

# Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SUMMER 2014



## Katherine Low Settlement: still going strong at 90



**K**atherine Low Settlement celebrated its 90th birthday on Saturday 17 May with a tremendous party in its building in Battersea High Street, overflowing into the street outside. The Battersea Society donated a blue plaque, unveiled by Mayor Cllr Angela Graham. Hundreds of local people, including Jane Ellison MP and BS chair Sara Milne, enjoyed the sunshine and the giant birthday cake baked by local hands.

### Fond memories

There were dance workshops, face painting, choirs, reggae bands and reminiscences from people with fond memories of the Settlement. Ninety red balloons were released the furthest reaching land at Sevenoaks in Kent, 31 miles away.

'Everyone came along,' said

*Clockwise from top left Unveiling the Battersea Society's blue plaque: (l to r) John Wates, president of KLS; Margaret Robson, chair of trustees; Aaron Barbour, director of KLS; Cllr Angela Graham, Mayor of Wandsworth; the Mayor's consort; Canon Simon Butler, KLS trustee and vicar of St Mary's Battersea*

**Leila Williams, local resident and member of Jehovah Jireh Church (who use one of KLS's rooms)**

### Playing giant chess in Orville Road

Katherine Low Settlement's director Aaron Barbour. 'Service users, colleagues past and present, friends and neighbours all joining to celebrate 90 years of our work in Battersea. Here's to another 90 years.'

Katherine Low Settlement has been in Battersea since 1927, working to tackle poverty and build stronger communities.



**Don't forget to visit our website: [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk) for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters**

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## From the editor



Battersea is changing – we all know that. But in this issue we celebrate history and continuity, for Battersea also has a

proud history of radicalism and social action.

The Katherine Low Settlement and Providence House have respectively enjoyed 90th and 50th birthdays. Caius House is even older but combines old and new with a modern home underneath – how SW11! – luxury apartments. All three organisations have a strong role in

strengthening the social glue that bonds the differing communities of our area together. It's so important that different cultures, genders and age groups are able to live together and to play both together and apart.

Back in 1903, a bath and electric light were considered luxurious for the working class, so families moving into the Latchmere and similar estates (p15) must have felt pleased and proud. Preserving these areas is an important role for our hawk-eyed planning committee (p4).

### Bitter struggle

Members who remember the bitter struggle to retain the Wandsworth Museum in the town centre may smile wryly – or grind their teeth – at the news that it is likely to move into Battersea Library (p14). The museum

has suffered from its isolated position on West Hill, and Lavender Hill will certainly be an improvement in that regard, but its space will be sadly reduced. But Battersea Arts centre (p11) is just down the road and attracts a wide audience. The current show, *Wot? No fish!* is a delight, by the way.

The Northcote Road fete (p3) was a huge success and a very happy day. The Battersea Society stall, staffed generously by volunteer members, sold locally picked elderflower cordial and mugs specially designed by our own Suzanne Perkins. Don't miss a chance to stock up – the mugs will be available from my phone or email until 30 July.

*Jenny Sheridan*

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## Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden reflects on raffles, restaurants and the romance of travel



Some of you may have missed the recent story about the discovery of an unexploded wartime bomb in a basement excavation on Battersea Church Road. It's a sobering reminder that war, now not even a memory for most of us – was once a very real presence here. And most bombs which fell on Battersea did not remain unexploded.

The annual summer party will probably have come and gone by the time you read this, and I'm sure a good time was had by all. I'll have been there, of course, I'd hate to miss the yearly raffle. I know it's the taking part, not the winning that matters (and it's all in a good cause) but each time a ticket is pulled out, a sigh of disappointment ripples round the eager watchers, and the smiles that greet the winner pushing their way through the crowd are perhaps not as sincere as they might be. I did win a prize once – a meal for two at Thai on the River. Since that eatery is now being turned into flats, I assume that prize will not have been available this year.

On a similar topic, I've started to think that restaurant reviews in this journal must be cursed. With friends

I have reviewed no less than four apparently thriving establishments which are now no more: The Fish Place, by the river, Mantoos, on Battersea Bridge Road, Battersea Spice on York Road, and Miyajima, a Japanese restaurant on Lavender Hill. I have been dissuaded by concerned diners against sharpening my quill pen and reviewing the evergreen L'AntiPasto on Battersea Park Road. But if you have an unfavourite place you'd like me to hex, then get in touch. Rates very reasonable.

### Globe

We visited the Globe Theatre recently on a very warm and sunny Sunday afternoon to see Anthony and Cleopatra. On a previous visit we had seats (albeit very uncomfortable ones). This time we were with our visiting friends from California who wanted to test the groundling experience. Standing in that wooden O so close to the stage, I did get a sense that it was like this in Shakespeare's day, although I'm glad that the people pressed around were more fragrant than they would have

been in the sixteenth century.

The sun blazed down and a few people fainted – reminiscent of trooping the colour, perhaps. Anyway the four of us all stayed upright, and it was great fun – scarcely marred by the frequent presence of a police helicopter overhead, which even had Cleopatra (magnificently played by Eve Best) rolling her eyes and waving a fist skywards at times. If you think you have the stamina you can buy standing tickets on the day – just £5 which is astonishing value.

### A world outside

As I write this our visitors are reaching the end of their holiday. We haven't been able to show them the kind of magnificent scenery we saw in northern California, particularly the Yosemite Valley but we've driven nearly 600 miles round England and Wales to some of the places that mean something to us – Salisbury Cathedral, Stonehenge, the Cotswolds, and Snowdonia. We've discussed badgers with a Shropshire farmer, sampled the pleasures of a Toby Carvery in Telford, and said hello to the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Manchester – and much more. Of course all of you know this, but sometimes it's useful to be reminded that there is a world outside London.

See you next time. And – remember – mind how you go.



# Katherine Low: will we ever know the true story?

Sean Creighton digs into the limited archives and uncovers her links with slavery

Katherine Low Settlement in Battersea High Street has recently celebrated its 90th birthday. But who was Katherine Low? According to local legend, she was a local social philanthropist and suffragette. I am sorry to say she had no Battersea connections and there is no known evidence that she was a suffragette. So why, you may wonder, was a social welfare initiative named after her established in Battersea?

The answer is that it followed her role in the United Girls School Mission which supported Peckham Settlement. For reasons yet undiscovered, her friends decided to set up and name a new Settlement house and chose Battersea over Camberwell.

Born in America in 1855, Katherine (always known as Katie) was the daughter of Andrew Low II, a wealthy Savannah-based Scots cotton trader with interests at the other end of the slave-produced supply chain in Liverpool feeding the insatiable appetite of the Lancashire mills. He had three children with his first wife, of whom Amy and Hattie survived into adulthood.

His second wife Mary Cowper Stiles was the daughter of a slave plantation owner. Andrew and Mary Low had three daughters: Katie, Jessie and Mary and a son, William.

The Low household had their own negro slave servants, one of whom, Tom Milredge, stayed with his master post-freedom until his death, his widow coming to England to cook for William. The Lows were arrested in the Civil War for gunrunning from Britain for the Confederacy.

After the end of the war Andrew settled in England in Leamington Spa, travelling annually to Savannah on business. Katie and her sisters were educated in Britain.

## Legacy

Andrew Low died in June 1886, leaving £618,000 from which there were legacies for each daughter, with the bulk of the estate going to William.

In November 1886 Katie and her sisters went to the States to attend William's wedding to Juliette Gordon, known as Daisy. Back in England, William and Daisy settled in Leamington Spa, re-modelling their property to resemble a southern plantation house. William became a playboy friend of the future Edward VII. After William's death Daisy returned to the United States in 1918, where her claim to fame is that she initiated the Girl Scouts of the USA.

As there is unfortunately no substantial surviving archive, we know very little about Katie's role in the Mission and the Peckham

Settlement. She was its treasurer from about 1908 until her death in 1923 at the age of 67.

In her last few years Katie lived at 106 Park St, Grosvenor Square. Her half-sister Amy had died there in January 1917 and Katie acted as her executor. She is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin in East Haddon in Northamptonshire next to the Hall where her other half-sister Hattie had lived, having married into the family of the owners, the Guthries, who had been involved in slave ownership in the British West Indies.

Described as 'a woman of independent means', Katie was in fact a millionairess worth around £4.5million in today's money. Her wealth was inherited from her father, from William, and from others like her second cousin Mary Catherine Philips, whose own wealth may have been inherited through family involvement in the slavery business. Katie left a small bequest of just under £13,000 in today's money to Peckham Settlement – hardly generous.

Katherine Low's name is well known in Battersea but the woman herself, her beliefs and her activities remain very much a mystery. As there are no surviving papers, research to explore her life will be a difficult task. [www.seancreighton.com](http://www.seancreighton.com)



The Battersea Society stall at the Northcote Road fete on 6 July: Carol Rahn and Steph Tickner selling local produce

## COMING UP THIS AUTUMN

- 31 July and 28 August, 3 – 5pm  
Exhibition on the history of the gas-holders.  
Engineers House, Prince of Wales Drive.  
[www.batterseagasholders.com](http://www.batterseagasholders.com)
- 1 – 15 September: Battersea Literary Festival
- 7 September: Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home dog show, Battersea Park (not to be missed by any dog-lover or observer of human nature)
- 20 – 21 September: London Open House weekend. Katherine Low Settlement, Battersea Arts Centre and the Pump House Gallery will be open
- 20 September: St Mary's Church fair

## Planning Matters: it's not all about Nine Elms

Monica Tross outlines the importance of conservation areas and how the Society's planning committee works to protect them

There are no less than twelve conservation areas in Battersea and each is important, to those who enjoy living in them and for the preservation of the character and history of our borough. They contain some older and grander buildings but they were in the main built to meet the need for housing for the many artisans and clerical workers moving into the area to work in the factories, light industries and the railways which grew in Battersea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Then, as now, Battersea was also home to commuters working in shops and offices in the West End and the City.

### Higher price

This richness in attractive properties has brought its own problems for those of us lucky enough to be living here. When a neighbour wants to sell they often decide to apply for an extension first because they are told that they can ask a higher price with planning permission for enlargement. They may have no intention of doing the work and once they have sold we have to review another application because the new owner has different ideas.

Other people buy a property with the intention of adding a basement, a loft extension, a rear or side extension or various combinations of these. Some even buy the house next door with the aim of combining them into one much grander house .so they can really increase the size of their property.

Members of the planning committee try to look at the detail of every application from within a conservation area. Sifting through the list and trying to decide whether or not the proposed work is objectionable is a time consuming task. We are helped by the generally good conservation area appraisals and management strategies prepared by Wandsworth Council's conservation officers and by the advice of planning officers on applications. We are hindered by the fact that pragmatism has led the Council to allow breaches of their

guidelines or to modify their stated policy – for example in relation to front rooflights. In these cases we seek some consistency in what is allowed, for example no more than two conservation grade front rooflights, only a small grating over a basement lightwell rather than an open lightwell. There are cases when we really can't understand why an application has been allowed and others where something we hadn't objected to is refused. And happily there are increasingly other cases where an objectionable application is refused – 19 Henning Street, 2014/464 is a recent example – or where the plan is modified to be more acceptable before then being approved.

### Lengthy lists

Do you live in a conservation area? If so, could you help? By telling us what you find unacceptable, by letting us

#### CONSERVATION AREAS IN BATTERSEA

**Battersea Park**  
**Battersea Square**  
**Clapham Common**  
**Clapham Junction**  
**Latchmere Estate**  
**Park Town Estate**  
**Shaftesbury Park Estate**  
**St John's Hill Grove**  
**Three Sisters**  
**Town Hall Road**  
**Wandsworth Common**  
**Westbridge Road**



Conservation areas: the Park Town Estate: photo Reading Tom, and Battersea Square

have your email address so we can ask your opinion about occasional applications where we can't decide on the impact – or by alerting us to worrying applications. We are not infallible and we can miss things in the increasingly lengthy weekly lists of applications.

### LATE NEWS

Covent Garden Market planning proposals can be checked out at 2014/2810 with comments by 1 August. Concerns are being expressed by English Heritage about the height of the residential building earlier planned to be 150m and now increased to 180m. We plan to comment on this and other aspects of the plans before the closing date.

*Please contact us at [Planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:Planning@batterseasociety.org.uk) We like to hear from you about conservation areas and any other planning and transport concerns you may have.*



## Providence House celebrates 50 years in Battersea



left A life-like cake with PH minibus to boot, made by volunteer Ellie Greenham is being cut by singer Noel Mckoy who first came to Providence House as a boy around 1970.

below, clockwise Three youth club members pose in a frame.

DJ Tony Francis helps compère some of the evening concert. Noel McKoy is in the background.

Esther Clevely, PH Senior Youth Worker, leads the singing during the anniversary service with a combined youth and volunteers group.

Katherine Low Settlement (front page) was not the only much-loved community centre celebrating an anniversary this year. Providence House in Falcon Road has been providing a youth club for 50 years and celebrated on 10 May with a service, party and concert. Robert Musgrave MBE, who has worked with young people at the club for 35 years, says the day was a huge success: 'There wasn't a time when the building wasn't heaving. Over 500 people attended, not just from Battersea but all over England.'

### Re-connecting

One of the highlights was a room of

past photographs. People were studying them until almost 11 at night, exchanging stories and experiences, re-connecting with the place and old friends and re-living old times. Several people spoke movingly about how Providence House had changed the course of their lives.

### Concert

'Of course the building was also full of our present young people and their families. They were printing T-shirts, making jigsaw puzzles in the carpentry room and in the evening there was a concert provided by past



members of the club. It was a very special day.

'Youth work has been the core work of Providence House for fifty years, and will continue to be so as it faces the uncertain future of the re-development of the local neighbourhood'.



## The Caius to the door: an old youth club in a brand new space

A new community resource is opening near the river. Jenny Sheridan hears all about it.

'It won't be our youth club, it will be theirs, the young people's. It'll be their community.' Tameeka Smith, director of Caius House, believes passionately in children's and young people's creativity and in the potential of the youth club to unlock their abilities.

Caius House (pronounced 'keys') has been working in Battersea since 1887. After six years in temporary accommodation at the Wand centre it is now returning to its original home in Holman Road, off York Road in a brand new building. The club will cater for 11 to 21-year-olds and they hope to add a lower age group later.

On the ground floor a large sports hall will offer a full-size basketball court. 'We'll also have badminton, five-a-side football, boxing, netball, volleyball and martial arts,' enthuses deputy director Delrita Tester. 'Schools will use it during the day. It's a fantastic resource.'

There's a gym, which local people will be able to use for sessions during the day, possibly through links with health authorities. Tameeka and Delrita are determined that the building will be used fully all day as well as in the after-school hours in which youth clubs traditionally operate.

### Low rates

That means that schools, local community groups and individuals will be encouraged to make it their own. 'I can imagine that groups that don't currently exist will form – perhaps a young mums' group will develop and meet in our community café, which may also help to train young people with disabilities to get into catering,' says Tameeka. There is a meeting space which will be available for booking at low rates.

As well as sport, dance will be an important part of the club's programme. They hope to offer all kinds of dance, from hip-hop to salsa to line or ballroom dancing. There could be a regular tea dance for older people, perhaps led by students from a dance school.

Music is a way of life for many young people, both listening and



creating. Caius House has an impressive recording studio and mixing suite where they can learn about the music industry and how to produce their own music.

As well as a chill-out space for socialising and playing pool, there will be 'what I think will be the most popular space in the building', says Tameeka. The Place of Peace is a room for meditation, quiet times or one-to-one sessions. Tam has already used meditation with pre-exam A-level students, who found it helpful.

Both Tameeka and Delrita were until recently teachers at Battersea Park School. As head of inclusion, Tameeka has extensive experience with behaviour problems. She says, 'When you look behind the behaviour you often find a frightened vulnerable child asking for help. We want to get to the root of the problem and support them, and their parents. Our main aim is to engage and inspire young people. They need to express themselves creatively, but education now is so exam-focused. The curriculum is one size fits all – but it doesn't. Some kids are not A grade academically but they're A grade in something and that's what we want to tap into. Children who are disadvantaged often struggle at school. They need somewhere they can succeed. Without that there is a risk of anti-social or criminal behaviour.'



**Tameeka Smith, 3rd from right, and club members**

'Once a teacher, always a teacher. We will offer a different kind of education where children can have fun while learning all sorts of essential life skills.'

Caius House is one of Wandsworth's five large youth clubs, two of which are in Battersea, the other being the Devas Club

Caius House, like the Katherine Low Settlement, was started by religiously-motivated undergraduates, in this case from Caius College, Cambridge. Moved by the poverty and deprivation in Battersea, they set up a settlement and youth club in Holman Road in 1887. By 2008 the building was near-derelict and no longer fit for purpose as a modern youth centre. The trustees (many with a Caius College connection) decided to sell the land to a developer who would build flats above the purpose-built youth club on the two lower floors, thus providing an endowment for the building.

The new Caius House will open in August. Tameeka plans a fun open day in the early autumn. She has promised to keep us posted.



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## Book review: Penelope Corfield reviews **Battersea through Time**

This publication is a must-have for all fans of Battersea. It contains 91 old vistas of the area, juxtaposed, page by page, with the same scene in a recent photograph. Readers get an instant guided tour through our history, complete with quips at the historic absurdity of naming the centre of Battersea as Clapham Junction. The images are matched by an incisive commentary from Simon McNeill-Ritchie, an expert on Battersea's architectural history, and Ron Elam, who has devoted a lifetime to collecting historic London postcards.

One immediate theme is the 'shock of the old'. Many of the historic views are fascinating, even nostalgic. A picture of four small cottages on Westbridge Road (formerly Bridge Road West), dating from the time of Charles II, is positively startling (p. 59). These dwellings survived until 1937, when they were the oldest buildings in the area. By contrast, the modern counterpart view has no village 'feel' to it at all. Instead, it's a rather humdrum area of low-and-high-rise social housing, indicating Battersea's mass housing response to population growth.

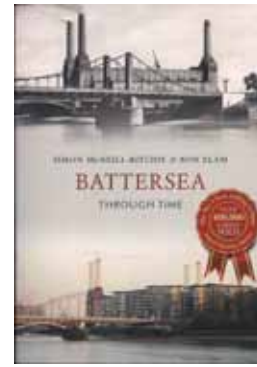
Equally, there's a matching 'shock of the new'. Look at old St Mary's Church as rebuilt in 1777. It is a charming spot, where once Turner painted sunsets over the huge bend of the Thames (p 58).

Today's counterpart is very different. St Mary's Church is towered over by the Montevetro glass-and-steel apartment building (2000). The effect looks like visual vandalism – but it's well to recall that, in between these two views, there was a prolonged period when the church was juxtaposed with an unromantic great flourmill.

### **Flux**

Lastly, within this tale of flux, there is also the 'shock of continuity'. Not everything changes. Many historic buildings survive through time, such as pubs, churches, schools and Battersea's massive Town Hall, now the Arts Centre. But the same can apply to wider scenes. Consider the aerial view of Wakehurst Road housing, dating from the 1880s, in south Battersea (p 9).

Viewed closely, many details have changed – notably the kerbside rows of cars in the modern view. Overall,



*Battersea Through Time*, by Simon McNeill-Ritchie and Ron Elam reveals the changing face of Battersea

however, the general prospect is remarkably the same. And the same applies to the 1870s Shaftesbury Park estate (p 29); the 1900s Latchmere estate (p 52); and the 1960s Winstanley estate (p 69). The mix of continuity and ever-updating diversity makes Battersea an urban jumble but simultaneously an architectural historian's delight. Look at these fascinating images to see why.

*Price £14.99*

*Obtainable from bookshops or from [ron@localyesterdaydemon.co.uk](mailto:ron@localyesterdaydemon.co.uk)*

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## **A quiet cul-de-sac?**

It's time for a re-think on noise, says Suzanne Perkins

I am always bemused when estate agents call my road 'quiet'. Yes, it's leafy, but that calls for ear-splitting tree-trimming. Yes, it's a cul-de-sac, and don't we know it when the daily procession of 4x4s does the circuit after school.

But it's also basement-digging Hades, with continuous compressors, drilling, skip and pumped cement deliveries for the last ten years.

I've changed my lifestyle, getting up at 6 every day to have two hours to garden and work before the noise kicks in. After that one needs earphones for the radio and a quick course in lip-reading.

Basement digging is obviously very

profitable, but I believe the scales are tilted too far against the interests of the people who just want to live, talk, think and enjoy their homes. And many of us work from home.

What would happen to house prices if the truth were told, and average decibel levels in a street were measured over say, five years, and had to be advertised clearly, as does the eco rating?.

Might this lead to a concerted effort to re-design building methods, re-frame planning and noise regulations and respect a bit of hush?

Only then will 'leafy' and 'quiet' at last reflect the truth.

Councillors, what do you say?

### **The Battersea Society**

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# Great Bus Journeys of the World No 11

From Streatham Hill to Selfridges: Mike Roden takes a ride on the 137 bus



And so it came to pass that a few months ago I travelled from Sloane Square to Telford Avenue, Streatham, on the 319 bus, and was faced with the choice of crossing the road and doing the whole journey backwards, or forging onward by waiting five minutes for the 137 to Oxford Circus, passing en route through Battersea (an essential component of one of these epic trips). I forged.

One of the last services to dispense with the old Routemaster bus, the 137 has had a rather chequered history, covering a variety of routes – in the 1930s running from Hyde Park Corner to Bromley - but it finally settled down to its current route in 1998.

## Mansion

Off we go up Streatham Hill, turning into Streatham Place, where we pass the Crown and Sceptre – now one of the Wetherspoons empire – which was built in the 1830s. Once upon a time it was all fields round here, as the saying goes. In the eighteenth century there was a nearby country mansion called Streatham Park. This belonged to the Thrale brewing family, and Henry and Hester Thrale entertained the leading literary and artistic characters of the day, including Doctor Johnson. The house was demolished in 1863.

As with all the rural areas surrounding London, it was the coming of the railways which spurred development and population growth, and we're passing through a range of different styles and ages of housing estates, private and municipal, punctuated by a few small shopping centres. I struggle to find

any landmark worth noting, as we halt at every bus stop to take on more passengers.

As the bus heads along Clapham Park road and people get ready to disembark it's clear that the main destination of most of them is Clapham Common Station. The Great Bus Journey to Peckham on the 345 took me this way, and I observed then that Clapham had changed since the days when Battersea's main station had to be named after it to gain any credibility.

Will Self on his blog ([www.will-self.com](http://www.will-self.com)) recorded passing through here on a late night bus on his way home to Stockwell:

'...who the hell were all these people? And what the devil were they doing – many of them half-naked – on Clapham High Street at 12.30am on a Sunday morning in January?... where there used to be a brace of hostelryes, there are now scores of them ... pretty much a continuous strip of tapas bars, pizza parlours, Belgian mussel shacks and Brazilian steakhouses...'

As I sit waiting for the bus to set off again, it is eleven o'clock on a chilly early spring morning, and if there was any half-naked Bacchanalian romping in Clapham that day it escaped my attention.

## Hospice

We're off again, on a now almost empty bus, passing Trinity Hospice. This was the first hospice in England, founded in 1891 by the banker William Hoare to provide a home 'for the man who is neither curable nor incurable, but simply dying'. Trinity still follows those same rules which were there in

the beginning – focusing on symptom relief and enhancing a patient's quality of life to the end.

Cedars Road takes us to Lavender Hill and then along Queenstown Road. The station here was opened in 1877 and was known as Queens Road until 1980. Its official name is Queenstown Road (Battersea) though the important last word is usually missed off official signs and timetables. I expect the Love Battersea campaign, are working on that one! Across Battersea Park Road and we're near to Battersea Park station – a grade 2 listed building opened in 1867. It was in April 1937, following a mistake by a signalman that two passenger trains collided just south of this station; ten people died and seventeen were seriously injured. It's well worth taking a look at the station's restored booking hall and building façade (*Battersea Matters* Autumn 2013).

## Arts and crafts

The bus is now on the way to Chelsea Bridge, passing alongside Battersea Park. Since I travelled to Tooting on the 44 for Battersea Matters, the demolition of the Marco Polo Building (once the home of the QVC shopping channel) has begun. And across the river, work is just beginning on the skyscraper city which will replace the Chelsea Barracks. We reach Sloane Square and stop outside the ornate frontage of Holy Trinity church. The official name by the way is The Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity with Saint Jude, Upper Chelsea. (Not a lot of people know that!) Completed in 1890 it was built by John Dando Sedding to a striking





Arts and Crafts design. Apparently at the time it was the widest church in London, exceeding St Paul's Cathedral by 9 inches (23 cm). I can't really do justice to the interior in this article, but if you have time do go in and marvel at the interior fittings and the stained glass. The bus moves quickly on, through the impossibly expensive emporia which line Sloane Street. No prices in the windows here (if you need to ask how much then you certainly can't afford it).

### Notorious

At the junction by Knightsbridge station we come face to face with the notorious development called One Hyde Park, blocking any view of the greenery behind. The alleged asking price for these luxury flats is more than £100m though there is scant evidence that these prices have been paid or that anyone is actually living there, and it seems that the foreign owners of those flats that have been purchased are getting away with paying little or no council tax to Westminster Council. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark methinks...

We sail round Hyde Park corner, past the Hard Rock café, and the towering Hilton Hotel, then along Park Lane with other expensive hotels such as the Dorchester and the Grosvenor House towards Marble Arch. This was planned by John Nash in 1827 to be the gateway to Buckingham Palace, but eventually ended up being stranded on this unlovely traffic island.

And so we near journey's end and we join the queue of slow-moving buses along Oxford Street which

(I know it's hard to believe) follows the line of a Roman road, the Via Trinobantina, which linked Hampshire with Colchester. It once had a black reputation as the route taken by prisoners on their final journey from Newgate Prison to the gallows at Tyburn. By about 1729, the road had become known as Oxford Street and was a popular entertainment centre – bear-baiting and masquerades among the main attractions. As the nineteenth century progressed it became known for its shops, and so it has continued, with around three hundred of them now tempting those who want to spend their money. At sale times, and especially at Christmas, you need courage to brave the crowds surging on the pavements.

### Tragedy

It was only a few weeks ago that tragedy struck when an elderly woman set off to cross Oxford Street near Selfridges and was knocked down by a 137 bus. She died later in St Mary's Hospital Paddington from head injuries.

Today the 137 has arrived safely here at Oxford Circus. From Streatham Hill to Selfridges, it has been a journey of real contrast. It's taken me more than hour to get here, and after a full morning on the bus, I go in search of a quicker way home.

**Sights to see: The Crown & Sceptre, Streatham Hill; a Streatham restaurant; Battersea Park Station; embellishment to a choir stall in Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street; One Hyde Park; the entrance to Selfridges in Oxford Street**



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## Air pollution kills

Harvey Heath outlines the Battersea Society's campaign to improve our air quality

Every year, 4,000 Londoners die prematurely from the effects of air pollution. In 2012, 113 of these were in Wandsworth. The Battersea Society is determined to change this.

As I reported in *Battersea Matters* in December 2013, the Society, together with the charity London Sustainability Exchange, has formed an air pollution group which has been actively involved in taking measurements in Battersea Park Road/Nine Elms Lane and in Clapham Junction. We now need to follow up with measuring techniques that are more scientifically rigorous.

### Nitrogen dioxide

We placed diffusion tubes (which measure nitrogen dioxide) as high as possible on lamp posts and 'ghost wipes' (cleaned glass panels) on shopfronts. Two weeks later we removed them and sent them to a laboratory to be analysed. This revealed that particulate matter, the most dangerous type of urban pollution, was five times above the European Union limit and nitrogen dioxide levels were double the European limit. The road under the bridge on Falcon Road showed particularly high levels of pollutants. Not surprisingly, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease (COPD) is higher in Wandsworth than the national

average, despite the fall in the number of people who smoke.

Of course there are many causes of pollution, including garden bonfires and inefficient central heating boilers. However the maps recording the incidence of pollution indicate clearly that road transport is the biggest polluter. There are two solutions to this: first changing our behaviour, particularly reducing car use, and secondly making our equipment less polluting. Both solutions are needed.

The Battersea Society's view is that we need to work on a number of fronts; we are focusing on three:

- improve the monitoring of air pollution, with the help of as many members as possible
- our planning committee will scrutinise planning applications of new developments to ensure that they are 'air quality neutral' ie do not worsen air quality
- we are approaching the local health authorities.

We have held meetings with Wandsworth's director of public health and the Council's environmental officers. Policy documents issued both by the

Mayor's office and Wandsworth Council say that they take the issue seriously. However it has become clear that local action is important. Local and national government constantly has to face the dilemma of where to put their scarce resources. Our activity helps them make their



decisions. Last year the Council found the money to undertake rigorous air quality surveys because the Putney Society and other residents gained the support of local councillors. Without local pressure this may never have happened.

We have made a case to the Council that some of the community infrastructure levy (CIL) money the Council receives from developers should be spent at Clapham Junction. An air pollution monitoring station would study particulates in detail and could ascertain the major causes of pollution. We also need a survey to examine what businesses and individuals can do to improve the quality of the air we all breathe.

Come and join us!  
To join the air pollution group, contact [harvey.heath@virgin.net](mailto:harvey.heath@virgin.net)

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## You couldn't make it up! Jenny Sheridan is gobsmacked

Northcote Road. Nappy Valley. Two children's hairdressers, several children's clothes shops (one just for shoes), buggies and double buggies blocking the pavements and cafes, 'min-pedis' and 'mini-manis' for infant princesses, childcare for 'me-time' or those so-important corporate days at Wimbledon or at the polo in the Hurlingham Club ... but now it's that 'What is the world coming to?' moment: in June the Northcote Road hosted a pop-up restaurant ... for babies.

Weeny Weaners billed itself as

the world's first sensory restaurant for babies. The website offers 'reeeally (sic) interesting tips to help your infant with the tiny taste bud weaning journey.'

So, no need to buy food – let alone prepare and cook it – the little darling can move straight from the breast or bottle to the Gordon Ramsay world that is its birthright.

What next? Raymond Blanc's toytime Manoir aux Quatre Joujous for toddlers? Heston Blumenthal's snail porridge adapted for infant gums?





## Do you know a local hero?

Jessie Wyld describes BAC's Our Good Neighbours project

This summer Battersea Arts Centre is gathering as many stories as possible about inspirational local people past and present – whether they are friends, family, neighbours, colleagues or legends from the past. We aim to collect as many nominations for the Our Good Neighbours project as possible by September, when a panel of local people will select 12 of the names. These will be commemorated on plaques permanently installed around our historic building. It's a project that aims to reach out to our local community; we want to start conversations and jog our neighbours' memories – including Battersea Society members. We look forward to uncovering some real treasures.



above A demonstration against the threatened closure of Battersea Arts Centre, 1980: photo Sara Wyld  
left A flyer calling for nominations for Our Good Neighbours

### Bee mosaic

Having grown up in Battersea, I am delighted to be working on this project. My family have lived locally since the 1970s and my connection with the building goes back to when my mother Sara Wyld photographed the protests to save the Town Hall building from demolition in 1980. My father helped to restore the mosaic bee flooring in the 1990s. I even performed for the first time on Battersea Arts Centre's Grand Hall stage, aged 11, as part of my primary school's production of *Bugsy Malone*.

I am proud to be from Battersea and draw inspiration from our heritage of radical and pioneering figures who have stood up for what they believed in and changed things for the better. From the well-known and celebrated individuals such as suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst or John Archer, the first black mayor of a London borough, and John Burns the first openly working class MP, to the lesser known figures who have also played a significant part in shaping the fabric of our community.

During our research and collection

of nominations we have discovered some wonderful stories. Elsie Young is an example of an unsung hero who we believe deserves recognition. She worked as an air raid warden during World War II in the Lower Hall in the town hall and kept a diary recording the falling bombs, showing great bravery and strength of character.

Then there's Ron, a local resident, who came into BAC to tell us about his grandfather W E Chamberlain who worked on the docks in Battersea and who, over the course of his working life, saved the lives of 12 people from drowning in the Thames.

Our Good Neighbours aims to celebrate those who deserve recognition: unsung heroes who have stood up for what they believed in or shown kindness and generosity to others. We are also particularly keen to gather stories about people who

have fought for the rights of others and for equality – making a radical social or political stand in order to change things for the better.

Our inspiration for the project is the story of George Neighbour, who lost his life rescuing others in the great fire at Arding & Hobbs in 1909. George's heroic deed is commemorated by a plaque in our Grand Hall. We look forward to installing 12 more beautiful plaques in our building designed by 12 world-class artists.

To nominate your local hero, please go to [BAC.org.uk/ourgoodneighbours](http://BAC.org.uk/ourgoodneighbours) and complete an online nominations card. You can also fill in a card in person by visiting either Battersea Arts Centre or Battersea Library. The deadline is 5 September.

*Jessie Wyld is project manager (heritage) for Battersea Arts Centre.*

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## ‘When you hear our music, you just gotta dance.’

Devon Marston tells Jenny Sheridan about Sound Minds

Musician Devon Marston describes the 1980s as ‘my wilderness years.’ Released from Springfield Hospital with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia and suffering physical side effects from the drugs that kept him mentally stable, he drifted from day centre to ward and back again.

Today he plays in a reggae band, writes plays and is on the management board of Sound Minds, the charity that he helped to found.

Sound Minds will be familiar to many Battersea Society members as the providers of the joyous jazz that we dance to at the annual summer party. (‘When you hear our music,’ says Devon, ‘you just gotta dance’). But the organisation is more than a band. It is a charity that uses the arts to support people – particularly those from black communities – with longstanding mental health problems.

### Life-changing

When I met Devon in Sound Minds’ offices, in the basement of the Battersea Mission in York Road, he told me that for many of the people who come to Sound Minds, it can be a life-changing period. Rather than ‘drifting or just hanging around, they can come here and do something creative. Some go on to study, others paint or make music and fulfil themselves like that.’

As well as providing the space and equipment to make music, people can go to Sound Minds for guitar, drum or piano lessons. There is a technology music studio where they can make music using a computer rather than a conventional instrument. There is an art class. A unique feature of the organisation is that almost all the staff, volunteers and tutors are mental health service users. Mutual



**Devon Marston:**  
photo Jenny Sheridan

support is key to all their activities. Devon heads the drama group, which is touring his play *Take Control*, about recovery from mental illness, to social work students. The focus of much of the charity’s work is on reducing the stigma around mental ill health through music and the other arts.

### Occupational therapy

‘Coming from a Caribbean background, music has always been a major part of my life,’ says Devon. ‘After I left Spencer Park School back in the 70s I started a reggae band. We were doing really well but then I became ill. After I left Springfield my CPN (community psychiatric nurse) introduced me to some black guys in a post-prison hostel in Balham and I started to work there and did a course in youth and community work. I also worked as an OT assistant in

Springfield and the OTs encouraged me in my music. We set up Sound Minds as a project and it became a charity in 1993. We have had funding from the Big Lottery, from Wandsworth Council and from Comic Relief.

‘Our new project is called Canerows. It’s a user-led project with four strands. One is Mama Low’s Kitchen, based at Katherine Low Settlement, which is a drop-in where people can get lunch for £2, play pool, enjoy each other’s company or organise a picnic on the common. People access it through referral, often from projects that have closed due to the cuts.

### Training

Then there’s our ward visiting service. We offer an accredited training course that enables volunteers to visit people on the wards at Springfield. After patients

are discharged we can visit them for up to six weeks to help them re-adjust and get used to daily life at home. We also organise Have Your Say forums, which work with the mental health trust to give black service-users a way to influence decisions.’

Sound Minds has done well for funding to date, but – as with other small charities – their future is less secure due to changes in the way patient services are funded. The government and the council are introducing personal budgets. The aim is to give service-users more control over their lives; they choose how to spend the money they have been allocated. This is good in principle, says Devon, but it can make things difficult for the organisation to forecast and plan its future.

[www.soundminds.co.uk](http://www.soundminds.co.uk)



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## How do you spell 'sweep'?

Jeanne Rathbone celebrates her street



Lavender Sweep has been home to me and my husband Dave for 46 years. When we give our address on the phone we have to spell sweep and add 'as in chimney' and explain that it curves around in a sweep. It was originally laid out as a carriage drive serving four large mansions with a lodge at either end. Lavender Sweep was the name by which the largest house became known. It was owned by Tom Taylor, a 19th century editor of *Punch*. He was also a leading playwright, drama critic of *The Times* and a distinguished civil servant.

### Ellen Terry

According to the great actress Ellen Terry, who was one of the many visitors to the house, 'to us he was more than this, he was an institution'. In Terry's autobiography, *The Story of my Life*, she writes, 'It clearly became the home from home for people from all the walks of literary, artistic and theatrical life that Taylor was part of'.

Among Taylor's friends were Dickens, Thackeray, Henry Irving and Lewis Carroll, who took several photographs of the house. Taylor died there in 1880, after which the developers moved in, demolished the house and created the street of the same name.

Ellen Terry's recollections of Lavender Sweep are of a genial home and she was evidently very fond of Taylor. She wrote, 'Lavender

Sweep was a sort of house of call for everyone of note... At Lavender Sweep, with the horse-chestnut blossoms strewing the drive and making it look like a tessellated pavement, all of us were always welcome ... Such intimate friendships are seldom possible in our busy profession, and there was never another Tom Taylor in my life .... The atmosphere of gaiety which pervaded Lavender Sweep arose from his kindly, generous nature, which insisted that everyone could have a good time .... I have already said that the Taylor's home was one of the most softening and cultural influences of my early life ... his house was a kind of mecca for pilgrims from America and from all parts of the world ..... Yet all the time occupied a position in the Home Office and often walked from Whitehall to Lavender Sweep when his day's work was done .... lavender is still associated in my mind with everything that is lovely and refined. My mother nearly always wore the colour and the Taylors lived at Lavender Sweep. This may not be an excellent reason for my feelings on the subject, but it is reason good enough.'

The fanlight from Tom Taylor's house has been preserved and transferred to 84 Lavender Sweep opposite our house. I was delighted to discover this fact from *The Buildings*

of Clapham by The Clapham Society (although Dave was annoyed that our Battersea home was included in Clapham).

I share Ellen Terry's love of lavender and it is my favourite colour. I offer visitors to our house little bags of lavender from our garden and allotment as well as using them to fight off the pestilent moths.

John Betjeman's poem London Sketch 1944 celebrates our street in his charming way:

*Lavender Sweep is drowned in Wandsworth,*

*Drowned in jessamine up to the neck...*

*Sun, shine bright on the blossoming trellises*

*June and lavender bring me hope.*

Like many other streets in the area I could name-drop actors and comedians who have lived here but I won't – except to mention the publicity-shy *News of the World* ex-editor Rebekah Brooks who was then married to Ross Kemp and had bodyguards on 24 hour watch.

I do like our street, which is so handy for the shops and Clapham Junction station and so close to Clapham Common. It would be nice to hear from other members writing about their street.

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## The book is safe in Battersea

Lorinda Freint announces the return of the Literary Festival

The popular Battersea Literature Festival is back. It will run from 1 – 15 September this year.

Previously known as the SW11 Literary Festival, it has been revived under a new name and with renewed direction. A partnership between Waterstones and the Clapham Junction Town Centre Partnership, it is supported by Wandsworth Council. John Daunt, the new managing director of Waterstones, will appear

at this year's festival to talk about the future of the book, and is likely to attract a lot of interest. Other writers already booked include Matt Haig, David Mitchell (*Cloud Atlas*), Joanne Harris (*Chocolat*), Laura Bates (*Everyday Sexism Project*) and crime fiction writer Mark Billingham amongst others.

The Director of the Cheltenham Poetry Festival Anna Saunders will run Poetry Performance Party, and

the festival will end with the ever popular Literary Pub Quiz where people can show off their literary knowledge. Tickets will go on sale at the end of July at Waterstones and Battersea Arts Centre.

*For more information please call Lorinda Freint on 020 7627 3182. Lorinda Freint is Clapham Junction Town Centre manager.*



**Laura Bates**  
*Everyday Sexism Project*

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## Museum on the move

Wandsworth museum may move to Lavender Hill, Jenny Sheridan learns

Wandsworth Museum and the De Morgan Collection are both on the move. Sheila Allen, chair of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum, explains that the Council's rent-free period ends in April 2015. The building on West Hill is expensive to maintain so the board of trustees decided to move. They are currently in negotiation with the Council's library providers, GLL Ltd over the future use of a room at Battersea Library on Lavender Hill.

'It is on the first floor, next to the archive collection,' says Ms Allen. 'It is smaller than the large space where we held temporary exhibitions on West Hill, but larger than the permanent collections room. It has high ceilings and we are working with a local museum designer who is pleased with that. It is more affordable, which is important. We are working closely with the heritage department and we also hope to be able to work with Battersea Arts Centre.'

Neil Couzens, the museum's director for three years, has left to become marketing director at JW3,

a new cultural and community centre in north London. The trustees are currently recruiting an interim director.

Ms Allen is unsure when the museum will re-open, but it is unlikely to be before spring 2015. The Friends of the museum aim to continue holding events, including coffee mornings and occasional evening talks. There will also be walks around Battersea, led by Blue Badge guide (and leader of the opposition on the Council) Rex Osborn.

### Supportive

Funding remains problematic. The Council is responsible for the museum's collection. The Hintze family trust, which stepped in to save the museum when it was threatened with closure in 2007, is still supportive.

A historical note: the museum was formerly situated in the Court House in Garratt Lane. In 2007 Wandsworth Council proposed closing the museum, to widespread and passionate local opposition, in order to open a library in the Court House and to fund improvements

at Tooting Library. Despite a professed wish to preserve a sense of 'Wandsworthness', the Council planned split the museum's collection and offer small displays in local libraries.

The Friends of the Wandsworth Museum are holding a tea party in Battersea Library at 4pm on Monday 4 August. Battersea Society members are invited, says Sheila Allen.

The fine De Morgan Collection has also closed. Curator Claire Longworth says, 'The De Morgan Foundation is currently in discussions with a range of museums and galleries with regards to loans and touring exhibitions of the collection. However we are planning to remain based in Wandsworth to allow us to continue to offer access to our collection, archives and as a point from which to deliver outreach. Once negotiations for this base have completed we will of course publicise it.'

*wandsworthmuseumgroup@hotmail.co.uk*

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## Join the hen party!

A local care home is looking for friends, says Mac Downes

George Potter House is a care home in Battersea High Street, registered for up to sixty-nine residents. It provides care for the elderly frail and those suffering with memory loss conditions.

Friends

With support from Wandsworth Older People's Forum a 'Friends of George Potter Association' has been set up. Its aim will be to provide extras to enhance a spirit of belonging and community. Although the wishes of residents will always be at the forefront of the association's activities, the residents are often too frail or confused to make these things happen without outside support.

To date a small committee comprising relatives and friends of residents has been formed. We are now looking for additional 'community

friends' – people who can spend a few hours in the year helping gather resources and making things happen. The staff are very supportive of the initiative and see it as a welcome addition to the facilities and activities currently provided for residents.

### Fundraising

To date the association has held a relatives' and residents' tea party and a successful table top sale. Now, helped by a grant from Wandsworth Big Society Fund, we are setting up a 'Live Hen Project' (yes, actual egg-laying hens that are named and cared for by residents). Future plans include fundraising to enhance the garden area.



Chickens can help to liven up a garden

*If you would like to help contact Wendy Abram, email info@georgepottercare.org Tel 020 7223 3224*

*georgepotterfriends.org*

*Mac Downes  
Outreach manager Wandsworth Older People's Forum, Treasurer, Friends of George Potter Association*



## 'Happy, healthy homes for sober and industrious workmen'

Historian John Boughton admires the Latchmere Estate

The Latchmere Estate is an attractive, secluded enclave of Battersea – easily overlooked but historically remarkable. Opened in August 1903, it was the first council estate in Britain to be built by direct labour – by the Council's own workforce – and it remains a superb exemplar of the practical idealism of Labour's first generation of municipal reformers.

For those Labour pioneers, the case for direct labour was obvious: it safeguarded workers' pay and conditions, it respected trades union rights and it guaranteed better value and higher quality than could be delivered by private interest. The Battersea Trades and Labour Council thought direct labour as 'necessary to the well-being of the community' as 'municipal housing, electric light, libraries [and] baths.'

### Municipal Mecca

By the turn of the last century Battersea had become the 'Municipal Mecca'. Its left-wing politics reflected the powerful local presence and radicalism of the Progressive Alliance. The Alliance had already secured a majority in the pre-reform Vestry in 1894 but came into its own with the creation of metropolitan borough councils in 1900.

In the first elections to the new Battersea council, Progressives won 37 seats against 17 for their Conservative opponents. One of the new councillors, Fred Knee, founder of the Workmen's Housing Council, was elected chair of the Housing Committee. (Knee is commemorated by a plaque at his former home at 24 Sugden Road.) John Burns, a leading independent Progressive, was the local MP.

An area of allotments on the former Latchmere Common had long been identified as potential building land but it took the perseverance of Burns and others to secure acts of Parliament in 1899 and 1900 which finally granted the right to build.

The Council acted quickly. A design competition, attracting

Houses in Burns Road built in 1903



58 entries, took place in 1901 and building began shortly after. The estate, a mix of houses and tenements, was attractively designed and built – unapologetically – to high specifications. As the mayor explained:

'The dwellings were novel of their kind, containing as they did what had once been regarded as luxuries, such as baths, combined ranges and electric light. Not many working men had such accommodation in which to bring up their families, but the Battersea Borough Council had come to the conclusion that such accommodation was an absolute necessity.'

That electricity, incidentally, was supplied by the Council's own generating station whilst the estate's water supply came from an artesian well sunk by the Council which also served the adjacent Latchmere Baths.

315 dwellings were provided in total: 28 five-room houses, one four-room house, 70 houses each with two three-room tenements with bath scullery and 73 houses each with two four-room tenements with bath scullery. Each tenement had its own entrance and its own back garden (with stairway access in the case of first-floor tenements). Of 11 acres, three were preserved as open space.

The houses themselves were solidly built of good quality stock brick. Bands of red brick, white masonry quoins and entrance canopies added an attractive decorative touch whilst the recreation ground in the centre of the estate provided some welcome greenery. The estate as a whole was granted Conservation Area status in 1974.

There were absences too which were just as important. John Burns expressed his pleasure at the estate's formal opening that it 'would not be

tainted by an off-licence or degraded by a beer-shop.'

Indeed, Burns went further: The home was the centre of health, the cradle of character. If they wanted to arrest drinking, and stop the decay of physique, they should multiply colonies like this estate all over London and the United Kingdom.

### Controversial

Burns' sentiments reflected the National Efficiency arguments of the day, sparked by recruitment concerns during the Boer War and fear of rising German competition. Patriotic alarm at the poor physique of the British lower orders and genuine concern for working-class living conditions joined with repugnance of a working-class lifestyle often seen by the middle class as tainted by alcohol and unredeemed by self-help.

The street names mark the Battersea Labour movement's values. Freedom and Reform Streets speak for themselves. Other streets were named after local Labour leaders – Burns himself and Matthews and Odger. More controversially, Joubert Street was named after a commander of Boer forces in the recent conflict – Battersea had been a centre of anti-war sentiment.

In conclusion, perhaps we can share John Burns' 'delight that one of his ideals of his early days had been realised, the securing of happy, healthy homes for sober and industrious workmen.' Moreover, as he stated of the Latchmere Estate:

'The land has a communal origin, the streets bear democratic names; the whole plan, history and achievement is redolent of the common victory of the common people.'  
*John Boughton is a social historian.  
municipaldreams.wordpress.com*



## Open Garden Squares Weekend comes to Battersea



Three local gardens opened their grounds to visitors from across the capital on Open Garden Squares Weekend 14 – 15 June.

Share Community Garden in the grounds of Springfield Hospital *above and left*, Thrive, in Battersea Park *below left* and Bramfield Community Garden near Old York Road *below right* all showed off their blooms and produce.

