

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SPRING 2019



From Beirut to Battersea

Refugee families are finding a welcome here, says Jenny Sheridan

Until August 2018, Suzy (not her real name) was a refugee living for over four years in miserable conditions in Lebanon, where she had fled when her family's property was looted and bombed. As an Armenian Christian in Syria, her life was constantly at risk. However grim the conditions in Lebanon, at least she and her daughters were relatively safe.

Now the family is living in Battersea, thanks to a scheme set up by the government in 2015, when images of three year old Alan Kurdi's tiny body, washed up on a Turkish tourist beach, shocked the world. Through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, (VPRS), the UK committed to taking 20,000 of the most traumatised and vulnerable Syrian refugee families from camps in the region. The feedback from neighbouring London boroughs who have adopted the VPRS has been overwhelmingly positive. Kingston has resettled 26 families, Lambeth pledged to take 20, but now has 23 and is looking forward to welcoming more. Wandsworth now has seven families and an eighth arrives this month.

Partnership

Since Suzy arrived in London, she has been supported by Battersea Welcomes Refugees (BWR), a group set up in 2017 by members from six local churches: St Mary's, St Peter's, St Michael's, St Barnabas, St Luke's and All Saints, all keen to do something practical to help refugees. The VPRS is a three way partnership between the government, which pays housing benefit, the local authority, which provides a support package,



English-language classes for recently arrived families are held at Katherine Low Settlement

and the local community. To avoid using social housing intended for local people, private landlords are asked to offer tenancies at housing benefit rate and the local community offer other support including helping the families integrate.

In Battersea, it was hard to find private landlords, so BWR decided to step in. Suzy is living in a flat on the Winstanley Estate belonging to St Peter's and another couple from St Peter's have offered their two bedroom flat to a refugee family, while they temporarily relocate to Cambridge. Members of the congregation of St Michael's, near Wandsworth Common, have actually bought a three bedroom flat in the middle of Battersea, specifically for VPRS.

Suzy and her children have been living on the Winstanley estate since last August. She is studying English at South Thames College to improve her skills and is also training to become a nail technician

on a course funded by BWR. She hopes eventually to go to college and become an accountant. Her two girls, aged 9 and 10 attend the Love to Learn homework club at Katherine Low Settlement. Serena Cox, St Mary's refugee representative, is one of the volunteers there. 'They are both bright, love maths and work hard', she says. 'I am sure the family will be an asset to Britain.'

Scared

Serena is also helping to support another BWR family. Ahmed and Sahar (not their real names) have three small boys, aged six, five and three. The youngest was born in a refugee camp in Jordan. 'I gather it was four years of hell', says Serena. 'The camp was run by violent gangs, they could hear the bombs over the border and packs of feral dogs roamed between the tents. The children are still scared of loud noises and of dogs.' ▶



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batterseasociety.org.uk

for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

From the editor



The death of the high street – we’ve been reading about it for years, and nothing much has been done to resuscitate it. Battersea has done better than many areas of London, and Northcote Road has done better than much of Battersea. But now things may be changing. One of the most interesting and individual shops around, the Hive Honey Shop, has closed its doors after 20 years, and will now be selling online only. I will miss them, not only for their amazing range of honey, much of it from their own hives in

Battersea and Sussex, but for the rare breed apples in trugs outside the shop every autumn, bringing ancient flavours, aromas and textures to our tables.

Another depressing sign of the times is the Northcote Road market. Last Saturday there were only three stalls in a street once lined end to end with them. Clapham’s Venn Street is the nearest, and is excellent, but I wonder why neither Battersea nor Putney have managed to sustain a street or farmers’ market.

Perhaps the new Clapham Junction BID (Business Improvement District) will end our high street woes and bring life, light and little lambkins leaping along Lavender Hill. Perhaps.

I feel that, like the Man on the Bus below, I must stop myself from falling into despair, or at least a state of severe grumpiness. No reasons

to be cheerful on the news certainly. One of the few sparks of cheer I can perceive is the huge number of local voluntary organisations and charities working to improve community life in Battersea. Some of them have come together to form an alliance to work even more effectively – you will read about it in future issues of *Battersea Matters*. One of the first fruits of this alliance is a Battersea Charities Week in June, culminating in the Falcon Road Festival, where the Society will have a stall.

May and June will be busy, with the festival, the Arts Fringe and the Heritage Festival. I hope to see many of you at these happy community events.

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Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden tries to look on the bright side

Of late there’ve been days when I felt like emulating Private Frazer from Dad’s Army and shrieking ‘Doomed – we’re all doomed’ to nobody in particular. I’m writing this on the Ides of March and though I haven’t yet seen portents and omens foretelling the death of Kings I’m aware that the world is gradually being suffocated by a tide of plastic, that temperatures (and thus sea levels) are rising much quicker than predicted, knife crime has reached epidemic proportions, and Westminster is currently showing a drama serial which may or may not be approaching its last episode.

Pull yourself together, I hear you cry. Worse things happen at sea. Look on the bright side.

There may be some truth in that. Spring after all is starting to peep shyly round the corner. A nearby magnolia is in full blossom and this year the makeshift bird table near our kitchen window is starting to attract visitors – a pair of blackbirds, dunnocks, bluetits pecking at the fat balls, and the occasional robin calling in to keep an eye on things.

The number of magpies round here is on the rise, but our quarrelsome

gangs of local crows seem determined to stop them settling in. Their black and white shiny plumage is very fetching, though *en masse* their constant cackling can be maddening. But I shall continue to follow a habit I learned from my mum and politely wish good morning to my first magpie of the day. I suppose it’s a way of hoping the ‘one for sorrow’ part of the traditional rhyme won’t count if you’re nice to them.

Continuing to look on the bright side, nothing could have been brighter than the garishly pink-painted shop which we approached one day on our way to Victoria station. The queue of (mostly) young women which snaked away from the front door was heroically long, but cheerful, and people were taking it in turns to record pictures of themselves in the shop doorway.

Cupcakes

It turned out to be the recently opened Ebury Street outpost of Peggy Porschen’s Parlour which bakes and sells ‘cupcakes, layer cakes and coveted confections’ and was obviously the place to be seen.



How many of these they consumed if they ever got inside, I don’t know, but I can’t help feeling that recording the occasion on Instagram is the main attraction.

The selfie is a phenomenon of our bonkers modern age which shows no sign of going away. Apparently most people prefer the Mona Lisa to be behind them with their own face in the forefront of the picture. I gather that the Taj Mahal suffers the same fate. A rather grimmer fate sometimes awaits those determined to get their faces in front of a magnificent piece of scenery like the Grand Canyon or a Himalayan peak. They inch backwards towards an unfenced edge trying to frame the perfect shot until suddenly the edge is no longer there. Neither of course are they.

Right – on that eminently cheerful note I should get going and leave you in peace. Incidentally, have you ever noticed that the word ‘Right’ said purposefully to display an intention to leave is a pretty good indication that they’ll spend the next ten minutes not going anywhere, needing to find their coat, or scarf or car keys, or bike lamp. Or that once they do get outside they’ll start a conversation on the doorstep, usually with the door open letting all the cold air in. Like I’m doing now.

I am leaving. Really. See you next time. And mind how you go.

◀ Before the war, in which he served in the Free Syrian Army, Ahmed was a specialist tailor, and has also worked as a chef. 'They are a really lovely family' says Serena. 'Ahmed is warm and kind, very hands-on with the boys and does at least half the childcare. Sahar is more reserved. Despite having so little, she has a keen eye for beauty and though their flat is utterly bare, other than a copy of the Koran, there are always flowers. I feel that she is even more traumatised than the children. They have all experienced quite a culture shock on top of what they went through in Syria and Jordan. And they worry desperately about their families back home.'



A UN refugee camp in Lebanon

Classes

Ahmed and Sahar go to Katherine Low Settlement for free English classes and the boys attend junior homework club there. One of BWR's aims is to help Ahmed into full employment.

The three flats were all decorated,

cleaned and furnished by BWR volunteers. The churches had a wedding-style list of goods the families would need, ranging from wardrobes to washing up bowls. Randall Close Day Centre donated winter items such as blankets and still sends a weekly vegetable box to the families. When parishioners realised that Ahmed and Sahar's boys had arrived with only the summer clothes they were wearing, they donated warm second hand clothing and some toys including, to their delight, a small bicycle.

Members of BWR help the family find their way around Battersea, take them to the dentist, sort out

prescriptions, assist with form filling and organise social events and the occasional treat. At half term, one family was

given tickets for the London Eye and the other tickets for a Thames boat trip. Both families were thrilled.

It is a big commitment of time but Serena says it is deeply rewarding. 'The families could not be more grateful. They are committed to their new life and when they can they want to give back to the community that has taken them in. Suzy, who now volunteers at St Peter's, says she can't describe what it is like to see her daughters relaxed and free from fear for the first time in years. And Ahmed and Sahar and their boys have blossomed since they arrived, exhausted and traumatised, last September.'

New film club celebrates world cinema

Chris Morgan-Locke and Roger Booker urge us to join

The inaugural screening of the new Clapham Common Film Club took place at the Omnibus Theatre on 25 February. Screenings are in the new upstairs space at Omnibus which has tiered seating, good projection facilities and a capacity of 70. This was the first of a trial season of five monthly films over the spring and summer. The plan is for the club to be a membership organisation with the membership fee covering entry to all showings at no additional cost. Our projected break even membership cost for this season is £35. The response will determine whether the club has a future into a longer season for 2019 – 2020.

We received much positive feedback following an earlier article in *Battersea Matters* so we thank those who came on Monday 25th.



The mission of the club is to show the best of world cinema past and present in a congenial community setting. The next screening is on Sunday 31 March at 7.00 for 7.30pm and will be *A Fireman's Ball* (Milos Forman, Czechoslovakia, 1967). The next will be on Monday 29 April and will feature a film from Italy or Canada. There is a limit on membership numbers so put the date in your diary now and join then.

Email ccfilmrb@gmail.com for more information and membership details.

Translation

Both families have had extensive help from the council, who assisted with everything from Arabic/English translation to organising schools, GPs and bank accounts.

Battersea Welcomes Refugees is committed to supporting these two families whom they have housed, as well as the new family arriving this month and the other five Syrian families scattered round Wandsworth. However, they would love some help.

Serena says, 'Anyone who can speak a bit of Arabic would be particularly welcome. Most of all we would love to hear from anybody who might have a two or three bedroom flat they would be prepared to rent to a family for two years. They would receive slightly below the market rent but the flat would be looked after beautifully.'

If you are able to help in any way, please contact:
serenacox@uwclub.ne

Refuge in creativity

Rev Betsy Blatchley on melding spirituality and the arts

In previous eras when new housing developments were being built, a church would have been part of the building programme, but in the 21st century that's no longer a given. So, as the huge redevelopment along the river between Battersea Park and Vauxhall brings tens of thousands of new residents, workers and visitors to the area – how does the church respond?

In the case of the Church of England in the Diocese of Southwark, by asking the question 'What makes a good city?' It seeks to provide accessible opportunities for sanctuary, peace, conversation and spiritual questioning in our hectic city life. As part of that response, a year ago I was licensed to the brand new role of Pioneer Minister in the Arts in Nine Elms, based in the parish of Battersea Fields and its three existing churches. My brief – to establish a new spiritual community in the Battersea Power Station/Nine Elms developments around arts and creativity.

Arts-in-education

For me, personally, it was a wonderful merging of two vocations. The first twenty years of my working life were in the world of theatre, initially as a performer and arts-in-education facilitator and then for many years as a producer. The past fifteen years have been spent as an ordained priest, but the arts have always played a part in my ministry.

My last job in theatre was at the National Theatre on the South Bank. Now, seventeen years later, I have returned to the river to develop a new community on the 'extended' South Bank - as the cultural footprint begins to stretch to the new Nine Elms development – albeit to something of a building site at the moment! My first year has been a whirlwind of building relationships in this incredibly vibrant area and linking up with artists and creative people to explore what this



new community might look like. The emerging community is built on three of my passions – the arts, spirituality and social justice. I believe that when we combine these, we have the best chance of nurturing human and community flourishing in an area of rapid change and starkly contrasting demographics. As a community of artists and creatives who share these passions has emerged, both from Battersea and across London, and we have met to plan and dream together, a range of initiatives have emerged.

One of the most exciting of these to date was *Refuge: A Christmas Story* at Battersea Power Station's Village Hall, just before Christmas. The event built on contemporary dance company Springs Dance, working with children from St George's Primary School, on the Patmore Estate, to develop a new dance piece. It was inspired by the delightful illustrated book *Refuge* by Anne Booth and Sam Usher. This simple retelling of the Nativity focuses on the theme of the family as refugees seeking the kindness of strangers. The book's author introduced the event and read the book (which is sold in aid of the charity War Child) to an entranced audience of nearly 200 adults and children.

Then Battersea Welcomes Refugees talked about their work in housing Syrian refugee families locally, but it was the children who were centre stage. The dance piece, which told the Christmas story whilst exploring themes of welcome, danger and journey, was stunning and moving, especially as many of the children had no previous dance experience. Sam Evans, music director of BPS Community Choir, rounded off the event by leading the audience in carol singing. In the foyer the Brownies displayed their work on the refugee theme for the audience to look at while enjoying mulled wine provided by a local restaurant.

The event attracted an incredibly diverse audience – parents of the

below: Betsy introduces the Christmas show. inset: children act the parts of weary refugees

children, from many different faith backgrounds, mingled with senior US Embassy staff, developers, councillors, council arts staff and representatives from local arts organisations. It felt like a first taste



of how this trio of arts, spirituality and social justice can build bridges between communities and help us to reflect on 'what does a society of welcome look like?'

Bridge

Building on this success, we are planning another event in the Village Hall as part of Wandsworth Arts Fringe. *Creative Soul: An Arts Spa*, on Sunday 5 May, is an opportunity for adults to come and spend an afternoon being refreshed, energised and nurtured through film, dance, craft, art, music and much more. We hope that this will lead to further pop-up well-being events across Battersea and Nine Elms. We are also developing an exciting summer cultural programme to coincide with the 'Happiness Bridge' project – refurbishing the area below the railway bridge on Thessaly Road. Later in the year we are looking at some exciting initiatives around World Slavery Day in the autumn and an ambitious Advent project. So plenty to keep me busy!

It might not be quite what church would have looked like in the great building boom of the Victorian era, but I am loving this new challenge of creating a spiritual community through the arts in Battersea.

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Planning Matters

Monica Tross waits for the 19 bus and the St Mary's slipway

NORTHCOTE LIBRARY AND CHATHAM HALL

Opinions are mixed about the architectural merits of the library, with some describing it as an iconic brutalist building and others calling it merely brutal. Whatever people think of the building itself, and of Chatham Hall, many are concerned about the plans put forward for their replacement. We have expressed our concerns about the detail of the plans (you can see our views on the application website, 2018/5833). In particular we have objected to the omission of any affordable housing from the mix. However we have also questioned the extent of the work and asked whether a more modest scheme of improvements would have made more financial sense for the council tax payer. We have written to ask for more details but await a reply.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH LIP

Last year we responded to the TfL consultation on their Transport Strategy and this year began with our response to the WBC Local Implementation Plan (LIP), designed to meet this strategy. It was dispiriting to find that much of what we had to say is little changed from our response to the same consultation back in 2010. We are still asking for something to be done to improve Clapham Junction station and still drawing attention to the congestion at the junction of Battersea Bridge and Battersea Church Roads. Clapham Junction station has changed management and we are meeting the Network Rail manager to brief him on our concerns. I will report back in the next issue.

CORE STRATEGIES – A ROLLING PROCESS

Wandsworth Council's key planning documents were last adopted in March 2016 and already the consultation process is starting again. This lists 98 questions and, with input from members of both the Open Spaces and Planning Committees, we managed to respond to most of them – some in more detail than

others. There is a link to this (and our LIP response) on the planning consultation section of our website.

NINE ELMS/ PIMLICO BRIDGE

The latest stage of this saga was heralded by the *Evening Standard* in a way which suggested work is about to start but the reality is a little slower-paced. A report to the Council's 13 February Finance and Corporate Resources committee agreed the recommendation that the bridge run from Grosvenor Road (Claverton Street) north of the river to Kirtling Street in the south. However while further technical validation work will be done, no further money was allocated and there will be a pause in the work programme. A decision to continue to stage three is to be brought back to the Finance Committee at an unspecified future date. Although we have always been highly sceptical about the sense in using so many resources on a not obviously needed bridge, this is probably the best route of the options put forward.

SLIPWAY AT ST. MARY'S, BATTERSEA CHURCH ROAD

Thanks to the vigilance of one of our members we were alerted to an application for a slipway extension to enable Duck Tours to operate from there. Duck Tours operate the large amphibious vehicles that tour around Westminster and have previously included a river trip from next to the MI6 building at Vauxhall as part of the tour. We swung into action and have objected to these plans. Quite apart from the disturbance to the riverside, just think of the added congestion along Battersea Church Road – see LIP comments above. St. Mary Park councillors are trying to find out whether there is any danger of the plans going ahead and we will report back when we know more.



How a new Northcote Library could look if the plans proceed

19 BUS

I hear from TfL that: 'We are now reviewing over 7,000 responses to the consultation and hope to publish a consultation report in the first quarter of 2019. This report will set out our next steps regarding the proposals that were consulted on. At present I am not able to give a more specific timeframe for when the results will be published. However, once the report has been published, we will contact everyone who responded to the consultation to let them know; the outcome will also be published on the consultation web page.'

UPDATES – AND AN APOLOGY

Smaller planning applications are still slowing down and we are currently waiting to hear about new plans for the South London Mail Site. There is to be an exhibition during the week of 25 March, check out our website for details. A further application relating to the Winstanley regeneration has been made, 2019/0024 and we have made brief comments. I was grateful to readers who alerted me to the fact I'd muddled my public houses in the last issue (not as a result of spending too long inside, I assure you). It is of course The Castle in Battersea High Street, not the Crown.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We always like to hear from our members (including pointing out mistakes) so do let us have any comments, on this article, on exhibitions, or on planning in general. planning@batterseasociety.org.uk will find us.



Ship ahoy!

Elaine Curley tells the tale of the boat that the Men in Sheds built

A documentary telling the tale of a group of local men who came together to create the Battersea Men's Shed is now ready to view. The film shows how the men, all over 55, began the project to tackle loneliness and social isolation by building a shed where they could make and restore furniture and how they progressed to crafting a boat they launched on the River Thames last June.

This Community Development initiative is based in Dimson Lodge, Battersea Church Road where the men have converted an unused room into a workshop.

Isolation can be a major cause of ill-health, both mental and physical and this project has proved a successful way of getting men out of their homes and interacting with each other on an array of community and personal woodworking projects.

Notorious

The documentary is a fascinating look at how the project developed right up to the current time and shows how much its members have achieved by working together. One member acknowledges, 'Men are notorious for sitting around at home after they

retire.' Another says he was at a loose end and that making things give him a challenge. Sharing jokes is as important as sharing technical skills and working together to assemble machinery.

The men meet every Wednesday. New members are always welcome and although it is mostly aimed at men, women are also welcome to join. In the film Janet says, 'I've learnt to use tools, so now I don't need to pay people to do things at home. I can do it myself.' The project is supported by Sheltered Housing Services but is run by the members themselves. It is

not suitable for people needing care or special assistance, but anyone needing additional support can attend with a carer, if the carer remains on site to help.

The boat is now at Alton Playgroup in Roehampton.

The documentary can be viewed on the Wandsworth Council website at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/q4wr3dwR1pk>

Anyone interested in finding out more about Battersea Men's Shed or any of the other projects run by the Community Development Team can contact Elaine Curley at Ecurley@wandsworth.gov.uk

Editor's note

I acquired a handsome new bird feeder from Mike in the Men's Shed. They also make bird boxes and planters.

WANDSWORTH ARTS
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3 -19 May 2019

What is a silent disco walking tour? And why would anyone call a play *Die! Die! Old People Die!*? These questions and no doubt many more may find answers in Wandsworth Arts Fringe, running from **3 - 19 May**. Here are just a few of the events happening in and around Battersea.

The above play, described as seriously funny, will be performed by the well-known theatre group Ridiculusmus. They will be at Battersea Arts Centre **8 - 18 May**.

The disco walking tour - 'a hilarious dance-walk adventure through Wandsworth's streets' - will start from BAC on **18 May**.

Omnibus Theatre will host a

version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, set in present day Milan during Fashion Week, **16 - 19 May**.

On **3, 11 and 19 May** there will be interactive storytelling on the life of Charlotte Despard, performed in the avenue that bears her name.

The Battersea Society's contribution will be a talk on all aspects of print-making, by Professor Jo Stockham, at the Royal College of Art on **9 May**.

At both weekends during the Fringe, choirs from all over south-west London will be singing their hearts out, from classical to pop and musicals, at Battersea Power Station Circus West.

Finding a way through conflict

Jenny Reid, director of Wandsworth Mediation Service, explains how it can help

Wandsworth Mediation Service is a local charity providing a free community mediation service to neighbours, families and communities in conflict. Since we were set up in 2004, our wonderful team of 57 trained mediators have helped hundreds of people reach a peaceful agreement with their neighbours and families by giving them time and space to discuss the issues and find shared solutions.

Mediation is a confidential process where people who are in conflict first meet separately with two mediators, and afterwards come together to have a round-table mediation session. The mediators, who are impartial, help them identify the issues, listen to each other, and decide how they might change the way they do things in the future. The mediators do not tell the parties what to do, but facilitate the discussions so that the parties can express what they want to say and listen to each other before working out an agreement on how to resolve the conflict.

Families

Many different types of problems can be mediated. We mediate between ex-partners over child contact arrangements, as well as dealing with building disputes, financial issues concerning inheritance and property matters. We also support families by offering inter-generational mediation between different members of the same family over all generations and ages. Often we help neighbours in conflict over boundaries, noise and parking. We can help with a wide range of cases, including commercial ones, for which we charge. All the fees generated support our community work.

Why does mediation work? Often people in conflict stop listening to each other and the conflict does

not get resolved. This causes stress, worry and hostility on both sides. At the mediation session, the mediators set ground rules, making it a safe space for people to express themselves. At the start each person gets the chance to speak without being interrupted for ten minutes. The mediators summarise what the parties say and encourage them to consider what they have in common – for example a desire to end the conflict. They do not tell the parties what to do, but they guide them to thinking about how they might do things differently in future. That

ownership by the parties, coupled with the possibility of a different way of behaving toward each other, brings a commitment to trying to doing things in a new way.

Here's a recent quote from a party to mediation: 'Your mediation service has been of a great benefit to myself and, hopefully, to

the other parties involved in the past few months. You have conducted yourselves in a very considerate and objectively fair manner, and I would highly recommend you for any future matters friends or family might experience.'

In a recent intergenerational case, Susan* and her teenage daughter, Alison*, had a strained relationship. Susan felt that her daughter was disrespectful and not keeping to the rules. Alison would often come home late and had been in trouble with the police. Alison felt that her mum didn't listen to her and was hard to communicate with.

Points of difference

Susan and Alison attended three sessions at Wandsworth Mediation Service over four weeks with the same two mediators. These sessions gave them a chance to express

their concerns, discuss points of difference and agree issues in a collaborative way. With the support of the mediators, they worked towards an agreement on the guidelines for Alison going out with friends, communication between Alison and Susan, and practical steps to rebuild trust.

Several weeks after the last session, both Susan and Alison feel that trust had been rebuilt and communication has improved. Alison is

coming home at the agreed time and letting Susan know who she is out with. Both are communicating without shouting and Alison feels that her mum is listening to her views.

Susan told us, 'Everything is going well since the mediation. It really helped – both of us coming together and working as a unit. Our communication is better, we're talking without shouting.'

Coaching

We also offer conflict coaching to people when the other person is not willing to mediate and the feedback we have had from recent cases has been very positive:

'I felt listened to and guided. I felt that they helped me find solutions in dealing with what I considered issues, but now think of as events ... I walked away feeling that I had a better sense of direction. Once again, thank you for your service. It was objective, yet personal and made me feel much lighter when I left.'

We offer training courses to help you communicate better with your neighbours, families and friends, and to deal with conflict.

(*names and some details have been changed to protect privacy)

I felt listened to and guided. I felt that they helped me find solutions ... (I felt) much lighter when I left'

'Your mediation service has been of great benefit ... I would highly recommend you ...'

Great Bus Journeys of the World No 24

Mike Roden takes the 38 from Victoria to Clapton Pond



While waiting at Victoria Station for the 170 bus, I often watch the 38 set off to Clapton Pond. I had no idea where this was, or whether there was an actual pond. So on a breezy March morning I board the 38 at Victoria.

Across Buckingham Palace Road is the first of the two patches of greenery that make up Grosvenor Gardens. The arresting sculpture in the second park, showing a lioness attacking an antelope is by Jonathan Kenworthy, and was installed in 2000.

Massive

The bus moves alongside the wall of Buckingham Palace Gardens towards Hyde Park Corner. Charles Sargeant Jagger's magnificent Artillery Memorial makes no attempt to idealise war. A massive stone howitzer towers over several life-size bronze statues including – very controversial at the time – a dead soldier anonymous under a tarpaulin. A plaque commemorates Jagger on a house in Albert Bridge Road, where he lived at the end of his life.

We're now on Piccadilly following a number 14 bus, a route I covered in the Summer 2018 edition. The odd sculpture over Fortnum and Mason's entrance (a duo with featureless flat heads) is the work of Lynn Chadwick. The piece is from the collection of Frank Cohen who has loaned other pieces of artwork displayed around the store.

The bus is now part of a slow-moving convoy, and up ahead I see a number 19 – whose fate has not yet been decided by TfL. It's probably quicker to walk along Piccadilly than sit here, but in the interests of accuracy I'll stay put!

Finally at Piccadilly Circus, we turn onto Shaftesbury Avenue. Great

Windmill Street was named after the windmill which was recorded here in 1585 and demolished in the late 1600s. The Windmill Theatre presented nude *tableaux vivants* during the 1930s and 1940s. I gather it's now a table dancing club but obviously I can't confirm that.

The London Trocadero was built in 1896 and featured a Lyons restaurant with grand opera stylings. It closed in 1965 and only in 1984 was the building reopened as a tourist-led leisure attraction. It has changed hands several times and since 2014 there have been plans for a hotel. That reminds me of Battersea Power Station's history, so let's wait and see.

Chinatown

There are at least 80 restaurants in Chinatown and numerous Chinese businesses ranging from banks to herbalists. In the early 20th century, London's Chinese population concentrated in Limehouse, which suffered heavy damage during the Blitz. After the war they gradually moved elsewhere in London. The current Chinatown became established in the 1970s.

The bus queue inches along Charing Cross Road past the Montague Pyke. This is now a Wetherspoons house but was originally one of a chain of cinemas that Pyke ran across London. They were mostly converted shops, but this one was purpose built and opened on August 26, 1911 as the Cambridge Circus Cinematograph Theatre.

It was his fourteenth and last cinema. After an employee died in a fire here he was accused of manslaughter. Although he was acquitted his fortunes declined.

The Phoenix Theatre opened on

24 September 1930 with the premiere of *Private Lives* by Noël Coward, who also appeared in the play, with Adrienne Allen, Gertrude Lawrence and Laurence Olivier. Those were the days.

Spy

Passing the revamped Tottenham Court Road station we turn onto New Oxford Street with its numerous fast food places. For those who'd rather get a walking stick or umbrella there's the shop at number 53. The business was founded by James Smith in 1830. The fittings date from around 1865 and this is seen as a perfect (and rare) example of Victorian shop front design.

The bus now carries us into Bloomsbury. You can't miss St George's Bloomsbury which was the sixth and last of Nicholas Hawksmoor's London churches and was consecrated on 28 January 1730. Improbably the crypt houses the Museum of Comedy.

Heading onward we pass the Grade II listed home of the Swedenborg Society named after the philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772). There's a library here, together with a museum, bookshop and events space.

On the other side of Bloomsbury Way is Pushkin House, another listed building and an independent Russian cultural centre.

Opposite Bloomsbury Square Gardens is Sicilian Avenue, an ornate pedestrianised arcade which opened in 1910. It used to live up to its name with a day-long noisy bustling Mediterranean atmosphere. Today at 10.30 am there seems to be nothing open. Its recent 'restyling' might explain its soul-less look.

The bus crosses Southampton

Left to right: Artillery Memorial, Marble Arch; gateway in Chinatown, Sicilian Avenue; James Smith Umbrella shop, Holborn; Dalston Junction Overground Station, Hackney



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



Row and we're now on Theobalds Road. It was traditionally pronounced 'Tibbalds' but it's probably best to avoid that usage if seeking directions. The poet Coleridge was born at number 15, and PM Benjamin Disraeli at number 22.

Downhill

The bus stops at Red Lion Street. Nearby is Red Lion Square, which has had a mixed career over the centuries. Early in the 18th century the new houses were highly successful in attracting 'men of quality' such as lawyers and doctors. By the 19th century things went downhill with writers and artists like Rossetti, Burne-Jones and William Morris moving in. Respectability returned when it was laid out as a public garden in 1885. On the edge of the square is Conway Hall which has a varied programme of talks and concerts and a library with the UK's largest collection of humanist works.

We're in Clerkenwell now, turning up Rosebery Avenue. The name recalls a former chairman of the LCC, Lord Rosebery, who in 1894 succeeded Gladstone as Liberal Prime Minister, was defeated at the election the following year and then resigned the Liberal leadership in 1896. Having a busy road named after him may have been some sort of consolation.

Exmouth Market is home to a large number of restaurants and bars, as well as book, record and gift shops. The street market – reinstated in 2006 – is open during the week.

The bus stops near Sadlers Wells. There's been a theatre here since 1683 when Richard Sadler opened a 'Musick House'. The name originates from the supposedly health-giving

springs on his property. Sadler enhanced ticket sales by claiming that drinking the water would be effective against pretty well all known ailments.

The theatre gradually declined in popularity as the discovery of other spas enticed away Sadler's mainly aristocratic customer base. The current building is the sixth on the site and was completed in 1998 at a cost of £54m.

We head up St John Street to the Angel. This is probably named for a historic pub of that name. The Old Red Lion Theatre is one of London's most innovative Fringe theatre venues. Many of its productions transfer to the West End. Probably the most successful one in recent years is the anarchic and hugely funny *The Play that Goes Wrong*.

On Islington High Street I spot the current incarnation of the Angel Inn which is of course a Wetherspoons pub. Nearby is Angel tube station. Waddingtons included Angel as one of the light blue properties in the first British edition of Monopoly in 1935. Rent with a hotel £500!

After Islington Green the road ahead offers little of interest. Rows of small shops mixed with private and council residential estates don't send my pencil scribbling.

Still, the Walter Sickert Community Centre catches my eye. The artist who some years ago was accused (without real evidence) of being Jack the Ripper lived in Islington, and there is a collection related to him and his family in the local museum.

Another long stretch of road with nothing much to report, and then we're in Hackney entering Dalston. Once a small rural village, this probably gets its name from Deorlaf's tun (farm). Dalston Junction station, is a reminder that the coming of the

railways changed the village for ever.

Heading towards Hackney Central Station my eye is caught by the sign 'Vegan Chips'. This is the local branch of Sutton and Sons, one of north London's most popular fish and chip shop chains – but here offering only vegan versions of fish, burgers and pies. I'm intrigued by battered Tofish (made presumably from Tofu). If you ever sample its delights, let me know.

Heading through another scatter of small shops and bars we turn up Amhurst Road. A brief pause at the stop for Hackney Central Station then the bus heads onto Dalston Lane towards journey's end. Clapton Girls' Academy is on a site where there has been a school of some sort since the early eighteenth century, including the London Orphan Asylum. It eventually became a girls' grammar school, whose most famous pupil was the singer Helen Shapiro (you may now sing a few bars of 'Walking back to Happiness' her 1961 hit).

Farmers

For centuries the land round Clapton was owned by the bishops of London, and occupied by tenant farmers who supplied the City of London. Prosperity came in the late 18th century when Clapton became fashionable as a country retreat for the wealthy. After the arrival of the railways many of the large houses and their grounds made way for the building of more modest homes.

But there was one constant, and the bus has now arrived there: my destination – Clapton Pond. It's now at the centre of a small unpretentious park – a very pleasant place to sit on a sunny day, but a touch chilly today. It's fed by a natural spring which once helped with the irrigation of surrounding farmland. Though its fortunes have waxed and waned over the years, it now has a working fountain and the fencing is intact, and it has an air of being looked after. That's down to the recent efforts of the Clapton Pond Neighbourhood Action Group.

Anyway I plant the Battersea Society flag I bring with me on these occasions [Editor's note: no he didn't!] hop on the 38 bus going in a homeward direction, and disembark at Hackney Downs station to take a nine minute train ride to Liverpool Street Station.

Rich pickings!

Historian Sue Demont celebrates a significant collection obtained by the Society

A few weeks ago the Battersea Society was offered the opportunity to purchase – at a very reasonable price – a selection of books, prints and pamphlets from the collection of the late Patrick Loobey, local historian and book compiler. Music to the ears of the Society's Heritage Committee! – as members are always on the lookout for undiscovered or out of print resources on our historic borough.

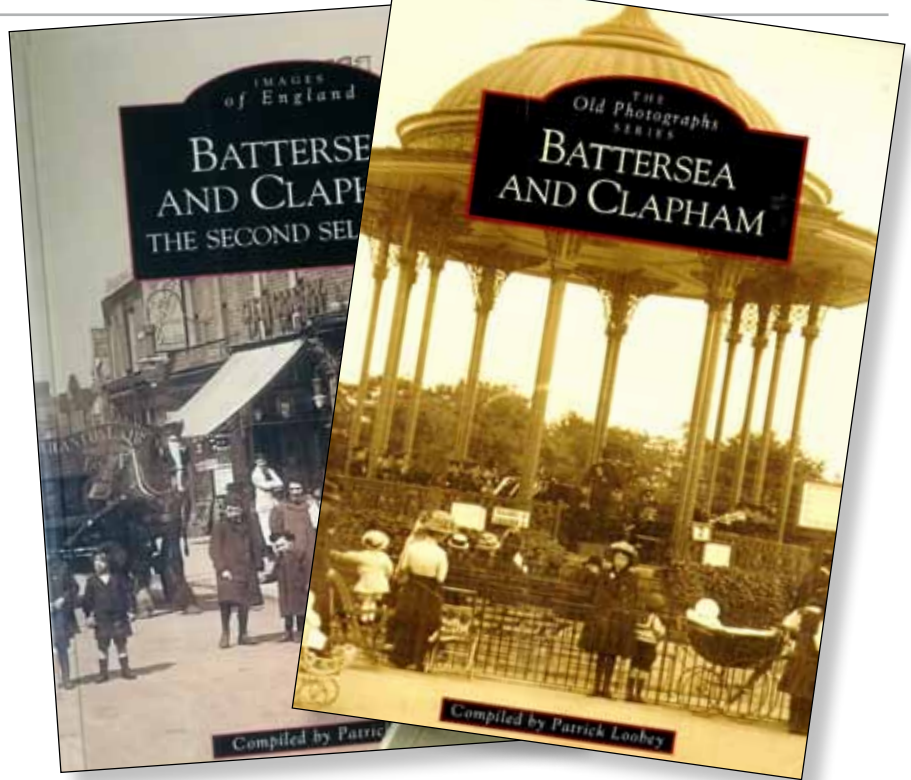
One particularly interesting item is the 1926 Official Guide to the borough's 'history, features, public buildings and institutions' which is certainly comprehensive. It begins with sections on the council's housing estates and open spaces and gives a surprisingly detailed history of the area going right back to the original 'Badericesege', the island granted to the Saxon Badric in 693 whose name eventually evolved into 'Battersea'. The book covers every aspect of municipal life; we learn that the Nine Elms Baths include

one of the largest swimming pools in England; that 'high class orchestral concerts' are held at the Town Hall on alternate Sundays; and that the Central Library includes a museum displaying a collection of Battersea enamels from the 1750s 'now very rare and highly prized by collectors'.

The guidebook is fairly bursting with civic pride and includes many interesting photos, such as the Maternity Home established in Bolingbroke Grove in 1921 and a splendid shot of Battersea Bridge from the Chelsea foreshore.

Spirit

There are also some nuggets in two little booklets published by the Rotary Club of Battersea in the early 1980s. Lamenting the disappearance of the so-called 'Battersea spirit ... a



community whose pride shone in a spirit of independence through the vast number of churches, voluntary societies and youth organisations' the Rotary Club set out to capture the reminiscences of local residents who had lived all their lives here. As the interviews were conducted almost 40 years ago this means that many

of the recollections date back to well before the first World War. For example, Mrs F Williams (b. 1880) describes her childhood in one of the 'little houses off Battersea Park Road' where almost everyone kept rabbits and chickens, whose eggs could be bought 'very cheaply'. She also recalled playing in the old buildings that pre-dated the mansion flats on Prince of Wales Drive.

A Mrs Richman of Wadhurst Road recalled that one of her weekly chores was to bring home a sackful of coke from the Nine Elms coke factory, which she transported in an old push chair; she always carried a hair pin with her for when a wheel came off. Another interviewee used to get distressed by the local slaughterhouse, where a 'man with a stick' would drive in the sheep and pigs. On occasion a few would escape and run down Usk Road

'screaming all the way for they seemed to know they were going to their death'. These little books also include some interesting, though poorly reproduced photos.

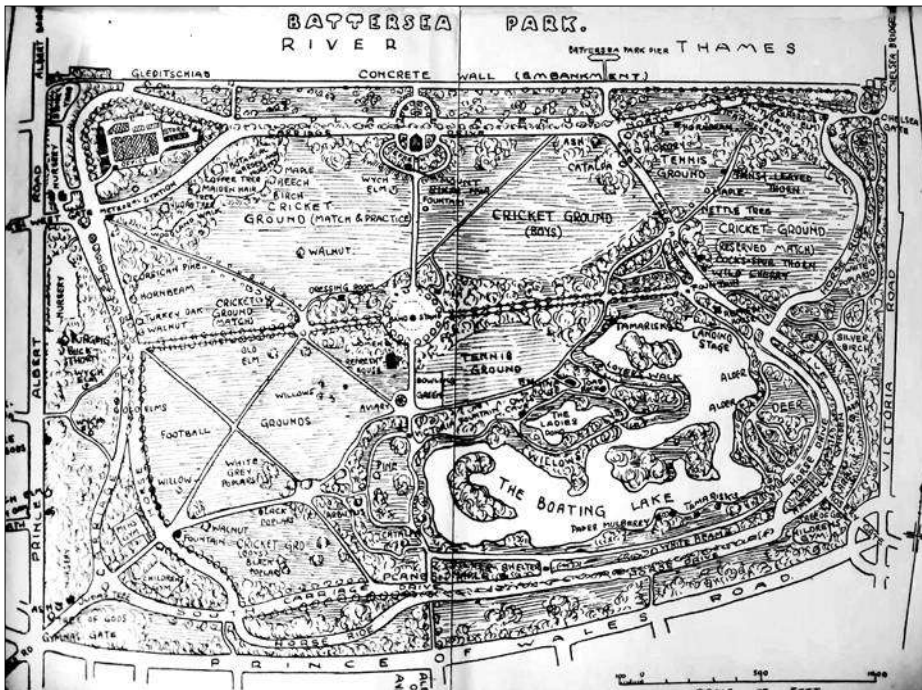
The Annual Reports of Battersea Borough Council for the years 1931/2 and 1933/4 are of more limited interest, though the former coincides with the redevelopment of the St John's College Estate which is described in some detail, including the proposal for the newly re-named Old Battersea House to house a collection of pictures, pottery and 'old-English furniture'.

Famous pastor

The centenary record of the Battersea Chapel (1797 – 1897) is also one for the specialist, but contains the odd striking observation, such as 'Mr Hughes (the first minister) strove to meet the religious and educational needs of a suburban village' which is an intriguing description of Battersea in the 1790s. The chapel's most famous pastor was the Reverend Israel May Soule, who 'laboured to keep pace with the rapidly increasing population' from the 1830s onwards. Soule evidently did this to good effect as he added around 500 members to the chapel, and the police estimated that over 7000 people gathered for his funeral in 1873. His name lives on today in Maysoule Road.

A particularly endearing item





above: map from Walter Johnson's 1910 survey of Battersea Park, inset: the Reverend Israel May Soule

is Walter Johnson's 1910 survey of Battersea Park 'as a centre for nature-study'. This worthy tome goes into exhaustive detail on the natural history of the park, but the 'Outline Calendar' which concludes the book is a gem, advising the visitor on the flora and fauna they should expect to see each month with a somewhat idiosyncratic commentary. In January we are told that the house sparrow will be noisy towards the end of month; one month later we learn that the rooks will be busy making journeys 'between Clapham and Wimbledon Park'. February is also the month when 'bats begin to fly at dusk and may be seen crossing the streets of Battersea'. In August the swallow prepares to depart, and the reader is recommended to watch this from Battersea Bridge; in October the redwings arrive and the ladybirds hibernate. As the year ends, flocks of greenfinches, chaffinches and skylarks (though Johnson warns that they will have ceased singing) can still



be observed. Those were the days ...

Finally, plaudits are due to Patrick Loobey himself, for assembling such an interesting array of old photographs for his two volumes in the Images of London series.

Representations of schools, shops, churches, factories, the railway, bridges and streetscapes across the borough are well-reproduced and helpfully captioned; both books also contain a chapter on Battersea Park.

For sale

The bulk of the collection will be kept intact for the present, and if anyone would like to browse through any of the books mentioned above they are welcome to contact me. However, thanks to the generosity of Janet Smith of the Wandsworth Historical Society, we have been able to purchase multiple copies of the two photo books and will be offering these for sale in the summer on our various stalls.

Sue Demont
Chair, Heritage Committee
secretary@batterseasociety.org.uk

BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS

- **SUNDAY 14 APRIL**
Spring Lunch at Bread Centrale Plantation Wharf 12.30 for 1pm. £19 for two courses, £23 for three
- **TUESDAY 30 APRIL**
Talk on proposed Heart of Battersea project by architect Camilla Ween.Dimson Lodge, Battersea Church Road (opposite St Mary's church) 6.30 for 7. Free
- **THURSDAY 9 MAY**
RCA Reveals ... Printmaking, hosted by the Battersea Society, talk by Professor Jo Stockham, Head of Printmaking Programme, Royal College of Art 6.30 for 7pm. Free
- **SUNDAY 19 MAY**
Unveiling of commemorative plaque for Pamela Hansford Johnson at 53 Battersea Rise 3pm. Free
- **MONDAY 20 MAY**
Visit to the Postal Museum Phoenix Place WC1, 1pm. £15
- **SUNDAY 26 MAY**
Notable Women of Battersea walk with Jeanne Rathbone, starting at Battersea Arts Centre, 12 noon. £5 donation
- **THURSDAY 6 JUNE**
Talk by Carol Rahn on *Growing Up in Wartime Battersea*. Royal College of Art, 6.30 for 7pm. £5 donation on door
- **WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE**
Guided tour of Lodge and Museum of the Grand Order of Water Rats (the lodge of actors & comedians) 2pm. £17.50
- **THURSDAY 18 JULY**
Summer Party in the grounds of St Mary's Church 6.30 – 9pm. £10

Weather and wildlife: what are the impacts?

Valerie Selby explains why it's difficult to measure the effects of a hot summer

The weather in 2018 reached extremes of both hot and cold. What were the effects of the heatwave on wildlife locally? For several reasons, it is difficult to distinguish between short-term impacts and long-term effects. To fully understand these we need accurate records across a long timeframe, to work out what are natural population fluctuations versus immediate impacts of weather or the longer-term impacts of climate change.

We are an unusual country in that while we have a long history of recording wildlife, we rely hugely on volunteer effort for this. Sometimes this is affected by non-scientific factors: observers may choose to study a species based on visual appeal or ease of identification or closeness to home rather than its value as a flagship for wider species groups or habitats.

In Wandsworth I am lucky that we have volunteer recorders of both birds and butterflies who have been happy to share their records and who have been recording now, in some cases, for several decades.

Stressed

Records for butterflies in the borough across 2018 indicate that the extreme heat meant that many butterfly species had rapidly completed their life cycle and/or were pushed into an early hibernation to save resources. This meant that very few were seen later in the summer. Indeed, there is a fear that food plants used by the larvae of some species became stressed by drought as the summer wore on and may not do well this year. This could cause larvae (and therefore subsequently adult butterfly) numbers to slump in 2019, as happened in 1977 after the summer drought of 1976.

Some butterfly species that overwinter as adults and usually emerge in the early spring (eg brimstone, small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma) did poorly. This was due to the wet weather that coincided with their emergence time in spring 2018 resulting in them being

too cold to feed effectively. This may also have a knock-on effect this year as fewer adults being able to breed in 2018 will be reflected in fewer individuals overwintering into 2019.

The flip side to all this is an increase in records of species more usually seen on the continent, such as marbled white or brown hairstreak. The trend seems to be a gradual increase over the last few years, which may indicate that these species are expanding their range due to a change in climate. As warmer conditions extend for longer periods year on year, these species can survive and thrive here where once they couldn't and so can move into suitable habitats and establish viable populations.

Another key factor which influences species populations is the availability of suitable habitat. It can be hard to determine if populations change in response to weather/climate impacts or if they are due to better (or worse) habitat.

In 2018 some species had an exceptionally good year such as the White Letter Hairstreak and the Purple Hairstreak; in some cases, (particularly the former) we have deliberately managed the commons to encourage them by planting disease resistant elms and maintaining active coppicing of existing elm stumps. We shall have to wait for a few more years to see if the population increase is (as we hope) down to improved management (which will be reflected by stable numbers being spotted year on year in suitable locations). Alternatively it could have been a 'one-off' influenced by the weather,

Bird data

We are currently working with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) (www.gigl.org.uk) to analyse trends in bird data gathered over the last 20 years on Wandsworth and Tooting Commons by a very

inset: a male Purple Hairstreak butterfly

dedicated volunteer. I am hopeful we can determine in particular the last record annually for some of the migratory bird species.

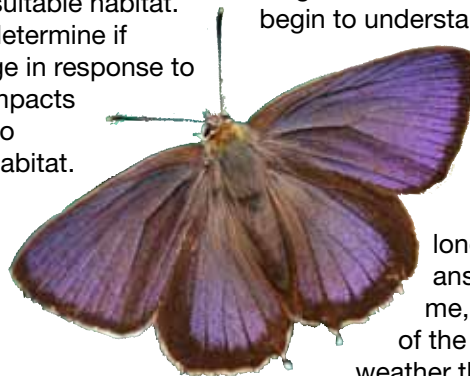
If we correlate that with weather records we may be able to understand the impacts better. Initial results for the chiffchaff and the blackcap for example seem to suggest that the weather here does not determine when species arrive but does influence when they leave. The blackcaps disappear as soon as the temperature starts to drop while the chiffchaffs linger for longer. As we have consistent recording over a long time frame at these sites we can begin to understand the differences

between population trends versus weather impacts more accurately.

This is all a very long way round to answer the topic set for me, namely 'the effects of the extraordinary weather this year on plants and wildlife'.

As you can tell, there is no clear answer and for most animals and plants it is too soon to know. If you would like to help you can get in touch with the team at GiGL. They have links to the many wildlife recording schemes and societies in London so you can find out more, meet like-minded others and take advantage of the many varied training opportunities available to give you the confidence to get started. Who knows, in years to come your records might be the ones that tell us what we need to know.

Valerie Selby is Biodiversity & Parks Development Manager for Enable Leisure & Culture biodiversity@enablelc.org





Common People

Richard Fox and Julia Bott look forward to The Friends of Wandsworth Common's first birthday

How time flies. It seems no time at all since 125 people packed into the Skylark café on a rainy Saturday last May to launch our Friends group. So much has happened since, and now we're planning our first birthday party cum AGM in mid May. Thanks first to all our members – over 300 of them – volunteers and committee who've helped us achieve so much.

Knowledge

Most visible to members have been our events, mostly small scale 'walks and talks', mostly nature themed to further our mission to celebrate our beautiful greenspace and help keep it that way by spreading knowledge of the biodiversity and the management challenges. But there's also been much behind the scenes work with Enable LC who manage the Common, with the Council and other organisations, not least the long-standing Management Advisory Committee (the MAC) which effectively spawned the Friends.

Tree walks have been a particular favourite, led by the Common's tree officer Jessica Stocks, supported by her managers in Enable. These walks fill up very quickly, showing how much people value the Common's treescape. To satisfy demand we're putting on five walks this year and there's also our self-guided 'tree trail' you can follow on your mobile phone.

Our first walk was about bats – two volunteers from the London Bat Group brought monitors to pick up

the sonic signals, which guide you where to look. It was so popular we're putting on two events this year, in April and September. Butterflies are another topic where we'll do more this year, helped by the Common's volunteer recorder (and former MAC chair) Ian Cunningham. Other events have included a nature focused photography walk, art class and pub quiz.

In January we started a Heritage group to raise the profile of the Common's historical features (including the old Battersea parish boundary markers). Charles Walton (another former MAC chair) will be hosting a history walk in the spring and we'll be participating in the Wandsworth Heritage Festival with a walk about the Craig telescope which stood on The Scope in the 1850s. This year is also the centenary of the Bolingbroke Bowling Club. We're helping them celebrate by promoting use of the bowling green with a teaching session and friendly match at the end of April, followed by monthly 'beer and bowls' events.

We've started regular litter picks, attracting around 20 people of all ages, from children to octogenarians.

Our equipment is bought by a new Battersea Rise shop, The Source Bulk Foods and by the Skylark cafe. We separate out recyclables and either take them home or get a special collection as there is no recycling collection from the Common. We hope to change that. The bagging of swan and duck food, started by the MAC in 2013, continues under the Friends and provides critical project funding.

Both these projects, as well as being fun and community spirited, have an educational element and a useful demonstration effect. We also support Naturescope's efforts to bring more schools onto the Common to learn about nature and how to look ►



top: Wandsworth Common, a green lung for Battersea. above: Volunteers making short work of the litter

◀ after it. We've also helped them bring 'walking4health' and chi gung programmes to the Common for less active users.

Our main projects include information boards at strategic, but unobtrusive, points and reinstating the drinking fountain. Both will feature in the new Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP), so once it's published in April we'll be able to make more headway. Longer term we hope to compile an oral history to capture older residents' memories. Last but not least there is the thorny issue of what happens to Neal's Lodge. That's an example of where a joint MAC/Friends approach is starting to pay dividends. Everything we do though is constrained by resources, especially organisers able to make things happen.

We work very closely with the MAC. They remain the statutory point of contact with the Council while the Friends focus more on user outreach and engagement. We've worked

together on several policy issues, notably the MMP and the re-tendering of the contract for managing the Common, currently held by Enable. We've made joint representations about both to the Council and also put in a joint objection to the Jaggard Way development, focussing on the impact on the Common. All this has made our first year incredibly busy, but with hindsight we launched at just the right time to influence these critical issues.

Links

We have links with the greenspace sub-committees of the Battersea and Wandsworth Societies and our counterparts in Tooting Common and Battersea and Wandsworth Parks. We believe we are stronger for collaborating with all these organisations, from whom we've learned a lot.

The value of greenspaces for health and wellbeing is increasingly acknowledged, with evidence that

those with active Friends groups fare better in a period of relentless funding pressure. It's often forgotten that Councils have no statutory responsibility to maintain greenspaces so they're an easy target for cuts.

Our launch has raised the profile of Wandsworth Common – we even had a film made about us last year which nicely showcases how we're building a community focused on enjoying, learning about and protecting the Common. Last but not least, we are pleased to be part of the events in July that will see London declared the first National Park Capital City.

You can see all our latest news, events and information and how to get involved at www.wandsworthcommon.org email friends@wandsworthcommon.org and follow us on Twitter and Instagram @wwcommon



RAILWAY NEWS

The Clapham Junction rail disaster of 1988 was not the first mortal accident. In August 1892 a train coming from Feltham collided with an empty train, resulting in a fire. The guard of the empty train, who lived on Patmore Street, died and others were injured.

The London Pneumatic Despatch Company trialled a system of underground rail for delivering parcels in Battersea in 1861.

Both are described in the spring issue of the *Wandsworth Historian*.

020neil119@gmail.com

Clapham Junction rail crash: an apology

As many eagle-eyed readers have no doubt spotted, there was an error in my report of the disaster. It took place on 12 December 1988, not 1998.

Apologies.

Jenny Sheridan

London women celebrated in verse

On 28 March, London Undercurrents, a joint poetry collection by Joolz Sparkes and Battersea poet Hilaire, will be published by Holland Park Press. Hilaire says, 'It's the culmination of more than five years' work, researching and writing poems about women who have lived and worked in our different patches of London; Joolz focussed on Islington, and Battersea was my area. Two poems from our book were published in *Battersea Matters* in autumn 2018.

'Along the way, we have been excited by the women we've discovered – innkeepers, munitions workers, Victorian cyclists, market gardeners – many of them, like us, drawn to London from elsewhere. It's wonderful to be able to share these women's voices more widely now, in book form. Exciting times for us, in the best sense!'



Hilaire

London Undercurrents can be ordered from Holland Park Press: www.hollandparkpress.co.uk/books/london-undercurrents, or from any good bookshop.

You can also buy it direct from Hilaire on 07527 844 719.

It may also be available from Wandsworth libraries.



Joolz Sparkes



Across the Common by Elizabeth Berridge

Janice Morphet admires an octogenarian 'young writer'

In 1964, Elizabeth Berridge (1919 – 2009) won the *Yorkshire Post's* book of the year prize for *Across the Common*, which describes the secrets hidden in a family living in a house with a whose garden backs onto Wandsworth Common. The Common, with its access gate to it from the family garden, plays a major part in the secret past which is discovered when the first person narrator leaves her husband to return to her family home where her aunts, with whom she grew up, still live. In the story, the house was developed by her grandfather at the time when much of the surrounding area was still fields. 'The new station, with its geraniums and infrequent trains up to Victoria had been hailed by some residents and bitterly regretted by others who had come to ... retire to clean air and peace. Each of the new prosperous houses was topped by an individual folly; my grandfather had built a tower on his with a square look-out. As a child I had gazed over to the far south, past Richmond and places I could not then name ... to the South Downs.'

Elizabeth Berridge attended Clapham County High School in Broomwood Road, but despite many stories about her early life, it seems unlikely that the house in this novel was indeed that where she grew up. Perhaps it was the house of a school friend. Berridge's father, Hubert, was a land agent and the family lived at 11 Althorp Road, until he died in 1932. As a land agent he had a second address in 3 Grosvenor Gardens, where his office may have been located. Her mother lived in Ravenslea Road before she was married. Hubert left little money on his death and her mother and sister then moved to Ellerton Road while Elizabeth was put to work in a City bank. She had always dreamed of being a writer and then, without telling her family, moved her job to that of a copywriter. She met

her husband, Reginald Moore, in a City bookshop that he ran, married and moved to Wales until 1951, where her children were born. Both Elizabeth and Reginald had poems and short stories published in this period and he edited a series of literary magazines. They returned to London after the war when Elizabeth wrote and published more and became a book critic for the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator*.

Unknown

Elizabeth's work is little known now and her *Guardian* obituary describes her being rediscovered: 'Two young editors, themselves novelists of distinction – in deciding what they would include in the next issue of the British Council's *New Writing* and unaware of her earlier work – picked out one of Berridge's short stories for its originality and excellence, and in the belief that its inclusion would encourage 'other young writers'. They were astonished, though delighted, to meet the octogenarian contributor at the launch party.' Her collection of short stories *Tell it to a Stranger* written in 1947 has also been published by Persephone Press.



Elizabeth Berridge



It is in *Across the Common* where the autobiographical entwines with the fictional. In the book it is the narrator's father, sitting in his garden deckchair before he dies, who unlocks her mother's family secrets.

When the narrator's own

marriage is close to disintegration, she comes back to the family home to see if this will cure her panics, revisiting the local shopkeepers who remembered her mother and recognizing familiar people on the Common, to see if this will unlock the past. Yet she realises that she always knew the answer to the family

secret, even if there is a shock at the realisation of this. The garden gate to the Common and the folly look-out tower were her grandfather's undoing. Her family made 'an ideal picture, fit for an album, common in an England of that time; and who would want to look below the surface for darkness and violence?'. The attractions and distractions of suburban life, distant yet accessible from the encroaching city, could be just an illusion of separation. As the novel finishes, the suburban aunts, stuck in their Edwardian memories and fears, have a television installed. Life will not be the same again – across the common.

www.theguardian.com/books/2009/dec/16/elizabeth-berridge-obituary

HERITAGE FESTIVAL

MAY – JUNE 2019

Wandsworth's Heritage Festival is one of the highlights of the year. This year it will run from Saturday 25 May to Sunday 9 June. The theme is Entertainment, though other areas of the borough's history will also be addressed.

Among the events in 2019 are a walk in Battersea Park exploring Festival of Britain sites and a talk on music halls, to be held in BAC. Battersea was home to several music halls and variety theatres in the 19th century, all but the Grand now demolished, though parts of the Queen's Theatre remain off Queenstown Road.

Another intriguing talk will be on Wandsworth Prison's appearances in film, theatre, literature and music.

The Battersea Society's contribution is *Growing up in Wartime Battersea*, a talk by Carol Rahn illustrated with video clips of people who lived (and in most cases still live) here, made as part of the War Comes Home project. This will be held in the Royal College of Art on 6 June. Jeanne Rathbone will also be leading a walk on the notable women of Lavender Hill.

The festival is organised by the borough's heritage department, based at Battersea Library. Programmes will be available online and in libraries from early May.

Blackbook – the Battersea Burgundy?

Underneath the arches, Jenny Sheridan meets an ambitious winemaker



The last place you might expect to find a winemaker producing high-end wines is in a railway arch in Battersea – Broughton Road, to be precise. These wines are English. And some of them are red. English sparkling wine is already a success, but Sergio Verrillo has set himself the challenge of producing cool climate pinot noir. ‘English red wine can be stellar,’ he says. Warming to his topic, he explains that other areas of the world with a similar climate – cool, rainy, variable – produce famous vintages, citing Alsace, Burgundy and northern California. These climates produce wines with lower alcohol and higher acids.

Sergio and his wife Lynsey started their wine business in 2016. They describe themselves as passionate Londoners – Sergio is from the USA and Lynsey is Scottish. Sergio worked as a *sommelier* in restaurants (including Battersea’s Chez Bruce) before deciding to move from selling wine to creating it. After a degree in viticulture and oenology at Plumpton

College in Sussex he travelled and worked widely in wine-making areas before returning to set up the business.

All Blackbook Winery’s grapes are hand-picked on small vineyards in south and east England just two hours drive from the Battersea office cum cellar. ‘We want to showcase our growers; everything in wine comes from good healthy grapes,’ says Sergio. ‘All our wines are single vineyard and most are also single variety, though we are experimenting with blends. The vineyards are family owned and run. It’s like our business – it’s just the two of us, we are self-funded, through savings and family support. It’s what we do.’

Railway arch

As well as the pinot noir (grown in Essex and described as having undertones of sour cherry, blackberries and pepper), Blackbook makes a sparkling wine and a chardonnay as well as a rosé and a blended red. Sergio brings the grapes from the vineyard to the railway arch. The white is pressed then fermented in burgundy barrels using natural yeasts. The red is fermented in aged barrels and is trodden by foot to gently mix the grape juice without extracting bitter tannins – like squeezing a teabag, Sergio says, without making the tea too strong.

The wines are made to age well. ‘My son was born in 2017, so we’ll put a couple of cases aside and get back to you in 18 years to tell you how it tastes,’ he jokes.

The decision to work in Battersea came about largely because the family lives ten minutes away, ‘so I can get here in a flash. And it’s easy to get the grapes here, without too much crappy London traffic. And then we’re two minutes from the park



and the river. I can step outside and see the stacks of the power station. Beautiful!’

In the tradition of small winemakers and negociants on the continent, Sergio also sells the wine himself, and says the ‘farm gate to consumer’ ethos is a great selling point, as is the fact that most of the wine is grown organically and is vegan. Sixty five per cent goes to bars, shops and restaurants, the rest is sold to individuals online or from the arch. He is pleased that the Wine Society is stocking two of Blackbook’s wines.

‘Tours’ are on offer, but the website admits that they are limited by the size of the railway arch. However they include a talk from Sergio about the winemaking process and a tutored tasting. There is going to be a spring release (of new wines) party on Saturday 27 April, with food and wine on sale and music playing.

www.blackbookwinery.com
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