

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SPRING 2018



Drunken and dissolute – that was Battersea

Duncan Parish continues exploring Charles Booth's 1890 *Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People of London*

While the railwaymen's houses of Lord Battersea's estate and the cottage gardens of York Road were complimented for their respectability, many other areas were notable for other reasons.

Orville Road, just off Battersea High Street, was 'a real plague spot for which there is no hope but in scattering, though there appears to be no valid sanitary reason for demolition. [It is] far the worst place in the sub division: thieves, prostitutes.'

In what is now Morgan's Walk by Battersea Bridge, a small area known as Little Europa is marked as very poor and here the children were 'dirty, three with naked feet, one child of 3 or 4 sitting in a doorway in shirt only.'

Subdivided

With a rapidly growing population, it is perhaps not surprising that a shortage of housing is a common theme in Booth's notebooks. Around the generally well-to-do area of Northcote Road, houses were being subdivided: 'there has been considerable decay in the streets between Wandsworth Common and Northcote Road ... George says that they are now universally let to two families ... indeed in his opinion there are not six families in Battersea that have a house to themselves.'

A proliferation of new flats had also sprung up across the area causing a marked change to the urban landscape. Around Battersea Park there was a 'tremendous growth



A section of Charles Booth's map showing very poor streets in Battersea (see key below)

of flats: when the remains of the Albert Palace are finally demolished these great blocks of 5 storey flats will extend in a line unbroken of other dwellings from Victoria Road to Battersea Bridge Road while in Cambridge Road and Albert Road are other blocks of similar size.'

As wealthy residents were drawn to the 'more attractive flats with their splendid open outlook on the park' the houses they left behind were suddenly affordable to a new group of residents. As a result the 'streets between the flats and Battersea Park Road were rapidly becoming tenemented, and such new building as has taken place eg Lurline Gardens, is obviously for the working class.'

Large houses

Elsewhere around Queenstown Road, not only were houses being subdivided but the land attached to them was being built on too: 'large houses meant for a single family

were built but it was impossible for them to hold their ground in this neighbourhood and they are now all, I think, being let in flats. While the large spaces which were unbuilt on ten years ago, are now covered with working class flats to which the road is suited.'

As today, even those workers who needed to live in the borough were finding themselves priced out, with one local policeman commenting on the 'increasing difficulty in getting work accommodation at a reasonable rent, a difficulty which the police, who cannot live anywhere, feel especially.'

Quite often when assessing the poorer areas, researchers would make a moral judgement about the inhabitants: 'the evil element which the map shows to the west of Plough Road has spread to some extent to the East: but according to George all the streets between Lavender Road, the Railway, York Road and Hope Street are equally bad: again and

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THE STREETS ARE COLOURED ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE INHABITANTS. AS UNDER—

Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal. Very poor, casual. Chronic want. Poor. 18s. to 12s. a week for a moderate family. Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor. Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings. Middle class. Well-to-do. Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.

A combination of colours—as dark blue and black, or pink and red—indicates that the street contains a fair proportion of each of the classes represented by the respective colours.



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

From the editor



It's extraordinary how much shopping for food has changed over the last 40 or so years. Bunny

runs the fruit and vegetable stall on Northcote Road. It's a hereditary trade: she took it over from her parents and used to sleep as a baby under the stall. She remembers when the market stretched the whole length of the road, with countless greengrocery stalls. Even though there were so many stalls, she says, there was enough custom to make a decent living. Now the market is a shadow of its former self – though I

am glad that it, and Bunny, are still there.

Lidl and the internet

In the 1960s and 70s more and more supermarkets opened and the street market started to shrink, as almost everyone shopped in Tesco or Asda. They swapped a chat with Bunny for an impersonal (but possibly cheaper) queue at the till. Now the supermarkets themselves are under threat, both from discount stores like Lidl and especially from the internet. Our roads are crowded with delivery lorries and bikes. The van arrives, the groceries are delivered and no words are exchanged. Shopping has become less and less of a social experience, time to pass the day and have a natter with other people. And at the same time politicians and charities are perturbed about social

isolation and loneliness.

When we go abroad, or to market towns in some parts of the UK, many of us head to the market. There's colour and bustle, local produce and interesting people to watch and perhaps talk to. But here at home in London we don't do enough to support and preserve them.

However the internet – specifically social media – has been used for a good cause in south Battersea. Many shops in the area seem to think they are in Clapham, because of the station. A little storm of outrage on Next Door resulted in the newly opened Pret a Manger store in St John's Road changing its sign from Clapham to Battersea. A small but welcome victory.

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Man on the Battersea Bus

Like PT Barnum Mike Roden leaves us wanting more

You'll all be aware by now that British passports are to turn blue. It goes without saying that red is not a colour much associated with this country – apart from pillar boxes, traditional telephone kiosks, guards' ceremonial uniform, Chelsea Pensioners, and the cross of St George. Apparently blue is more 'us' somehow, the colour of well – lots of things, I'm sure. And an elegant blue passport will really stand out, with only another sixty or so countries possessing this wonderful object. We can stand shoulder to shoulder with North Korea, Somalia, Belarus, the Ukraine, Argentina and the rest, including of course the USA.

The weather of late has certainly been exciting with various beasts from the east going on the rampage with winds from the Urals. One result of those gales has been a growth in the number of bits of plastic fluttering from branches like phantoms in a Victorian ghost story. Our family has a name for these irritating eyesores. Years ago we were driving near Pangbourne in Berkshire, when our daughter excitedly spotted a large heron standing in a roadside ditch. It turned out to be a discarded fertiliser bag caught up in the hedge. This phenomenon became known as a

Pangbourne Heron, though these days the waving bags are simply called 'pangbournes'. I'm sure there will be a pangbourne near you.

Cliff-hanger

I can't understand the appeal of 'binge-watching' – viewing a complete TV series (or box-set) in one sitting. I suppose this is an example of the modern desire for instant gratification. I like to stick to the old ways – one episode per week, and if there is an impossible cliff-hanger at the end of each, so much the better. I used to write magazine serials and one of the great pleasures was ending an instalment with the hero or heroine in mortal peril, and having no idea how they'd get out of it.

Nobody will ever match the literal cliff-hanger at the end of the original version of *The Italian Job*. The truck filled with stolen bullion and the gang who stole it teeters on the edge of a sheer cliff, with no obvious possibility of escaping with the loot. And then Croker (Michael Caine) announces that he has a 'great idea'. End of



movie!

Thankfully, despite many efforts, no sequel was ever made showing just how they resolved their dilemma. Some mysteries should be left unsolved for ever. A case in point being the story in which Sherlock Holmes listed his deductions about his new client in front of that gentleman: 'Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else.'

The client gapes in astonishment. Naturally every one of these assumptions is correct. Holmes then makes the elementary mistake of explaining how he reached those conclusions.

'Well, I never!' says the client. 'I thought at first that you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it, after all.'

And so it would have turned out in *The Italian Job II* if it had ever been made. In the immortal words of PT Barnum – 'Always leave them wanting more...'

And so I shall. You'll have to wait till next time to find out if I manage to resolve my problem about which great bus journey I take next.

Thanks for reading. Mind how you go.



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again he said there is nothing to choose between them: one street is as bad as another: if anything the streets east of Plough Road are worse than those west: the people are drunker, dirty and dissipated.'

Drunkenness was seen as a particular concern and researchers would regularly comment on the inebriated state of those they came across or the number of licensed premises in an area. The people around Plough Road were deemed to be 'only poor through drink; there is plenty of work and they earn plenty of money but drink it all away.'

Further east the researcher was a bit more balanced: 'the Culvert Road district is still rough and rather troublesome to the Police. The most remarkable thing about this district is the large number of licensed houses. 16 are in Battersea Park Road and 15 between Battersea Park Road and the Railway, an area which now especially in view of the number

in the main road would certainly not be allowed a single licence. How far this accounts for Edward's remark that the people live on beer and fish I do not know but I am bound to say that I saw no unusual signs of drunken habits.'

While the poor may have been judged for their drinking, the vice of the wealthy areas was prostitution. Around Parkham Street and Granfield Street were the presence of two lodging houses 'both of low character: one is for youths and one for women only: both are largely used by prostitutes.'

Some of the roads in the wealthy area close to Wandsworth Common were 'a good deal frequented by prostitutes who ply their trade on the Common.'

Suspicion

And Battersea Park fared no better: 'the dwellers in these flats must be comfortably off but as usual the police evidence goes to show that amongst them are a good many queer customers: in the flats in

Bridge Road especially are many kept women and prostitutes, but none of the blocks are far from suspicion.'

The notebooks go on to provide a wealth of further insights into historic Battersea, too many to go into here. From the Gipsy Colony living in eight vans in a yard just west of the High Street, to the description of the courts and alleys of old Battersea Village, and the fact that it was remarkable that an area 'might often be for three hours without a policeman', there is certainly much more to explore. Thanks to the LSE, much of Booth's archive, including the maps, is available online.

Booth's is the only survey for which the original documents have survived and it therefore is unique in the insight it provides into society in late Victorian England. Recognising that fact, in 2016 Booth's archive of original notes joined the Magna Carta and William I's Charter to the City of London as part of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, a catalogue of the world's most prized documentary heritage, so hopefully a snapshot of Battersea past will be preserved for many years to come.

Keeping in touch with our members

An important message from Mike Roden, the Society's communications and web officer

Those of you who were at the recent AGM will have heard me mention the ominous words 'data protection'. On 25 May a new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force. The Society must follow a few basic rules and store your information (the contact details you provided when you joined) securely.

We don't hold any financial or other

personal information about you, and we will never share your information with anyone else.

It is vital that we have your active consent to keep these records and to contact you on membership issues

The easiest way for us to obtain that consent is by email. If you've given us your email address you will soon receive an email from me

with the title Your Consent Required. Those without email addresses will receive a letter.

Please watch out for this email/letter and respond promptly because if we don't receive your consent then we must not contact you in any way, and this would include sending your copy of *Battersea Matters*, and details of Society meetings and events.

DO YOU LOVE FILMS?

Roger Booker and I, both local residents, are thinking of launching a not-for-profit film club. The venue would be the Omnibus Theatre on Clapham Common Northside, which is fully accessible and is on the 35, 37, 137 and 345 bus routes. Our vision is to present a programme of 12 films a year, monthly on Monday evenings, in a community setting. Films would be of international acclaim, previous festival winners, and classics. They

will not replicate current releases or appearance on TV schedules. Most would be sub-titled.

We are trying to gauge the potential interest in this idea. We anticipate that the cost of annual membership would be approximately £50, giving free entry to all 12 films. Members would be able to invite guests for an additional fee payable on the day, space permitting. The club would have a maximum membership limit determined by the Omnibus capacity. The intention is to

respond to members' preferences and suggestions for future films.

If you might be interested of joining such a club please email us your thoughts to ccfilm2018@gmail.com We will email you more details if the interest is strong enough.

Note: email addresses will only be used for this research and will not be passed on to any third parties. Details for those who subsequently do not join will be deleted.

Chris Morgan-Lock



Members of the walking club and the book group enjoying their meetings



No Jam and Jerusalem – it’s walking and wine!

Victoria Wallop introduces the new Battersea WI

The Women’s Institute (WI) really did start with Jam and Jerusalem, well jam at least. The WI was imported to Britain from Canada in 1915 to help educate women in isolated rural communities about food growing and preservation, a vital skill, particularly during wartime. In 1919 the Government handed over responsibility for setting up new WI groups to the National Federation of WIs and they stormed ahead, opening over 1,200 in 1919 alone.

The WI remained entirely rural until 1965, when the resolution restricting groups to populations under 4,000 was rescinded. Now there are hundreds of groups in cities across the UK but, until 2018, not one in Battersea.

Maggie McCullagh used to live in the East End of London, where she was a member of a thriving WI, which she really enjoyed. When she moved to Battersea she thought that joining the local WI would be a great way to meet new people, and was surprised to find there wasn’t a branch. She contacted the Surrey Federation, who said that if she could find a few people who’d like to join her, they would help her to set up a new group.

After a few exploratory meetings in the pub, lots of time spent on social media, articles in local magazines, and an early morning appearance on Wandsworth Radio, Battersea WI was officially formed. On 16 January 2018 the Lavender Room at the Duke of Cambridge was packed to the gunnels with standing room

only. There was a fantastic buzz about being at the start of something new. At that first meeting, 38 people became WI members, and two months in, we’re already in the mid-fifties. We’re a diverse group, ranging in age from mid-20s to late-70s, with all sorts of skills and interests, and a common desire to meet new people, be inspired and contribute to our local community.

Skills

So what exactly does a WI branch do? True to their founding principles, the WI is still about inspiring women and sharing skills. Each branch has 11 monthly meetings, all with a speaker. Our first speaker was Emma Sullivan, an award-winning TV and film director, who told us about playing Scrabble with Hollywood stars and the challenges of filming births on *Call the Midwife*. Our programme for the rest of the year includes a beekeeper, a social historian who has written a book about the suffragettes, the chief executive of the Royal Academy, a talk on gardening for mental health and an expert in edible mushrooms. Her talk will be followed a few days later by a guided walk on Wimbledon Common to gather them.

The WI is also an impressive campaigning force. In the early days the WI was one of the first voices calling for a universal healthcare system and they campaigned for more public health information to

help prevent venereal disease. Later, they set up the Tidy Britain campaign, which was so successful it became an independent body, and in the early 1980s pushed for more information to be available to the public about HIV and AIDS. Today the WI is still campaigning, currently around issues including single use plastic and alleviating loneliness.

Our first outing as a group was to the Western Riverside Waste Authority tip at Smugglers Way, to learn about recycling in our borough and get a sense of the scale of the rubbish problem. It was fascinating, if you haven’t been, we’d recommend it!

As well as outings, we also have a number of different interest groups meeting regularly. So far we’ve been to the cinema, met for coffee, been for walks, for runs round Battersea Park, and we have a book club and a wine club. We’ve also got a theatre group, bridge group and craft groups in the pipeline. If a member wants to do it and we can find a couple of people to join them, then they can set up a group.

Each WI branch has its own character, they are very much what their members make them. After just two months, Battersea WI is a busy and thriving group and we’re excited about what the future holds.

*Interested in joining us?
Email batterseawi@gmail*

Planning Matters: Spring 2018

Monica Tross explains the significance of 'reserved matters'

We are increasingly concerned with this aspect of the planning process. It comes about when an application is given outline planning permission with the rest of the planning set down to be dealt with as 'reserved matters'. The definition of what constitutes reserved matters is very wide and can include details of access and circulation, appearance, landscaping and – crucially – layout and scale, including the height, width and length of the proposed buildings. There may then be little consultation about what are often quite major changes to plans already given outline planning permission. We think there should be more.

A case in point is the reserved matters application for the development of the South London Mail Centre site in Nine Elms. The application is for a mixed use development, including housing and a school but no longer including any mail services. The new application, 2017/6764, not only covers all of the reserved matters listed above but includes significant changes to the plans in terms of the housing tenure – now proposed as rental throughout – and to the height of the buildings. While rental only may be a reasonable option the application raises a number of points of wider concern. In particular there has been no Design Review Panel (DRP) scrutiny of this since an initial review back in 2011 by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). This, while broadly supportive of the scheme, had concerns about some aspects of the plans and in any case may no longer be relevant to the current proposals. We have written to ask that a DRP be convened for the current scheme and await a reply. Our full comments are on both our and the application's website.

Another aspect is the likely high cost of the rentals, with Discounted Market Rent (DMR) allowable at 80% of market rent, not including service



Artist's impression of the Royal Mail development, Nine Elms

charges. These particular plans include a wide variety of services which will, presumably, have an impact on service charges and may price out many potential residents. Battersea MP Marsha de Cordova has rightly put forward a request in parliament that the definition of 'affordable' be reviewed and this application shows just how important this is.

Office to residential: there are impending changes to legislation. Perhaps as a result, there are currently applications for prior approval for this change to be made to all the offices at Ransome's Dock (2018/0806 and others) and to the Glassmill at Battersea Bridge (2018/1212).

ILLUMINATED RIVER PROJECT

There have been exhibitions of the lighting designs and some details of the wide-ranging environmental impact studies which will be

undertaken before full planning permission is applied for. I asked why Battersea Bridge was not included in the 15 chosen, from Tower Bridge to Albert Bridge and was told that they had deliberately chosen these two icons as the start/stopping points. You can find out more at www.illuminatedriver.london

UPDATES

More Inlink advertising pillar applications are rolling in, two more in Battersea Bridge Road and another in St. John's Hill – see our comments on 2018/0455. We fear the plans for Crosland Place (2018/0494) will be approved although we continue to object, as do others. We are also concerned that the plans for 186 Battersea Bridge Road will be approved, 2018/0072. Perhaps residents

of Battersea High Street will be luckier and the council will reject the application to add a storey to the building on the site of the former Castle Public House, 2018/0126. We read that the Ford Chariot minibus service has started but we haven't seen one yet. Residents in North London are up in arms about their quiet side street being used as a short cut by these buses – do let us know if you find the same is happening on the Battersea route. Finally the first phase application for new building on the Winstanley Estate has been approved, 2017/6864.

HAS ELM COURT QUAY BEEN 'TRUMPED'?

No longer the proud owner of a bus stop – now renamed United States Embassy.

GETTING IN TOUCH

We are always glad to hear from you – do let us have any planning comments or concerns. planning@batterseasociety.org.uk will find us.

Council elections 3 May

We asked some of the election candidates what their party would do for Battersea.

DR HUGH BYRNE, CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE SHAFTESBURY WARD

This election is your local choice: your vote decides who you trust to run your local services and who sets your council tax for the next four years.

Wandsworth Conservatives are on your side.

We will protect services, support the elderly and keep the lowest average council tax.

Our top priority is housing. We will deliver

5,500 affordable homes for people who live or work locally. We know how many people are stuck in the private rental sector, unable to buy and unable to save. They deserve a home of their own, which is why we launched our own Council home-building programme, with the first now underway. It's why we are regenerating our estates and why we have already squeezed more affordable homes out of developers than almost anyone else in London.

We are also standing on our record of cleaner streets. We actively tackle fly-tipping and guarantee to keep weekly bin collections, unlike other boroughs next door, like Merton. Looking to the future, we are installing electric car-charging points on every road. We will plant 1,000 new trees every year as part of our sustainable management of Wandsworth's 60,000 trees and extend our successful Putney air-quality scheme for reducing local emissions.

Our local schools are getting a real-terms increase in funding, with 98% already rated good or outstanding. We will create a £17m grant fund to help locally with repairs, playground equipment and training, while expanding popular schools. Because road safety matters for everyone, we will introduce better lighting, mobile CCTV units and get proper enforcement of our 20mph zones. That includes over £8m on further investment in our road

surfaces and pavements.

Regardless of your personal politics, you can rely on Wandsworth Conservatives. We don't make promises we can't keep.

JAMES COUSINS RENEW CANDIDATE SHAFTESBURY WARD

Renew is a new option for voters in Wandsworth.

Those that have heard of it will probably know it best as an anti-Brexit party and opposing Brexit is central to Renew's purpose.

This is the last scheduled election before the Article 50 two-year notice period expires and, therefore, the last opportunity Wandsworth's voters will have to send a message to the major parties that they do not want to see either Theresa May's or Jeremy Corbyn's damaging hard Brexit.

However, Renew is not just about Brexit, important though that is. It is standing as a centrist

alternative for those who feel left behind by the major parties as they move further and further to their extremes; whether it's Momentum or Moggmentum, we're there to offer you an alternative.

Renew recognises the power of education in improving lives and the need for people to have access to affordable housing, both a major problem in a borough with failing children's services and developer-led planning.

And the past few years have shown the difference a couple of independent councillors, including Renew's James Cousins, can make on the council. Aside from local ward campaigns we were the first to call on the council to look after the rights of EU citizens, we have championed leaseholder rights and were opposing Formula E in Battersea Park when both main parties were still voting in support.

Renew are not seeking to control the

council. Instead we are purposefully standing one candidate in each ward—asking people to lend us just one of their three votes—so we can continue that tradition of holding the council to account and making sure it's not the controlling party's interests that come first, but local residents and communities.

LOIS DAVIS GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE ST MARY'S PARK WARD

Over the past four years Battersea Greens have been playing their part to support the good work of local community groups

on campaigns such as saving Battersea Park from Formula E, making our streets safer with 20mph speed limits and exposing the huge problem of air pollution in London.

We've also worked hard to ensure that residents' concerns are heard on affordable housing and meaningful consultation on development plans. We want our nurses, health care workers and teachers to be able to live locally and we will continue to hold the council to account on providing genuinely affordable housing and building good homes for ordinary people instead of luxury flats for property speculators. In the trend towards packaging homes in ever-taller tower blocks, we will protect our rights to light and open skies in residential areas.

We will continue our efforts to protect our parks and playgrounds and make sure green spaces are there for everyone to enjoy for generations to come. We oppose pay to play schemes where public spaces, such as the much-loved Battersea Park Adventure Playground, are turned into commercial ventures. Go Ape now charges upwards of £23 per head to enter the part of the park where our youth used to explore tree climbing, socialising and exercise, but youth clubs, one o'clock clubs and schools needing spaces for outdoor games still struggle for funding.

More and more studies now confirm that creating a healthier and happier community can save millions. We will keep the pressure up on

Hugh Byrne



Lois Davis



James Cousins



town planners to embrace every opportunity to make our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists, reduce our exposure to toxic air and protect local businesses and independent retailers.

We're a small party but we are very good at persuading others to do the right thing. So a Green vote is never a wasted one.

**MARK GITSHAM
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT CANDIDATE
QUEENSTOWN WARD**

It's a shame that serious political debate in our borough takes place only once every four years at local election time. The other parties have learned to get away with ignoring residents most of the time, and then flooding key wards with their dumbed-down messages in the months before the poll. If you live in a 'safe' ward you will be taken for granted.

The Liberal Democrats stand for a different sort of local politics.

Our pledge to residents is that, if elected, we will engage with you and campaign for you throughout all four years. We will genuinely consult and take up issues of local concern. We

will run regular surgeries, local meetings and workshops with residents to hear what matters to local people, then distribute regular Focus newsletters at our own expense to keep you up to date.

What are our specific concerns in Battersea? Development without local concern: along the riverside, around Clapham Junction, and in fact everywhere. This does not prioritise local needs. Social housing, affordable housing and local jobs are being pushed out. We think council services, especially social care, are in danger, and that promises to freeze the Council Tax aren't helping. Councils have limited powers to raise taxes; there are times when they will be needed for the poorest, the young, the elderly and the homeless we see every day in the streets.

We want Battersea to be a greener, safer and pleasanter place to live. We will make the council plastic-free,

plant thousands of trees, and use discretionary rate relief to support local business and breathe life back into our high streets.

We don't believe that people have to be killed and injured before street safety schemes are considered. Cuts to community policing should be reversed to combat rising crime such as moped gang thefts and the terrible rise in youth stabbings.

We believe that Battersea deserves a greener, fairer and more open council, one that stands for the needs of all residents, not just well-paid lobbyists, property developers and foreign investors. And with councillors that talk to residents all the time, not just before an election.

**SIMON HOGG
LABOUR CANDIDATE
LATCHMERE WARD**

Wandsworth is a fantastic place to live. Its strong, diverse communities represent the best of modern London.

But with Conservatives in control locally and nationally, people are feeling the strain. They once claimed to run a tight ship here, but they've become stuck in a tired and self-serving rut. They are trapped in a mind set that knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

When our most vulnerable residents need more protection than ever, the Tories have instead prioritised their relationships with property developers and lobbyists.

Wandsworth is at a crossroads. Continue with a council with the wrong priorities and no new ideas, or choose a dynamic team with a radically different vision built on fairness and common sense that puts people first.

As our neighbourhoods change, we need a council with the right values. And as London grows as a global city, we need a fresh, practical approach that harnesses potential without creating imbalance or division.

Only Labour offers this.

Labour will keep Council Tax low – because it's not right to ask those who are struggling to pay more. We'll freeze Council Tax this year and next. We'll open up the books,

cancel wasteful contracts and cut councillors' expenses to help pay for much needed services. And we'll work with local people to protect high streets, provide the homes our communities want, and stop Wandsworth being a soft touch for developers.

Labour's team is principled, experienced and successful. We'll put fairness first and stand up to powerful interests. Genuinely affordable homes for local people will be our top priority. Our experienced

team has strong plans for clean air and cleaner streets.

We'll match competence with compassion, protect neighbourhoods and support those who need it.

We will be ambitious, act with integrity and work tirelessly to make Wandsworth a place where families can thrive now and into the future.



Simon Hogg



Mark Gitsham

The Battersea Society

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Great Bus Journeys of the World No 20

Mike Roden takes the 156 from Vauxhall



Vauxhall Bus Station is a very useful transport hub where travellers can transfer from one bus to another with relative ease and safety. Unfortunately, the plan to close it has recently been approved by Lambeth council. One of the main results from a passenger point of view is that the bus stops will be moved away from the centre and redistributed round the edges. This will provide an excellent exercise in survival for travellers who arrive on one bus and then must quickly negotiate a major road to jump on another.

Anyway the 156 arrives on time, and I climb the stairs and begin my first trip along Nine Elms Lane since I took the 344 back in spring 2012. The twin tower development of One Nine Elms is well advanced. The tallest tower is (you won't be surprised to hear) 'an exclusive 56-storey building offering stunning apartments for sale'.

The US Embassy is now open for business. President Tweet has (wrongly) blamed Barack Obama for choosing this 'off' location and did not come for the opening ceremony, and shows no signs yet that he may be heading our way. His loss is our gain...

Those running the large Waitrose store presumably hope that embassy staff will arrive en masse. But it will probably be more useful to those moving into the new Riverlight complex on the other side. The walk along the river is much improved from the days when you had to weave your way through a crumbling industrial estate and there are now a couple of pubs there as well to add to the attraction.

It's all change at New Covent Garden Market, and much of the area

seems to be a building site. For your benefit I visited their website to find out what they're doing. Apparently they've 'kept the best bits about the market - that's the remarkable people and the exquisite products - and restyled the environment.' So now you know.

There is no mystery about the new underground station. The Northern line extension will form a continuation of the Charing Cross branch of the line with two new stations here at Battersea Power Station and up at Nine Elms. The main tunnelling started in April last year and was completed on 8 November. There is a faint chance that this extension will eventually continue to Clapham Junction. Watch this space around 2025 for more news on that.

New pier

The Power Station's four restored chimneys gleam off-white against a wintry blue sky. If you haven't visited the Circus West development starting just beyond the Grosvenor Railway Bridge I'd recommend you take a look at the transformation. And the new pier is a welcome addition giving daily and frequent access to the whole riverbus network.

Back to Battersea Park Road and we find the Duchess pub. Until relatively recently it was called the Duchess of York, the name it took in 1791 to commemorate the marriage of the Duke of York and Princess Frederica Charlotte of Prussia. The current building dates from 1883.

Opposite the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home is Flanagans - a popular local pub which was originally called the Old Red House in tribute to the

notorious Red House on the edge of Battersea Fields where the clientele were no better than they should be.

This is turning into something of a pub crawl. The next one is the Masons Arms, a grade II listed building, with an attractive medieval stone mason wielding his mallet high up on the face. Its other claim to fame is that George Shearing the legendary blind jazz pianist played there at the age of 16.

So we turn left under one of the many railway bridges in this area and head up Queenstown Road. We soon arrive at another bridge and another station. Above the entrance you can see the name 'Queen's Road', its name when it opened on 1 November 1877. The station changed its name to Queenstown Road in 1980.

Much of this road is residential on one side, and industrial on the other. One long low blue tiled building does stand out. This announces itself in large letters as Loaf. I look up their website, and learn that they have 'oodles of squishy goodness available for you to try out' Disappointingly this is not a cream cake emporium but a furniture shop.

Turning right onto Lavender Hill we pass Battersea Arts Centre. I have been this way many times before on behalf of Great Bus Journeys so won't bore you with too much detail.

Garish

At the junction with Falcon Road and St Johns Road there is a newcomer since my last visit.

While other banks shed branches left right and centre Metro Banks are turning up all over London. The garish frontage always reminds me

Left to right: The US Embassy, Nine Elms; the Duchess pub, Battersea Park Road; George Shearing; a 'ghost sign', St John's Hill; King George's Park, Wandsworth; Wimbledon Mosque



of an amusement arcade, and the multitude of video screens and coin counting machines inside rather reinforce that image. But if it matters to you I can confirm that they have a dog friendly policy – offering free dog biscuits and water.

The traffic is very slow here as we head up St Johns Hill but eventually we reach the junction with Plough road and pass Transformation House (formerly the Granada cinema) on one side and the Plough Bar and Kitchen on the other where 'the Anglo-American menu is all about small plates. Inspired by New York eateries famous for their tasting plates and little bites, we believe that the best things come in small packages.'

Wholesome

Further along, in a row of shops, bars, delis and artisan bakeries, above one doorway you can see the classic 'ghost sign' for Peterkin Custard, Self-Raising Flour and Corn Flour. To cut a very long story short, the Peterkin Mill was run by J Arthur Rank (yes the man behind the films with the gong). It was part of his father's much larger milling business which eventually became Rank Hovis McDougall. J Arthur wasn't cut out to be a miller and gave it up when he went into the film-making business, hoping to counter the pernicious influence of American movies with something more wholesome.

Passing the St John's Therapy Centre, built on the site of the union workhouse, the bus heads down East Hill forging into Wandsworth, past the Brewers Arms, South Thames college and Wandsworth Town Hall, opened in 1937.

And then as we take a left turn onto Buckhold Road we at last enter uncharted territory. On the edge of Southfields we pass King George's Park which was laid out in 1922, though King George VI didn't officially open it till 1938. The River Wandle forms the eastern boundary of the park.

It was all farmland round here once upon a time, and many of the roads – including this one - were once little more than pathways through fields. Like so many London communities Southfields developed with the coming of the railway.

We pass the Park Tavern which (according to the pub's website) 'is a beautifully restored Coaching Inn ... steeped in history and is rumoured to have been a favourite rendezvous for the Highwaymen and Footpads of the early 1800s'.

We approach Southfields Academy. Most of the students here are from different minority ethnic groups, speaking more than seventy different languages. Interior scenes for the movie *About a Boy* were filmed at the school.

'Tin tabernacle'

This is a very long, mainly residential road and there isn't much to report on, But then I spot St Barnabas Church which started out life in 1889 as a temporary 'tin tabernacle' on the edge of a couple of streets being built on fields which once contained watercress beds. The rather bulkier current building was dedicated in 1908 and back then had up to 800 regular worshippers. I suspect that number has diminished a bit.

The recently grade II listed Wimbledon Mosque is of more recent

vintage – opened in 1977. Like many of the mosques round here it is home to members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. This minority sect – founded in India in 1889 – rejects the concept of a violent jihad and aims to lead a peaceful revival of Islam. They are committed to helping others and working for the common good. (Information from the website of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK).

Appalled

The bus turns right at Plough Lane, once the site of Wimbledon FC's ground. Much water has flowed under the bridge since 2002 when (for reasons that scarcely matter now) the once mighty club was relocated 56 miles away in Milton Keynes. Most supporters were appalled by the move, and founded their own club AFC Wimbledon which with amazing rapidity climbed the football league ladder and is now in League One. The club is currently based in Kingston, but plans have just been approved for a new stadium just 250 yards away from the original site on Plough Lane. The stadium should be ready sometime in 2019.

There has been a settlement in Wimbledon since at least the Iron Age. The village is referred to in a charter signed by King Edgar the Peaceful in 967. The town's expansion began in earnest in 1838 when the London and South Western Railway opened a station.

And after trundling through yet more suburban streets we arrive at Wimbledon Station. It's taken me the best part of ninety minutes to get here, and it will take me just a few minutes to get home on the train.



Café and synagogue, music and art

Anne Reyersbach traces the history of Nightingale House

In June last year my mother, suffering from dementia, became a resident of Nightingale House, a home for elderly Jews. Based in Nightingale Lane, it has a fascinating history. It is surprising that the home is in Wandsworth where, according to the 2011 census, Jews form only 0.5% of the population.

It was established in 1894 'to provide a Home for, maintain and clothe aged, respectable and indigent persons of the Jewish religion, who shall have attained the age of 60 years, and (if not British subjects) shall have been resident in England for at least seven years'.

The present home amalgamated three homes that cared for the Jewish poor in the East End, providing refuge from destitution. In 1904 Lord Wandsworth, a banker and philanthropist, bought its current home at 105 Nightingale Lane. As Sydney Stern, he had been MP for Stowmarket and was made a peer for services to the Liberal Party. He was, in fact, a classic English gentleman – he hunted, shot and fished. He donated Nightingale House, then called Ferndale, to the Home for Aged Jews after being successfully lobbied by Rabbi Isaac Samuel from the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home, at 101 Nightingale Lane. This eventually became Oak Lodge School.

The completed Home was opened in 1910 and by 1911 there were 147 residents (currently there are 180). Residents (called 'inmates') were treated as 'objects' of charity. Strict rules governed behaviour – inmates had to be compliant, perform such duties as the matron directed, and attend divine service. Quarrelling and spitting were not allowed.

financial difficulties were and are a feature of Nightingale House. In 1931 it had a serious deficit of £7000. An appeal raised £4400. Small sums came in from Jewish clubs, guilds and societies. At the same time there was an increase in people suffering psychiatric problems, perhaps as a result of the first World War. In the 1930s the Home had to manage an increase in applications on behalf of elderly and destitute

refugees from Germany. The managing committee decided to accept as many as they could. Staff numbers and income went down during the Second World War yet the wage bill increased as nursing and care staff were paid nationally agreed rates of pay.

During the war a house on the site was used by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) as an annexe for women. Three women, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel and Madeleine Damerment are commemorated by a blue plaque in Nightingale House. They are three of 13 women, assigned to the French section of SOE, who were caught and murdered by the Nazis.

Renovations

After the war, the managing committee wanted a new building to commemorate it and appealed to the Jewish community to contribute as a way of expressing their thanks. As part of the renovations an occupational therapy department was established. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy changed the ways in which the residents spent their days; they were encouraged to leave their beds and many re-learned how to walk. They were admitted with as many of their possessions as was practicable: previously they had only been allowed to bring their clothes.

In 1969 the weekly cost of each resident was £13 13s 1d (£13.65). It cost £153k to run the home per annum. Local authority funding plus the resident's pension covered 58% of the cost. In 1983 an endowment fund was established to guard against the ending or reduction of state support.

Fundraising remains an imperative. In 2017, 74% of income came from fees, with the rest coming from bequests and fundraising events such as the London Marathon. In 2017 £2.7m was raised through fundraising to help towards the £48k needed every week to cover the full cost. 54% of the total is spent on care, with a further 12% on food.

My mother is in Wohl, the newest wing, named for the philanthropists

Maurice and Vivienne Wohl.

Maurice Wohl was a property developer whose charitable work includes the Maurice Wohl Clinical Neurosciences Institute at King's College Hospital. To give to charity is a Jewish commandment, and many Jewish people do this assiduously.

Pioneering

Nightingale never rests on its laurels and last year opened Apples and Honey, a nursery, on its site to pioneer intergenerational working (*Battersea Matters*, winter 2017). Every Friday morning nursery children visit my mother's unit to sing and dance. There are also weekly baby and toddler sessions to which residents are welcome.

The Home provides activities on every wing and each week I receive a list of those offered. On site is a café, occupational and physiotherapy, a hairdresser and a synagogue. There is a religious coordinator who conducts 150 services a year (Shabbat and every Jewish festival are celebrated) and an outreach worker who works with South London's Jewish community. A GP visits all residents weekly. The staff are a mixture of nursing and healthcare staff. Staff accompany those who are able to museums and galleries. There are regular concerts for residents. Relatives' views are regularly sought.

Caring for people with dementia is taxing and I am awe-struck by the patience and kindness of the staff. Their work is formally acknowledged in the Annual Review 2017 'it's the staff who provide the care every hour of every day ... we owe them a huge debt of thanks for their caring, professionalism, dedication and commitment'.

References: *Nightingale Hammerson Annual Report 2017 A Home for Life Roberts M., (2001) Nightingale: The story since 1840 McCue P., (2015) pamphlet for the unveiling of a plaque in memory of French section women SOE agents*

Crowded streets vs frightening woodland

Janice Morphet describes a new book contrasting Battersea and the Green Belt

John Grindrod's recent book *Outskirts* follows on from his earlier exploration of brutalism, *Concretopia*, where he traced the rebuilding of post-war Britain. *Outskirts* is a complement to this journey, not focusing on what has been built post war but on what land has been protected from development and why – it is a story of the Green Belt. But this is not a straightforward historical account. In *Outskirts*, Grindrod sees the Green Belt as a lived experience and intertwined into the narrative is the life of John's own family, who moved from Battersea to the edge of the Green Belt. John's parents and two older brothers were born in Battersea and his family moved to a 1930s maisonette in New Addington in 1969, where John was born the following year. Fairchildes Avenue is on the edge of the Green Belt in what he describes as 'the last road in London'. Throughout his account of the history of the Green Belt, John uses these two perspectives – that of wider planning policy and how intertwined they were for him and his family, with mixed consequences.

'The old days'

John Grindrod's parents were born and brought up in Battersea. His mother worked in the offices of Arding and Hobbs where she honed her secretarial skills. When his parents were married they were allocated a flat in Gresley House, Deeley Road on the Patmore Estate where his mother was already living and, according to John's brother, 'the whole block was dominated by our family'. It was a modern, well designed flat built through the government's post-war housing drive. After their move to New Addington, John's parents spent time each weekend telling their sons about the 'old days' – what life was like in 'Battersea during the war. Bathing once a week in a tin bath. Sharing beds with brothers and sisters. Grabbing cakes from a smashed-in bakery window after one of the tram's frequent derailments. The tiny terraced houses, bare yards and



New Addington in the 70s

nasty outside privies. The bombsites'. But John recalled that these stories were lost on him and his brothers, although memories of their own Battersea experiences were strong.

The edge

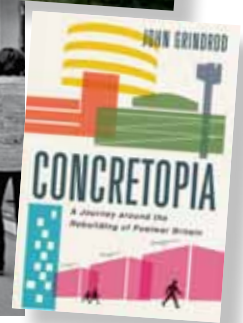
In the history of the Green Belt traced in this book, John also looks at the family connections in the development and delivery of the project. One of the main proponents of bringing the Green Belt to life was Patrick Abercrombie, with much of the practical work being undertaken by his godson the architect Peter Shephard, who later worked in the Ministry of Housing. Shephard's son Paul recounted to John how rudimentary the research methods were in defining the Green Belt – 'He had to find out where the edge of London was ... which involved driving down streets in your location and saying, Okay, the houses stop here, so we put the mark on the map. And they went all the way round doing that. Just driving to the edge and making marks. And this was all done from the back of a car.' In one of those twists in this book, Shephard, who later formed an architectural practice, was also the architect of Gresley House, from which his parents moved to relocate by the Green Belt.

The house in New Addington had many benefits. It was at the edge of land that was once two farms, purchased in the 1930s for a garden village. There was a wood and places to roam. New Addington was five miles outside Croydon and its

location on top of a wind-swept hill led to its local name of Little Siberia. John's house was one of those built in the 1930s and so not so new when the family moved in; once again there were other family members already nearby. The family was able to move to a better house in the same street later, when John's mother was confined a wheelchair. One of his brothers never recovered from the fear of the open space and woods opposite their home.

Through this personal account, John Grindrod raises many questions about the purpose and quality of the Green Belt. It may initially have been purchased to provide urban containment for major cities. But in practice the land felt abandoned and undermanaged. Places were difficult to get to without a car or later the Dial-a-Ride This was in stark contrast to the scale of public management required when people lived at much higher density in Battersea. Moving around was difficult and had to be planned. Can the Green Belt only be seen in opposition to what it is protecting? Did moving the urban periphery improve the Grindrod family's lives or would they have been better off staying in Battersea? This seems an unanswered question at the heart of this book which is a fascinating read for its personal and historical perspectives.

Grindrod, J., Concretopia, A Journey around the rebuilding of Postwar Britain, 2013, Old Street Publishing.
Grindrod, J., Outskirts, 2017 Sceptre.



Battersea needs its station back!

Why not re-open a much-needed amenity, says Duncan Parish

There has been much local feeling about the historical marketing ploy to name the landmarks of Battersea after our supposedly more salubrious neighbour. Asda Clapham Junction steadfastly refused to change its name for fear of confusing its customers. More successful was the hard fought campaign that resulted in a new sign at Clapham Junction pointing out that the station was in fact in the heart of Battersea. Many campaigners may have wanted the railway to go the whole hog and adopt the name Battersea Station, but few perhaps knew that that name was already taken.

Like Battersea Power Station, Battersea Railway Station has been long out of use. While it has not had a stopping service for 70 years, a new campaign is aiming to bring the station back to life.

Battersea Station opened on the West London Extension Railway on 2 May 1863. It was situated on Battersea High Street close to its junction with Gwynne Road. The wooden station was built on the raised embankment and from here steam trains took passengers south towards Clapham Junction and north over the river towards Chelsea.

The station remained in operation until the Second World War when the West London Line was severely damaged in an air raid on 20 October 1940. Battersea Station was hit by an incendiary bomb and the steam services from Clapham Junction to Kensington were halted. The line and the station were initially closed temporarily, but in July 1943 the platform decking was re-purposed and Battersea Station never re-opened. The station buildings were finally demolished in the 1950s, and nothing remains besides a wall on the east side of Battersea High Street marking where the street level ticket hall once stood.

A bridge too far?

There are plans for a new pedestrian footbridge alongside the Cremorne railway bridge joining Battersea

with Chelsea Harbour. It may be unpopular to say so, but while its architects have created an elegant design of what would undoubtedly be a lasting legacy for the Diamond Jubilee, a new station on the south side of the river could be built much more quickly and more cheaply.

The land the station once occupied is still vacant and owned by Network Rail. When Imperial Wharf Station was built on the north side of the river in 2008, it cost £3m. Adjusting for inflation, the £3.8m expense would be small fry compared to the estimated £26m cost of a new bridge. It could be covered by the funds Wandsworth Council have already put aside.

If you build it they will come

In the 1930s the West London Extension railway was suffering from both the expansion of the underground system and the growth in cars and trams. Now however the introduction of the London overground service has seen its fortunes revived. TfL estimate that in 2010 on average 15,500 passengers a day travelled north and south between Imperial Wharf Station and Clapham Junction. By 2016 that had more than doubled to 32,500 passengers.

With the sharp increase in flats being built in the area, demand for the overground can only increase. The site is surrounded by a range of developments. New homes have been built on the site of the former Castle pub on Battersea High Street and over 200

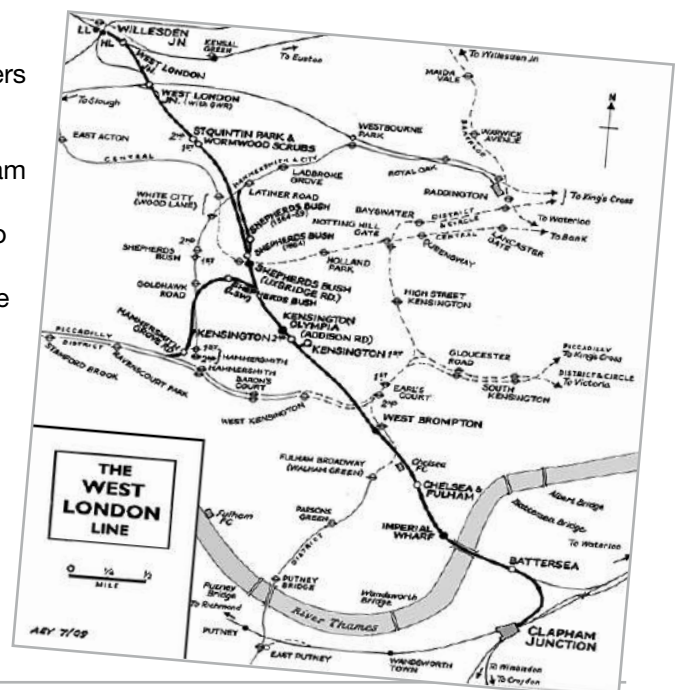


On the left in the picture, the site of Battersea Station on Battersea High Street, looking south

flats have already been completed on Gwynne Road and the streets alongside. The Lombard Wharf Tower adjoining the railway houses a further 134 new apartments and two large developments are underway at York Road's Lookers Volkswagen and Homebase sites. Mike Roden may find himself squeezed out of writing in future editions about the 170 single decker bus route that serves the area.

Easing the pressure

A new station would bring economic benefits to businesses on Battersea High Street. It would reduce the need for car journeys in the area and would help ease congestion at Clapham



Junction. The Mayor's 2018 transport plan for London designates Clapham Junction as a strategic interchange site, as the city aims to improve its orbital rail services and network hubs. But Clapham Junction is also flagged as a potential bottleneck and, with increased passenger numbers, the plan notes that congestion could lead to station closures, like those we have seen regularly at Victoria and Oxford Circus.

The advantage of re-opening Battersea Station is that it would reduce the number of passengers needing to travel into the Junction once they had crossed the river. Its location would also mean it would be just a short hop to the bus services which, from 2020, will connect passengers directly along Battersea Park Road to the new Battersea Power Station underground stop on the Northern Line.

While I have absolutely nothing against the proposed bridge, its development appears to be stationary. Whereas a station could provide a fast and effective bridge for the local area's future transport needs.

If you would like to know more about the campaign to re-open Battersea Station or to lend your support email BatterseaStation@gmail.com

The Great Fire of Battersea

BAC's Grand Hall is preparing to re-open. Jenny Sheridan reports

Who can forget? On Friday 13 March 2015, the Grand Hall of Battersea Arts Centre, the former town hall, went up in flames. Thanks to good fortune, much of the organ was away being repaired so it was largely unscathed. Thanks to prompt and skilled action by firefighters, the glass dome in the centre of the building was saved.



Exactly three years later, on 13 March 2018, artistic director David Jubb announced the Hall's opening Phoenix Season. The first production will be physical theatre company Gecko's *Missing*, which was rudely interrupted by the fire three years ago. This will open on 6 September and until then the Grand Hall will feature a series of events, including a vow-renewing ceremony for couples (including David Jubb) who married in the Hall and a commemorative photo session.

David recalled the week of the fire,

when thousands of people across the world sent emails of support or donations. As most of the computers had been destroyed in the blaze, BAC bought a printer and stuck the emails up on the wall. 'If you wanted to cheer yourself up, you just read the walls,' David said. It was clear that the building was loved globally as well as locally.

In appreciation of that generosity, BAC is going to create a garden and mini-allotments for local community groups on Town Hall Road. It will also launch a Scratch Hub in the spaces under the Grand Hall, to provide a base for creative businesses and social enterprises.

New ideas

Once the Phoenix Season opens, many of the performances will be preceded by a short curtain-raiser – an opportunity for a social entrepreneur or voluntary group to present their ambitions and ventures or for artists to test new ideas.

Over 2,000 tickets will be made available for £1, to be distributed through local charities and voluntary organisations.

The Grand Hall itself is still a work in progress. The scaffolding is still up but the new triple-glazed windows and the proscenium arch are in place. The new suspended ceiling echoes the old plasterwork but allows space and access for modern lighting and sound. The walls are still scorched and burnt from the fire. As a memento of the inferno and the community effort to restore it, it will remain permanently scarred after being made safe and clean.

BAC's family show in December will be Return to Elm House – the house which stood on its site before it became Battersea's Town Hall. It was home to Mrs Jeanie Nassau Senior (see page 15). The audience will embark on a quest through the building, exploring hidden memories and lost secrets to uncover Mrs Senior's story. The thirteen new installations they find will be permanently embedded in the building, contributing to the old and new history of Battersea.

Battersea Society AGM 2017

The Battersea Society's AGM, on 15 March 2018 in St Mary's Church, was well attended by 70 members.

After a welcoming drink, chair Sara Milne introduced the press attaché of the US embassy, who gave a presentation on the building's architecture.

The AGM business started with the chair's report. Sara listed the achievements made over the last few years, including online banking, payment for subscriptions online and new membership leaflets. The

Society also has a new committee – Heritage – and a revitalised Open Spaces committee as well as working groups on membership and green plaques. Sara said that she was standing down as chair after five years and Harvey Heath was standing down as secretary after 18 years. Both were thanked for their great contributions.

Three trustees have resigned: Susan Hoffman, Maureen Larkin and Steph Tickner. Three new trustees were introduced: Clare Graham,

Michael Jubb and Duncan Parish.

The Society's new constitution, replacing that of 2009, was approved by the membership, as were the accounts for 2017.

Trustees 2018

Jenny Sheridan
Chair

Sue Demont
Secretary

Ian Beardall
Treasurer

Clare Graham
Harvey Heath

Michael Jubb
David Lewis

Sue Marshall
Sara Milne

Duncan Parish
Monica Tross

Singing: sweat-free exercise for the soul

Susannah Frieze has joined a community choir in nearby Vauxhall

I have loved Vauxhall Voices since the moment I joined when, within five minutes of the warm-up, our leader Janna had coached four parts into singing a song from scratch. I had walked through the door of the Wheatsheaf Hall with fear and trepidation: nervous about the unknown, nervous about the degree of exposure to which I was about to subject myself and here I was, singing close harmonies with people who instantly didn't feel like strangers any more.

Although I am a veteran of large choirs, I knew after the first ten minutes with Vauxhall Voices that I had found my musical home. With singing, four things have to work: the people you sing with, the direction and personal style of the choir leader, the repertoire of the music chosen and your own comfort level of how much you are prepared to sing out. For me, after years of often painful part-by-part sight-reading in a large classical choir that sang only huge classical pieces, it was joyous to be singing out and making music so quickly and so effortlessly.

I came to Vauxhall Voices through a combination of word-of-mouth and Facebook, a mix of old and new recruitment methods. I work locally but live in Shepherd's Bush so I wasn't convinced that singing with a community choir in Vauxhall would be particularly welcoming, but I couldn't have been more wrong. As my friend Jane puts it, 'Vauxhall Voices is a diverse group of people but there is a genuine sense of community. Singing together and breathing together brings people together naturally.'

There's a real feeling of elation when we sing and all the parts come together to create harmony. It can be quite emotional!

She's not wrong about the emotional part. Janna, our leader, has that rare quality of being able to elicit something very special from a roomful of people, many of whom didn't even know they could sing. She can hold 30 people enthralled, engaged and learning fast, without a sheet of music in sight. She is both inclusive and effective: she encourages the shyest of newcomers to sing at the top of their newfound voice and yet achieves that musical nirvana of bringing the dynamic to an exquisite controlled hush when required.

Magic

Like all good choirmasters, there is a touch of the magician about Janna. Often I have walked in for that Monday evening session feeling cold, tired and down; two hours later it is as if Janna has waved a magic wand: I feel warm, energised and uplifted.

Singing a capella (voices only, no instrumental accompaniment) also makes music feel more intimate and immediate. Our repertoire is eclectic and global, from Gaelic lullabies to African marching ceremonies to Russian love songs to Motown classics. The one possible snag for me was going to be the performance element: after years of hiding out in a 250-strong classical choir, nicely invisible at the back of the Royal



Festival Hall, how was I going to enjoy singing up close and personal in a pub? But I was wrong to worry: doing gigs with the Vauxhall Voices has struck that vital balance between fun, high quality, celebration, discipline and the sheer bloody joy of singing harmonies with like-minded people to a receptive audience. In one pub, we were even given a free lunch. Fun and food: what's not to love?

But don't just take my word for it. I asked fellow singer Ian Barber how he felt about Vauxhall Voices and he summed it up beautifully: 'I never thought singing with others was for me, until I saw an ad for Vauxhall Voices and decided to try it. I'm so glad I did. You turn up, leave life, work and Monday at the door and two hours later, go home feeling great. It's like exercise, but for the soul. And without all the sweating.'

Vauxhall Voices rehearses on Monday evenings, 7 – 9pm. The summer term starts on 23 April. Wheatsheaf Hall is off the South Lambeth Road, near Nine Elms Sainsburys. Visitors can come for a taster session.

*A similar choir sings at the Welsh Chapel, Beauchamp Road, Clapham Junction
Tuesdays 7.15 – 9pm
www.realvoices.co.uk*



Design awards

The winners of Wandsworth's 2017 design awards were announced in February. One of the six awards and three of the commended entries are in Battersea. They are:

Design award: St Mary's RC primary school, Lockington Road (pictured left © David Christian).

Commended: courtyard in Phase 1 of the Peabody estate, St John's Hill; St John Bosco School, Parkham Street; houses, Hafer Road.

'A noble army of one'

Jeanne Rathbone introduces Jeanie Nassau Senior, the first female civil servant

Few people have heard of Jeanie Nassau Senior. Yet she was the first woman civil servant, and a Battersea resident for sixteen years. Her home was Elm House, Lavender Hill, later the site of Battersea Town Hall and now Battersea Arts Centre.

Born Jane Hughes in 1828, she was the only girl among six brothers. She was described as a winsome and vivacious young woman with a golden halo of hair and a magical singing voice. The family's home life was immortalised in the early chapters of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, written by her brother Thomas.

Lodgers

At the age of 20, devastated with grief after the death of an older brother, she married John, the only son of Nassau William Senior, a well-known political economist. The marriage was an unhappy one. Her household is mentioned in the Survey of London: 'Theirs was an unusual household, its financial stability shaken by the failures of a spineless husband and the commitments of an energetically philanthropic wife'. Her husband turned out to be lazy and workshy. He could never hold on to the opportunities his wife gamely secured for him and condemned her by his indolence to a lifetime of financial worries. To make ends meet, she gave singing lessons and took in lodgers.

In 1860 the couple moved to Elm House, which for the next sixteen years became the centre of her family life and of her progressive circle of distinguished friends. These included George Eliot, who based *Dorothea* in Middlemarch on her, John Millais and George Watts, who both painted her, and Marie Spartali, the Pre-Raphaelite painter who lived close by in Lavender Gardens. Julia Margaret Cameron photographed her, Jenny Lind, the 'Swedish Nightingale', sang with her and Prosper Mérimée, the author of *Carmen*, tried and failed to seduce her. Alfred Lord Tennyson, Florence Nightingale and Octavia Hill, co-founder of the National Trust, were also frequent visitors to the Lavender Hill house.



A portrait of Jeanie Nassau by George Frederic Watts

She threw open the new family home, which now included her only child Walter, to her brother and his four little motherless children, as well as to an unrelated motherless girl and her own and her husband's widowed mothers. Yet she still had energy and emotion to spare for the larger world, especially those poor people whom her father-in-law had scorned. She visited workhouse inmates, supported a local industrial school for girls and helped Octavia Hill in her housing projects for the poorest of the poor in Marylebone.

Tireless

Jeanie was actively involved in a number of charitable undertakings and during the Franco-Prussian War (1870 – 71) was a tireless worker for the Red Cross, who gave her a medal. She founded the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, a scheme which 'had results of a most wide-reaching and beneficial kind'.

Her work with poor children led to Jeanie's greatest claim to fame. She was approached, via Octavia Hill,

by James Stansfeld MP, president of the Local Government Board. He appointed her as assistant inspector (and later inspector) of workhouses, a paid senior civil service role. Her ground-breaking official *Report by Mrs Senior on Pauper Schools*, published in January 1874, was critical of the existing arrangements. She concluded that the massing of children in large numbers was wrong and strongly recommended boarding out (the fore-runner of fostering) for the category of 'pauper orphans'. She was critical of the entire pauper relief system which had been instituted by her father-in-law in the 1834 New Poor Law,

The report caused a public furore and a lengthy battle ensued with the vested interests in the 'workhouse establishment', carried out largely through the letters columns of *The Times*.

James Stansfield approved of her report and wanted her appointment to be made permanent. An election and further objections by the establishment ensured that did not happen. Despite Jeanie's example, the employment of women in senior positions in the Civil Service was not permitted until 1925, and was not extended to married women until the 1940s.

Although Jeanie bravely stood her ground, she had to resign in December 1874 due to ill-health. She was backed by Florence Nightingale, who said she was 'a noble army of one', George Eliot, Octavia Hill, Lord Shaftesbury, Sir James Stansfeld and others, but it was too much. She died on 24 March 1877, aged 48.

Although her report's recommendations were not immediately followed, (children continued to live in workhouses until 1915), they influenced Dr Barnardo, who wrote that 'boarding out owes its introduction to the indefatigable labours of Mrs Nassau Senior'.

Reference: Oldfield, Sybil. Jeanie, An Army of One, 2008

Peace in the park

Sara Milne delights in the new Promontory Garden in Battersea Park

My initial thought as I sat down in the new Promontory Garden was ... it's a bit breezy! But of course it will be perfect on a summer's day which is what it has been designed for. Having said that, it was mid-afternoon and the sun was on my back as I sat looking out across the Thames and Albert Bridge – which considering the Beast from the East weather we had just had was a miracle!

What is lovely about the Promontory Garden is that it's a little pocket of peace that exists as an adjunct to the daily bustle of the park. It is beautifully designed and in keeping with its location, with a nod to the heritage of the park and the riverside's industrial past. The utilitarian bollards, slate shale mulching along the river edge and



Albert Bridge from the Promontory Garden Photo: Sara Milne

Victorian benches combine to make it a place of interest and contemplation. The planting is still young and it's difficult to envisage what it will be like in a couple of years, but the effect is one of calmness.

Grasses

The copious grasses, when fully grown, will sway and sigh in the Thames breeze. The garden benefits from some very large established

park trees which give it a feeling of space and permanence and the newly planted acers will fill the empty space left by the canopy of the existing trees.

It's a great place to sit and gaze across and down the river, admiring the beauty of both Albert and Chelsea Bridges. I am so pleased that this area of the park is now accessible and looking its best. Definitely worth a visit.



Spring flowers in the grass in St Mary's Cemetery, Bolingbroke Grove
Photos: Jenny Sheridan and Sue Demont

Festival time is here

May and June are festival months in Wandsworth. The Heritage Festival follows hot on the heels of the Arts Fringe. Here are some of the highlights in Battersea (though there's nothing to stop us going to other parts of the borough).

Arts Fringe 4 – 20 May

- An exciting innovation is the Battersea Circus Garden, in Shillington Park, Este Road. Acrobats, jugglers, cabaret artists and old and new circus skills will all be on display in the Big Top from 4 to 13 May.

- Enjoy a large and colourful textile artwork made by local older people at Fresh Ground (Battersea Rise) 16 – 19 May.

- There will be a dance day at the Royal Academy of Dance, performance poetry on the Doddington and Rollo estate and, in Wandsworth Prison, the story of three alleged traitors – or were they political prisoners?

- The Battersea Society's contribution is a talk on the de Morgan collection at St Mary's Church on 17 May.

Heritage Festival 26 May – 10 June

- There are several local walks to follow. On 10 June, the Battersea Society's Jeanne Rathbone will lead a walk around the famous women of Lavender Hill. The Society, together with the Friends of Battersea Park, are organising a walk in the park on 2 June.

On 27 May and 10 June Tony Belton is guiding a walk through historic Battersea, and on 7 June Jon Newman will lead a walk along the route of the buried Falcon brook. There will be a guided walk on the trees of Battersea Park on 30 May.

- The Battersea Society, again with the FoBP, is offering a talk by Jennifer Ullman on the history of the park, on 7 June.

- On 4 June Carol Rahn will give a talk based on interviews carried out by the War Comes Home group. Local residents shared their fascinating memories of growing up in wartime Battersea.