

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society WINTER 2014



E-racing comes to SW11

Council likely to approve Formula E in Battersea Park

It's (almost) official: Formula E racing is coming to Battersea Park. In an international championship race, electric cars will race at 120 mph around the park's roads next June. The race is open only to cars with zero-emission electric engines.

The FIA, the organising body for motor sport, hope that the race will be run each year for five years.

Both the Battersea Society and the Friends of Battersea Park (FoBP) objected during the consultation period, mainly about the closure of the park to the public and potential damage. However the Council is minded to give the plan the go-ahead subject to planning permission. The Heritage Lottery Fund, which funded the park's restoration, has also agreed in principle.

Concern

Over the five years, the race would generate around one million pounds for the Council. In contrast, other cities, such as Miami and Monte Carlo, are paying to host the race. According to Boris Johnson, the race will bring considerable economic benefit to London.

At a well-attended meeting on 6 November organised by the FoBP, some local residents expressed their concerns about noise – not from the cars themselves but from the build-up and crowds – and damage to the park. Others were excited about the prospect of clean racing coming to Battersea, with knock-on effects on the popularity of electric cars and benefits to air quality.

The park will be closed either

wholly or in part on four days – the race weekend of 27/28 June 2015 plus two days for setting up and de-rigging the stands and barriers. There will be some disruption in the lead-up to the event.

Eco-technology

Up to 30,000 spectators are expected; a number of free tickets will be given to local schools and community groups.

Cllr Jonathan Cook, the council's environment spokesman, said, 'We are certainly keen to support

advances in this important eco-technology and give our support to the British motor racing industry which employs many thousands of people.

'But above all else, we are quite clear that we will not support any proposal that causes harm or damage to the fabric of the park and its important historical and heritage features.'

The Council will make a final decision on 18 February 2015.



Below: A plan of the proposals, with the circuit in yellow.



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

From the editor



Like in a good Christmas pudding, there's a little bit of everything in this issue of *Battersea Matters*.

There are dogs, there's strong drink, there's another of Mike Roden's creepy seasonal stories that hang about in your mind, there are tall towers. On the page opposite you will see one of those cunning developers' perspectives, all glowing sunsets and lightly-clad young people laughing under trees or sitting outside Parisian-style cafés. What you don't see is the 20-storey building towering above

and funnelling an icy wind through the 'piazza'. You don't see older people huddled in warm coats against the cold – they're not picturesque. You don't see poor people – they can't afford either the flats or the cafés.

Unreal?

You see a fantasy world. Attractive, but unreal. And the notion of Nine Elms as a 'cultural quarter' – is that also unreal? I went on a walking tour of the area and although it is still largely a building site, the ambition and desire to make it somewhere full of art and great design is genuine. But in real life, will this happen? Artists need somewhere to live and work that is affordable. Battersea isn't that now, let alone when the new developments and embassies arrive.

The arts flourish in scruffy corners – but Ransome's Dock and Testbed One, in one of those corners, is to

be redeveloped. Many of us feel that too many rough edges are being smoothed. Will the places that are being designed expect us to behave like the people in the perspectives? Will they nudge us towards it?

Formula E racing is a hot topic for debate. I have come to feel that there is much to be said for it. We are concerned about air pollution (page 5) – the race will raise the profile of less polluting transport. Young people will be enthused. Money will be raised for the park. Local cafés, pubs and businesses will prosper from it. If it does go ahead, we will keep our readers informed of all aspects.

I hope all our readers will have a very merry Christmas.

Jenny Sheridan
newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk
020 7350 2749

The Man on the Bus:

Mike Roden reflects on talking, knitting, nutty slack and the festive season

Alan Bennett spent his childhood engulfed by garrulous aunts whose conversation had a tendency to stride off in all directions at once. He recalled his father saying exasperatedly of one of them 'I wouldn't mind but you're no further forward when she's finished than when she started'.

I know how he felt. Why can't people get to the point? Anyway, I've come up with an idea to distract them from bothering the rest of us with their unending meanderings. I shall provide them with their own website. While Twitter restricts entries to 140 characters at most, my new offering – tentatively called Witter – allows an unlimited number of characters and indeed insists on at least six hundred words for each entry. That should keep them busy for a while.

An unlikely schoolroom memory came back to me a few weeks ago. When I was thirteen the boys in my grammar school class took up knitting. This craze lasted for a week or so – treated with disdain by our female classmates. We relied on our mothers or elder sisters to cast on or cast off and never progressed beyond

knitting scarves. This amusing little jape was viewed regarded with increasing annoyance by our teachers – 'Are you knitting under your desk?' was the usual cry, making it sound like something less salubrious was going on. I have not picked up a knitting needle since, but recalling it made me wonder if there was an epidemic of such behaviour at the time. Google is infuriatingly silent on the matter. Perhaps someone in the cosmopolitan readership of this journal harbours a similar guilty secret from fifty or more years ago. It would be comforting to know I am not alone. These days of course knitting needles would be banned from classrooms on the grounds of health and safety.

Noxious

According to a festive promotional email I received for a local pub, amongst the odours associated with the coming season of goodwill and over-eating are those of spiced cider and chimney smoke. I've never tried spiced cider, but chimney smoke – especially that created by smouldering nutty slack is noxious.



Knitting for schoolboys: Health and safety hazard?

The smell calls to mind my father's attempts to coax a dying fire into life with a sheet of newspaper, which invariably turned brown, and then black, sometimes bursting into flame.

Give

So are you hanging up a stocking on your wall, or hoping that the snow will start to fall? That's from Slade's 1973 hit record, by the way, and will be coming to a radio station near you soon. The Christmas trees are now alight all over Battersea, and the crowds are flocking to their computers to find that perfect gift for that less than perfect relative. It's often observed that it's better to give than receive. The winter fuel allowance may well be vital to many, but it's hard to believe that most people I know would go cold without it. So once again can I remind you 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.

So mind how you go, and happy Christmas to you all.

Planning Matters: tall buildings contravene Wandsworth's policies

Changes to the council's planning procedures make it all the more important that residents comment, says Monica Tross

TALL BUILDINGS

We have accepted that Nine Elms will have many tall buildings but two recent exhibitions show a worrying creep along to the west of Battersea. Exhibitions of proposed developments on the Looker's site in York Road and at 12 – 14 Lombard Road include plans for buildings up to 17 storeys and 28 storeys high respectively. You can see the proposals for 12 – 114 Lombard Road at www.lombardroad.com and our comments on our website www.batterseasociety.org.uk. Further concerns are raised by proposals for a 14 storey building in Gwynne Road (2014/5357) to replace a two-storey building.

These are all way above the heights in the Council's Site Specific Allocations Document (SSAD) which sets out policies for appropriate heights of buildings area by area. This is concerning, especially as they follow on from approval of the Heliport House building in Lombard Road – a project providing 14 luxury flats in a building with an overall height of 20 storeys – and the Battersea Park East application (2014/4665). There is very much which is excellent about the plans for Battersea Park East, not least better links between Queenstown Road and Battersea Park stations and much improved school facilities. However they include proposals for a 16 storey building opposite Battersea Park Station and this will tower over its surroundings.

We have written formally to the Council to ask to what extent we can expect SSAD policy documents to be respected. Our concern is that developers appear quite confident that their application for a tall building will be accepted, as long as they



More tall buildings at Lombard Road?

supply reports on technical aspects such as the climatic and other impacts of their proposal. We will report back on the Council's response in the new year.

YET MORE CONSULTATIONS

I have written before about our time consuming, yet essential, participation in consultations. As I write we are gearing ourselves up to respond on those for the Vauxhall Gyratory, plans for the Thames Path, changes to Wandsworth Council's planning policy documents, further plans for the Winstanley Estate and a study by Network Rail looking at routes into Waterloo and Victoria. We aim to publicise consultations when we can via the planning section of our website so our members can participate. We post our responses – and our comments on major applications – via the News and Updates section of the Planning Link. So check out www.batterseasociety.org.uk – always worth a read.

PLANNING DECISIONS DELEGATED TO OFFICERS

Wandsworth Council has decided that applications will only be considered formally by the Planning Applications Committee when there are three or more different objections or where a councillor requests that an application be considered. For other applications an individual officer will consider and decide on an application, subject to review by senior planning officers. This makes good sense, as the paperwork for this committee grows ever longer and it is clearly sensible

for members to focus on applications of major importance and/or which are matters of substantial local concern.

We have always said that it is worth individuals writing to comment or object if they are concerned about aspects of any application – or indeed if they particularly welcome proposed plans. This change of procedure makes it even more important that individuals write when necessary rather than leaving it solely to the local civic society.

RECENT APPLICATIONS

Work has started on 1 Prince of Wales Drive, plans which have caused us much concern but which have been approved. We are awaiting the outcome of a further application to change the design of part of the extension (2014/4184). We objected to the proposed change. Wandsworth Council has two applications in for large illuminated signs at Wandsworth Roundabout – 2014/5629 and 5812. The applications contain little or no information about the effect on residents or drivers and we are among many objecting.

Two pieces of good news. RBK&C turned down Cadogan's latest plans to develop the Curzon Cinema site in the King's Road and an application for changes to the Windward, Leeward and Hope Buildings in York Place has been withdrawn (2014/3329).

Are there applications we should know about? If so, please alert us via planning@batterseasociety.org.uk Or do you take a different view on an application? Tell us please, we like feedback.

Take a tablet to discover 19th century London

The Panorama of the Thames project is a revelation, says Jenny Sheridan



Give yourself an early Christmas present – for free! Part two of the Panorama of the Thames project website is now online, and it is a fantastic achievement. Go to the website and move along a photographic panorama of the Battersea riverfront viewed from the other side as we seldom see it. The extent of the visually unplanned and unco-ordinated residential blocks and towers becomes glaringly obvious. Planners and architects will, or should, shield their eyes.

Inspire

Hopefully it will inspire them, if not to greater heights, to more respect both for the river and for their built neighbours. It will be invaluable to historians and to communities and organisations trying to preserve and improve on their heritage.

The other part of the website is devoted to the same riverside in Georgian times. As though in a small skiff in mid-river you glide past the shorefront in the early 19th century. John Inglis, the director of the Panorama of the Thames, has succeeded in digitally restoring Samuel Leigh's 1829 panorama, which was 60 feet long. It was produced in segments, mainly for the use of people using boats at a time when the river was still the major route for transporting goods through the capital. Before the embanking of the river, when it flowed more slowly, it was also popular for leisure, and

segments of the panorama must have amused ladies and gentlemen as they were ferried across the Thames.

Silk factory

The Battersea section shows a highly industrialised low-rise frontage, especially in the eastern part, up to St Mary's Church. Further west there are stretches of gardens and woodlands interrupted by a large silk factory and then by the brewery in Wandsworth. Click on a landmark and detailed historical information appears on the screen.

The site is compatible with iPads and other tablets, and would greatly enhance a walk along the Thames Path.

This ambitious project is the brainchild of visual effects director John Inglis and journalist Jill Sanders, who live on an eyot near Chiswick. They have struggled for over three years to access funding to bring it to fruition. If they are successful in this, they plan to add further features including a history of boats on the Thames and its biodiversity and water quality, as well as extensions of the photo panoramas further back in time. The geographical extent of the modern panorama extends 52 miles from Hampton to Tower Bridge. Leigh's panorama covers 30 miles between Richmond and Westminster.

Spend some time studying the website and I suspect you will be as fascinated as I was. If you wish to give the project a Christmas

Battersea Old Church (St Mary's) in Georgian times and the present day

present yourself, John and Jill would appreciate it. Funding remains a severe problem.

You can send a festive cheque to Panorama of the Thames, 25 Garrick's Ait, Hampton on Thames, TW12 2EW

The Battersea Society

Chair Sara Milne

chair@batterseasociety.org.uk

Vice-chair Sue Marshall

mhc@btinternet.com

Secretary Harvey Heath

secretary@batterseasociety.org.uk

Membership Sec Maureen Larkin

membership@batterseasociety.org.uk

Committee Chairs

Community Harvey Heath

community@batterseasociety.org.uk

Planning Liz Walton

planning@batterseasociety.org.uk

Open Spaces

openspaces@batterseasociety.org.uk

Events Wendy Deakins

events@batterseasociety.org.uk

General enquiries

information@batterseasociety.org.uk

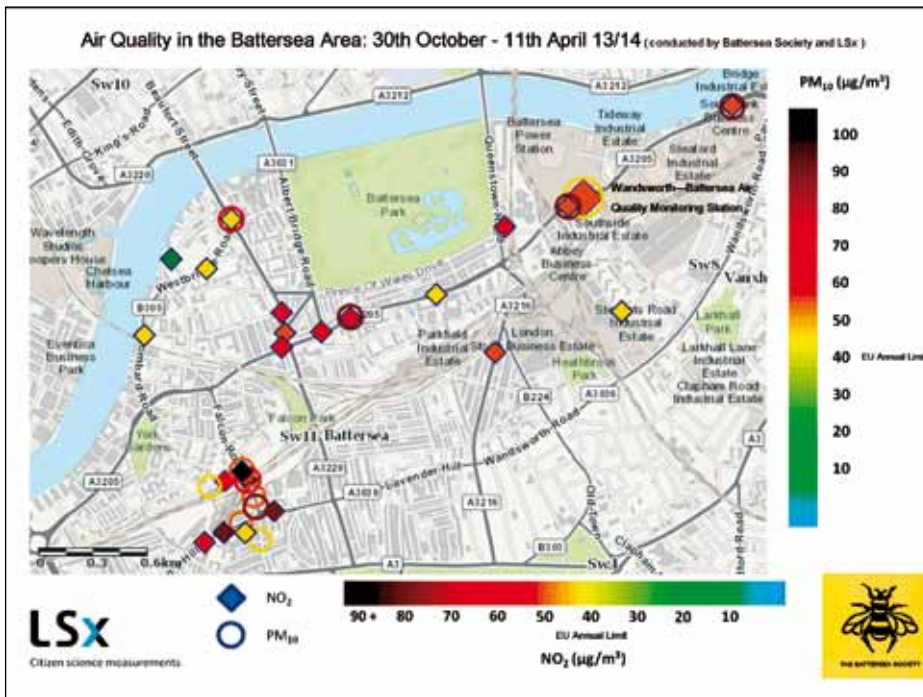
Website

batterseasociety.org.uk

Registered charity no.1103560

The air that we breathe

Samantha Heath describes work to track air pollution



Air quality matters to us in Battersea. London Sustainability Exchange has been working with the Battersea Society and Wandsworth Living Streets to investigate it over the past year or so.

Pollution is a very real concern; in 2010 the *Lancet* reported that particulate matter can lead to lung cancer, and the World Health Organisation in their March Bulletin this year said that there may be no safe limit for the very small particles that get into our lungs. So we were worried that the new developments – such as along Nine Elms Lane – would lead to increased traffic and more effects on people’s health. And the information from Defra and Transport for London may not give us the best picture about pollution. So we decided to explore this on local streets.

Lung capacity

Air pollution has serious effects on our health; it averages out to a loss of life expectancy of approximately six months for every UK resident. In London our life can be reduced by



Campaigners assess Battersea’s air quality

twice as much, although studies vary and the reduction could be as much as eight years. We may suffer from reduced lung capacity, our arteries can thicken, and we could be more prone to strokes and heart problems.

In the new year Wandsworth Council will be publishing its Air Quality Action Plan, and I hope that many residents will respond.

In London there are a number of different pollutants. We looked at two – particles (PM) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2). Small particles of dust (bits of tyre and diesel) that are smaller than a human hair are called particulate matter or PMs. They are measured

Tackle diesel exhaust to make it cleaner:

Battersea should be part of the Ultra Low Emission zone. We support the retrofitting or upgrade of the most polluting vehicles such as buses and taxis.

We need a comprehensive assessment of transport around Clapham Junction

Improve the buses that go into Clapham Junction to reduce emissions.

Review traffic lights so that traffic isn’t frequently at a standstill, smoothing traffic flow. A 20mph zone around Clapham Junction could help.

Encourage shops in Clapham Junction to close their doors to reduce pollution in shops.

Discourage drivers from keeping their engines idling at traffic lights, or when lorries are making deliveries

Warn vulnerable populations of high pollution events

Plan a car-free day

Work with the Wandsworth Health team:

Include air quality data in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments

Doctors should provide information on air quality, especially to patients who suffer from asthma and other lung problems.

Implement the NICE guidance on walking and cycling and lobby for guidance from NICE on air quality

At the planning committee:

Support your planning team to develop guidance on air pollution, especially to support only developments that are ‘Air Quality Neutral’ ie do not add to air pollution.

as either 10 or 2.5 microns across. NO2 is the pollutant about which the European Commission has voiced its concern. It is looking to fine London for having NO2 above European Standards. NO2 can cause and aggravate breathing difficulties.

London Sustainability Exchange (LSx), has been working with citizen science for some time. This is an exciting departure when citizens gather data that is important to them, and with help they work out what it means. In this case, Battersea Society members were collecting data on pollution in their area.
cont overleaf

Lichens

We used diffusion tubes, lichen studies and a particle meter to look at the quality of the air in places where people may stand waiting for a bus or walk along the street doing their shopping. Diffusion tubes are small glass tubes containing a chemical which reacts to NO₂; this enables us to determine the density of NO₂. In lichen studies, we look at the numbers of lichens present that need nitrogen to grow, indicating that there is likely

to be higher nitrogen quantities in the air in that area. Particle meters detect and count tiny PMs in the air.

We started by analysing the air quality along Nine Elms Lane and Battersea Park Road, and then moved onto Falcon Road and Clapham Junction. We were quite surprised by the results. There were a number of areas, especially around Clapham Junction and the railway bridge at Falcon Road, where levels appeared to be well above the European

Standard for both the small particles (PMs) and NO₂.

What can we do about it? Clearly Clapham Junction is a hot spot for pollution, so special measures are needed to improve the situation. LSx's comments on the council's Air Quality Action Plan are on page 5 – (more details will be available on the LSx and Battersea Society websites once the details of the Plan are clear). *Samantha Heath is chief executive of London Sustainability Exchange.*

A dog is for life...

Georgina Watson of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home describes tackling the status dog culture

Every year, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home deals with a number of cases of dogs that have been trained to be dangerous and used as weapons by irresponsible owners. The culture of 'status dogs' in society is a tragic example of animal cruelty, and owners who train their dogs to be aggressive are risking the lives of those around them and often condemning these animals to a death sentence.

We care for nearly 6,000 dogs a year, and it is a very small percentage which has obvious signs of being used as status dogs. But we carefully assess each dog and always hope to offer them the chance of living in a loving, responsible home.

New maximum penalties

We are active in calling for more responsible dog ownership and earlier this year we welcomed the extension of dog laws to private property, and new maximum penalties for dangerous dog offences. However, hospital admissions for dog attacks have risen six per cent over the last 12 months. We believe the only effective way to reduce these attacks is to provide earlier intervention and better education on responsible dog ownership.

Dee McIntosh, Battersea's director of communications, says, 'We believe if more people understood how to care for and be around dogs,

there would be far fewer tragic incidents. Dog attacks tear apart our communities and affect how we feel about pets and specific dog breeds. Any dog, no matter what size or breed, can attack a child, adult or another dog. Training and caring for an animal, and being able to clearly read a dog's body language, are the only ways to help provide safety for the likely victims of attacks, especially children.'



Education is the key to driving down the incidence of dog attacks to make sure that dogs and people can enjoy each other's company. Among our tools to get important messages out to thousands of often hard to reach young people is our short

film, *Bully Breed*, which spells out the repercussions of training a dog to be aggressive.

One such dog who was a victim of the 'status dog' culture, was Bruno, a Staffordshire Bull Terrier who arrived at Battersea earlier this year. He was rescued by someone who found him being beaten up on the streets. The shy four year old is now terrified of large groups of people and cowers in crowded areas. Luckily for Bruno, his life has been transformed after finding a new home with a family in West London.

It's dogs like Bruno that inspire

us. Last year alone, the Home's community engagement team reached over 17,000 young people, communicating and demonstrating how to be safe around dogs. The team visits local primary schools to teach young pupils how to behave around dogs, and gives advice to children over 12 about how to be a responsible owner, where not to buy a dog from, and how much it costs to look after a pet.

Companions

Battersea believes it is important to educate people from a young age, so children grow up understanding the responsibilities of having a pet. The team visits Young Offender's Institutes to deliver workshops designed to encourage young people to see dogs as companions and not as weapons or commodities.

The team also reaches out to families and pet owners at dog shows and fairs, and community events across the capital where visitors can receive advice, and dogs can be microchipped and given ID tags.

We are committed to educating the public on the serious consequences of irresponsibly owning a pet, or attempting to turn a loyal, loving animal into a weapon. The charity hopes that, working together with local authorities and the government, it will be able to tackle the status dog culture, reduce the number of incidents each year and put an end to puppies being specifically bred to fight.

Anyone who suspects a dog is being trained to attack should report them to the police immediately.

www.battersea.org.uk

Nine Elms – a new cultural district?

Jenny Sheridan gives an update on the towers, the new jobs and the cost

Throughout the 20th century, Nine Elms was never a beautiful landscape. With no landmarks or cultural activity it was home to warehouses, the Royal Mail sorting office, railway goods yards and the like. But now towers are beginning to sprout, embassies will soon embed themselves and – perhaps – a new cultural district will be created.

The people behind the new development, currently known as Nine Elms on the South Bank, describe it as ‘a place for culture, a place changing for the better, to benefit current and new communities.’

Unusually, the two council leaders of Wandsworth and Lambeth are co-chairing the development partnership, despite their political differences. At a recent conference organised by New London Architecture (NLA), Councillor Ravi Govindia of Wandsworth described the massive growth in the last three years since he became council leader, and especially since the Malaysian consortium took over the power station.

Three years ago Nine Elms was full of industrial sheds, now the first residents are moving into Riverlight, the Rogers Stirk Harbour-designed blocks overlooking the river and Nine Elms Lane, where one-bedroom flats are selling for £800,00.

Consultation

Lambeth’s leader, Cllr Lib Peck, said her council was committed to 40% social housing, mixed communities and an emphasis on local jobs. She said too that the Vauxhall gyratory would be transformed into a place to linger (though some people might prefer it to remain a safe, dry place to catch a bus). There is currently a TfL consultation on the bus station’s future. Any reader who uses the buses may wish to add their comments. <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/vauxhall-cross> or google Vauxhall Cross consultation.

Nine Elms is an enormously large and enormously expensive



Proposal for the Thames Path

development, with a total value of £15 billion – equivalent to the whole of Crossrail. It has taken off faster than anticipated due to the confidence created by the flagship US Embassy and Power Station developments. The peak phase of the development will be in 2016, when the Northern Line Extension and the Thames tunnel are both starting construction. The great majority of the schemes – new homes, offices and hotels – will be completed by 2025, not long for a regeneration project on this scale. They will employ and house significantly more people than estimated in the original 2012 GLA framework.

Loop

This area is seen by its developers, both public and private, as part of central London, in particular as an extension of the South Bank. They hope to pull the South Bank’s diversity and popularity further west, using culture in a broad sense – sculpture, theatre, festivals, food. In ten years time a linear park (described by some as a mere ‘green walkway’ as it will be narrow and heavily shaded) will link Vauxhall and Battersea Power Station, taking an uneasy loop around the well-defended American embassy. The Thames Path, currently windy and deserted, will be beautified.

There is a commendable intention to make the ground level experience of walking through the new district attractive. Landscape architects are being employed to enliven the public spaces. But who will live in the residential skyscrapers, above the art and the trees? Wandsworth will require developers to provide only 15% of affordable housing while Lambeth aims for 40%. Will developers find it viable to build these

new homes?

At the NLA conference a director of developer GL Hearn seemed to suggest that affordability criteria should be relaxed so that more of it could be built; in other words it should be made affordable to fewer people. He also proposed that the affordable units should be located away from the more desirable areas, such as the river. London has traditionally been a city where rich and poor live close together and share public space and amenities.

Nine Elms has been selected as suitable for a ‘cluster’ of towers. However Liz Walton, chair of the Battersea Society’s planning committee, points out that the cluster seems to be creeping westward, with many tall buildings being proposed that defy Wandsworth’s building height policies. She also suggests that many tall buildings are inappropriate for affordable living. At present few low or medium-rise buildings are proposed in the new developments.

This new district will need people to work as well as live in it. Considerable work has already gone into working with local schools to offer children the specific skills to make them employable, especially in the construction phase. If reasonably priced premises are available, businesses will move in and jobs will develop in IT, in services such as hairdressers and nurseries and in shops.

A primary school is planned and there is talk of health premises, but these seem vague in comparison to the concentration on a cultural strategy. Perhaps the future residents of Nine Elms on the South Bank are more likely to be users of private health and education.

Great Bus Journeys of the World No.12

Mike Roden takes the 337 from Clapham Junction to Richmond



It was a chilly start to my latest foray into unknown territory, courtesy of TfL. I caught the bus at the bottom of St John's Road, and the on-board clock told me it was 10.10am.

Apparently the use of the twelve hour clock has caused annoyance to those who worry that it will be misleading to foreign visitors who work to the 24 hour clock. Presumably these benighted folk also have no idea what am and pm mean!

Truffle chips

A left turn up St John's Hill takes us through territory familiar from past journeys. I read recently that there has been a pub on the corner opposite Plough Road since the eighteenth century, but the current incarnation is a world away from that early hostelry – being a 'cosmopolitan New-York inspired bar and kitchen' where the delights on offer include 'a pint and a bowl of white truffle chips'. The shops along here have a lifestyle gloss to them, too – designer furniture, lighting and so on, which leads one to suppose that this area is becoming much sought after (and presumably very expensive).

After passing St John's Therapy Centre the bus heads down over Trinity Road towards Wandsworth via East Hill. The driver stops outside South Thames College for a rather prolonged wait to make up time. There's been a college here for more than a century. Since merging with Merton College, South Thames has become one of the capital's largest further education colleges.

The closed Wandsworth Museum is a forlorn sight. The plan to move to new premises in early 2015 aims to

improve accessibility to visitors and maximise funding to best serve the community. Wandsworth Council and the Friends of Wandsworth Museum are supportive of the relocation.

However whether the press releases I've quoted from are telling the whole story remains to be seen.

On Upper Richmond Road the traffic is slow moving. A green plaque on a gatepost commemorates A V Roe, aircraft pioneer and designer of AVRO planes. In 1906 he won first prize in a Daily Mail competition to design a model aeroplane which could fly and set up a workshop behind the surgery of his GP brother (near the site of the plaque). A couple of years later he moved to Walthamstow where in 1909 his first successful flight took place. He had a long and distinguished career and died in 1958.

We head into East Putney, passing the station, which opened in 1889. Mainline train services ended in 1941, but the station remained in British Rail ownership until 1994 when it was sold to London Underground for £1. You never know when a fact like that might be useful in a pub quiz!

Theatre

Putney Arts Theatre began life in 1959 when Maurice Copus, a local teacher, was spurred by the enthusiasm of his pupils to found a theatre group. After using various venues, in 1968 the group leased the disused and very dilapidated Union Chapel from the LCC and after six months of hard work by volunteers the first performance took place. The building quickly became a thriving theatre, expanding the range of its

own productions and hosting visiting companies. By 1998 thanks to a generous legacy, vigorous fundraising and a Lottery award the group was able to purchase the freehold. It is now the borough's principal venue for non-professional community theatre.

Leaving East Putney the bus stays on Upper Richmond Road, and is now travelling through a mainly residential area, large houses mixed with private flat developments, and very few shopping arcades. Quite a few people get off as we stop outside Putney Leisure Centre, more energetic than me. I've been lulled into a rather soporific state by the less than exciting terrain we're going through.

Pilgrimage

It was nearby on Gipsy Lane, near Barnes Common, that on 16 September 1977 the 29 year old Marc Bolan died when his Mini, driven by his girlfriend, crashed, ending up against a tree. The tree (and its associated memorial) has been a place of pilgrimage for T-Rex devotees ever since.

We're on the edge of Roehampton here, and the stop near Dover House Road is a reminder of how in 1919 the LCC bought 147 acres of parkland belonging to adjacent private estates. Those in the big houses nearby expressed a 'generous' concern that the estate should not be built as transport links were inadequate for working class residents, with the rather more concerned subtext that the value of their property would fall. Worries that the project would blight the neighbourhood were unfounded. There were eventually over 600 houses on the Dover House



Estate and it was viewed as a model of building design and landscaping and in its day was an LCC showcase, though the initial lack of shopping and other facilities did cause some difficulties for the new residents.

Leaving Dover House Road behind, the road traces the southern edge of Barnes Common, one of the largest areas of common land in Greater London. Although managed by Richmond Council it's actually owned by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral.

Priory Lane is the home of London's longest established private psychiatric hospital. As far as I could see, the Priory Hospital is not visible from the bus, so I can't report spotting any celebrity patient walking in the grounds. The very elderly gentlemen waiting at the bus stop with his dog didn't really look like a troubled pop star.

The road crosses the Beverley Brook at Priests Bridge. This river, nearly nine miles long and culverted for much of its course, enters the Thames near Barn Elms. At this point it marks the boundary between Roehampton and East Sheen. The name is apparently a reference to the beavers which used to be abundant here until the sixteenth century.

Fame

We're now heading into the long, rather straggling high street of East Sheen. Near the war memorial on the traffic island locals call the Triangle is a curious milestone dated 1751 which gives us the useful information that the distance from here to Cornhill in the City is ten miles. One of the town's claims to fame is that Sir Tim Berners-

Lee, father of the internet, grew up here and went to the local primary school.

The local shops delight in imaginatively telling you where they are, and (before I get bored) I note Sheen Sports, Sheen Tyres, Sheen Beds, Sheen Polish Deli and Sheen Living. I'd like to say there was a TV and radio shop called Sheen and Heard, but that would be less than the truth.

Almshouses

And so, as the saying goes, we say farewell to East Sheen and start the final leg of our journey along Sheen Road into Richmond. The highlight on this stretch is the rather elegant Grade II* listed Hickey's Almshouses. William Hickey died in 1727 leaving several properties on Richmond Hill in trust to provide pensions for six men and ten women. In 1834 the trust used some

Left to right: South Thames College; the pioneering aviator, A V Roe; the memorial where Marc Bolan died; an East Sheen lifestyle emporium; Tim Berners-Lee, founder of the internet; Hickey's Almshouses, Richmond

of the income to build and endow twenty almshouses, together with a chapel and two gate lodge cottages – one for a porter, the other for a nurse. Since then another 29 dwellings have been built on land behind the original almshouses.

I get a sense now that I'm approaching Richmond by the back door, away from the river, which is the historical hub of the town. It has been a long journey, and there's little to report from the one way system which takes us to the surprisingly small bus station. It is 11.17 (whether you're using the 12 or 24 hour clock) and it's starting to rain. It's time to go in search of the railway station.



Michael Pecirno's sculpture, *The Air Above*, winner of the Friends of Battersea park 2014 sculpture award.

Pecirno is a student at the Royal College of Art sculpture school.

Goodbye to all that

Jenny Sheridan looks at Battersea Park's memorials

This year, as always, Battersea's ceremony of remembrance was held at the war memorial in Battersea Park. Local politicians and representatives of societies, public services and schools laid wreaths below the stone feet of three infantrymen, one of them a famous poet.

The statue was the work of Eric Kennington, a Chelsea-born sculptor and painter who became an official war artist in both the first and second World Wars.

Battersea Pals

It is a memorial to the 24th (East Surrey) Division, which included the Wandsworth and Battersea Pals' battalions. The Battersea battalion was recruited by the Mayor of Battersea, Cllr TP Simmons, who insisted that the officers as well as the men be local. The 24th played a part in the battles of Vimy Ridge and the Somme, among others.

The sculpture shows three soldiers, with detailed uniforms and helmets. The man on the left as you face the statue is based on Trooper Morris Clifford Thomas, the one in the centre on Sergeant J Woods and the man on the right is Captain Robert Graves, the poet and author of *The White Goddess* and *Goodbye to All That*. Kennington was known for recording the courage of all ranks in the war. The men hold hands; beneath their feet writhes a snake – the serpent of war.

Kennington made the sculpture in his Thames-side Chiswick studio



The striking sculpture by Eric Kennington in Battersea Park

from a block of Portland stone, bought from sculptor Eric Gill for a very welcome £300. The Battersea Park siting was chosen by a vote among surviving members of the 24th Division and the sculpture was unveiled on 4 October 1924.

The statue is situated near the bandstand and the athletics stadium, on the east side of the park.

There are two other war memorials in the park. Each year on Anzac Day, 25

April, a service is held at the plaque commemorating the Australian and new Zealand forces who died at Gallipoli in 1915. Nearby is a plaque to the Australian air crews who were lost in action the Second World War. www.westernfrontassociation.com

For more on the Pals' Battalions see Battersea Matters winter 2010.

www.batterseapark.org

When Northcote Road was a disgrace

Many of the First World War commemorations have focussed on 'the fallen' – those who died in the armed forces. It is salutary to be reminded of the horrors that survivors suffered. An article entitled *The Chelsea artist on the Wandsworth Salient* in the *Wandsworth Historian* no 98 (Autumn 2014) describes the *Gazette*, a magazine produced by the patients and staff (who included a number of artists) of the 3rd London

Territorial Field Hospital – now the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building on Wandsworth Common. Contributors to the *Gazette* were frank about the shell-shock and physical injuries they and their patients experienced.

Muddy

Another interesting article mines Battersea Library's archive of letters written by ratepayers to the Wandsworth Board of Works

between 1869 and 1900. Most were complaints on the state of the muddy roads (Northcote Road was 'a disgrace to civilisation'), foul smells from sewers and piggeries and anti-social behaviour. This included throwing a pot of paint over a complainant in Kennard Street.

For copies of the Wandsworth Historian, contact Neil Robson ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk

Restaurant review: London House

Mike Roden and friends investigate what Gordon Ramsay is offering in Battersea Square

It was time, we agreed, to check out Gordon Ramsay's Battersea Square establishment, London House. So the self-styled Battersea Four made a reservation and were joined by two country members up from Dorset for the weekend.

It replaces the short-lived Bennetts Oyster Bar, which took over from the long disused All Bar One. In the Sixties it was a louche night club, one of Princess Margaret's favourite haunts, where she and other celebs of the day danced on a glass floor above a tank of piranhas.

No piranhas tonight. We were ushered in with a rather old-fashioned formality and led to our table, which was definitely designed for fine dining, with its shining cutlery, massive gleaming glasses and Persil-white tablecloth. Most of the other diners were probably under forty and able to hear their own voices above the rather loud music. A request to turn it down was greeted with a mildly apologetic shrug – it was not possible to lower the volume on different speakers. As we sat down, we discovered that the stylish-looking chairs were less than comfortable.

Juicy

The menus arrived promptly – three courses for £40. Biting the bullet we ordered wine – £25 for the white, £28 for the red. That arrived quickly, together with the tap water, but it took a while to entice the waiter back once we were ready to order. It was then some time before the food arrived, and the wine went down quicker than perhaps it might have done!

The most arresting of the starters was a braised pig's head croquette with quail eggs, pickled carrot and caper mayonnaise. As our dentist companion from Dorset remarked, it is hard to recognise a pig's head 'sans teeth sans eyes sans everything', but the very juicy meat inside the two bread-crumbed patties was certainly



The London House: The Battersea Four dined out in style

not 'sans taste', and I enjoyed my brief encounter with the tiny, soft-boiled quails' eggs. The heritage carrot salad with pickled raisins and Tete de Moine cheese was – despite its long description – underwhelming, and the romantic sounding Scottish gironle veloute turned out to be upmarket mushroom soup.

Another bottle

The main courses also took their time to arrive, and the red wine drinkers were forced to order another bottle, though those quaffing white wine were admirably restrained. Highlight of the mains was probably the succulent Cumbrian beef fillet accompanied by parsnip and cumin puree and braised cheek stuffed potato gnocchi. The vegetarian offering Aubergine Parmigiana was tastefully augmented with a few rocket leaves. As usual the humbler root vegetable element was pummelled into pureed submission and used to decorate the plates, which came in a variety of shapes, round, square, rectangular. The three sides of spinach we ordered quickly disappeared.

The desserts were perfectly OK, nougatine parfait, pear and custard, vanilla yoghurt with apple jelly and tiny doughnuts, or a selection of British cheese.

So what did this gourmet food

taste like? Perhaps I've sounded a bit dismissive, but everything was pleasant enough, and nobody pushed their plate away. I'm not sure that any of us was overwhelmed by the experience, though. When you're out with a group of friends talking nineteen to the dozen, and drinking your wine, the food is just one part of the equation, and we didn't really discuss the finer points of each dish.

How much? Well, with a total bill of £376 including service, it worked out to £62 a head. Not everyone can afford that kind of money, and it's not something any of us would spend regularly on a meal, but it everyone agreed it had been a good evening. Lunch is available Thursday to Sunday and broadly same three course menu is available for £28, which all things considered might be regarded as a bargain.

The waiter very considerably asked us whether we wanted a taxi. We smiled benignly, and said that the walk would do us good. He looked at us with respect as we strode briskly into the night. Presumably most of those dining here live further than a five or ten minute walk away.

*London House
7 – 9 Battersea Square
London SW11 3RA
020 7592 8545
<http://www.gordonramsay.com/london-house>*

ADVERTISEMENT

Big Yellow Storage Company Ltd
Units 1–2 York Road Business Centre
55 Lombard Street
Battersea, London SW11 3RX
T 0207801 0280
F 020 7801 1239
battersea@bigyellow.co.uk
bigyellow.co.uk



Get some space in your life™

Buffalo Bill on Battersea Rise

Pamela Hansford Johnson was a prolific and distinguished writer. Janice Morphet describes her links with Battersea

Pamela Hansford Johnson (1912 – 1981) was a novelist, poet and critic who lived at 53 Battersea Rise with her family until she was 22. Pamela's father was a civil servant in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and died on leave when Pamela was 11, leading to financial insecurity. Pamela's grandfather had been Sir Henry Irving's manager and her great aunt Emma Howson was the first Josephine in *HMS Pinafore*.

He kept an open house for musicians and actors on Sunday evenings – something Pamela missed as the money diminished. Her mother and aunts spent some time on the stage but later moved into other jobs and her mother let out the top of the house. Pamela's mother took in typing, including for the son of Buffalo Bill and Pamela wrote that to see him coming 'down our area steps on Battersea Rise, with Stetson hat and long flowing locks was something of an experience'.

Pamela attended Clapham County Grammar School in Broomwood Road for which her mother paid £5 a term. Despite her headmistress wanting Pamela to attend university, she left school at 16, taking a secretarial course in South Molton St and then a job in the Central Hanover Bank in Lower Regent's Street.

Dylan Thomas

It was while she was working at the bank that Pamela submitted her poems for publication and had some success in a competition set by Victor Neuberg in the *Sunday Referee*. Shortly after this, Dylan Thomas won the same competition and Pamela started a long and increasingly personal correspondence with him. Eventually they met in February 1934 when Dylan Thomas stayed with Pamela and her mother in Battersea Rise for two weeks and then later for six weeks. Pamela and her mother also visited Thomas's family in Swansea. In 1933, Pamela started a novel set



Pamela Hansford Johnson marries C P Snow in 1950

in Battersea which was eventually completed and published in 1935. The title, *This Bed thy Centre*, was suggested by Thomas from a Donne quotation. Pamela writes in her autobiography that the publication had the same impact as *Lucky Jim* in the 1950s. The main character Elsie lives with her mother and has a boyfriend, Roly, whose father is a Battersea councillor. Roly also works in Battersea town hall and eventually finds a job for Elsie there as well. Despite an affair between Roly and a local librarian, Elsie and Roly marry and the novel ends as she contemplates their future together.

Disowned

The novel dealt with suicide, sex outside marriage and cancer as well as describing many shops and locations in Battersea. Its risky subject matter meant that her family and the local community disowned

her for a while and Battersea libraries refused to buy a copy although it was acquired by the Clapham library, where the celebration of the centenary of Pamela's birth was the last event before it closed in 2012.

Although Pamela and Dylan Thomas contemplated marriage, they parted in 1935. Pamela married Gordon Stewart in 1936 and after their divorce she married C P Snow, later Lord Snow, in 1950. Although Pamela moved to Chelsea in 1934, many of her subsequent books had Battersea links. Pamela had a career in writing and contributing to Radio 3's *The Critics* and joined her husband on trips to the United States where they taught for periods.

Fantasy

Writing in her autobiography, published in 1974, Pamela recalled living in Battersea Rise:

'We lived in a large brick terrace house bought by my grandfather some time in the eighties, when it looked out on fields ... By the time I was born, the railway had come and the houses had been built up right over the hills between it and us. Not pretty I suppose. But in my childhood, I could create an Arabian Nights fantasy about anything and found the smoky sunset between the spires of St Mark's and the Masonic School magical to contemplate'.

Further reading:

Pamela Hansford Johnson This Bed thy Centre (introduced by Zoe Fairbairns) 2012 edition, Fig Leaves Publications Nottingham; Here Today, 1937
Important to Me 1974 (autobiography) Ishrat Lindblad, Pamela Hansford Johnson, Twayne Publishers Boston 1982
Isabel Quigly, Pamela Hansford Johnson Longmans 1968 (ed) Andrew Whitehead and Jerry White London Fictions 2013 Fig

The disappearing hat

An uncanny tale from Mike Roden

You'll all remember that bone-chilling December some years ago, which turned out to be one of the coldest for a century. It was cold enough in Battersea on that Carols in the Square evening. I'd been giving out flashing Santa hats and reindeer antlers.

Now the special guest had said their few words, the tree lights had been switched on, and with a couple more carols from local choirs, the event was coming to an end. We pushed to the back of the crowd looking for our friends Leo and Harriet.

If you were there that year you're certain to have noticed Leo. He is very tall, well over six feet. And he was wearing his long black winter overcoat, almost to his ankles. But the hat made him stand out. It was a souvenir of their trip to the north-west USA the previous year – a garish tartan fur-trappers hat with fur lined ear-flaps. The overall effect was enhanced by the large metal badge pinned on it in the shape of a grizzly bear with sharp teeth set in an evil grin.

Snatched

The crowd and choir were united (more or less) in a lusty rendering of the final carol *Oh Come All Ye Faithful*. Leo and Harriet stood in the entrance to Cotswold Mews both clutching plastic cups of mulled wine and Leo still held his song sheet. But rather than Leo's silly hat, I saw his shock of unruly white hair.

'Where's the hat?' asked my wife.

Harriet shrugged. 'He's always losing something. He left his umbrella on the 170 yesterday. Our neighbour picked it up and brought it back. Someone always brings things back. He's like a human magnet.'

She waved her hand back into the mews. 'It's in there somewhere. Must be. No sign of it though.'

Leo shook his head in a rather dazed fashion. 'This boy snatched it off my head, and ran off singing – 'Where did you get that hat?'

'An old music hall song,' I said. 'Don't hear it that much these days.'

Leo stared back into the mews again, most of the offices were in

darkness. 'There was a laundry there. I could smell damp washing and soapsuds...'

Harriet studied me thoughtfully. 'This isn't going to turn up in one of those stories of yours is it?'

'Well,' I pondered, 'There used to be a laundry there. From about the time of the first world war – the Cotswold Laundry.'

Laundry

'I see,' said Harriet. 'Look, this mulled wine is a bit short on wine for my liking. I need a real drink.'

'Listen,' Leo grabbed my arm, 'I had no idea that used to be a laundry.'

'I don't believe you did, Leo.'

But all the way to the Woodman he couldn't let it go. He'd strayed into Cotswold Mews out of curiosity. 'It's one of those places you never go in. It looked mysterious. Then out of nowhere this skinny boy snatches my fur hat off my head and runs off waving it like a trophy...'

'Just exactly as he told me!'

The young woman who spoke had followed us into the pub. 'It's a real strange tale.'

'Then you must sit down,' said Harriet, 'Leo – get the lady a drink.'

She shook her head. 'No thanks, I can't stay. My name's Laura, by the way. I guess you've noticed that I'm an American.'

She addressed Leo. 'When I came into the Square tonight and saw you – wearing that crazy hat, with the badge it was quite ... moving.'

Her voice broke a little and then she became brisk. 'I was about twelve, thirteen years old when Grandpa told me the story – showed me a picture, too. He died a couple of years later, but I never forgot. He was born here in Battersea. He told me how one December day...'

She paused and looked at us all, 'The same date as today – how he snatched the cap from a tall thin guy who came into the laundry yard where he was working, doing odd jobs. It was a joke, he was going to give it

back, but the guy just vanished...'

She paused, 'There were a couple of other weird things. He suddenly heard a choir singing a carol out in the square. And the guy was holding some kind of pamphlet – now I know it's the song sheet they give out. It had a date on, same date – but different year. It made no sense to him. But then nothing made any sense. The man vanished, the choir too. It was all part of the weird story. He always wished he could be around in the 21st century so he could come back to Battersea and take a look.'

She gave a sad little smile. 'He didn't quite make the millennium. As you'll have guessed he left his hometown and went travelling. Ended up in New York, raised a family, had plenty of grandchildren, including me. And your hat came in pretty useful during our winters, Leo.'

'You've come all the way to Battersea just to see if his story was true?' interrupted Harriet with an air of disbelief.

'Oh I always believed it was true,' said Laura fiercely, 'Grandpa wouldn't have lied to me. And I guess he'd be tickled to know that I might live in Battersea one day when the US embassy moves across the river. I work there, you see, so it wasn't too hard for me to come here today and take my own look.'

She stood up, 'But I must go now. And you really should have this back, Leo.'

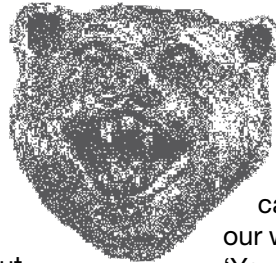
Teeth

On the table she laid a metal badge showing a grizzly bear on its hind legs, with its teeth showing in an evil smile. 'I said I'd return it if I could.' Then she was gone.

Wonderingly Leo turned the badge over in his hand. 'Looks the same,' he said. 'But the story doesn't seem very likely does it?'

'I don't know,' I said, 'As Harriet observed earlier, if you lose something, it always comes back to you.'

© Mike Roden 2014





Eagle Alehouse 1: Government 0

Local landlords celebrate Commons vote

Dave Law and Simon Clarke, landlords of the Eagle Alehouse in Chatham Road, celebrate the victory of their long campaign to end abusive uses of the pubs beer tie. Dave and Simon have been at the forefront to the ten year struggle, working with CAMRA and other organisations.

In November, MPs voted against the government to support an option for landlords to choose to be tied to a pub company or

free of that tie.

‘We are thrilled that MPs have supported this fundamental change’ says Simon. ‘Over time it should lead to lower rents and cheaper beer. It’s good for publicans and drinkers alike and should see growth return to the pub sector.’

The Eagle is known for its well-kept ales, its sports coverage and its friendly atmosphere.

Its traditionally riotous carol evening is on Sunday 14 December.



This poem was commissioned by the Southbank Centre and is displayed on a poster outside the Hayward Gallery.

Wandsworth

It starts with a name
and don't we all begin that way?
Two rivers meet, the watermills flow
and Wandesorde, Wendelsorde,
Wandsworth is born.

In Domesday's book this
borough boasts meadows and
sufficient hides
for a dozen neighbourhoods to thrive.
A brewery
and a trembling bridge where troops
must pause
to break their step.

For really I think that the poorest hee
in England
Hath a life to live as the greatest and
therefore
Truly Sir, we measure our hearts
according
to the promise.

No cat, or dog or person
will be left in the cold. There is
common land
for all to graze, parks and
promenades to praise
And you will know it when the cabbie
says, 'Here's
Gateway to the South.'

A monument to power
still, four chimneys rise like upturned
legs.
A table waiting to be set. Towering ,
the prison walls
shadow homes as evening falls on
Carmichael Mews
and Alma Terrace.

Cheryl Moskowitz

Inflation, inflation, inflation...

Half a million for garages leaves Jenny Sheridan bemused

You've got a spare half million. What to do? You could buy a 17th century chateau in south-west France with eight acres of grounds, and fulfil those dreams of opening a boutique hotel. Or there's Moreton House, a listed Georgian manor house in Devon with 28 bedrooms – plenty of storage space for all that stuff you've got in the cellar.

Or you could buy three garages. In Blenkarne Road, Battersea. Without planning permission (but hey, this is Wandsworth: that shouldn't be a

problem). Sadly, you're too late, they were sold at auction this summer. With a starting price of £135,000 the bidding rose swiftly and the hammer came down at £500,000. Even Savills raised their impeccable eyebrows.

For the impecunious with just quarter of a million going spare, an alleyway off Northcote Road went for £260,000 in September. At least that had planning permission.



Gin: it's a tonic

Jenny Sheridan enjoys the Christmas spirit



Is there something about Battersea and gin? Not so long ago Gordon's was distilled in quantity by the river here, where those vast St George's blocks now loom over Wandsworth Bridge. And now, near Battersea Bridge, a brand new distillery has launched Dodd's Gin, a high-end drink produced with great care in small quantities and bottled and labelled by hand.

Herbs

The London Distillery Company uses angelica, black and green cardamom, bayleaves, fresh lime peel, raspberry leaves and honey (from London hives) as well as juniper, gin's basic flavouring. All the herbs are organic, as is their UK-produced wheat spirit. The first distilling takes place at high temperature in their spectacular 140 litre copper still, then the more delicate herbs are added for cold distilling, left to mingle for about four weeks and then bottled. 'It has a luscious texture and is fresh and aromatic,' says sales manager Joe Ricketts. 'You get different aromas depending on whereabouts in London the honey comes from. You can drink it with tonic, but many people like it neat with just an ice cube or two.'

'The founders started with the idea of producing whisky', explains Ricketts. 'But it takes three years to get a licence to make whisky so we started with gin. The whisky is on its way and we hope it will be ready before Christmas.'

Joe Ricketts and the copper still

The whisky will be the first to be distilled in London for over 100 years. It is made from a mixture of rye and barley and matured in English oak barrels. The barrels have an important effect on flavour, and the distillers plan to experiment with different kinds of wood to gauge these effects. They will also try to source old varieties of yeasts and grains, such as the charmingly named Plumage Archer barley.

The distillery is based in the Testbed complex on Parkgate Road. It will be re-developed along with Ransome's Dock, losing more of Battersea's fast-disappearing industrial heritage – the building was a warehouse for a dairy. 'We will have to move in 2016,' says Joe Ricketts. 'We'd love to return, but we are also looking around. It's lovely here, with the Doodle Bar, and Battersea Park just up the road where we go for picnics at lunchtime.'

At £35 for 50cl, the gin is far from cheap. Full disclosure: I treated myself to a bottle, and it really is delicious. At 49.9% strength, and at that price, I drink a tiny iced glass occasionally after supper, as a rather delightful change from my usual cuppa.

Available from Harvey Nichols, Fortnum & Mason and the distillery. London Distillery Company 33 Parkgate Road, SW11 4NP. www.londondistillery.com

Letter to the editor

We have received a letter in response to the article on page 12 of the autumn issue of *Battersea Matters*. Society member Virginia Hiller writes:

● Susie Morrow (*Can the school run be fun, BM Autumn 2014*) writes in a positive manner of the advantages of 'walking, cycling or scooting ... to school' as a great way for children to recognize and deal with the dangers of the street that they will have to face sooner or later'.

Actually it is the unfortunate pedestrians who are often in danger—indeed a friend of mine recently suffered a very bad cut to her leg caused by the sharp front of a scooter.

The late, much missed PC Johnny Johnson told me he spent a large amount of his time telling children—and their parents—not to scoot or cycle along the pavements. Pavements are for walking.

I live in Orbel Street, and sadly the young children from local schools frequently use nearby Trott Street and Shuttleworth Road pavements as a race track. The children rush in front on scooters or bikes while the parents/au pairs seem oblivious of their responsibilities. Unfortunately parents also often ride bikes in the road while their offspring keep level, often at a great rate along the pavement.

Walking or using public transport to school is a great idea; we are very well served by an excellent bus service.

This would also help to cut down on the growing number of Chelsea tractors which occupy parking spaces outside our houses.

In the meantime, bikes (for children who are not yet ready to cycle by themselves in the road) and scooters should be confined to Battersea Park, or areas where there are few pedestrians.

Hopefully the head teachers of our local schools can include considerate use of pavements within their valuable road safety classes.

Virginia Hiller

Christmas is for going out

From skateboard parks to treasure islands, there's a lot on locally for children, says Jenny Sheridan

Christmas is a busy and expensive time of the year. Many Battersea Society members will have children or grandchildren to entertain, and it can be hard – even in London – to know what to do with children of assorted ages.

We offer here some suggestions for outings of various kinds. Most are not prohibitively expensive, a few are free, and all are easy to reach from Battersea. No need to go to the overcrowded, over-priced West End!

Here in SW11, the **Battersea Arts Centre** is offering *Antarctica*, produced by Little Bulb, who created the much-enjoyed *Orpheus*. Includes songs, puppets and snowy surprises. For children 2-6. £40 for four people including at least two children.

Also in Battersea, **Theatre 503** is offering a three-man pantomime 'for those who like their panto with a twist': *Cinderella and the Beanstalk*. Children over 8. Family tickets for four £40.

For children over six, **The Polka Theatre** in Wimbledon is putting on *Peter Pan*. £17.50 adults and children. On 9 January, June Whitfield is reading children's stories, for children of 4 and a little older. The Polka café is particularly child-friendly.

The **Wimbledon Theatre** has *Cinderella*, starring Linda Gray (Sue Ellen in *Dallas*, for those with long memories) and Wayne Sleep. £12 – £48.

Younger children may love *The Snow Dragon* at the **St James Theatre** in Victoria. A young goat named Billy finds himself in trouble: how will he escape? For children over 3. £9 – £18.

There is murder, mutiny and madness at the **National Theatre** for kids over 10 and their families.



Christmas at Kew promises a magical experience

Treasure Island promises thrills galore. £15 – £50.

At the **Rose Theatre**, Kingston, Children and nostalgic adults can visit Narnia in a new production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, meeting Mr Tumnus, the mighty Aslan and the four children. For over 7-year-olds. £10 – £27.

Wandering players will guide the audience round five atmospheric floors of the **Bargehouse** (behind the Oxo Tower) in a site-specific version of Philip Pullman's adaptation of the Grimm Tales for young and old. For anyone over 8 and fearless. Children £20, adults unclear.

Slava's Snow show, recommended for anyone from eight to 88 and described as 'an unforgettable comedy masterpiece' is at the **Royal Festival Hall**. Tickets from £20. Also on the South Bank are pop-up choirs, a Christmas tree maze and a little train.

Active delights

But it's not all about sitting in the dark watching theatrical magic – though for children that can be even more magical. There are more active delights on offer.

Open air ice rinks are popping up all over the place. The two nearest to us are at the **Natural History Museum**, surrounded by sparkly trees, £8.80 for children, £12.65 for adults. And there's a brand new rink down the road in **Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens**, a little cheaper at £7.50 for children, £10.50 adults. Street food trucks are promised too.

Also in Vauxhall, in the railway arches, is **Vauxwall**, a colourful and exciting climbing centre with walls

covered in holds of varying difficulty. Children as young as six can learn the challenges and fun of climbing. Prices from £6.50 for kids, £7.50 for any adult brave enough to give it a go.

The London Eye, though expensive, is a treat. It costs £29.50 whether you are six or sixty five – a bit less if you book online.

Kew Gardens opens in the evenings for a winter wonderland, with trees illuminated in fairyland colours, a fire garden and giant light sculptures. £10 for children, £15 adults if, as recommended, you book in advance.

Bus sculptures

So what can you do for free? The adventure playground in **Battersea Park** remains free, thanks to vigorous campaigning. Or there's the skateboard park on Clapham Common, with a handy café for attending adults. In **St George's Park** in Wandsworth there is a

skateboard, scooter and BMX track. For children living outside London, a simple ride on the top deck of a bus is an adventure – especially if it's to see the Christmas lights. As a bonus, TfL has designed a **Year of**

the Bus sculpture trail, with buses decorated by artists popping up in unexpected places. Accessible on foot or by bus.

Fans of the bear from Peru will want to find all the 50 Paddington Bear statues in London, via the **Paddington Trail**. See them by bus, walking or Boris bike. The statues have been designed from ideas by artists and celebrities. Boris's bear is, of course, called the Bear of London.

