales, probably destined to become the home of a new Tesco Express.

The one way system goes past Sir Jules Thorn Court (a care home named after the philanthropic founder of Thorn Electrical Industries) occupying the former site of the Battersea General Hospital. Founded in 1896 by the Anti-Vivisection Society it initially refused to employ anyone with any connection to animal research but dropped that stance in the 1930s when its funding dried up. It became part of the new NHS in 1948 and by 1974 it had been closed and demolished.

Blue plaque

We join the queue on Albert Bridge Road waiting to turn right. The Battersea Society's first blue plaque can be seen at no.13 commemorating the musician and composer Donald Swann. Eventually the lights change and we turn past the Lighthouse pub, still very much open for business, unlike the Latchmere, which is closed for refurbishment until May. In the meantime Theatre 503 remains open upstairs.

Along Battersea Park Road I spot a couple of new estate agents, doubtless eager to reap the rewards of our inflated housing market. But the child-friendly café Eat Play Love has closed. It always seemed very busy, but perhaps it wasn't busy enough.

Turning left down Falcon Road we're now following the course of the Falconbrook (one of London's culverted lost rivers). I hear that developers have their beady eyes on the Princes Head but it still survives, while the Peacock Arms (formerly the run-to-seed Meyrick Arms) is now closed and to let. Travelodge, the new kid on the block, seems to have settled in and the café on

its ground floor is always bustling. There's the usual bus gridlock at the junction with Lavender Hill, but eventually we negotiate St John's Road and cross Battersea Rise. I'm rather shocked to see a garishly fronted pawnbroker on Northcote Road. Perhaps things aren't quite so happy in Nappy Valley!

We're still following the invisible Falconbrook back to its source. Long ago this was just a farmland track, but the arrival of the railways from 1838 saw the population treble in ten years. The original plans had been for Northcote Road to stretch as far as Nightingale Lane but in the end circumstances meant it could only be taken as far as Broomwood Road which is where we turn right towards Wandsworth Common.

Grazing rights

The common dates back to the eleventh century but as London expanded from the mid-1800s long established rights of cutting wood and grazing stock disappeared as parts of the common were sold off or were buried under road and railway lines. In 1887 when the municipal authority took charge the land was bare, muddy and treeless. Things have improved a lot since and its 175 acres now include two lakes, woodland and meadow which are a haven for a wide variety of urban wildlife

Along Bolingbroke Grove we have the common on our right, and respectable broad-shouldered Victorian villas on the other. Nightingale Lane leads us past the road leading to Wandsworth Common station, then by the Hope pub which claims to have

**Sights to see: The Royal Court Theatre;
plants galore in the Northcote Road;
Tooting Bec Lido**

Britain's biggest beer garden (though only by including the common as part of its territory!)

Trinity Road was planned as part of the London Ringways, a scheme abandoned in 1973. After turning left through a straggling parade of shops and much residential property, we pass the grade II listed Holy Trinity Church built in 1855. We're in Tooting Bec now, named after the Bec Abbey in Normandy which was given land round here after 1066. There's an air of neglect in the shopping area round the tube station, with a lot of shuttered shops, betting shops or grubby convenience stores and takeaways.

A straight stretch of residential road brings us to the remains of the common land which once stretched to Mitcham. Doctor Johnson's Avenue, separating Tooting Bec and Tooting Graveney Commons marks the boundary between Tooting

and Streatham, and follows the culverted course of our old friend the Falconbrook, known here as the York Ditch. Doctor Johnson is said to have strolled here when he was staying with the Thrale family at nearby Streatham Place.

Lido

Tooting Bathing Lake opened in July 1906, but did not become Tooting Bec Lido until the late 1930s when the term became widely used. Wandsworth Council cutbacks in the early 1990s saw closure of the King George's Park lido, but Tooting Bec was spared, and in recent years money has been spent on making improvements here.

St Leonard's church standing on the edge of Streatham was largely rebuilt in 1778 with further substantial changes about fifty years later, but the original fourteenth century flint tower still stands. In 1975 an electrical fire fanned by a strong east wind destroyed much of the interior of the church and the roof, taking the bells

with it. Strenuous restoration efforts saw the church reopened for worship in just two years. On the other side of the road is the Grade I listed Roman Catholic English Martyrs Church built in 1892 by Alfred Purdie, a pupil of Pugin.

After the inevitable wait at the junction we head up Streatham Hill. This is one of the oldest routes in and out of London, and just before the station we pass the Horse and Groom Pub – now surrounded by more modern buildings – but clearly an old coaching in.

To be honest, for the most part this hasn't been the most exciting journey I've taken, and after over an hour it's a relief to reach Telford Avenue and journey's end, opposite the Arriva Bus Garage. Normally I would go for a coffee and then head back homeward. However this time I wait for the 137 which will take me from here on another circuitous tour, this time to Oxford Circus.

More of that next time....

**AUTHOR SEEKS HELP WITH
LOVE STORY**

Historical novelist Tania Crosse is looking to members of the Battersea Society for input for her next book. She writes, 'I lived in Battersea in the 1950s as a child. I'm planning on setting my next novel in the area probably in the 1930s.

I've read everything available online and at the library's heritage centre, but wonder if any of your members might know any more details about working at Price's. Also, about the houses on the side of Banbury Street that was demolished.

'The book will be a gritty backstreet saga with much drama and intrigue – and a love story or two thrown in!'

To help, contact Tania via her website www.tania-crosse.co.uk



Well done, Thrive!

It nearly beat Wisley! The Old English Garden, that romantic haven in Battersea Park, was voted second only to Wisley by the public in BBC *Countryfile's* Garden of the Year awards. Bodnant in Wales was third. Both are much bigger and grander than Battersea's garden.

Therapy

The garden is cared for, beautifully, by the horticultural therapy charity Thrive.

In mid-April perennials were in leaf, purple and white honesty was flowering and a wren bustled among the stems. In summer, the garden is fragrant with roses and herbs in misty tones of lilac, pink and white.

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Radicals, progressives and pacifists

Mike Roden looks at Battersea as it approached the beginning of the 1914 – 18 war

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated along with his wife in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. A war involving all the main European powers drew closer, but Prime Minister Asquith confided unconcernedly to his diary 'there seems to be no reason why we should be anything more than spectators.'

Certainly, the people of Battersea had other things to worry about.

They were still talking about the nightmare events on 14 June when a sunny Sunday afternoon in South West London was transformed by a freak thunderstorm.

Huge hailstones and flash floods were not the worst of it as lightning strikes hit those sheltering under trees on Wandsworth Common. Seven people died, three of them Battersea residents. There were four children among the dead.

But then life for most people in Battersea was tough all the time, especially for those working in the riverside industries such as Morgan Crucible and Gartons sugar works. The men at Gartons worked sixty hours a week in appalling conditions. In 1913 they went on strike for three weeks for better pay and conditions.

Battersea had more than its fair share of radicals. John Burns (a trade union hero for his role in the 1889 dock strike) became Liberal MP for Battersea in 1892. He was one of the prime movers in the building of the Latchmere Estate, completed in 1903. The estate became the focus of much pacifist, anti-imperialist feeling against the Boer War, and Burns expressed those views in Parliament. Joining the Liberal government in 1905 he became one of the first working class government ministers.

John Battley ran a Battersea printing company. Battley Brothers treated its workers with benevolence unusual at the time: two weeks instead of one week annual holiday, pay higher than the trade union standard, and a host of other benefits.

As an active Baptist he was a pacifist, and campaigned against the Boer War.

Charlotte Despard was born into a wealthy Kentish family. When her husband died in 1890, friends encouraged her to take up charitable work and she moved to the deprived area of Nine Elms. Shocked by the levels of poverty, she funded a health clinic, organised youth and working men's clubs and a soup kitchen. A very political animal, she railed against the war in South Africa as a 'wicked war of this Capitalistic government'. She became active in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and was imprisoned twice in Holloway gaol as a result of her protests.

War is declared

Britain declared war at 11pm on 4th August 1914, after Germany refused a demand to respect Belgian neutrality and withdraw from its territory. A call by Parliament for an extra 100,000 soldiers was issued, and across the country there was an initial surge of enthusiasm, with recruiting offices like the one in Trafalgar Square under siege from the following morning.

Things slowed a little until the last week of August when, as reports from the Battle of Mons started arriving, the flow of men to recruiting offices increased again with more offices opening across London. It soon became clear that many potential recruits from deprived areas like Battersea had lived in worked in conditions which rendered them unfit for soldiering.

One Battersea volunteer has been immortalised by *War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo. Visiting the Bedford House war cemetery in Flanders he noticed a headstone with a striking name, and settled on 'Private Peaceful' as the title of his new novel. Thomas Samuel Henry Peacefull (the original spelling) from Battersea was nineteen when he

enlisted in 1914. He joined the 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, and fought at the Battle of Ypres. He died of wounds there in June 1915. His brother Henry died on 1 July 1916 on the bloody opening day of the Battle of the Somme.

Battersea Dogs and Cats homes 'volunteered' some of its canine guests as recruits to a unit being set up by Lt Colonel E H Richardson, an expert police and military dog trainer. Such dogs were to play an important role in the trench warfare of the Western Front.

The Royal Victoria Patriotic Building on Wandsworth Common was commandeered as a military hospital. Short of staff, the Commanding Officer agreed to take on a group of men who were too old or medically unfit for military service, as Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies.

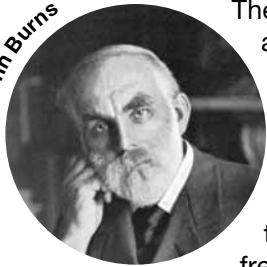
They were all members of the Chelsea Arts Club.

With military action under way, co-operation with the war effort was the order of the day, and the trades unions withdrew a threat of national industrial action, while the more moderate suffragettes decided to call off their protests. The Battersea radicals we met earlier naturally took their own view on these matters.

John Battley the pacifist printer vigorously opposed the war on religious grounds. When conscription arrived in 1916 he won limited exemption as a conscientious objector, and worked long and gruelling hours in a market garden instead. On a very cold day while he was putting 2,000 cauliflowers under cloches, he noticed that his toes were turning black. He had never been to the trenches, but he had contracted trench foot. He survived the rigours of his war, and eventually became Labour MP for Clapham.

In 1914 John Burns had been appointed as President of the Board

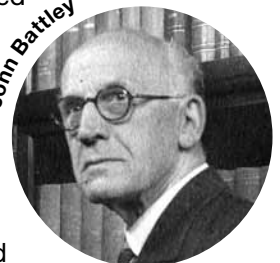
John Burns



Charlotte Despard



John Battley



of Trade, but as the government decided that war would be the only alternative, he stuck to his pacifist principles and on 2 August, (along with his Liberal colleague Lord Morley) Burns resigned. He remained an MP until 1918 but then left politics altogether. He lived to see the start of a second global war, giving the lie to the notion that the Great War would be the one to end all wars and died in 1943 aged 84. He is buried in St Mary's Cemetery, Battersea Rise.

In one of those unlikely twists of

history, Charlotte Despard's younger brother, to whom she was very close, was Sir John French, commander-in-chief of the British expeditionary force. On the outbreak of war she kept oddly silent for a while busying herself in charitable work, but eventually she took up a strong anti-war stance and toured the United Kingdom speaking against conscription. At the end of the war Charlotte stood unsuccessfully as Labour candidate for Battersea North. She moved to Ireland in 1921 and continued to speak at political

rallies in Ireland, England and on the Continent. She died in 1939, at the age of 95. One of the roads in the Doddington estate bears her name.

The war was now under way in earnest. If anyone had hoped it would be over by Christmas they soon had those hopes dashed. Casualty lists grew, the knock of the telegram boy was feared by wives and mothers, and four long years of growing hardship and deprivation lay ahead for soldier and civilian alike.

Introducing Sara

The Battersea Society's new chairman talks to Jenny Sheridan



Sara Milne and a giant friend

Sara Milne was elected chair of the Battersea Society at the AGM on 27 March 2014, following Tony Tuck's resignation.

Sara has been a member of the Society for 13 years; 'I'm a Londoner born and bred – I was brought up in Chelsea and in those days there was a real sense of community there. When I moved to Battersea 29 years ago I wanted to continue that. I joined the Society to contribute and to be aware of what's going on in planning and development issues that affect my life.

'The planning committee is amazing; they are so knowledgeable and highly skilled. The work they do in standing up for local residents and giving them a voice is so important.'

Detail

Sara lives in Battersea Bridge Road, near the now closed Prince of Wales pub. 'It's a done deal that it's going

to become a Tesco, but we can at least try to affect the detail. I spoke to someone in the planning department at the Council about the 6am opening. For the first time, I felt they just didn't care. But it's often these small developments that most affect people's quality of life.'

Sara is an independent PR consultant, currently working with a young PR agency specialising in charities and with the trade association for the horticultural industry. In her spare time she walks her two dogs ('an old Scottie and a mad but lovely rescue dog') in Battersea Park every day and enjoys cycling. She also loves making jam and chutney, which she sells on behalf of the Society at the St Mary's Church fair each autumn.

Poppy sowing

Recently she took part in the poppy sowing along Battersea Bridge Road, organised by the Ethelburga Residents Association. 'I bought a mug of poppy seeds mixed with sand for £3 – the money goes to the British Legion – and scattered them in my allotted spot. The residents association will look after them and hopefully in July and August there will be a whole swathe of scarlet along the road to commemorate the First World War.'

What does Sara see as the most immediate task for the Society? 'Our membership is not evolving and we really need to look at this. The executive committee will be focusing on this; we may have to

release some of our reserves to grow the membership. If we don't develop the next generation of members, the Society will eventually die.'

Sara is passionate about the Society and wants to see it continue and broaden its work.



BOOK OFFER

Putney-based photographer Andrew Wilson has produced a new book: *Wild about Battersea*. Focusing on south Battersea, it features handsome photographs and a foreword by Philip Beddows of the Love Battersea campaign.

Andrew says, 'South Battersea has at its heart a natural valley, at one time a stream, and is bordered in the east by Clapham Common and in the west Wandsworth Common. With such riches, no wonder Londoners have flocked here to live between these commons with its charming little streets, filled with the very best shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs'.

Andrew is offering Battersea Society members a special offer: 20% off the cover price plus free postage within the UK. Total cost £17.60 (a saving of £7). Quote the Society when contacting Andrew.

Email aw@unity-publishing.co.uk
020 8487 2199
www.unity-publishing.co.uk

A little touch of Harry in the night

Tenor Harry Nicoll tells Jenny Sheridan about his experiences at Shakespeare's Globe and why he loves Battersea

One of the great stage successes of this London spring – tickets like hen's teeth – was *L'Ormino*, an opera first performed in 1644. Among its stars was tenor Harry Nicoll, a Battersea resident for over 30 years.

Born and brought up in Scotland, Harry's home was full of music. 'My parents were both very musical', he says, 'In fact my dad still has a pretty good voice at 91.' He breaks off to play me his father singing 'Nobody's darling but mine', complete with yodel effects. 'Dad played the fiddle and my mother still has a lovely contralto voice. They were very supportive when I changed my studies from textile design to music.'

Acting skills

Harry studied singing at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. After a three month tour of the US and Canada singing Scottish songs in his kilt, he moved to London, acquired an agent and his singing career really took off. He has played the principal tenor role in operas by Rossini, Mozart and Donizetti among others. His voice is 'a light lyric tenor. Nowadays I play character roles which involve acting as well as singing skills.'

One of the highlights of his career was *La Fenice* in Venice. 'I was hard at work sanding down the walls in my flat when I got the call to sing the tenor arias in *St John's Passion* there. So it was a quick change, first class flight, water taxi I'd never been to Venice before. Magic.'

Concerts with local and regional choirs have always been part of Harry's life. Bach in particular means a lot to him: 'I'd be happy singing the Evangelist in the *St Matthew Passion* for the rest of my life,' he says.

The Evangelist is quite a contrast to his current role in Cavalli's *L'Ormino*, the comic but romantic and beautiful 17th century opera performed in March and April at the new Sam Wanamaker Theatre at Shakespeare's Globe. Harry sings the role of the maid Eryka, in drag, with what he describes as 'an enormous pair of



bazookas!' It is a comic role – 'a real hoot' - with some amusing audience interaction, but there is serious singing and real emotion.

Harry has enjoyed it enormously; 'It's like nothing else I've ever done. The theatre is candle-lit and we have to hold candles to light our faces. And the audience is so close, you can see nearly every face. The conductor and the orchestra are high up on the gallery behind us, so it's much more singer-led than most productions. And it's very exciting to be in the inaugural opera in this wonderful theatre.'

Colourful

When Harry is not performing, he enjoys his flat and roof terrace on Northcote Road. Light and colourful, it is a far cry from his first Battersea bedsit, with a bath in the kitchen, a piano in the tiny bedroom and an outdoor toilet occasionally used by strangers from the street. He bought his present flat in 1981. The shop below, then a greengrocer but now an up-market decorating showroom, typifies the changes he has seen in the neighbourhood. 'Back then it was a bit edgy. Taxis wouldn't take you here because they knew they wouldn't get a fare back. The market used to be much bigger and better.

above Harry Nicoll, in his role as Eryka, in *Ormino*. Photo © Stephen Cummiskey and above left minus finery

'Now, though we all complain about the chain stores and the pregnancy boutiques, there are still a lot of shops you can enjoy. I go to the butchers and the cheese shop, to Spar and that nice little parade of shops in Wakehurst Road. A lot of my social life consists of walking up and down the road and talking to people.

'The buses are excellent, and it's easy to get to Gatwick to see my parents in Inverness every month. And there's the two commons. When I go to other parts of London, I'm always glad to get back.'

Local lunch

Harry always has a project on the go. He is knitting a fair-isle waistcoat, designs and makes tapestry cushions and loves cooking. He also eats out locally, mainly at lunchtime: 'I'll go to Lola Rojo or Indian Moment on Northcote Road or sometimes even as far as Ben's Canteen on St John's Hill.'

L'Ormino has been such a success that a revival has been agreed for 2015. Harry will be donning his bazookas again!

The Adventures of Bob Barnett: a South London Odyssey

Angela Roden took her chair to be upholstered, and came away with an inspiring life story

Ever thought about getting a favourite chair recovered? Well let me introduce you to a Master Upholsterer working right at the heart of the Doddington & Rollo Community Association's business centre.

When Bob Barnett caught sight of my bargain ebay chair his eyes actually lit up: 'I'm doing this one myself!' he declared, recognising the craftsmanship in the 1950s frame.

I was interested to learn more about his workshop – but as he began to tell me, I wished I was a film mogul, as this story really needs the big screen treatment.

Mother

Bob was born in Brockley in 1963 and did his GCEs at the old Brockley Grammar School. Bob's mother has always been a powerful influence in his life. She had arrived here in the 50s from St Thomas, Jamaica, leaving behind her black and white parents and grandparents who had always all supported each other. As a child she had been regularly to her grandparents in the old plantation house and seen their lovely old furniture. In the UK she bought similar pieces to make it feel homely and made clothes for herself and Bob.

But the mid-70s were not a good time to be a black teenager in the UK. With his good grades Bob secured a clerical job in the Home Office. But they discovered he'd not declared the caution he'd been given for shoplifting biscuits in his early teens - and he was out. Soon the easy solace of drugs took its toll and by 17 he was serving a prison term. Two supportive prison officers mentioned a new resettlement scheme. Some two years later, after his release, he was invited to join a NACRO training workshop in Woolwich run by 70year old John Hoare. He thought the young Bob was showing a real 'panache and flair' for upholstery work. But when Bob overheard him trying to arrange a



above Bob Barnett in his shop
left Angela Roden enjoying her smart 'new' chair



job making car seats for Ford he was horrified. He wanted to be a proper upholsterer.

Training

Stubbs Furnishings gave him a trial – then sacked him. Starbuck's Upholstery took him on for a few months to meet a big order – then sacked him. He persuaded Norris in Blackheath to let him work for no pay, saying he'd four years' experience. It took him over two weeks to complete a sprung-edge chair. Mr Norris told him he was either useless or a fantastic liar. When Bob confessed he had less than one year's experience Mr Norris was amazed, and kept him on. He even tracked down funding for him to get formal training at the London College of Furniture. There, the much-respected Malcolm Hopkins eventually allowed him to do the four year course in just one year – as long as he did all the other coursework too. So, holding down the day job, that's just what Bob did, until he qualified with Distinctions and Credits in 1989, with his love for upholstery still intact.

Of course that was not the end but the beginning, that led - with ups, and downs, and then more ups – to Bob arriving in Battersea where he found love and got married and worked installing SKY TV to make the money to start his own business. Now he focuses about 70% on training courses with the upholstery making up the rest. His links with other specialist workshops and high-end upholstery salerooms across the city continue, and the way he names the individuals

who've helped him on his way shows the depth of his appreciation.

Apprenticeships

As for the future, he'd like to grow the business and perhaps be able to run a school in his own premises. In 2002 he gained a teaching qualification at Greenwich College and helped run a programme at Wandsworth Prison until the funding ended. He's hoping the new plans to introduce apprenticeships might mean that he can help start this again. He's also joining forces for the first time with a businesswoman running a charity providing accredited training in South Africa – he's aiming for a student exchange scheme eventually.

Bob thinks the grammar school ethos and his mother's parenting have helped him make something of his life – qualities not as readily available to the younger generation. As he says: 'Upholstery changed my life – it plucked me out of the mess I was in!'

And my chair? It is gorgeous and completely priceless. As a result of Bob's loving skill I've now secured a memory from my childhood in stylish form for me to enjoy – and then pass on to the next generation.

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Charlotte Despard Avenue
London SW11 5HD*

*www. Uphosteryclass.co.uk
020 7622 9347*

s.carter@barnettupholsteries.co.uk

Save the zebra

Road crossings should be safer – and soon they will be, says Robert Molteno

How safe are our road crossings? I have good news for residents of Battersea: we are going to get two new pedestrian crossings, hopefully by spring 2015.

1 Queen's Circus at the junction of Prince of Wales Drive and Queenstown Road on the southeast corner of Battersea Park

Various Battersea Society members have long been campaigning for improvements at this exceptionally busy roundabout. Someone on foot cannot cross safely unless they can catch the eye of a driver as they swoop round the Circus heading for Chelsea Bridge. It is equally dangerous for cyclists using the 'Cycle Superhighway' 8, particularly in the rush hour. It's so bad that Transport for London (TfL) routed CS8 up on to the pavement – which made things even more intimidating for pedestrians.

Now at last Wandsworth Council and TfL have agreed to use Section 106 funds from nearby big developments to re-design the junction and its crossings entirely. Pedestrians will get a crossing (with a Green Man phase) at each of the four entrances to Queen's Circus. And cyclists will get a lightly segregated lane which does not go on the pavement. The re-engineered roundabout ought to be operational by next spring.

2 Brighton Yard entrance at Clapham Junction Station

This additional entrance to the overhead passageway giving lift and stair access to the station is well liked. However it is little used, for two reasons. First, almost all the bus stops are located much nearer the old station entrance. And secondly, there is no pedestrian crossing opposite the new entrance.

Pedestrians who need to get across St John's Hill often thread their way through the traffic at great risk to life and limb. But now the Peabody Estate has agreed to the building of a new

signalised crossing there. Section 106 funding is committed to financing it. Wandsworth Council has decided to proceed right away. And Wandsworth Living Streets has been assured by Cllr Russell King, the councillor responsible for transport issues, that the new crossing will be in addition to the existing crossing opposite the main entrance to the Station.

After the good news, the bad. TfL has shortened the 'Green Man' phase for pedestrians to six seconds at 25 junctions in Wandsworth. TfL did not consult residents. It did not even inform Wandsworth councillors it was going to do this.

Unrealistic

The consequences are not clear. There is, of course, a period of grace after the 'Green Man' switches to red. But there is no published information about how long these are, or whether TfL has lengthened them to compensate for the reduced Green Man phase. The suspicion is that it has not – in which case crossing times have been reduced.

There is another problem for pedestrians. TfL assumes an unrealistic walking speed of 1.2m a second at crossings. But a University College London study has shown that many people cannot dash across at this speed. The national pedestrian charity, Living Streets, is calling for the assumed walking speed at crossings to be 0.8 metres a second.

If you would like a full list of the 25 junctions in the Borough where the Green Man phase has been reduced to 6 seconds, read our update, *Pedestrian Crossings in Wandsworth – Where have we got to?* at wandsworthlivingstreets.org

Across London, pedestrians and cyclists now comprise a rising percentage of casualties. For example, in Westminster in 2009 55% of people killed or seriously injured were from these groups; three years later (2012), this had risen to 72%. As a result, TfL is making some major positive

changes, including the following.

Most collisions and pedestrian casualties take place at junction crossings, not on zebra crossings. Transport for London is now prioritizing 33 major junctions and is committed to spending several hundred million pounds on them. The engineers are producing detailed re-design proposals. A TfL working group comments on each one, and this group includes pedestrian and cyclist representatives. Living Streets thinks that TfL engineers are starting to take pedestrian perspectives into consideration.

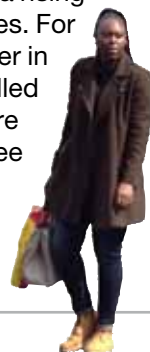
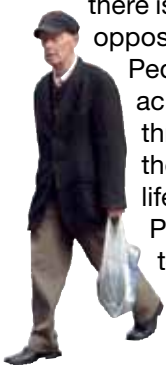
Pedestrian Countdown is TfL's biggest innovation, which it has been installing across London. You have almost certainly encountered them already, for example at the crossing outside the main entrance to Clapham Junction Station. Countdown has a display which shows you immediately the Green Man phase switches off, how many seconds (with a short period of grace) you have left before the traffic starts to roll.

There is already a report assessing how it is working. This has concluded that pedestrians, including people with disabilities and children, have generally welcomed Countdown. For the first time it is clear how much time one has left. The report also concludes that there has been no increase in road danger, and that it has even created some time savings for motor traffic.

Longer waits

But Countdown can involve longer pedestrian wait times, and of course the pedestrian phase takes no account of how many people are trying to cross the road at any one time.

This latter problem may be tackled by a new technology called Pedestrian SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique). It uses intelligent video cameras to alter traffic signal timings based on demand. In recent years TfL has installed SCOOT on about half of its 6,000 traffic signal sites and



is now rolling it out on a lot more.

As the system is aimed purely at smoothing the flow of traffic, pedestrians pay the price in longer waiting times.

Now a new experiment is coming in late summer this year. TfL has adapted the technology to benefit pedestrians. Pedestrian SCOOT sensors will detect the build-up of large numbers of people waiting at a busy crossing. If a significant number of people is detected, the system adjusts the traffic signal timings

automatically to extend the Green Man phase, allowing more people to cross safely. And the first trials are going to take place in our very own borough at the crossings outside Balham and Tooting Bec stations.

A lot more needs to be done to make London's street crossings safer and more convenient for us when we are on foot. There are clear principles for designing good pedestrian crossings that need to be applied in future. And, of course, a lower speed limit on our people-busy, as well as

traffic-busy, streets is key to reducing collisions and lowering the severity of injuries when people are hit by motor vehicles.



www.wandsworthlivingstreets.org
Robert.Molteno@googlemail.com

Note: Section 106: money due to the local authority for public benefit to compensate for the increase in land value when planning permission is granted to a developer.

A John Lewis organisation for the council's leisure service?

Senior council officer Paul McCue describes the way forward

Wandsworth Council, in common with all local authorities, faces an extremely challenging financial climate. In April 2013 it set out a programme of service reviews to address this situation.

As assistant director of the Leisure and Culture section, it seemed to me that this division was well placed to consider the potential for a staff mutual organisation. I consulted my senior management team, who include the head of culture, events and filming, the head of parks and leisure and the head of the Putney School of Art and Design and we decided to take this further.

Public Sector Mutuals have been defined by the Cabinet Office as 'an organisation that has spun out of the public sector, continues to deliver public services and involves a high degree of employee control'.

Our current responsibilities include: contract management of parks, open spaces and cemeteries maintenance, and community grants as well as outdoor sports facilities (eg. Battersea Park and Tooting Bec athletics tracks); Putney School of Art and Design; and bereavement services. We also cover events, arts, filming and sports development.

We submitted our proposal to develop a Leisure and Culture Staff Mutual and in June 2013 the Council gave outline approval for preparatory work. It did so while recognising that, although there is an existing market for some elements of the division, eg outdoor sports facilities, there is as yet no extensive or developed public

sector market for elements such as contract monitoring services or bereavement services. The Council considered that establishing a Staff Mutual would offer a fast track route to achieving the required savings, from a wide variety of services, in one procurement exercise.

The agreement to go ahead with developing a Leisure and Culture Staff Mutual is still subject to a number of conditions and future actions:

- savings – the Staff Mutual has pledged annual savings of a little over £1million by 1 October 2015, to be achieved by a mixture of cost efficiencies and additional income without compromising levels of service delivery;
- while the services to be delivered by the Staff Mutual may well be competitively tendered in the future, this will not happen until October 2019 at the earliest. The Staff Mutual is expected to be 'externalised' from the Council by 1 October 2015, so this timescale gives the new organisation four years in which to prepare for competitive tendering;
- the Council may yet opt to take a share in the new organisation;
- the organisation is, from 1 April 2014, operating in 'Shadow Staff Mutual' form, ie still as part of the Council, but preparing for externalisation from 1 October 2015. It is supported by the consultants appointed by the Government's Mutuals Task Force, part of the Cabinet Office;

- the process is still subject to future reports on progress to the Council: i) in November 2014 detailing what is deemed to be the best 'vehicle' for the new organisation – to date, this appears to be a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status; ii) in June 2015 when one full year's (ie from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015) experience of the 'Shadow Staff Mutual' can be reported and considered. All being well at that stage, the final green light would be given for externalisation by 1 October 2015.

While this proposal is an innovative one for the Council, its Market Testing Support Team believe the case for a Leisure and Culture Staff Mutual is a strong one. They consider that the management and staff of the services involved, given their long experience of trading and income achievement (often in competition with the private sector), are well-placed to develop an externalised company.

This view of the Council's senior officers, approved by councillors, has been supported by the staff and unions involved. 92% of staff who voted were in favour of the Staff Mutual. We have consulted with major stakeholders such as the Friends of Battersea Park. The current staff group of the proposed Staff Mutual consists of 102.44 full time equivalents, some 160 people in total. Proposals for the way forward will only be progressed if they have clear staff commitment. We anticipate that

continued overleaf

Obituary: Morag Jones 1940 – 2014

Monica Tross remembers the woman behind knitting shop Honor Parry



I was very sad to hear that Morag Jones, aka Honor Parry (Battersea Park Road) died on 18 January 2014 at Trinity Hospice.

Morag and her husband Glyn bought this long-established general draper and haberdasher in 1969 and took over the name under which it was opened in the 1950s. Over the years it has changed from selling a wide variety of goods to concentrating on knitting wools. This old-fashioned, but still relevant, shop featured in *Battersea Matters* Autumn 2009 as one of the diminishing number of individual shops which Battersea was lucky still to have.

Midwifery

Morag Jones bought a variety of experiences to her role as both shopkeeper and source of advice to her many customers and friends. She was born in British Guyana and attended the Bishops' High School, Georgetown, coming to England in 1959 to train as a nurse at Westminster Hospital. Having gained her SRN she took a midwifery course and practised in Barnes (with a bicycle) and then in Caterham, where a small car was provided. She married



above left Morag on holiday, and right, as a young nurse. above the wonderful Aladdin's cave of Honor Parry



in 1966 and the birth of her first daughter led to the decision to move from midwifery to shopkeeping.

Her mother, also a nurse, had been a keen knitter and needlewoman and Morag continued the tradition, fitting in dressmaking, knitting and even making loose-covers with the help of a soft-furnishing course at South Thames College. All that in addition to the shop and her family.

When Morag arrived in 1969 there were still local shops on both sides of this section of Battersea Park Road

and many people travelled to work and shop in the area. The British Iron and Steel Research Association had moved into the Spiers and Pond Laundry premises and the London and Provincial Steam Laundry remained operational through to the 1980s. As business moved away Honor Parry remained a beacon of specialist goods and advice which enabled the shop to keep going, despite pressures from supermarkets and convenience stores selling many items, such as stockings and tights, formerly a staple of the general draper.

Her two daughters are currently opening the shop (at 206 Battersea Park Road) on occasional Saturdays. Dates and times are posted on the shop door or telephone 020 7622 5553.

We will miss her.

The council's leisure service

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staff already employed by the Council will be eligible to transfer to the Staff Mutual under TUPE Regulations, taking with them their existing contractual terms and conditions and that existing members of the Local Government Pension Scheme and Teachers' Pension Scheme will be able to continue membership of

their schemes. The Events Support Service, a group of five policing staff, are expected to remain as Council employees so as to retain their unique selling point as attested constables, but their management and deployment will be seconded to the Staff Mutual.

A small number of other Council services are expected to follow suit in the future, but at present it seems likely that this path will only be

relevant for a few. The management and staff of Leisure and Culture at the Council felt it is their best option: we know how to compete; we know how to balance income generation against quality and levels of service; we know the borough's make-up and its discerning public. Watch this space!

For a list of relevant Council committee reports, contact newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk