

# Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society WINTER 2011

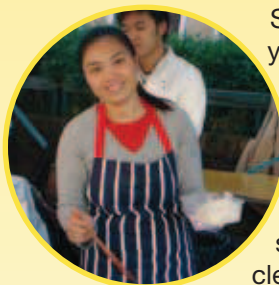


## In the market for good food

Carol Rahn celebrates our street markets: Battersea High Street and Northcote Road (back page)



**Hidden from busy Battersea Park Road but well worth the stroll to the cul-de-sac of Battersea High Street, there's now a row of tempting food stalls every Saturday.**

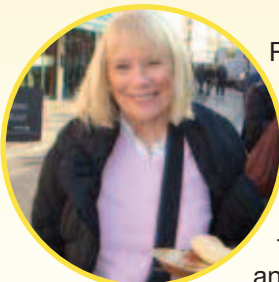


Stella will offer you freshly made Vietnamese specialities. Living nearby, she has just made the investment in this stall. But she's clearly not new to delicious cooking.

A young customer with her favourite: bread from Ricardo's stall dipped in some of the olive oil he sells.



Regular customer Ruth arrives to discuss the cheeses on offer, hovering between a tempting cheddar and a perfectly soft brie: "They never bring it unless it's ready."



Paul, who lives just around the corner, admits that today is his first visit to the food market. But it's unlikely to be his last. He already has a slice of carrot cake in hand and he is definitely sold on this pecan pepper chutney, recommended with cheese or with game.



Don't forget the wine. Clapham-based Dvine Wine reminds us "you can buy organic, sustainable, wine made by someone who really cares about what they're making and how they're making it." One of their suppliers even funds a school for farmworkers' children in Chile.



**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**



And if you like the whole hog, there's that, too. Aaron, who also owns The Castle pub, brings his Kiwi slant to roast pig at the Spit stall. His pork sandwich features caramelized manuka onions and kiwi and apple cider sauce.



Down at the Battersea Park Road end of the market you will still find Ian in his mobile butcher shop. He calls himself "the new kid on the block": he's only had his Saturday spot for 18 years.



Mark Swain has had his fruit & veg stall for 30 years. Mark says "We're supported by the local community, but younger people don't cook as much. They'll buy one potato and one carrot where an older person will buy five or six pounds of potatoes." One of those still buying in quantity is Angela, who takes away a carton of avocados for Jack's Place, the restaurant around the corner that her father opened in 1968 and that she now runs with her husband.

*Battersea High Street market is on Saturdays only*

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## From the editor

Almost at the end of 2011 we look back at a year of financial shocks, a new council leader and the summer riots – all presumably unconnected. I hope in this issue you will find at least as much to celebrate as to despair of. After all, the summer's riots were followed by the clean-up and other examples of true Battersea community spirit.

It's not all doom and gloom. Our street markets though greatly reduced still offer variety, value and a chance to chat with stall-holders and neighbours. Community groups like WOW (page 5) and Spacemax (p6) bring people together and do an extraordinary job of empowering them to do more than they ever thought they could. It's noteworthy that at a time when immigrants are frequently denigrated in both Parliament and pub, these organisations are largely run by people who came from overseas – like Ravi Govindia, the new leader of the council. We should be



pleased and proud that they all chose to become Londoners.

Spacemax works to benefit families forced to live in small, cramped spaces. What a contrast with the developments planned for Nine Elms. The first block, Riverlight, was droolingly described in the *Standard* as “five slender buildings up

to 20 storeys, each to be topped by double height duplexes, shaped like the prow of a ship. Interiors are larger than average.” Flats in the circular tower going up at Vauxhall are priced from £720,000. Do you think such extreme differences in the borough are healthy?

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without one of Mike Roden's stories of the supernatural. You will find this edition's story on page 13 and I am sure you'll enjoy it. I'd like to thank Mike for the absolutely sterling work he has done on the layout and design of Battersea Matters since 2008, and the support he has given me. Suzanne Perkins has now taken over as designer and she and I look forward to hearing your comments on the new look.

I hope you will all have a very happy Christmas.

Jenny Sheridan  
[newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk)  
020 7350 2749

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## The man on the Battersea bus

“It's being so cheerful what keeps him going”

We must hope that the re-opening of Albert Bridge to the car will improve things for those living on the grid-locked approaches to other river crossings. But let's not forget that London's prettiest bridge (now looking much better after its extensive facelift) has not been closed to foot traffic, nor to those willing to push their cycles across. My pessimism about the efficacy of the 'Cyclists Dismount Now' notices was happily proved wrong. Most people have dutifully got off their bikes and walked. Perhaps we should try the experiment on Battersea Bridge, and put an end to the sound of bicycle bells insisting that you, the pedestrian, get out of the way of the impatient cyclist.

Of course they originally told us that Albert Bridge would re-open in the summer. It struck me recently that nobody ever queries the identity of these omniscient sages identified by

this mysterious 'They'. I imagine a convocation of bearded philosophers – looking much like our eminent chairman, perhaps – meeting in secret to decide what They



should tell us next. As with the bridge They are often wrong. They all laughed at Christopher Columbus when he said the world was round, and They keep telling us the future of Battersea Power Station is settled once and for all.

And despite the fact They tell us civilisation is falling about our ears, and that even young Master Osborne thinks that things can only get worse before they get worse, Christmas does not appear to have been cancelled, and the shops are full of Yuletide glitter and gifts of dubious utility. As a child I received

such offerings from aunts and uncles: Letts diaries, propelling pencils, and abridged editions of *Children of the New Forest* published by Blackie. But the anticipation is what matters - not the reality. I saw it in my children, and now in my grandchildren, and it is impossible to maintain the cynicism for which the Man on the Bus is famous.

### Goodwill

So in this time of goodwill (and coming austerity) can I urge those of you of mature years who do not really need the DWP's winter fuel offering to remember that we have a very worthy charity here in Battersea which can put such payments to good use. You can read about the excellent work of the Katherine Low Settlement (and find the address for donations) on their website: [www.klsettlement.org.uk](http://www.klsettlement.org.uk).

They do say that it is better to give than receive. For once They may be right. Mind how you go, and happy Christmas to you all.

Mike Roden



## How green is my house?

Conserve energy, save money: Robert Molteno goes green

A J Cronin, author of *How Green is my Valley*, who loved Wales, thought of a whole valley. We in Battersea may have to think just of our own homes. Two recent local events urged us to do precisely that. In mid-November, Friends of the Earth and St Mark's Church Battersea organised an afternoon Neighbourhood Energy Saving Toolkit (NEST) event for householders in the church's beautiful Durie Hall. At a time when our electricity and gas prices are soaring by some 20%, the purpose was to help people think about how to save energy and cut their bills.

A local builder, Greener Builds, together with insulation expert Mould Growth Consultants, and two solar panel companies, Joju Solar and Green Tomato Energy, exhibited. The speakers were down-to-earth people who have actually done the things they suggested we all could benefit from.

### Insulation

Susan Venner gave an inspiring illustrated talk on how she and her husband (both architects) have transformed their Balham house. Their aim was to cut their energy use by 80% over three years. Did you realise that external walls leak 35% of the energy in a house? Walls, the

roof and the floor together account for three-quarters of the energy we lose. Susan argued that insulation is by far the most cost effective way of saving energy and reducing our carbon footprint.

Hugo Schonbeck of Hyde Farm CAN (Climate Action Network) focussed on something we can do quite cheaply: draught busting. In Balham and Brixton, they have been organising Saturday DIY draught-proofing sessions. Someone volunteers to host the event, and invites interested neighbours to come along and join in.

Akta Raja of Joju Solar explained how those of us who are home owners can take advantage of the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) to generate our own renewable energy. This involves installing solar panels on the roof. The government pays you 21p for every unit (kWh) of electricity you generate, and an extra 3.1p if you export it to the grid. This is a saving of some 10 to 12p per unit on current electricity charges. The higher rate is guaranteed for 25 years and is inflation-linked.

This successful event took place shortly after the Wandsworth Environment Forum's public meeting to begin informing Wandsworth

residents about the government's Green Deal. John Alker, director of policy at the UK Green Building Council, and Justine Greening, MP for Putney, explained this initiative. The Green Deal, which will take off next year, aims to improve the energy efficiency of millions of homes without – and this is the interesting part – making householders pay the up-front costs of insulation, getting a more efficient combination boiler etc.

The Green Deal has a Golden Rule: any energy saving measure you install on the recommendation of an accredited home energy advisor will save you more in your quarterly energy bills than the interest and repayment charges involved. And it is the green energy provider that puts up the initial capital cost. It was a fascinating evening and Wandsworth's deputy leader, Cllr Jonathan Cook, promised that the council will play its part in spreading information about the Green Deal to local residents.

A clear message emerged from both events. Each of us can cut our energy use and it doesn't have to cost the earth. And as we cut our gas and electricity bills, we are also doing our bit for global warming. The slogan could be: Do yourself a favour; do the planet a favour!

*For more information, help in organising similar events, or to contact the speakers or companies, email Robert.molteno@googlemail.com*

## Information wanted

### BATTERSEA COUNTY SCHOOL

I am trying to trace photographs of the exterior of the former Battersea County School, which was founded in 1894 as a technical school for boys attached to Battersea Polytechnic. It taught "a thoroughly sound and useful knowledge of the Applied Sciences and Technology" and established a good reputation.

In 1909 the school moved to the top of Latchmere Road, Lavender Hill, and in 1918 was renamed The County Secondary School, Battersea. In 1923 the name changed again to Battersea County School.

The next move, in 1926, was to South Lodge, Clapham Common. Re-named the Henry Thornton School

after the abolitionist and member of the Clapham Sect, who was born nearby, it was opened by the chairman of the LCC. (See the website for information about Henry Thornton School, which closed in 1986)

[www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk](http://www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk)  
*If you are able to help with information, please contact me.*

*ted.hayward@btinternet.com*  
31 Linfields, Amersham, HP7 9QH  
01494 762838

### MARATHON WOMAN

The Association of Road Racing Statisticians (ARSS) is seeking information about a notable local resident, Miss Violet Piercy (or Piercey). The first British woman to complete a marathon run, she lived in Leathwaite Road, Battersea in the

1930s and perhaps later. Her first and most famous run was from Windsor to London on 2 October 1926, ending at Battersea Town Hall.

The Dictionary of National Biography plans to include her in their May 2012 edition on Olympic-related sports. As a key figure in the development of the women's marathon she deserves to be honoured in this way in Britain's Olympic year. We think she was born between 1890 and 1901 but there is still uncertainty about her dates of birth and death, and details of her life.

*We would appreciate any further information. We have already investigated local papers and some of the electoral registers for the ward in which she lived between 1930 and 1933. Andy Milroy, ARSS*  
[andymilroy@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:andymilroy@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Ice age or space age?

The new director of Wandsworth Museum explains his priorities to Jenny Sheridan



collections space to make two rooms or even swap the two spaces over.”

Such plans will not come cheap.

Wandsworth Museum has a chequered recent history. Slated for closure by the council in 2007, it was saved by a vigorous local campaign and a £2million donation from Michael and Dorothy Hintze, local philanthropists. Since 2009 it has had three directors. The latest is the ebullient and cheerful Neil Couzens, who started in August this year.

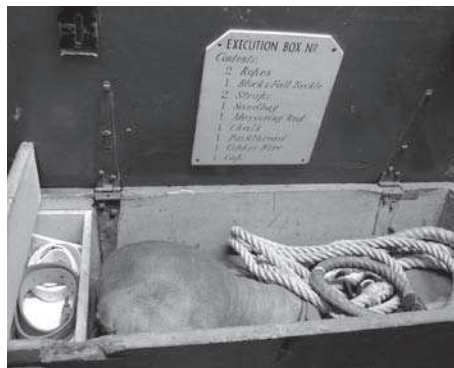
“I’m quite unusual in having a background in marketing rather than curating, but it will become more common because of the difficult times we’re living through,” says Neil. Previous roles were with the National Army Museum and the Chelsea Physic Garden, where he is proud of increasing opening hours, visitor numbers and income.

### Victorian streetscape

The current exhibition, Separation and Silence, about Wandsworth Prison, will run till February. Neil aims to run two temporary exhibitions in 2012, one on historic photographs, and the other on local architecture, old and new. “There’s so much going on, with Nine Elms and the American embassy, plus we’ve got all the Victorian streetscapes and treasures such as the Granada cinema in Tooting.”

The museum has a small room for the permanent collection and a larger space for temporary exhibitions. Neil is full of ideas for how these could be used. “In the permanent room a lot of space is taken up with pre-history, but most people are more interested in the last five hundred years or so. If the space was more flexible we could make more room for the 20th century. We could partition the temporary

Neil needs to increase both visitor numbers and income. “We had around six thousand visitors in the last year, which just isn’t enough. I want to get to a stage where we can have three or four temporary exhibitions a year and also rotate objects from our stored collection. People will think ‘I haven’t been to the museum for a while, I must go again, there’s bound to be something new’.” In its previous more central incarnation in the Court House, the museum boasted over 20,000 visitors.



A grisly exhibit: Wandsworth's execution box

Funding is an ongoing issue, despite the Hintzes’ continuing commitment. Costs run at about £250,000 per annum, and the current rent-free status from the council has only another three years to run. “We’re going to approach the major trusts and foundations and I hope there will be local benefactors as well. The Museum Friends are a great support, both financially and for volunteers. We couldn’t survive without our volunteers, and we’d love more, for the front desk, cataloguing the collection, marketing, the garden.”

The café contributes substantially to income (its cakes are famously delicious). Neil has widened the

selection of books and gifts in the shop, especially children’s books. A new initiative is two festive shopping weekends in December, when the price of many goods will be slashed by 20%. Entry to the museum will be free between 20 and 31 December. Normal admission charges are £4, with £3 for concessions. The De Morgan Centre, which shares the site, has the same charges and a voucher scheme allows money off between the two.

Education has always been important. “Our education department is fantastic. By the end of this year we will have interacted with most of the schools in the borough. Around 1000 children visited this term alone.”

Neil observes that there are few cultural venues in the borough. “There’s the BAC, Theatre 503, the Pump House gallery and here. To attract tourists and people from outside the area you really need more. Having said that, the borough is good at festivals, large and small. Our marketing will concentrate on these as well as online networks like Facebook and Twitter.”

### Lavender Hill

Neil believes it is important for the director of a local museum to live locally and to know at first hand the local geography and history. He has lived in Wandsworth since 1999, first in Balham and now in Battersea, moving to Lavender Hill shortly before the summer’s rioting. He has previously said that he wants to display some of the graffiti boards from Debenhams and other Clapham Junction shops in the café, and promises to follow this up.

Neil Couzens has a difficult task. Can Wandsworth Museum become both a cultural hub for Wandsworth and a draw for tourists? With his enthusiasm and his clear ideas for the future he may just achieve it.

*Wandsworth Museum  
West Hill, Wandsworth SW18 1RZ  
Buses 37, 170, 337  
Opening hours 10am–5pm  
Tuesday–Sunday  
Festive shopping weekends (20% off most books and goods) 3–4 December, 17–18 December.  
Entry free 20–23 & 28–31 December*

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# Not for you, not forme, but for us

Jenny Sheridan is WOWed



**WOW mums and their children help out in the Doddington community garden, weeding, planting vegetables and finding snails**

When you meet Senia Dedic, Sandra Munoz, Hadas Hagos and the other women involved in WOW Mums, it's hard not to be bowled over by what they have achieved. WOW – Women of Wandsworth – grew out of a group of mothers involved with Sure Start at the Katherine Low Settlement (KLS). Within four years it has become a dynamic community group whose aim is “making our community stronger through self-help” and providing free educational and fun activities for children.

Senia Dedic, the chair of WOW, came to London from war-torn Bosnia in 1992. She married and had her children, now aged 15, 13 and 11, in the UK. With a degree from Sarajevo University in business economy, she runs a part-time business consultancy, “but WOW and all the other voluntary things I'm involved with take up a lot of my time.”

Senia is a school governor and chairs both a PTA and Wandsworth Contact a Family (for parents of children with a disability). She has recently become a trustee of KLS. If this sounds like a tweedy pillar of the community, Senia is anything but. A fast-speaking, fast-thinking, long-haired powerhouse, she clearly gets a lot of fun out of her activities. “When we started in 2007 we didn't imagine that we'd have such fun volunteering for our community. We took 30 kids to a farm in Devon. These were children who'd never seen a sheep or cow, most had never had a holiday outside London. They loved the sheep, the

chickens, the Dartmoor ponies.

“The Forestry Commission were thinning out the little self-seeded pine trees so we saved their lives and gave them to the Doddington community garden. The children each have their own tiny tree – maybe they'll be Christmas trees next year. It's nice to have real forest trees here in Battersea.”

There are also outings to London Zoo and a pantomime, funded by grants from the council or trusts. Thomas's School Foundation has funded popular taekwondo and drama classes.

## Childcare

Weekly parent forums and coffee mornings at KLS offer mutual support and friendship. Sandra Munoz explains that only the informal childcare arranged through WOW enabled her and another mum to study and gain qualifications. Sandra is the group's film-maker and PR person.

Mother of a five-year-old, Eduardo, she faces losing her privately rented flat and has been unable to find another home she can afford in Battersea. “I don't want to leave this area, all my friends are here. I don't have family in this country and when I had my child I lost all my party-going friends, but through Sure Start and WOW I've met people who share my values.” Sandra's videos of WOW Mums' work can be found on YouTube, via the WOW website.

During the campaign to save

York Gardens Library, Sandra's moving short video about its local importance was shown to councillors. WOW Mums are now stakeholders in the library and both Sandra and Senia are on the committee. They see campaigning as an important role for a family-focused community organisation and fought against Wandsworth's now-reconsidered decision to charge for the adventure playground in Battersea Park.

## Elderly link

Many of the families come from overseas and, like Sandra, have no relatives close by, so children miss out on having grandparents. A new project to bridge the generation gap was born to link the children with elderly people in Haven Lodge sheltered housing scheme. Birthday parties, barbecues, cooking and art sessions bring three generations together, all learning from each other. “The residents have time to sit and play and do jigsaws with the children, they teach them to knit, they tell them about the old days in Battersea. The kids really enjoy it, and so do the old people,” says Senia.

Senia believes that it is the absence of family support that explains the high proportion of volunteers from other countries in WOW – the committee for example has members from Ghana, Ethiopia, Spain, Slovenia, Poland and Nigeria as well as England. “People need to support each other.”

Two residents' associations, on Kambala and Rollo estates are being revitalised by WOW mums, who stepped in when nobody volunteered to chair them. Without them the associations might well have collapsed.

What next for WOW? They are in the process of registering as a charity and are looking for trustees. They are actively seeking funds for classes for their children; Senia mentioned chess, pottery, maths and ballet for starters. A new job club seeks to help parents into employment or self-employment.

Watch out for WOW come the Olympics: three mums and children will be carrying the Olympic torch around the streets of Wandsworth. [www.wowmums.org.uk](http://www.wowmums.org.uk)  
Email: [seniadedic@wowmums.com](mailto:seniadedic@wowmums.com)



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## Spacemax: making the most of the space you've got

Jenny Sheridan meets another WOW project

Many families in Battersea live in overcrowded accommodation and are on a long waiting list for re-housing. With support from South London Citizens (see *Battersea Matters* Spring 2011), WOW (see page 5) has set up Spacemax, to help people make the best use of the space they have.

Citizens offered a platform for WOW to address Wandsworth Council. They acknowledged the council's difficulties and proposed solutions: simple things like bike hooks to get children's bicycles out of the crowded hallway, or curtain partitions to offer privacy when two family members have to share a bedroom. Fold-down beds and tables can make space for kids to play or do homework and mean that the family can eat round a table instead of on their laps. The council saw the point and has been supportive, with grants from the Big Society Fund.

Hadas Hogas is volunteer project co-ordinator for Spacemax. She says,

"We have a community architect, lovely Robert Law, who came to us through London Citizens. He used to design boats so he is brilliant at finding solutions for small spaces. I don't have the knowledge, I just have the passion, because I know what it's like to live crammed into a small space.

"Sometimes de-cluttering can help, or shelves to get things off the floor. I know a family of four in a one-bedroom flat where the mother and children are in the bedroom and the dad is sleeping in the living room. Putting up a temporary partition might help them.

"I believe that overcrowding is at the root of a lot of problems, especially for teenagers. The lack of privacy at home pushes them out into the street and they get involved in drugs and gangs. I'd like us to research to see if there is a link between overcrowding and young people in juvenile detention centres."

Several of the women involved

in Spacemax are going on a course in the new year to learn DIY skills, funded by Wandsworth's Lifelong Learning Fund. They have fund-raised for storage space and for tools – Hadas earned a month's rent by face-painting at the royal wedding party in Battersea High Street. The Big Society Fund has now given them a grant for this.

One of the indefatigable WOW mums, Hadas came to Britain from Ethiopia in 2002 and has a five-year-old daughter. "WOW Mums gave me the strength and empowerment to take on all this voluntary work," she says. As well as Spacemax, Hadas chairs the Rollo Estate Residents Association and a keyholder for the Doddington Community Garden. Like other WOW mums, she acknowledges the support and help provided by Katherine Low Settlement and its manager, Sarah Rackham. "She's been the backbone of everything, our rock."

*Spacemax is looking for qualified carpenters, electricians and plumbers to help them tackle the problems of overcrowding. It also needs space-saving furniture such as fold-away tables and chairs.*

[www.spacemax.org.uk](http://www.spacemax.org.uk)

Email: [etegehadas@yahoo.com](mailto:etegehadas@yahoo.com)

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## Obituary: Richard Jones

My friend Richard Jones, who has died aged 84, was an author and journalist. His first novel, *The Age of Wonder*, revolving around an elderly woman's decision to publish the papers and diaries left by her late husband, appeared in 1967. Its American edition was retitled *The Three Suitors*. He wrote four more novels, *The Toy Crusaders* (1968, retitled *Supper with the Borgias* in America), *A Way Out*, *The Tower Is Everywhere* and *Living in the 25th Hour*. His reputation was such that he became a visiting lecturer at Stanford University in California.

The son of a dairyman, Richard was born in Aberystwyth and attended Ardwyn grammar school, where he excelled at French. Instead of going on to university, however, he left school at 16 to work for the planning department in Croydon.

When he reached the age of military service in 1944, he was drafted into the Nottinghamshire coalfield as a Bevin boy.

He married Maria (Moussia) Bavenko, a French woman of Russian descent, in 1955, by which time he had taken up journalism as a career. After reporting for the *Cambrian News* in Aberystwyth (I first came to know Richard well while working in the newsroom with him there) and the *South Wales Echo* in Cardiff, he joined the BBC to become its correspondent in Beirut. He then moved to London as a bulletin editor for the BBC's *World Service* in Bush House. He remained with the corporation until his retirement.

The death of his 12-year-old daughter, Natalie, in a road accident in 1976 had a devastating effect on Richard, and he came to see fiction writing as an irrelevance. He was, however, highly supportive of friends who pursued writing careers.



Always keenly interested in politics and public affairs, he made a mark as an outspoken independent member of Cardiganshire council in the 1950s, and in recent years had backed the Liberal Democrats, campaigning for the party in Battersea.

Richard was a man of great personal warmth and, until diagnosed with cancer, seemingly tireless energy. He is survived by his wife and his daughter Katherine.

*Herbert Williams*

*Reproduced from guardian.co.uk, 29 September 2011. Richard was a longstanding member of the executive committee of the Battersea Society and a strong supporter of the Society.*

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## Planning Matters: It's not all Nine Elms.

Monica Tross reports on the Peabody Estate and the Thames Tunnel plans

Just for once our work on the planning committee has not been wholly dominated by events at Nine Elms – although inevitably there is news to report about that area.

### Peabody

In November the team from Peabody came to tell us about their plans for demolition and rebuilding of their estate in Battersea – or Peabody Clapham as their leaflets call it. The team were apologetic about the name, given by those in charge of building back in the 1930s. Seems as if SW11tch Back to Battersea should have got going rather earlier than it did!

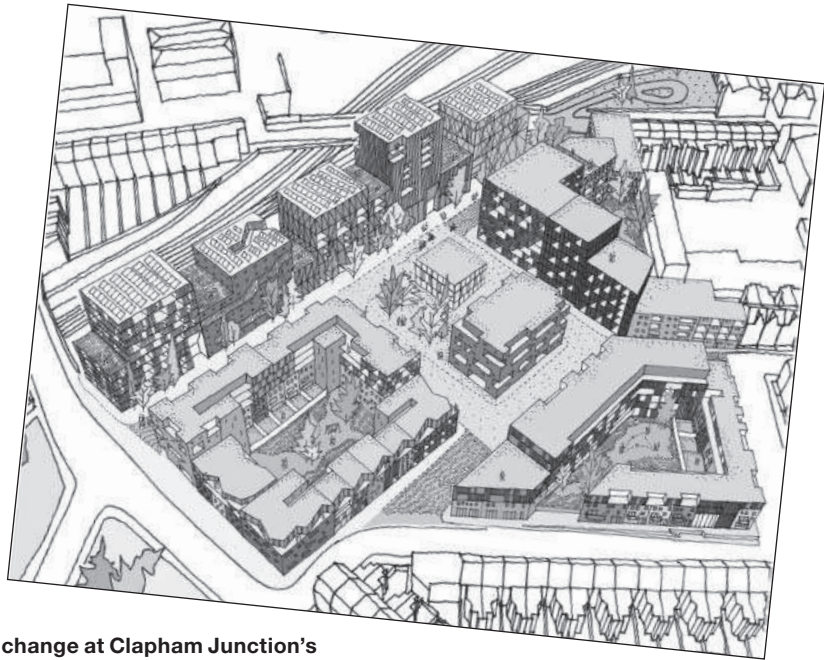
We were shown the plans in outline and told that it had been decided that new build was the best way of providing homes to meet or improve on current standards and that the existing buildings are much in need of repair. We understand that all permanent tenants are guaranteed a home during the phased construction period and then within the new buildings. The plans were shown at St Mark's Church Hall and details of the boards shown at the exhibition can be found at [www.claphamdevelopment.org.uk](http://www.claphamdevelopment.org.uk). Do let us know what you think about the plans – particularly if you live on the estate. A planning application with fuller details is expected early next year.

### Thames Tunnel

Thames Water is consulting again on their tunnel plans. You will have read that our friends to the west are fighting off plans for major work at Barn Elms with the Council's preferred location apparently in Kirtling Street in Nine Elms. Thames' new proposals can be seen at various locations in December and early January. Check these out at [www.thamestunnelconsultation.co.uk](http://www.thamestunnelconsultation.co.uk)

### New regulations

The government's proposals for new planning regulations are very worrying and we were pleased to see that Wandsworth Council share many of our concerns, as do many other local



**All change at Clapham Junction's Peabody Estate**

authorities. Members of the planning committee attended seminars held by the Department for Communities and Local Government and by Civic Voice and submitted a lengthy response to DCLG – what good it will do remains to be seen.

### Nine Elms

It almost came as a relief to return to more exhibitions on Nine Elms, most recently a two-day expo where the latest plans for many of the developments planned in the opportunity area were on show. Representatives from both Lambeth and Wandsworth Councils, developers, TfL and others were on hand to answer questions and the exhibition seemed to be well attended but perhaps with more people from Vauxhall than from Battersea. The 3D model of the area didn't include the latest proposals, notably for 58 and 47 storey towers at One Nine Elms (currently Market Towers) nor other developments to the south in Wandsworth Road at Sainsbury's and Vauxhall Square (the Cap Gemini site). While these are in Lambeth they too will have a major impact on us all to the west. The Covent Garden Market Authority has just put in a planning application for their new development but there is no council application number listed yet.

### Complex plans

I don't know if it was heartening or otherwise to find I am not alone in finding these models and schematic plans hard to read. I attended a Design Council CABE event recently which reviewed the way design panels assess plans. We heard from architect members of these panels that they too have to dig into the detail to make sure they understand exactly how the proposals will look when built and how they will relate to the neighbourhoods around them.

### Members' input

Finally, we continue to monitor all the applications listed for Battersea and comment or object when this seems necessary. This time these included objections to quite inappropriate plans for the site at 575C Battersea Park Road (2011/4019) and to the height and density of plans for 100 York Road (2011/2950). In several cases recently we have been prompted to comment by members concerned about a planning application. This is very helpful so do continue to alert us to your concerns about planning and transport matters – and please give us your comments on Peabody and other developments reviewed here.

Contact us at: [planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org.uk)



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## A new window on Battersea

Author Isabel Losada looked at Battersea – and Battersea looked back



With great joy I accepted an invitation to be author-in-residence in the window of Waterstone's, St John's Road, for nine days of the SW11 Literature Festival this October.

As the author of two books with 'Battersea Park Road' in the title, I was just what they wanted - an author who genuinely does live on the Battersea Park Road in SW11. A friend and I decorated a backdrop to make it look like a view from my window including the wonderful Italian Caffetino café and my favourite Battersea shop, the dog grooming parlour Barking Betty, which is always full of happy and embarrassed dogs.

### Delight

We put up the back-drop, moved in some cushions, a computer and me. You might think that it would be strange living in a window and being looked at day after day by passers by. But instead I found the spotlight reversed; I had a huge viewing screen on Battersea. I smiled at everyone and, much to my delight, everyone smiled back.

I soon started to fall in love with the people in St John's Road. The atmosphere there is quite different from the atmosphere in Battersea Park Road. This is a red route so people are usually on their way to

**Isabel Losada in her window within a window, looking out on St John's Road from Waterstone's shopfront.**

somewhere else but in St John's Road people are out shopping and have time to stop and chat.

How wonderfully diverse Battersea is. We have so many languages and cultures, and I had the privilege of a thousand conversations. Some had read my books and wanted to discuss them, some wanted to know about being a writer. Many people asked "How do you write a book?" to which I always reply as a Zen practitioner might - "Well, one word at a time." Some wanted to ask my advice or tell me their problems as if being in a window gave me some kind of power. Some just bought me coffee and asked, "How's it going?"

### Cheeky

But even more than the conversations, I fell in love with the smiles. By day two I had started asking people if I could take their photos to record some of the warmth and by the end of the week I had 120 dynamic photos. I am still trying to figure out how to exhibit them. I love the cheeky kids, the unpretentious honest nature

of some of the Battersea residents and the beauty of the elderly. The faces are quite unlike those that we see every day in newspapers and magazines which mostly seem to feature the stereotypically 'attractive' and the predictably 'powerful.' I saw timidity, generosity, assertiveness, shyness; above all I saw the unusual in the regular. Like travelling on the bus but seeing the faces there with new eyes.

And what brought this about? An author in a window had created the shock of the unexpected. For a few minutes people stopped worrying about what had happened yesterday or where they were going next and were surprised into the present moment. And this moment was smiling at them out of a shop window where normally only books live.

### Smiles

By the end of the week I had changed. At this side of Battersea, where I have lived for fifteen years, there is so often a "just here for two years" or even "just here for six months" attitude that I have experienced it as ungrounded and transient. But in St. John's Road - where, ironically, the riots were at their worst - I found people who looked delighted to be where they were. For all the "troubles" and for all our joint faults this is where we choose to live. Those smiles made me glad I'm here. I had become like someone too long in a marriage who had grown to take all the good qualities of their partner for granted. I had been seeing too many of Battersea's faults.

But I've been woken up. Battersea I love all your contrasts. You're extraordinary.

*You can see all the photos that Isabel took on her Nine Day blog, [isabellosada.posterous.com](http://isabellosada.posterous.com) Scroll back through the days to see the photos.*

*Or find out more about Isabel at [www.isabellosada.com](http://www.isabellosada.com) [authorisabellosada](http://authorisabellosada)*

*See the review of Isabel's book The Battersea Park Road to Paradise on page 9.*



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## Restaurant review: Fish in a Tie

Julia Matcham is tempted to keep this relaxing restaurant to herself

This is a restaurant I love for its combination of excellent value, interesting décor, charming owners and un-stereotyped atmosphere. Lilian Jovanovic and her husband Marco Perugini launched the restaurant in 1992.

As well as the usual *à la carte*, they have weekday (12am-5pm) lunchtime two-course deals at £5, extended choices at £7 (specials of the day), and £10.

Every evening there is a £10 menu as well as the *à la carte*.

Traditional Sunday lunch of beef or lamb and all the trimmings is £5.95. A bottle of house wine, white or red, is £11.95.

Even at the low prices the food is not ordinary. 'Fish in a Tie' is a slightly misleading name, for while fish in various forms (e.g. whitebait, calamari



A quirky interior at Fish in a Tie lends a pleasant atmosphere

rings, plaice in thyme and lemon, even cod and chips, etc) are always amongst the choices available, there are plenty of other possibilities: various pastas, risotto, steak, duck, vegetarian parcel, knuckle of lamb to name a few, and all very nicely presented. This is a relaxing restaurant and it is only too easy to linger on with friends, happily chatting in the pleasant surroundings, until people start to come in the evening. I hardly like to tell you about it!

*Fish in a Tie*

105 Falcon Road, SW11

From Clapham Junction, almost opposite the first bus stop after the railway arch.

Tel 020 7924 1913 (definitely book in the evening). Website: [www.fishinatie.co.uk](http://www.fishinatie.co.uk) (more details of menus).

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## Book review: The Battersea Park Road to Success

Angela Roden is enlightened by a local author's new book

You can say one thing for sure about Isabel Losada – she has certainly secured her place in any Battersea Hall of Fame by the ineffably catchy title of her first book, *The Battersea Park Road to Enlightenment*, which has sold over 100,000 copies worldwide. I was intrigued by its title when I was living just off the BPR in 2002, and although I don't normally go for books which claim to be searching for spiritual enlightenment I found it a refreshingly frank and entertaining read. It was about her search for what made some people happy and positive against all odds, no matter what life threw at them.

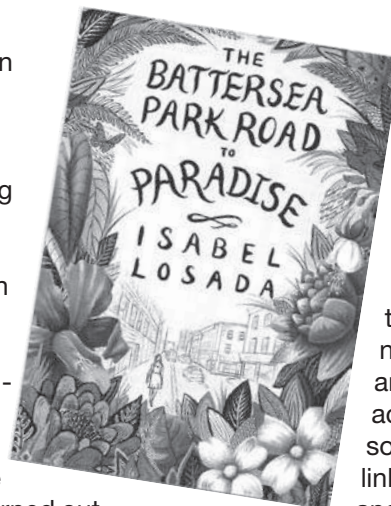
As she tried out various theories (from tai chi to tantric sex via colonic irrigation) she shared her trials and tribulations with the reader very openly. She did the courses so that we didn't need to – and we all learned something along the way.

Her new book, *The Battersea Park Road to Paradise*, has picked up again on the successful formula,

but this time concentrating on five potentially life-changing experiences which could not be more chalk-and-cheese different. What is so engaging about Isabel's reports back from the front line is her willingness to let us see when she loathes things – such as arrogant and unfeeling feng shui experts, and scary mind-altering drugs administered by an Amazonian shaman – although a pool in the middle of the Amazon jungle itself turned out to be a true paradise.

But when her heart is touched by someone, whether it is His Holiness the Dalai Lama (as she always refers to him), an American motivational guru who regularly packs the suitably named Excel Centre or our very own Brixton-based guru Mooji (do look for him on YouTube), she does a great job in helping us to see them through her eyes.

You can read her books as easily



as a novel – and many people have accused her of writing fiction. But she insists she is committed to 'narrative nonfiction', and always acknowledges her sources, provides links and booklists and maintains an

on-going dialogue with readers on her website [www.isabellosada.com](http://www.isabellosada.com) and on Facebook. I've enjoyed making her acquaintance again in this book and am not at all surprised that open-minded people like her still enjoy living on the Battersea Park Road.

*Note: You can earn the Society a few pence by buying this book from our online bookstore ([batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore](http://batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore)) at a bargain price*

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## Tripping the light fantastic

Jeanne Rathbone goes in search of the tea dance



Tea dances are back in fashion, although they never fully disappeared. A tea dance is an afternoon or early evening dance. Books on Victorian etiquette such as *Party-giving on Every Scale*, (London 1880) included detailed instructions for hosting such gatherings and noted "Afternoon dances are seldom given in London, but are a popular form of entertainment in the suburbs, in garrison-towns, watering-places, etc."

The usual refreshments then were tea and coffee, ices, champagne-cup and claret-cup, fruit, sandwiches, cake and biscuits. Even after the introduction of the phonograph the expected feature was a live orchestra – often referred to as a palm court orchestra – or a small band playing light classical music. Dances included the waltz, tango and, by the late 1920s, the Charleston.

What is available nowadays on the tea dance scene in London to those of us of an uncertain age? Checking it out, I found that the variety and range was quite fascinating.

At the top end is the Waldorf Hotel, which costs £65 and where, according to their listing: 'You'll have an opportunity to step back in time to an age of elegance when evening dress was obligatory in the ballroom.

Sit down to enjoy a contemporary afternoon tea with a variety of finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones with Devonshire clotted cream and strawberry jam, along with delicate home made pastries and your choice of tea, infusions or coffee.

'A live five-piece band will entertain you with traditional ballroom music, while you dance away your Sunday afternoon. It's a truly authentic, timeless experience'.

### Lovely dresses

Then there is the Royal Opera House. When the Opera House was a dance hall during the War, its tea dances were legendary. It revives them once a month, and, unbelievably, they're



only a tenner. My outing there in September was splendid. It was held in the majestic Paul Hamlyn Hall, where dancers were evidently enjoying themselves hugely to an

eight-piece band. Many women were elegantly dressed, with high heels and some lovely dresses on display. Most dancers came in couples, with a few small groups from dance classes, and most knew what they were doing. Booking is essential as, with tea and a plate of three biscuits, £10 is good value. There is also a bar.

City workers can swing by Spitalfields Markets on the last Friday of every month for the Covent Garden Dance Orchestra's free afternoon tea dance.

### Grand Hall

Here in Battersea the BAC hosts a tea dance each month in the Grand Hall. They are DJ'ed by a firm called Mr Wonderful which runs such events in various venues in London and Kent. The music is recorded. When I went there were about 150 people who all seemed to know the dances and had evolved line dance versions as well as couple dancing. Most had made their way by public transport and were not from Battersea/Wandsworth. There were no coaches/minibuses with groups from residential homes, day centres or pensioner groups or clubs. The door staff said they recognised most of the same people coming back.

At just £5 including tea and biscuits the Battersea Arts Centre is very affordable. But I do wish the BAC would hold a tea dance with live music. I reckon that people who want their music live in an elegant venue would be prepared to pay a reasonable price for it.

According to a *Time Out* article in 2008, 'Tea dances are far more serene, romantic affairs and are chock full of elderly folk whizzing around the floor. Leave your looks of pity at the door and expect to be wiped off the dance floor by participants 50 years your elder. The older people know what they're doing at a tea dance.'

*The next tea dance at the BAC is on Tuesday 20 December and runs from 1.30 to 4pm.*





## The Wandsworth Parks Police: goodbye to all that?

Jimmy Burns objects to the likely end of a community police service

Wandsworth's Parks Police Service is an example of best practice law enforcement and community policing. Yet it now faces extinction under the twin attack of a 20 per cent cut from central government to local authorities and a London mayor facing re-election next year with a key pledge about police numbers in tatters.

Wandsworth Council plans to push through in December the replacement of the 23-officer Parks Police Service with 12 Metropolitan Police Officers under Boris Johnson's 'buy one get one free' scheme. A small core of five parks officers will be kept as a support service for events in the park.

Local community groups, led by the Friends of Battersea Park, are campaigning to save the Parks Police. We claim the cuts are short sighted, create unnecessary upheaval, and are being rushed through without adequate consultation. The Council admits that there is no certainty of savings after the end of the three-year matched funding offer from the Met. The Council's plans are not properly costed and do not examine how the Parks Police Service could be restructured to produce significant savings.

A 2000-strong petition calls on the Council to withdraw its proposals to disband the Parks Police Service. 'Savings based on the Metropolitan Police's 'buy one get one free' offer are guaranteed for three years only. We believe that there has been insufficient consultation and investigation of other, better value and longer-term options,' the petition states.

The Council appears to have lost the respect it once had for Battersea Park as its 'jewel in the crown', and has come close to insulting our intelligence with a misleading publicity campaign. Wandsworth's official magazine *Brightside* carried a picture of mounted police in the park when this is not and never has

been part of its plans. Recently it has emailed signatories of our petition claiming that we and other groups have been fully consulted, when our views have been ignored.

The facts are these: the Friends and other community groups were only given the details of the Council's plans on 26 October, just two weeks before a crucial Council committee meeting. In the limited period we were given our chairman, Frances Radcliffe, wrote an initial response but no time was given for wider consultation. We believe this should have been granted given the nature and scope of the proposed changes.

### Expertise

Battersea Park currently benefits from a Parks Police force that provides a range of services from straightforward control of criminal activity to managing civil actions in a spirit of engagement and cooperation with the vast majority of park users. During any week a parks police officer may intervene to save an old person or child from assault, rescue a heron with a broken wing, look after a lost pair of keys, or enforce a bye-law on dog-fouling or dangerous cycling. During last summer's riots, they provided an essential element of additional reassurance.

To use Boris Johnson's short-term fix as a cover for scrapping an essential service becomes even more questionable when the Met is already facing enormous pressure. In Battersea, the Met has enough of a struggle trying to find officers to keep the streets safe, and response to 999 calls are notoriously slow. The Council claims that funding for the 12 Met police officers responsible for Battersea Park and other open spaces will be ring-fenced. However none of them will have the knowledge or expertise built up over years of cooperation with local groups.

Battersea Park and other green spaces are likely to be well down on Scotland Yard's list of priorities if further riots break out, or pressures build up around the capital's main events elsewhere like the Olympics.

For those who enjoy living near or using Battersea Park, the Parks Police are our eyes and ears as well as our protectors. Without them, we risk returning to the bad old days when the Park felt so unsafe that far fewer people dared use it.

*To sign the petition, please follow the links from [www.batterseapark.org](http://www.batterseapark.org). The deadline for signatures is 28 December.*

*Jimmy Burns is a founding member of the Friends of Battersea Park and editor of its newsletter.*

## Named, shamed – now to be reclaimed?

"School in crisis" screamed the headline of the *Evening Standard* on 21 November. The school in question is St Mary's RC Primary School in Lockington Road, off Battersea Park Road. The Standard's admirable Dispossessed Fund is putting 85 volunteer reading mentors into the school to help it improve. The front page article describes St Mary's as "struggling", "a forgotten school." Pupils face many challenges, including deprivation, overcrowded homes and no English spoken at home. The school has falling rolls and has had five headteachers in the last six years.

However this does not tell the whole story. Last year Ofsted described the school as improving and its scores in most areas were good or at least satisfactory. Other London schools fare much worse. Perhaps the *Standard* chose to target this school both because it has a dynamic new executive head and because it illustrates the 'tale of two cities', with high-achieving, privileged Newton Prep almost next door. A stark illustration of the difference is that the prep school has a 16,000 book library, the primary has no library at all.

Hopefully, the *Standard's* initiative will help the school's head and staff to continue and to accelerate St Mary's improvement. *Jenny Sheridan*

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## How well do you know your neighbours?

Christopher Morgan-Locke's thriving social club fills a local gap



As a trainer, therapist and writer I meet a lot of people but about a year ago I realised I may not be typical. I

kept hearing from

friends, neighbours and clients in the neighbourhood how few local people they knew, so I decided to do something to change that. Using Streetlife, the new local community website, I posted the idea of forming a local club and arranged a meeting in a bar in Battersea Rise. Just over a year on, Battersea Social and Battersea Social Plus (for older members) are growing rapidly.

For some years I have been lucky enough to live a few days a week in a little village in Hampshire and I wondered if I could bring a bit of country life to London. In the village everyone knows each other and there is no crime or violence. The pub and church are the social centres and very few are lonely. Despite living in Battersea for years many people who came to the meeting knew few locals, even their neighbours. Many work all over London and their friends and workmates tend not to be local.

After those first few meetings I launched the club with free membership, setting the joining criteria as 'open to all nice, friendly local people who do not take themselves too seriously.' Battersea

Social now has over 150 members of all ages from 30 upwards. In the early months the drop-ins tended to be about 80% female but now they get typically a 60/40 split with the majority single or divorced but more recently a growing number of couples.

In the beginning the only club event was an informal drop-in every two weeks in a local bar near Clapham Junction so that it was easy for

people to get to on their way home from work or if they live locally. In the early days drop-ins were held at The Merchant, Le Bouchon, Frieda B's, Establishment, Dime Bar, The Northcote, B@1 and other bars in Battersea Rise and Northcote Road.

We wanted to try all the local bars but many were so noisy we could not talk to each other.

### Not too noisy

Recently we have been using the new Battersea Mess and Music Hall (formerly Jongleurs) in Lavender Gardens just off Lavender Hill. It is a great place and more of a community pub so not too noisy. They give our members a great deal on wine and beer before 9pm. They also serve bar meals and snacks, have a restaurant and soon will have entertainment too.

Some of the older members felt a daytime meeting in a quieter venue would be nice so this summer I launched Battersea Social Plus, which is open to local folk approaching retirement or retired. The

group currently meets once a month in the morning in the lovely Coffee 1st Café and Art Gallery in Battersea Rise. Battersea Social Plus now has about 25 members and is growing each month.

In addition to the drop-ins both clubs are now starting to organise other events. The first was a guided tour of the Battersea Arts Centre by the two artistic directors with drinks

afterwards. This was a great success and has inspired more events like it.

As there is no charge to join this club I feel the events should be organised by the members as they would be in a village. Now we

have groups organising meals in local restaurants, theatre trips, London walks and all sorts. I expect this to expand as the club grows.

We normally get between 10 and 20 members to drop-ins and events, which is a nice number. We are not a singles club but about 75% are single, we are not a business networking club but some do network at the drop-ins - what we are is a local club for friendly local people. We like to socialise, perhaps have a few bevvies in a local bar, go for a meal or perhaps team up with a few others to go to the cinema, theatre or arts event.

*For more information on how to join email me on [batterseasocial@btinternet.com](mailto:batterseasocial@btinternet.com) or go to [www.streetlife.com](http://www.streetlife.com) and go to the Battersea Social forum.*

**Open to friendly local people who do not take themselves too seriously**

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## Forty years of Wandsworth research at your fingertips

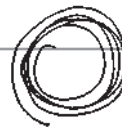
The life of a Swiss confectioner in Victorian Battersea and Wandsworth's population at the time of the Domesday Book are just two of the pieces in the autumn issue of the *Wandsworth Historian*.

An exciting new reference source from the Wandsworth Historical Society is a DVD featuring the whole

archive of the *Wandsworth Historian* 1971 – 2011. This will be invaluable for everyone interested in our area's history. The DVD is searchable so that one can search by locality, individual's name or any other topic. All issues of the journal are covered and each page is reproduced as originally printed.

*Copies of the autumn issue are available at £3 plus £1 for postage and packing from Neil Robson 119 Heythorp Street London SW18 5BT or email [ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk) The DVD costs £5 plus £1.50 p&p from the same address. [www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk](http://www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk).*





## The dog that barked in the night

Another strange story from Mike Roden

It was a few days before Christmas last year that I found myself in front of our block of flats in dressing gown and slippers. It was just after six in the morning, the sky was still dark, and it was very quiet and very cold. Hardly a sound. The dog that had been barking so furiously had gone silent the moment I got outside.

I'd been sure it was Benny, Ella's scruffy little terrier. He sounded in real distress. I went towards the door of her ground floor flat. And then I heard Ella's voice. "Is someone there?"

I tried the door and found it was unlocked. I pushed it open and stared into the darkness, "Ella, are you there?"

Ella's in her late eighties, and the years have rewarded her with a well-honed line in sarcasm. "Who else is going to be lying on my hall floor? Put a light on!"

She was at the foot of the stairs, half on her side, glaring up at me. "I can't move my leg. Well, I can but..." She winced as she tried to move her right leg. "Might be broken." She pushed me away. "No, don't touch it. Just call an ambulance."

I phoned 999 and tried to be efficient, but Ella kept butting in and putting me right on the details. She'd woken up, thought it was the middle of the night, and remembered she'd left the door on the latch. She tripped on the loose carpet at the foot of the stairs, and thought she might have knocked herself out for a moment. Anyway that was enough and the

quick arrival of the paramedics was promised.

"Why didn't you put a light on?" I asked.

"Why don't you go and make a cup of tea?" she retorted.

"Yes, but where's Benny?"

"What?" Then there was a sudden rap on the door, and a cheerful paramedic looked in. "What we got here, then?"

"You were quick," said Ella.

"I was on my way back from somewhere. Ambulance won't be long."

He took a few details, had a cursory look at the offending leg, and then the ambulance arrived. There was general agreement that her leg wasn't broken, but the doctors should take a look at her. As they were moving her to the ambulance Ella said, "Why were you wandering around at this time of the morning?"

"I heard Benny, of course – barking fit to bust. Where on earth is he?"

"You never heard Benny!" she said, "Didn't you know? He's gone." She sighed, "Two days ago, it was. Course I miss him..." She became brisk. "Anyway, you'll let Lizzie know what's happened will you? Her number's in my book."

I managed to say, "Yes, I'll phone her now," and in a sort of daze watched the ambulance disappear past Montevetro.

Once she gathered that her mother wasn't seriously hurt, Lizzie was predictably phlegmatic. "I'll get over

to the hospital quick as I can. It's a good job you found her so quick."

I said slowly, "Well you see, I heard a dog barking – I thought it was Benny. I've been away a few days. Only got back last night. I didn't know he'd died. That must have been really upsetting for her."

There was a long pause at the other end of the line. "What time was all this?"

"I suppose I woke up about twenty to six."

Very quietly, Lizzie said, "Benny's not dead, you know. He's standing by me now wagging his tail. He needs his walks and right now – whatever she says – it's too cold for Mum to take him out. So he's staying here at the moment. If she's OK, he'll go back home after Christmas."

Again she paused. "You see, it was round about half past five he started barking. We couldn't calm him down – he just wouldn't stop. Then suddenly, he shook himself, shut up, went back to his bed in the corner, and off to sleep. That would have been at about..."

"Five past six," I interrupted, "That's when I found her."

If we'd been in the same room, I suppose we'd have been staring at each other in awed speculation.

"You know I live in Tooting?" said Lizzie at last.

"Oh yes," I said, "I do know that."

"Mum often says that if something can't be explained, it's better to leave it be," said Lizzie.

"She's probably right." As I shut Ella's front door firmly behind me, for a moment I wondered if I'd heard a short, sharp bark from inside. "That's OK Benny," I said, "Any time."

© Mike Roden 2011

## Streets stay safe for local children

Robert Molteno applauds a change of heart by the council

Earlier this year, Wandsworth Council consulted all the schools in the borough with school crossing patrols about the proposal to end its funding, as part of its rolling programme of anticipated deficit reduction measures (see *Battersea Matters* autumn 2011). We are all familiar with

the morning and afternoon rituals of affectionately styled 'lollipop' women and men escorting small children across the road. There are 45 such sites across Wandsworth. The original intention was that funding would cease in November. Countless parents were worried about what this would mean for the safety of their children. After representations and protests, one school at least was told that there was a reprieve until February 2012.

Now Wandsworth Living Streets has learnt that there are no proposals

on the table to end this funding. The issue did not feature on the agenda of the council's Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 November. Perhaps the council has thought again about the road safety implications and the health benefits of children walking to school. And perhaps it has taken account of the strength of public feeling on this issue. If so, congratulations! Maybe, under its new leadership, it is becoming a more listening council. *Robert Molteno is secretary of Wandsworth Living Streets.*

## Joining north to south

Mike Roden listens to a fascinating account of the history of London's bridges

Until 1729 with the building of Fulham (later Putney) bridge the only crossings of the Thames in London were at Kingston and London Bridge. The story goes that in 1720 Sir Robert Walpole arrived at Putney to take the ferry to Fulham. Infuriated by the ferryman's refusal to budge from the pub to row across to fetch him. Walpole began a campaign for a bridge to replace the ferry.

That was just one of the many anecdotes Society members heard during a talk given by Peter Edwards, a Blue Badge guide, and author of *London's Bridges* (Shire publications 2008). He entertained a large audience with a brief overall account of London's 33 bridges, while giving a little more time to those in our own area.

The oldest of course is Battersea Bridge. While the current bridge dates from 1885, the original was commissioned by Earl Spencer. Lack of money led to the planned stone bridge being scrapped in favour of a cheaper wooden structure, which opened as a toll bridge in 1772. As became London's last surviving wooden bridge it was much painted by Turner and Whistler whose *Nocturne in Blue and Gold – Old Battersea Bridge* has the lights of the newly-built Albert Bridge just visible in the background.

### Spiralling cost

Albert Bridge opened in 1873, already hampered by a compensation deal secured by the operators of Battersea Bridge. It was a financial disaster, as the tolls collected were quite inadequate to cover spiralling cost. Like the 'wobbly' Millennium bridge, the bridge vibrated alarmingly, particularly when soldiers marched across. Following the collapse of other similar bridges, notices were placed at the entrances warning troops to break step when crossing. Tolls were gradually abolished from 1877 but Albert Bridge's octagonal tollbooths were left in place, and today are the only surviving bridge tollbooths in London.

Chelsea Bridge was opened in



**James Abbott McNeill Whistler. *Nocturne in Blue and Gold, Old Battersea Bridge. 1872-75. Oil on canvas. Tate Britain***

1857. It was less of a commercial success than had been anticipated, partly because of competition from the Albert Bridge. It also proved to be too narrow and structurally unsound and was demolished and replaced by the current structure, which opened in 1937. As of 2008 it achieved Grade II listed status. During the early 1950s it became popular with 'bikers', who staged regular races across the bridge. A meeting in 1970 erupted into violence, resulting in the death of one man and the imprisonment of many others.

Wandsworth Bridge may be one of the busiest bridges in London, carrying over 50,000 vehicles daily, but most people would agree that it has little character and it has been described as "probably the least noteworthy bridge in London".

The first bridge on the site was opened in 1873. The expected western terminus of the Hammersmith and City Railway was never built on the north bank, and the hoped-for increased income from tolls did not materialise. In the 1920s it became evident that the bridge was too narrow and too weak to carry buses, and its replacement was opened in 1940.

Peter's talk contained so much more information than I can include here, but if you are interested to learn more I can recommend his book



*London's Bridges*, which covers the history of all the bridges, and has a wealth of excellent illustrations *You can of course buy it from the Battersea Society online bookstore: [batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore](http://batterseasociety.org.uk/bookstore)*

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**Website**  
[batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk)

Registered charity no.1103560



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## Battersea United Charities

Philip Beddows outlines a charity which has served the people of Battersea since 1641

If you have visited Battersea's St. Mary's Church, have you ever looked up to admire the gallery? Have you noticed the names of the seventeenth century benefactors that encircle it? If so you may have wondered what became of all those old trusts and charities. The answer is that almost all now come under the umbrella of the Battersea United Charities. And BUC is continuing to serve the purposes and people that the original benefactors intended.

This year marks the 370th anniversary of the oldest of these historic charities – that of Henry Smith, born in about 1548, a salter by trade who became very wealthy. He became a City alderman in 1608, during the reign of James I. After his wife's death, without children, he dedicated his wealth to charity across almost every parish in London. He died in 1627 and his impressive memorial can be seen in All Saints' Church in Wandsworth High Street. His trustees appointed part of the income of his estate to be paid to the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of Battersea for the "relief of impotent and aged poor who had resided in Battersea for over five years". Today his charity is valued at over £700m, a tiny fraction of which comes to Battersea.

Battersea United Charities (BUC) was set up in December 1938 by the Charity Commissioners with the old Borough of Battersea. It combined the charities and bequests of Henry Smith (1641), John Edmonds (1708), Ann Cooper (1720), Rebecca Wood (1796), Anthony Francis Haldiman (1815, the year of Waterloo), John Parvin (1820), Thomas Ashness (1827), John Rapp (1834), John Charles Constable (1849), the Battersea Lammas Hall (1858), Henry Juer (1879), Edward Dagnall (1882), the Ely Charity founded by Ashlet William Graham Allen (1893) and Arthur Sykes (1919).

Three other separately registered charities and two funds are administered by BUC: the Charlotte Despard Charity (1960), the John



Barrington Bequest (1945), the Pettaugh Centre Association (founded 1960, merged into BUC 2003). The Wingrove Harrison Fund (1945) was in memory of Fred Wingrove a former Battersea councillor, supplemented in 1990 by a bequest in memory of his friend Herbert Harrison, a former Battersea councillor and chairman of the BUC for 17 years. His daughter-in-law Lilian Harrison MBE succeeded him as chairman, serving until 2006. The other fund is The Mayor's Fund, donated in 1994 by Councillor Beryl Jefferies from a third of the charitable funds raised during her mayoral appeal.

### Suffragette

Charlotte Despard was a well-known suffragette from a famous Irish family; her brother was Great War Field Marshall John French, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Ypres. Widowed aged 46, she threw herself into charitable and political activities, helping the poor of Battersea, stood for parliamentary election and became an alderman of the Battersea Borough Council in 1920. Her charity helps older women train to return to work and was boosted by a bequest from former Battersea MP, the late Douglas Jay.

The BUC also administers the John Bank's bequest (1716). Banks was a Citizen of the City of London and member of the Livery of the Company of Haberdashers, in whose hall his portrait still hangs. He was born around 1652, died in 1720 and his bequests included one for elderly

men and women pensioners in Battersea, where he had property around Nine Elms.

Despite the charities' age, their focus remains remarkably topical with communities today. BUC has supported further education to help subsequent employment, educational support for schools including music (Falconbrook clarinet players), enabling disadvantaged children to go on school trips (most recently St. Mary's and Sacred Heart) to places like the Isle of Wight, where they experience a memorable week of activities. We also continue to help elderly pensioners in Battersea. Each Christmas we raise money to provide food parcels for pensioners from all over Battersea (545 in 2010).

We have supported the Battersea Summer Scheme, many schools and have helped a local girl who is one of England's top ten under-15 squash players, before she had reached the threshold for official financial backing. We have also helped sponsor trips to Providence House's farm in Devon so that teenage boys from parts of Battersea can experience their first trip outside London and learn about life on a farm, milking cows, building stone walls etc.

More than three centuries on from Henry Smith, we're privileged to be able to continue his and other generous benefactors' historic mission of philanthropy in the service of local people. What we now seek are 21st Century Henry Smiths and Charlotte Despards who wish to leave a lasting legacy for the people of Battersea.

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**Battersea  
United  
Charities**



## A sunny Saturday in Northcote Road



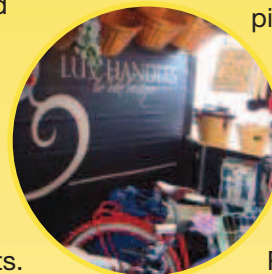
Francisco buys from the fish stall, a local favourite, all the time, "because the fish is good and fresh. In Spain, you can find this everywhere. Here, you really have to hunt for it."



Ted Mills first started helping out in his grandmother's fruit & veg stall on the Northcote Road when he was 7 years old. But on 19 November he said goodbye to the business. It's a good reminder that if we like the personal touch and the variety on offer right on our doorstep, we need to support our local market and local merchants. Thanks, Ted, for your years on the Northcote Road market, and all the best.



Beata cycles to the Bread Stall from Tooting twice a week for "the best bread in town." Have you tried the pizza yet?



For the past year, Luv Handles has been bringing the latest and best cycling gear to the Northcote Road.

*Most stalls are open Friday to Sunday. You can buy fish and flowers on most weekdays.*



Bunny's stall sells all the freshest veg from the humble spud to Italian cavolo nero

## Artists' Open House

Louis Gillard celebrates local creativity

The first two weekends of October saw over 200 artists all over Wandsworth throw open their doors for the Wandsworth Artists' Open House 2011. From studios, garden sheds, cafes and front rooms, artists put on a fantastic display of creativity.

Here in Battersea we made an extra effort to put Open House on the cultural map this year. Many more artists participated – 22 venues opened as opposed to 14 in 2010. We also launched a number of add-on activities including an artists' blog, workshops in schools and a taster exhibition.

Two of the more successful new initiatives were the Battersea Local Area Bike Trail and the Travelling Artist.

The bike trail saw groups of cyclists meet at the pagoda in Battersea Park each day and take a guided tour around a number of Open Houses. The initiative has been recognised by the London Cycling Campaign which has just awarded us Best London Cycling Event so we hope this event will become a firm fixture in future years.

The travelling artist won a commission from Wandsworth Council's Arts Team, who asked artists to create a point of interest for Battersea which would also generate publicity for Open House. Three artists

created an intricately embroidered cloak, featuring all the arts and crafts on offer in Battersea. Roaming our streets on Open House weekends wearing the cloak, they drew a large and curious crowd wherever they went.

### Positive feedback

The first Open House weekend dawned with one of the hottest October days on record. Only serious art lovers were prepared to visit on a hot and sticky day, most people preferring to bask on the common. The second weekend saw more predictable weather and visitor numbers picked up. Sadly numbers in Battersea were down on 2010, reflecting the pattern across the borough. However, those who did visit responded with overwhelmingly positive feedback, many commenting that they were first-time visitors and had been unaware that Artists' Open House existed in Battersea until they saw the balloons and posters outside houses.

Artists' Open Houses nationwide are under threat

or have been cancelled by local authorities, owing to pressure on arts financing. We are lucky to still have an Artists' Open House here but it only works because artists are prepared to fund local publicity and invest time spreading the word. This year we were very grateful to receive generous sponsorship funding or free services from the Battersea Society, James Pendleton Estate Agents, Renaissance Pubs, Pearl Print Management and Roopa Designs. This enabled us to increase the help publicity and launch the add-on activities which to bring Open House to more sections of the community.

However, for Wandsworth Artists' Open House to continue, we do need more people to visit! So in 2012 please try to fit Open House into your busy lives. And, instead of spending money in expensive shops, why not support an artist neighbour by purchasing something unique and hand-crafted in SW11! *For information on Artists' Open House in Battersea and the 2011 participating artists, please visit [www.sw11art.wordpress.com](http://www.sw11art.wordpress.com).*

