

# Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society WINTER 2017/18



## Playtime for old and young

Britain's first intergenerational nursery is in Balham: Jenny Sheridan enjoyed her visit

**W**hat's 87 years difference between friends? Fay, in her late 80s, stands up from her walking frame and leans over the fence to take the toy offered her by Florence, aged 2½. They look at each other and smile. This is Apples and Honey Nursery, based at Nightingale House Care Home in Balham, where inter-generational sessions take place every day and are enjoyed by both young and old.

'Some children are immediately drawn to the elderly,' comments head teacher Cindy Summer. 'And almost all love being with them. And as for the old people, well, for some it has changed their lives. Their faces light up.'

### Rainbows

Nightingale House is a Jewish care home, reserved for elderly Jewish people, but the nursery is open to children from all backgrounds. The nursery runs the national early years curriculum with a Jewish emphasis. When I visited, Noah and his ark was the focus. The walls were covered with paintings of rainbows and the children were playing with pairs of animals.

Diversity is imaginatively valued. 'One day I came in wearing a pink wig', says Cindy. 'All the children laughed at me, but I encouraged them to see that even though I had



Left: A music session,  
below left: Hanukka celebrations



different hair, I was still the Cindy they knew; that appearances aren't everything.' The children learn Makaton sign language, used by individuals with learning disabilities. The nursery has adapted the Bounce Back resilience programme (designed

for classroom teachers) to work with very small children. 'We talk about teamwork a lot. And the way we work here helps them learn about caring for others – their friends, animals, old people. Being with the old people teaches them compassion, caring, gentleness .... They get a lot of positive reinforcement from them too, and it can help their confidence.'

### Varied

Inter-generational activities vary from day to day. On Monday the children and residents celebrate Havdallah, a Jewish ceremony that separates Shabbat from the working week with candles, singing and grape juice. On Tuesday there is Gardening Club, which residents and children join in with or watch depending on their capabilities. On other days the children join the end of the physiotherapy group, and all sing, dance or throw soft balls to each other.

'Last week Fay came to me and said she had written a story for the children' Cindy says. 'I said why don't you come and read it to them? So she did. She was quite nervous beforehand but she really enjoyed it, and the kids loved it.'

Fay says, 'I love the interaction, I love the children, they're so much fun. They bring you alive; I feel I've been re-born.' She thinks the children feel safe with old people.

A music therapy session: five elderly people, all of whom have dementia. Seven lively two-year-olds. Judith Ish-Horowicz, Apples and Honey's founder and principal, sits on the floor beside the therapist's

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

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## From the editor



Greetings from the off location! The US embassy has opened quietly, peacefully and unTrumpeted. A presidential

visit would no doubt have tested its security measures as welcome parties might have been, well, not so welcoming. It remains the most distinguished building among its ill-mannered neighbouring towers. Perhaps we can hope for a Battersea Society visit one day.

2017, like most years, was both good and bad for Battersea, as Monica Tross points out on page 5. Developers have continued to over-develop, the Mayor has over-ridden WBC's refusal of a vast development at the Homebase site on Swandon

Way and Lambeth is going to re-develop Vauxhall bus station. More positively, some inappropriate developments have been turned down, and the river bus service now runs from Plantation Wharf and the Power Station.

Best of all, the 170 bus is back, after a short, unannounced and very unwelcome absence. I am writing this later than other contributors, who bewail TfL's lack of communication and consideration for its customers. In this case, the power of public opinion (including the Battersea Society's) and the input of local councillors resulted in a change for the better.

2017 was also the year of the unexpected General Election, with its surprising result both nationally and locally. Labour's Marsha de Cordova overturned Conservative Jane Ellison's majority to become Battersea's MP. Her first priority is housing, as she tells us on page 13.

Ms de Cordova, like most of her constituents, is a Remainer. Recent Government announcements have made the future a bit more predictable for the thousands of EU citizens who live in Wandsworth, but the way forward is still complex and murky. Wandsworth Council has set up an advice service to help clarify the situation (page 7).

History can be a guide to both present and future. In this issue Duncan Parish peers onto the Booth archive to see what has changed and what remains similar 120 years on. The second half of his article will be published in the spring issue of *Battersea Matters*.

Let's hope that 2018 will be a year where the positive outweighs the negative. I wish you all a very Happy New(ish) Year.

*Jenny Sheridan*

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## Man not on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden in post-Christmas recovery mode

As 2018 is still in its early phase, I'll wish you all a Happy New Year. You may still be wrestling with over-ambitious new year resolutions. But January is a gloomy month anyway. Why make things worse by denying yourself the odd glass of wine, or depriving yourself of the occasional bacon sandwich so you can celebrate Veganuary? Of course there is nothing wrong in being vegetarian or vegan. But other diets are available.

As PG Wodehouse might have said, it's never difficult to tell the difference between a ray of sunshine and a bored Labrador. The latter – along with an elderly cat and three chickens – was part of the menagerie left in our care while we house-sat over Christmas for our holidaying daughter and her family. The chickens laid one egg between them, the cat slept all the time, and the dog spent long hours staring at us mournfully resentment while we slumped in front of the fire suffering from traditionally nasty

Yuletide colds. And it rained most of the time. Let's raise a glass to January and February being better than that!

The Battersea Society has keenly supported campaigns to reduce traffic pollution. Three cheers then for TfL introducing new ultra-low emission single deckers on the 170 route from Victoria to Clapham Junction and beyond. Then – so TfL tells us – Network Rail tweaked its evil moustaches like a pantomime villain and declared that the Cremorne Railway bridge arch under which the south-bound 170 must pass could only accommodate vehicles below ten feet in height.

### Horror

Shrieks of horror as TfL realise that their new buses are 10 feet 2 inches high and so forbidden to go under the bridge, leaving those hapless people living along Battersea Church Road and Vicarage Crescent to trudge to distant bus stops. There's now talk that TfL's version of the story is a little economical with the truth, but at the time of writing a solution is yet to be found.

The riverside walkers I spotted the other day in their sturdy boots, waterproofs, and wielding Nordic walking poles seemed a bit

overdressed for a walk to the Ship Inn near Wandsworth Bridge. But it was ever thus. Hunter Davies writes of a leisurely Lakeland walk he took on a snowy day in the late 1970s with climber Chris Bonington. Wearing jeans and wellies they strolled up the 2000ft High Pike. Reaching the summit they were greeted by the sight of a climber striding towards them 'dressed in the real stuff, with ropes, ice axe, huge boots, very expensive anorak, and two pairs of colour socks one of them rolled up and one rolled down, as if done with set squares'.

One of the curiosities of our week away from home was our introduction to Alexa – the 'smart speaker' which answers your questions in a polite female voice – though she avoided answering our grand-daughter's Christmas Eve query about where Santa Claus was at that precise moment. Alexa can also be plumbed in to your 'smart home' and will turn the central heating up or down, or dim your lights on request. What she won't do is take the dog for a walk, or boil you an egg. That would be progress.

Anyway, that's all for now. I hope your bus arrives on time – if not invest in some Nordic walking poles, and mind how you go.



*continued from page 1*

keyboard. Her rôle here is to hand out the musical instruments and to unobtrusively ensure that everyone can take a turn. The old people beam at the children and some ask their names and chat a little. The kids are natural and friendly and are gentler with their old friends than their young ones. All sing and play simple instruments together, at whatever level they can cope with. They share instruments between each other. There is laughter. It all feels natural and happy.

### **Gardens**

Situated at the end of the large and beautifully maintained gardens of Nightingale House, the nursery has a separate, safe outdoor space to run around and play in. Twenty per cent of nursery places are reserved

for care home staff, with obvious advantages, in staff recruitment and retention.

This is the first nursery situated within a care home in the UK. Judith Ish-Horowicz hopes that more will follow, though she says that there are many possible models – ‘Anything that brings people of all ages together with respect and a sense of being valued is fantastic. You see how gentle these children are with their elders’, she says, ‘I hope the relationships will continue, that families and individual children will go on visiting and being involved here for years’. Judith also founded the original Apples and Honey nursery in Wimbledon but does not want to expand further. She is very much a hands-on principal.

‘It’s a really exciting project,’ says Alastair Addison, head of activities

at Nightingale House. ‘It’s our two different communities growing together. For some of the elderly residents it has helped to re-create their parenting days. For others, particularly for those whose relatives are living overseas, it’s a surrogate family. Many old people are quite isolated and this gives them an opportunity to express their care.

‘It has also been part of our inclusiveness work – opening our doors and breaking barriers between this Jewish community and wider local society.’

Judith Ish-Horowicz is on the steering group of the ‘think-and-do tank’ United for All Ages, which works nationally to bring people of different ages together. ‘Creating community – I think it can change society’, she says.



## **In praise of balconies**

A letter to the editor

I settled down to read my copy of *Battersea Matters* at the end of one late October afternoon, sipping a cocktail in a hazy sunset glow... Imagine my astonishment when I discovered your claim that just such a thing was highly unlikely to happen on any of the 1,300 balconies between Wandsworth and Chelsea Bridge! (From the Editor, *BM* Autumn 21017)

Here is my short paean of praise to the beauty of balconies. All my

gardening urges can be met in this small space in my half a dozen pots. Admittedly it is ambitious to be growing a Giant Redwood, but I live in hopes of finding it a good home eventually. As for the pelargoniums, if I spot something needing dead-heading, I can casually reach out from my recliner and nip it off without difficulty. How many gardeners can relax in their green acres at the end of a day without noticing something that still needs doing? On my balcony I can still be in for a delivery – while I am actually out. I can take the fresh air – and still hear my radio. In March you will find me sitting there in a coat to catch the first breath of spring.

And in October and November the sunsets to the west over the river are stunning. So thank you GLC architects for designing my flat with a lovely draft-proof brick built balcony. I would not dream of using it for storing old bikes!

*Angela Roden*

### **The Battersea Society**

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River boroughs: Richmond Bridge and Chelsea Railway Bridge to Battersea

## Building bridges

Mandy Skinner describes the arrangement between Wandsworth and Richmond councils

Local government is under pressure. Under pressure to deliver services to increasing populations with increasing expectations; under financial pressure to do more with less; and pressure to tackle increasingly complex problems – some associated with increasing numbers of older people, or transient younger populations. And some associated with place, where a local council has a significant role in creating the conditions for economic growth, providing homes that are affordable for local people and for attracting business.

Wandsworth Council has a track record of understanding the local issues, assessing the associated need and providing services at best cost, delivering directly where that is the right thing to do.

The Shared Staffing Arrangement (SSA) established with Richmond upon Thames Council is a further example of that pragmatic approach. Agreed by the councils in 2015, this ground-breaking arrangement for London local government took shape in October 2016. Now over a year old, the SSA has secured savings of £10m for each Council, and is also providing a strengthened capacity for securing the outcomes for both boroughs.

### Sovereignty

The SSA is a sharing of approximately 3,400 staff across two boroughs serving a combined population of 500,000. It is not a merger of councils or democratic processes. Sovereignty for both councils is paramount. Each council has rightly maintained its rôle in setting priorities, making policy and determining budgets. The decision making and scrutiny arrangements

are the same for Wandsworth Council as they were before the introduction of the SSA. And each council has retained its own ‘front door’ for respective borough residents.

Sharing staff in this way has also provided opportunities for the councils to find other ways of reducing costs and better ways of doing things, particularly by adopting joint approaches to commissioning and procurement. These ultimately create a further set of efficiencies when purchasing goods or services. The approach has allowed staff to learn from each other and to think about new ways of doing things when teams have been brought together.

### Flexible

What does it look like in practice? Essentially all staff are now employed by both Wandsworth and Richmond Councils. Of course some officers work just on services for one borough – such as Wandsworth children’s services, or housing management staff (Richmond Council had already established a company to deliver its children’s services and transferred its housing staff many years ago to a housing association), and many staff will find their time directed towards one borough more than the other. However, all the senior officers and service managers work across both Councils, reporting and working with councillors of both authorities.

There have been practical issues to consider – some of the teams are now co-locating into new accommodation and where appropriate others have adopted fully flexible arrangements and work 50/50 from both boroughs. Taking forward the co-location work has also allowed the councils to think about

their office space and how best to use it. In some cases this has created more opportunity for home working. Looking at the use of accommodation has created a further opportunity to reduce cost whilst designing the best way of delivering services.

### Practical issues

So how does it feel one year on? As part of the review process, the councils both referred to the SSA in their respective residents’ surveys and for the most part residents were not aware that the SSA had impacted on their service. This is just as it should be with the council retaining sovereignty. Performance of services has shown no consistent pattern of upward or downward trends, suggesting that the SSA has not had a systematic impact on council-wide service levels. There are inevitably practical issues that still require more work – the way we do business internally, supporting staff when processes change etc. We are still learning and developing.

The Shared Staffing Arrangement is just one part of the council’s approach to delivering the best possible service to the residents of Wandsworth. Saving money whilst not impacting on service delivery has been a vital theme throughout the development of the SSA. And while the focus for the first year was about bringing the structures together, the future is about enabling both councils to move forward and providing the capacity to design and deliver quality services at the lowest possible cost.

*Mandy Skinner is assistant chief executive (customers and partnerships) of Richmond and Wandsworth.*

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# Planning Matters: New Year predictions and an update on 2017

Mystic Monica gives her predictions for 2018

## PAVEMENT CLUTTER WILL INCREASE EXPONENTIALLY

BT has put in at least 17 applications in Battersea for the replacement of telephone kiosks with Inlink advertising/wi-fi posts (see page 9). There is little information about the usefulness of these – other than as a revenue earner for BT. The December Planning Applications Committee (PAC) approved the first batch, despite many objections and representations by Northcote councillors. 2017/5851 and 5895 are typical.

Approval has been given to electric vehicle charging points, 2017/5314 and 5598. The one installed just east of Harris Academy looks awfully bulky compared with more aesthetic designs I've seen elsewhere.

## MORE TALL BUILDINGS WILL BE APPROVED

It seems that even on the rare occasions when the council refuse an inappropriately tall building the Mayor will approve it – as was the case for the Homebase site at Swandon Way (2016/7356). We have objected to plans for the B&Q depot at Smugglers Way (2017/0580) but with little hope of success. These sites are on the borders of Battersea but there will be an impact for us, not least with further dangerous overcrowding on public transport. We also objected in order to support our colleagues in the Wandsworth Society who sent in very thorough objections to both these. The developers of the Homebase site at 198 York Road had no need to appeal to the Mayor: the application for an increase in height to 27 storeys was approved by the PAC (2017/4380).

We are slightly less critical of plans for the Peabody development in St. John's Hill (2017/5837) although we regret the added height. We predict these will be approved. As will

plans for the expansion of the Royal College of Art campus in Battersea Bridge Road, 2017/6064. See our website for our comments on these.

## CONSULTATIONS WILL ABOUND

Although it is debatable how much these will influence the outcome. TfL were at least honest in saying that the plans for Vauxhall Bus Station shown at the BAC last year were for information only. Lambeth Council approved the plans in December.

We objected to an application to TfL for a Ford Chariot 'minibus' service along Nine Elms during peak hours and await the outcome. We were not invited to any exhibition of plans for the proposed development on the Vauxhall Island site but expect to comment – Lambeth application 2017/058071 refers.

Unfortunately some consultations are staffed by representatives of developers/promoters who are ill-equipped to answer our queries, so we often have to ask for further information outside the exhibition. Nonetheless we will continue to engage with all relevant consultations and, with Mike Roden's help, will aim to let you know about these in time for you to attend should you wish.

There was however, a helpful consultation, with well-informed representatives of the borough and their chosen development partners, at the consultation on the first phase of redevelopment of the Winstanley Estate in November. We are now considering their first application (2017/6864) for development on Grant Road, due to go to committee later this spring.

## 170 BUS WILL RESUME NORMAL SERVICE

There is a nonsense at present with what we hope are temporary changes to the route from York Road to Battersea Bridge, leaving many residents without an essential

bus. This is because the Lombard Road railway bridge clearance, while actually 10'3", is signed as 10'0". New eco buses are 10'2" but because of the sign TfL have re-routed and contend there are not enough old buses to service the route. Residents at Valiant House are leading the battle with support from local councillors.

We're on the case too and will keep you updated.

## LAST YEAR'S OUTCOMES

In a recent round-up of action and decisions for the last quarter I have listed 11 applications where we have commented and await an outcome and a further 33 on which we had commented and a decision has been taken. This doesn't include all the Inlink applications where we wrote in detail on all 17 applications. In some cases there was no decision in that the application was withdrawn, for example The Grand where there were plans for a roof terrace (2017/5507) and a gazebo on the top of Falcon Wharf (2017/5087).

The design for the Battersea Park Northern Line station was approved to much acclaim, although in our view the design is undistinguished and the information about access and traffic inadequate. See 2017/4269 and 4274.

We were pleased that plans for Crosland Place off Taybridge Road (2017/3214) were turned down by the PAC and hope that the architects will come back with a more neighbourly development to fit into this site.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

We try hard to be vigilant but we do miss some applications. Sometimes we decide the neighbours are doing such a good job there isn't much for us to do, but we always like to hear from you.

You can see our comments on major applications and consultations on the planning section of [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk) or email us at [planning@batterseasociety.org](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org). It is always encouraging to hear from members and as you can see from the above, we do need a bit of encouragement from time to time.



# Wandsworth Common: past, present and possible future

Harvey Heath looks at the tangled history of the common

Wandsworth Common is rightly regarded as a precious resource by the local community; it seems to be used more intensively than ever. It offers what can be the conflicting uses of being a touch of the countryside in an urban setting and also a space for sporting activities.

## Gravel

The reason for its shape and size are both geological and historical. Geologically, its subsurface is of terrace gravels: the detritus of a former bed of the Thames when, in the Ice Ages, sea levels were much higher than today. This provides a soil in which 'the plough could not go'. It was described in earlier times as a manorial waste land for common use of grazing, wood and gravel.

Wandsworth Common – referred to as Battersea West Heath or Wandsworth East Heath – lay on the land between the Wandle valley and the valley of the Falcon brook (today's Northcote Road).

The reasons for the shape of the common lie in its history. The 1771 John Roque map shows an area for Wandsworth Common of 400 acres (double its present size). Since then its history has been one of enclosure and incursions as developers and land owners took bites out of the open space, reducing it to today's pattern. Much more of the common might have been lost but for some determined local residents.

*Rapidly increasing urban population in the 19th century gave landowners financial incentives to develop open spaces and on the Common the advent of the railways curving their way through the common almost sealed its fate. From 1763 the Lord of the manor of Battersea was Earl Spencer; the fourth earl Frederick from 1845 until 1857, and the fifth earl John Poyntz until 1910. It was under Frederick that many of the major land sales and enclosures occurred and it was John Poyntz who finally gave up all Spencer rights to the common. (Passmore)*

Earl Spencer sold land for railway

development to the London and Southampton Railway in 1836 and the London and Crystal Palace railway in 1862. All the land south of Bellevue Road except for a small piece of the common around the new Wandsworth Common Station was sold to developers in 1850. The Royal Victoria Patriotic Commissioners (RVPC) bought 52 acres in 1857 to build an orphanage for the children of Crimean War servicemen. Magdalen College Oxford owned a large portion of land on the western side of the common and chose to build on it in 1883.

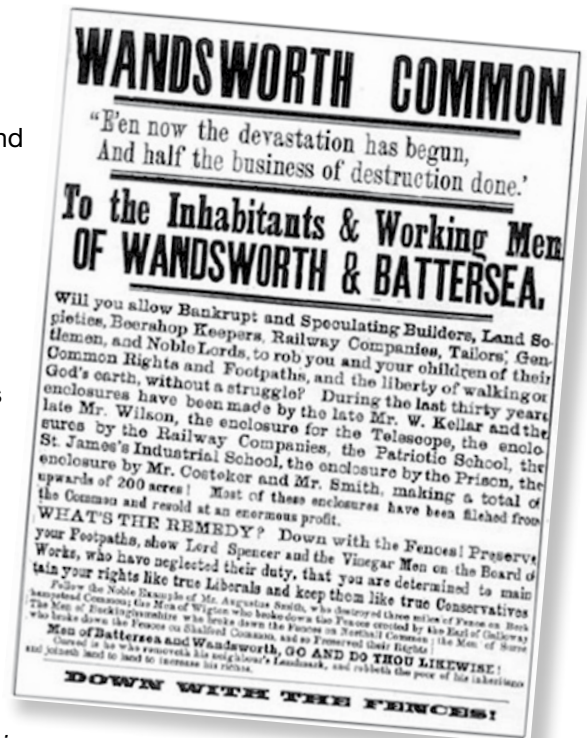
## Public meetings

*The appearance of the common in the late 19th century was not at all attractive and was in a pretty dire state after years of neglect. The Mid Surrey Gazette writes of stinking ponds and disused gravel pits full of rubbish, no paths, no seats, huge muddy ditches, much rubbish strewn about. (Passmore)*

Not an area that one would expect to engender sympathy. However residents were growing concerned about the loss of land and the trigger was the London and Brighton Railways' wish to sell some of its surplus land near St Mary's cemetery in Bolingbroke Grove. Large public meetings were held leading to the founding of a fund-raising defence committee. After some initial failures to affect the landowners they were able eventually to achieve an act of parliament. The Wandsworth Common Act 1871 established conservators of local people to oversee the common. It provided a map and the conservators were charged with improving the common. They had powers to buy back land and convert it into common land.

From 1881 the common was run by the Metropolitan Board of Control who ceded control to the London County Council (LCC) in 1883.

In 1912 RVPC sold 20 acres to the LCC. In 1924 the LCC opened what they called the Wandsworth Common



A poster urging protest at the enclosure of parts of Wandsworth Common, 1870

Extension which included the farm as a tea shop; two tennis courts and a bowling green were added.

During the 1939 – 45 war the common was dug up in places to provide anti-tank trenches and housed barrage balloons and anti-aircraft guns. Pre-fabs were built along Bolingbroke Grove, Bellevue Road, and Spencer Park. They were not removed until 1956 to 1966.

In 1964 the plans to extend Trinity Road to Wandsworth Bridge were brought forward and these were completed in 1970. This meant that common land had to be taken to complete this major road; the common was compensated by acquiring the Home Office-owned land in front of Wandsworth prison.

The land and buildings of the Patriotic were bought by the LCC. They immediately used 10 acres of this land to build the Fitzhugh estate, completed in 1952. For a while the Patriotic building was allowed to deteriorate but in 1980 the building was rescued by Talex Ltd on a long lease. It now houses flats, a theatre school, craft workshops, a restaurant and offices.

Wandsworth Council became responsible for the running of the

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common in 1974 from the GLC and took ownership in 1986. In 2016 Enable (a staff mutual of WBC members) took over the responsibility of day-to-day management of all open spaces in Wandsworth. This will be reviewed in 2020.

For a time the Spencer Park Comprehensive School occupied four acres of the RVFC area. This was demolished in 1992 and in its place Wandsworth Council approved the building of 140 flats and 64 houses with a new bridge over the railway. An example of where the local authority showed a conflict of interest and did not favour the common over its duty as a housing authority

When we debate the common's future it is interesting to note what plans the LCC once had for this open

space. They planned an all-weather sports area complete with floodlights, dressing room accommodation for 20 teams and a mess room for 20 people. An athletics track of five acres was also mooted. Such concepts could return if the common has to increase its income potential.

### Conflict

When in 1887 the residents of Battersea and Wandsworth handed control of their common from a body of conservators to a local authority they did not realise the consequences of their action. There was and there remains a conflict of interest within a multi-purpose authority whose duty to protect and enhance the common is only one of their many duties. Wimbledon Common by contrast

retains its conservators to this day and they only act for the common. The case of the Fitzhugh estate and the Spencer Park School are only two examples of the conflict a multi-purpose authority can face.

*This article is based on research completed by the late Shirley Passmore in 2010. I am indebted to her family for permission to use this. Sadly, Shirley died in 2017. She was a member of the Battersea Society and a founder member of the Wandsworth Society and her particular efforts led to the establishment of the Wandsworth Common management advisory committee (MAC) which advises Wandsworth Council on the maintenance and enhancement of the common.*

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## Council offers EU advice

Wandsworth is working to support EU citizens. Jenny Sheridan reports

Brexit will affect all of us. But perhaps the most immediately affected will be people from EU countries who live in the UK. In Wandsworth, there are more than 26,000 such EU citizens. The largest number come from Poland, followed by French, Italians and Germans. Many live in Battersea, where they work, shop, study, take their children to school and take part in the life of the community. The prospect of Brexit threw this life into confusion and made planning for the future very difficult, as James Williamson outlined (*BM* spring 2017).

Wandsworth Council is doing its bit to make life a little less uncertain for its EU citizens. It has set up an advice service to help clarify the situation, so far as possible. Kasia Zagrodniczek is employed by Citizens Advice Wandsworth, on behalf of the council, to offer advice and to signpost people to the documents they will need.

The government has created a new immigration status for EU citizens. 'Settled status' will enable people to work and live in the UK. This is currently an entitlement but after Brexit people will need to apply for it and

to prove that they have lived in the UK for five years.

When I met Kasia in early December, the government had recently announced a new system to speed up and simplify registration. Kasia said that while this promise was welcome, it is not yet law. Some rights have been confirmed but much remains unresolved.

### Caveats

The European Commission's booklet, *EU Citizens' rights and Brexit*, (published on Bastille Day, 14 July, 2017) is full of caveats such as

'Nothing will change as long as the UK is part of the EU', and 'this (eg visas or tuition fees) will be subject to Brexit negotiations'.

There are few hard and fast statements.

Wandsworth Council has been at the forefront of boroughs lobbying the government and the EU to protect EU citizens' rights and to clarify their position more swiftly.

Council leader Ravi Govindia has pushed for councils to be involved in the negotiation process. He has said, 'For us they

are first and foremost Wandsworth citizens .... The contribution of citizens from the EU to London's current and future success cannot be over-estimated.'

It appears that Wandsworth, along with Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, is one of the few London boroughs to offer a specific advice service for their EU residents. Kasia Zagrodniczek is hoping she will be joined by volunteers who can assist her. 'I'm looking for people who can speak one of the European languages,' she says. Interested people should email [volunteering@cawandsworth.org](mailto:volunteering@cawandsworth.org). Training will be offered.

### Event

Citizens Advice Wandsworth is holding a free event for EU nationals living in Wandsworth. It will provide information and advice about their post-Brexit status, and how to apply for permanent residence and British nationality. The event will be held at Wandsworth Town Hall on Tuesday 13 February.

*To access the advice service or to attend the event, email [euadvice@cawandsworth.org](mailto:euadvice@cawandsworth.org)*



## Trees: good for the environment, good for us

Andrew Wills, co-ordinator of the Wandsworth Tree Wardens Network, outlines a new strategy

The Wandsworth Tree Wardens Network (WTW) is made up of local volunteers. Our aim is to promote public awareness of the many benefits of trees in urban environments and to help improve the treescape in Wandsworth.

Earlier this year we produced a discussion paper titled *A 21st Century Tree Strategy for Wandsworth*. The aim of this paper was to encourage Wandsworth Council to revise its existing Tree Policy which the WTW considers to be outdated. WTW feels that Wandsworth have at times allowed property developers to get off too lightly by allowing them to remove mature trees or not enforcing re-planting conditions imposed as a condition to granting planning approval.

### Positive

It was against this background that the discussion paper (see it at [wandsworthtreewardens.org/about-us](http://wandsworthtreewardens.org/about-us)) was presented in May to all Wandsworth councillors in the hope that it would provide a basis on which a new long-term tree policy/strategy could be developed for the borough. It has received positive feedback, including from Wandsworth's leader, Cllr Govindia. The paper discusses the many benefits afforded by trees beyond the obvious aesthetic and environmental ones. Other benefits include:

**Bio-diversity** – a mature oak may host up to 423 different invertebrates

**Economic** – numerous studies show that a significant premium value is attributed to tree lined residential and commercial areas

**Medical** – patient recovery times are significantly reduced for those hospital patients that have a view overlooking a green or wooded environment; and

**Health** – studies have shown that ten trees on a street improves people's perception of their health as much as having an extra £10,000 income.

The discussion paper encourages the council to adopt a long-term ambitious strategy that is visionary and which will benefit generations to come. It includes details of specific policies which the WTW would like Wandsworth to formally adopt as part of the official Borough Plan.

### Health

This would ensure that such policies and strategic vision are adhered to and there is a degree of accountability. The WTW acknowledge that there will be a financial cost associated with adopting, implementing and policing any new strategy. However we believe the cost will be relatively modest compared to the long-term detrimental cost of failing to address important environmental and health issues. Of course, trees alone will not address all of society's 21st century ills, however they can make a significant contribution.

In November, the WTW met with Enable (Wandsworth's contractors responsible for park and tree maintenance) and key representatives from the council and agreed the following next steps:

1 WTW will submit a joint response to Wandsworth's recent borough-wide consultation survey. This will emphasise the need to ensure that the many benefits of trees are recognised and understood and that this needs to be reflected within the borough's future policy, strategy and management arrangements

2 Enable (with the assistance of WTW) will review the WTW discussion paper in the context of

the borough's current and possible future tree policy/strategy; and

3 Following this review, prepare and make formal submissions to Wandsworth in relation to the 2018 review of the Borough's Local Plan (this review typically occurs only once every five years).

Separately, we also encourage all *Battersea Matters* readers to write to their local councillors and simply say that you have heard about the WTW's discussion paper and that they think it makes good common sense. Perhaps you could urge your councillors to ensure as many of the WTW's proposals as possible are formally adopted.

We believe that Wandsworth is generally supportive of our ideas and that it is a case of exerting the correct pressure to ensure things move forward in a timely fashion. In the meantime, it is encouraging to learn that Wandsworth has recently announced that 1000 new street trees will be planted throughout the borough over the next two years (500 each year). The vast majority of these trees will be replacement plantings in existing empty tree pits.

We welcome new members. No knowledge of trees is necessary, just enthusiasm!

*Meeting dates for 2018 are:*

*8 March Wandsworth Town Hall*

*7 June Nature Scope Centre, next to Skylark Café, Wandsworth Common*

*6 September Nature Scope Centre, next to Skylark Café, Wandsworth Common*

*6 December Wandsworth Town Hall*

*Meetings begin at 6.30pm and finish no later than 8.30pm*



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## Google spy kiosks

New phone boxes could invade our privacy says Adrian Short

The 'phoneboxes of the future' will be coming to Battersea soon as BT starts to replace its old boxes with new InLink internet kiosks. Fifty are already installed in central London and many more are working their way through the planning process. Wandsworth Council has already granted planning permission for 20 InLink kiosks with another 55 in the pipeline for the borough. Examples already approved locally are on Battersea Bridge Road and Lavender Hill/Eland Road.

BT InLink kiosks provide free wifi funded by digital advertising screens front and back. You can make free phone calls and send texts, get power to charge your phone, and there's a screen where you can use maps and the council's website. All this is provided without users or the public purse shelling out a penny.

### Distraction

So what's the catch? Well, no-one ever campaigned for more advertising on their street. Replacing printed posters with illuminated screens that are designed to be more noticeable increases the amount of visual pollution and distraction for everyone. The operators would reply that the screens comply with the relevant regulations, as if that makes them any more desirable. The Battersea Society has objected to InLink planning applications saying that they will debase the street.

But dig a little deeper and we find that the main operators of InLink aren't BT but a US company called Intersection. They're owned by Sidewalk Labs, an 'urban innovations' company owned by Alphabet Inc, which most people know as Google. InLinkUK is part of Google's strategy to bring 'smart cities' technologies to major cities. Leeds has just got its first kiosk. New York has over 1,000 and will eventually have 7,500.

But serving up free wifi and showing ads is just the tip of the iceberg.

At its heart, InLink is a surveillance system that can be adapted to do just about anything. As the operators put it: 'The modular nature of the

build of InLinks allows us to evaluate and invest in the best tools and techniques of collecting meaningful insights for the community as sensor technology improves.' In other words, these kiosks are designed to be fitted with devices to soak up information from the street about anything that moves and send it back to Google's data centre.

Each kiosk is fitted with three cameras: one above each of the advertising screens on the front and back, and a third above the tablet screen on the side. In New York, the main two cameras are used to record video which is retained for seven days and only used in case of an incident. The operators do not say whether they are able to view live video from the kiosks.

Bluetooth beacons in the kiosks, can pop up location-specific advertisements and open apps on people's phones as they pass within range. BT InLink's advertising partner, Primesight, runs a national proximity marketing network which uses Google's beacon system that is integrated into Android phones and the Chrome web browser.

InLinkUK says that they anticipate tracking things like pedestrian, bike and vehicle movements. A common way to do this is to use a wifi network like those in the kiosks to scan for stray signals sent off by all phones in range. This can track literally everyone with a working wifi device passing by from kiosk to kiosk, not just people who have chosen to use the wifi network.

### Spy bins

The advertising firm Renew used this wifi tracking method to install 'spy bins' in the City of London in 2013, only to be told later by the City to remove them. On a larger scale, TfL held a trial in 2016 to track Tube passengers using their wifi network. They used the data they collected to reconstruct 42 million

precise journeys taken by over five million people, most of whom were unaware that they were being tracked. While TfL insisted that this data had been pseudonymised so that specific individuals couldn't be identified, they later refused a Freedom of Information Act request to release the data because they saw a risk of identifiable people's movements being disclosed. TfL estimates that they could make £322 million using this data to target advertising at passengers and increase shop rents on their network.

### Privacy

Some people don't mind if Google knows where they're going and who they're going with. But what about those of us who do mind? Privacy isn't just for people who have something to hide. We all make decisions every day about what personal we choose to share with and for which purposes. Most of us are happy for our doctor to have our medical records but not our next door neighbours or our social media contacts. We need to protect our freedom to choose for ourselves what other people know about us, whether those people live next door or whether they're a global corporation. Systems like BT InLink need to respect our privacy by default because it's practically impossible to avoid them once they're installed in large numbers on our streets.

Campaigners may be able to get a handful of planning applications for InLink kiosks refused where they are poorly sited such as on particularly cramped pavements or in conservation areas. But rather than regulating BT InLink as just a collection of individual physical phoneboxes, communities should be empowered to decide whether they want such a system on their streets at all, and if so, exactly what it should and shouldn't be permitted to do.

Wandsworth Council has received legal advice that privacy issues cannot be taken into account when making planning decisions, leaving Google and their partners free to install whatever technology they like if they can get permission for the kiosks on the street. So unless we watch them and push back, they'll be watching us.



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# The homely gas lamps of Battersea

Janice Morphet reviews Richard Church's memoir *Over the Bridge*

Portrait of Richard Church  
by William Shackleton

Richard Church (1893 – 1972) was a prolific and popular author whose first volume of autobiography, *Over the Bridge*, was published in 1955 and won the Sunday Times Gold Medal. While Church is not much read or remembered today, *Over the Bridge*, about his early life in Battersea, was a set text for public exams into the 1980s. The book opens on New Year's Day 1900, with Richard and his brother crossing Battersea Bridge to collect a goldfish from friends of their parents, caretakers for a painter in Tite Street. On the way home, the brothers meet with some trouble as boys pursue them in the streets to seize their prize.

## Social gradations

While the style of Church's prose is dated, his observation of detail is particularly good. He describes the nuance of place with a light touch on every page. He notes the social gradations within Battersea streets and in the schools where his mother taught in Horseferry Road and Battersea Park Road, next to the polytechnic. These schools were different from the calmer and more genteel nature of his own school in Surrey Lane.

Church spent the early years of his life at 24 Henning Street. His parents met at St Luke's Church, Chelsea and when first married moved south of the river to live in 'rooms' including at 57 Rosenau Road. Richard's mother Lavinia had trained to be a teacher. She was related to George Eliot but her family was ashamed of her bohemian lifestyle and seldom mentioned it. Lavinia wanted to get on in life and continued working when the children were small, travelling home at lunchtime to feed them as babies. His father was a postman and then, helped by his wife, passed the civil service examinations to become a sorter at the South West District office, first in Buckingham Palace Road and then at the red brick sorting office behind the Army and Navy in Victoria Street.

The house in Henning Street was

one that Richard's parents were buying with a mortgage from the Temperance Building Society, helped by a deposit saved from his mother's pay. The street was one where respectable lower middle-class families lived (although one end was socially better than the other). The gardens were an important part of life with many men keeping livestock including rabbits, poultry, pigeons and goats. At the weekend, the men would ride off in donkey carts or on their bicycles to race their pigeons.

Richard was cared for by a local girl who preferred the bustle of the Latchmere Junction with its department store and buses to Battersea Park. As a small child Richard remembered seeing 'the gloomy Battersea Park Road, newly set with electric arc-lamps, tall, futurist standards, that began to hiss and spluttered and needed no kindling by a man with a pole, as did the homely gas lamps of our side streets'.

Inside the house, Richard remembered spending much of his time in the long parlour, 'front and back rooms thrown into one by opening folding doors...and the space before the bay window impenetrable, being filled with bamboo stands carrying enormous flower pots'. He remembers his mother bringing home cuttings for her garden from the Battersea streets as she walked around.

## Bicycles

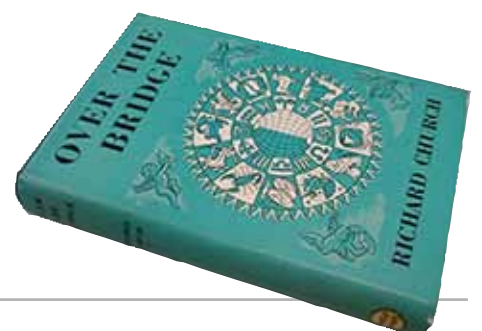
Church's life changed after a visit to an optician in Lavender Hill, opposite the Shakespeare Theatre, after which everything became much clearer. This was helpful when his father bought bicycles for Richard and his brother for the first Christmas of the twentieth century. Riding around Battersea in the quiet of Boxing

Day, Richard later reflected on the efforts of Battersea householders to keep their curtains clean and pave their paths with bottle tops in an attempt to keep the industrial and river grime away – 'the dreary streets were diversified with a thousand eccentricities of domestic pride'.

While Richard's brother did well at the Polytechnic School, Richard stayed at Surrey Lane and his mother became increasingly unwell.

When he was ten, the family moved to Ruskin Walk, Herne Hill, for the sake of Lavinia's health and Richard joined Dulwich Hamlet School. The house was detached and double fronted, signifying social progress. Their garden backed onto Half Moon Lane where the horse bus travelled to Peckham, presumably the forerunner of the number 37. The new house had been built for the architect of the Kennington theatre for his own use, while their Battersea house was sold to a colleague of Richard's father in the post office. Living in Herne Hill was different from Battersea. Everyone had to travel further to work and it loosened the strings of family life.

While *Over the Bridge* starts with a journey across the river, it concludes with another journey into adolescence, within a different social milieu. The differences between Herne Hill and Battersea remained strong in Richard's memory so that he could write about them in detail fifty years later. While he may have come to prefer Half Moon Lane to Surrey Lane, his writing provides us with an enduring and detailed picture of life in Battersea in 1900.



## A stitch doing time

Fine Cell Work have opened a workshop for ex-prisoners in Battersea. Katie Steingold describes the charity's work

Eyebrows were raised in 1997 when the founder of Fine Cell Work, Lady Anne Tree, explained her new charitable venture: training prisoners in needlework and embroidery, before selling it on 'to top shops'. A sweet and rather lunatic idea, you could see people thinking.

But assumptions that Fine Cell Work would be an amateurish and short-lived affair show how times have changed. Ethical craft businesses now abound and there are a host of umbrella organizations to support them. Lady Anne Tree and her founder trustee Robert Oakeshott were visionaries. Unmaterialistic yet commercially savvy, they thought Fine Cell Work could make money for prisoners and for itself, and that it could bring purpose and beauty to these impoverished places.

Lady Anne was right. In 2017, Fine Cell Work celebrated its 20th anniversary. Now working in 32 prisons across the UK, last year the charity provided paid, creative needlework to over 500 stitchers. This work allows prisoners to foster hope, discipline and build self-esteem, so they can finish their sentences with work skills, money earned and saved, and with the self-belief not to re-offend.

### Calming

Initially, it is often the money which attracts our stitchers. They get paid approximately one third of the retail price of each product they stitch, so it is well paid in comparison to prison jobs. But once they have started it is often the therapeutic value of the work that keeps them there. Crafting of any nature can be calming, and completing a piece is very rewarding. For many it is the first time they have seen a project through from start to finish and been praised for it. It is also the only job that prisoners can complete in their cells as well as in a classroom environment.

Our products – beautiful cushions,

lampshades and decorations – are developed in collaboration with well-known designers. Stitchers' work is sold online and through events across the country, as well as being commissioned by churches, English Heritage sites and museums. It can be seen at our office on Buckingham Palace Road.

You may wonder what this has to do with you? Well, last year we opened a community workshop in Battersea, thanks to a significant grant from the National Lottery. The Fine Works Hub is a purposeful, productive space where we offer work experience to stitchers upon their release from prison. We offer accredited employment training and one to one mentoring to help them find work in a related field. They are supported by our very experienced production team.

There is a real gap in support for ex-prisoners upon their release. Without support and encouragement to regain independence and reintegrate into society, it becomes far too easy for ex-prisoners to fall back into old habits and re-offend. In providing a creative, safe space to stitchers upon their release, we aim to help tackle this problem.

Bob\*, a former Fine Cell worker who now has a successful career in IT, writes,

'Getting out of prison was quite scary. Once the gate opens you are on your own. You feel how big and fast and noisy everything is. I went to Sainsburys and it was terrifying. ...There are internal things you have to deal with. Having freedom feels strange. Even though you are free you are still not independent and you cannot support yourself. You have nothing to do all day. Sometimes you get to a point when you feel maybe it was better inside. You need something to focus on and you badly need day-to-day purpose.

'Coming to volunteer with FCW was crucial because it gave me a sense of purpose and value. It gave me confidence for job interviews



where I would have been terrified about being an ex-offender. Volunteering with FCW you have a role with responsibility. You're being given trust. That is so important because you feel people won't give you trust because of where you have been. The trust they give you makes you feel "I can build up my future. I can tackle barriers and deal with a job. All because there are people who have believed in me".'

The Fine Works Hub is not a new idea. We have been testing and planning the model for three years now, and we have had outstanding results. We have worked with 13 ex-prisoners, and have had a 92% success rate. In other words, there has been only 8% reoffending as opposed to a national average of 46%.

### Skills

Of these 13 former Fine Cell workers, all of whom were trained in prison by FCW in textile skills, seven have found work in textile trades - upholstery, soft furnishings, machine embroidery, costume-making and leatherwork. Tom\*, who is now working part-time as an upholsterer while he completes his formal upholstery training, writes,

'When I got out of prison Fine Cell Work really helped give me the confidence to do something with the hand-stitching skills I had learned inside. They provided a space where I could come to and not feel overwhelmed by all the challenges I had to face when I was released. They introduced me to people who could help me develop my career. Now I am training as a professional upholsterer and working part-time in the field. Thanks to Fine Cell Work I have a new life and a career path in something I really enjoy.'

*\*Names have been changed.  
Katie Steingold is communications manager for Fine Cell Work  
[www.finecellwork.co.uk](http://www.finecellwork.co.uk)*



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## No hope but demolition: Nine Elms in 1890

Duncan Parish dips into Booth's *Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People of London*

A lack of suitable housing, unaffordable rents, and antisocial behaviour are frequent concerns for those of us living in Battersea today. Thanks to the work of one Victorian social reformer, Charles Booth, we know they were common features of Battersea life almost 120 years ago too.

Booth's *Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People in London*, carried out between 1886 and 1903 was a labour of love for a man with a mind for data and statistics and a desire to understand the reasons for poverty and social inequality in the rapidly growing Victorian cities.

Using a team of researchers, he set about documenting 'the condition and occupations of the inhabitants of London'. The inquiry, published in no fewer than 17 volumes in 1903, not only contained details on the wage levels and conditions of employment of every occupation followed in London, but also looked at religious, moral and social influences.

### The poverty maps

While Booth's notebooks contain a wealth of information about London's migrant communities, religious groups and social ills, the most accessible parts of the review are the poverty maps. Each street is colour-coded according to seven levels of poverty or wealth from 'vicious, semi-criminal' classes to the wealthy 'upper classes'.

The maps, which cover an area of London from Hammersmith to Greenwich and from Hampstead to Clapham, were drawn up by researchers accompanying local policemen on their beats. It's from their notebooks and this survey that we get an insight into Battersea at the turn of the twentieth century.

### Battersea during the 1890s

By the time the maps were drawn, the marshes and market gardens surrounding Battersea Village were a distant memory. When the Wandsworth District Board of Works was created in 1856 covering Battersea, Clapham, Putney,



Charles Booth, 1840 – 1916

Streatham, Tooting and Wandsworth, the population numbered 65,000. But growth was rapid with the development of industry and the coming of Clapham Junction and the 'Battersea Tangle' of railways (see Sue Demont's article *BM* Summer 2016).

By 1889 when the London County Council took over the running of the area, the population of Battersea alone had more than doubled to 150,000 and London was the largest city in the world.

It was at this time that the Metropolitan Vestry of Battersea finally shifted the commercial centre from the old village south towards Clapham Junction and constructed a number of municipal buildings including the Town Hall and Central Library. It's worth noting that even in those days there was competition between Battersea and Lambeth: 'from the condition of the streets, the work of the Battersea vestry is much better done than that of the neighbouring Lambeth.'

While many people might have a vision of industrial Battersea as a series of slums, the majority of Battersea was designated as 'fairly comfortable' with 'good ordinary earnings' containing

'the whole of the wealth and aristocracy of what one is accustomed to think of as Battersea.'

### Huge industries

Residents were often employed in local industries, particularly in the north of the borough where 'there is no lack of work for the people close at hand lining the river bank: Price's Patent Candle Co is a huge place employing thousands of hands: while Orlando Jones, and Garton Hill and Co are large concerns.'

Many also worked for the railways, and the housing provided to railwaymen and their families across Battersea was singled out as being of particularly high quality: 'The

Streets between this district, Queen's Road, and the railway are I think on Lord Battersea's Estate: this is of the highest respectability in the main the home of the railway people: the building is excellent and substantial. The houses are kept in excellent repair and most are smart with flowers and creepers.'

### Cottage gardens

In fact cottage gardens were a feature of the area with those found around York Road and 'those respectable streets off it' noted as having a 'number of beautiful cottage gardens: nowhere else in London have I seen so many on which time and money had evidently been lavishly spent.'

As with Battersea today, there was still some variation in living standards however and pockets of social inequality ran alongside the railways. Nine Elms for example was deemed to have 'the lowest depth of poverty and degradation, sheltering as it so often does... under the wall of the gas works. For this area there is no hope but in demolition, and probably in time... it will fall prey to the [London South West Railway] or the gas works.'

*'The second part of this article will be published in our Spring issue*

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## ‘More homes, that’s what we need.’

Marsha de Cordova talks to Carol Rahn about her Parliamentary passions

Meeting Marsha de Cordova, our new Labour MP, is to encounter warmth, smiles and energy. The surprise winner in last June’s election appears comfortable in her role and is a natural for putting others at ease, too. Giving her maiden speech just a few weeks after the election and named shadow minister for disabilities three months later, de Cordova is an active advocate across a range of issues.

When first elected, de Cordova announced that housing would be one of her main interests in Parliament, a priority reinforced by a constant stream of letters and emails from her constituents. As much as 60% of her constituency cases are about housing. Where does she stand on policies such as Right to Buy or Help to Buy? These are of little interest to her, as she explains, ‘Ultimately what we need is more homes to be built. That’s what we need. More homes. And we need the homes that we do have to be fit for habitation.’ Council housing is also in her sights, because, as she sees it, ‘people are desperate. My in-box is full of (messages from) people who are living in overcrowded situations or just ‘temporary’ accommodation for years and years and years and they need homes.’

### Loophole

She has little patience with what she calls the ‘viability loophole’ on affordable housing in new developments and hopes to influence a change of policy that would close this convenient get-out. ‘We need to ensure that if developers want to develop and build on our land, they have to commit to building affordable homes. We also have to look at what affordable means, because it’s very relative isn’t it? Affordable to whom?’ She calls out for particular criticism Wandsworth Council’s recent agreement to reduce affordable housing at Battersea Power Station to 9% from the already low 15%. However in line with the Council and many of her constituents, she was against the much-criticised development that will put three 8

– 17 storey buildings on the former Homebase site and is disappointed by the Mayor’s recent decision to override the Council and approve the development.

De Cordova is well aware that many of her constituents are renting from private landlords. What she has seen in Battersea has convinced her that landlords need to be made more accountable for the state of the homes they are renting—some sort of charter or certification scheme-- and she will be voting for a private member’s bill to that effect.

### Pro Remain

De Cordova’s sympathies on Brexit are in line with her pro-Remain constituency and she has gone on record as having four red lines on this issue: retaining access to the single market; protecting the rights of EU citizens living in Battersea; preserving environmental and employment rights; and a Parliamentary vote on the final deal. She declines to predict the future (Jeremy Corbyn has now said staying in the single market is not possible, although he advocated negotiating to retain those benefits) but reiterates her commitment to those red lines.

A key local issue occupying de Cordova’s time and attention at the moment is fighting reductions in the train service to Queenstown Road. With the population of the area only going to increase, she wants to see service maintained and the station made more accessible. Immigration, social security and benefits, family issues – these also make up a sizeable proportion of the concerns brought to her by constituents. She does not support a third runway at Heathrow, or more flight paths over Battersea.

How is de Cordova finding Parliament? ‘Like no other workplace’, she says ‘It’s unique because it’s the place where you come to work,

but it’s also a place where you work to make a difference and there are so many ways you can do that.’ She acknowledges there’s a steep learning curve for a new MP, noting that one thing you learn is that what goes on in the Chamber is only a small part the work, and only one of many avenues available to influence what happens in Government.

### Influence

She adds, ‘I have been a disability rights campaigner for most of my life. As a campaigner, you’re always trying to change the law, influence government, influence decision-makers. Now, being a member of Parliament, I am part of that. I have to use all the levers that are available to me to try to change the law and also be a voice for the disabled.’

It has been an incredible nine months, she says. She speaks, as she did in her maiden speech, of the remarkable politicians of Battersea’s past, ‘I do stand on the shoulders of some great people that have gone before me, and they should never be forgotten. For me to come along that path, that journey, is amazing and I am really thrilled to be doing it.’

And if Parliament were not sitting today and she had no constituency duties – how might she be spending the day? Most likely enjoying time with family, among them her irresistible four year old twin god-daughters. Or possibly playing tennis for the visually impaired, a game she enjoys enormously. But if time and distance were no obstacle, she’d be watching Roger Federer in the Australian Open.

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## Onions for breakfast

Jenny Sheridan writes about temporarily sharing her home with refugees

I don't have children, but for a few weeks in November/December I became Mama Jenny. My 'son' was Ahmad, a refugee from Deraa in Syria who stayed in my spare room. Before that he had slept on friends' floors or sometimes in night buses or on the streets. As he is as snappy a dresser as you can be on very limited benefits, and meticulous about personal hygiene, it must have been dreadful for him.

Ahmad came to me through Refugees At Home, a marvellous small organisation set up in 2015 on a very short shoestring. It now has charitable status. They link asylum seekers and refugees who need accommodation with people who have offered to host them. Since October 2015 they have placed 830 people, saving them from cold, hard and dangerous nights sleeping rough. A very few of those people have stayed with me.

Refugees At Home has close contacts with organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers, such as the Red Cross and the Refugee Council, who refer people who need accommodation. RAH doesn't offer placements to people with serious mental health problems or substance abuse.

It's quite a large decision to make, to share your home with a stranger who may speak little English and who

comes from a different culture. But once you have made that decision, it's actually very easy. Refugees at Home sends a home visitor to check out that you and your home are appropriate and you await your first guest – with trepidation, in my case. I needn't have worried. She was a delightful woman from east Africa who spent much of her time volunteering at a refugee support centre in north London.

Initially, as a single woman living alone, I said I would only take female guests. But, as Refugees At Home point out, most people who manage to make the perilous journey to the UK are male. After Jo Cox's death, wanting to do more to help, I said I would host men as well. The two young men I've had staying here at various times since then have shown me that my anxiety was misplaced.

### Chats

One kept himself to himself most of the time (though the cats loved him), while Ahmad was very outgoing and chatty. Our 'chats' amused us both: his English was extremely limited and we conversed using a mixture of English, drawing and Google Translate on his mobile phone. Given the peculiar translations it came up with in English, I wonder what I seemed to be saying to him when it converted to Arabic.



Ahmad was polite about my cooking but only really complimentary about shepherd's pie. Sometimes he cooked for me. I remember a pepper and onion stew mixed with egg, which made a surprisingly delicious breakfast, though I wasn't so keen on the raw spring onion and pickled cucumber on the side

It is relatively easy for me to have people to stay. I have a spare bedroom and bathroom. One of my guests came on from someone who lives in a one bedroom flat – the guest slept on the sofa bed in the living room. I choose to have guests for just a few weeks, so that out-of-London friends or my US-based brother can come to stay. I feel lucky to be able to offer refugees and asylum-seekers a few weeks staying in a warm and comfortable house.

My next guest will be from Eritrea. She apparently speaks little English but fluent Tigrinya. I hope Google Translate can cope.

[www.refugeesathome.org](http://www.refugeesathome.org)



Over 20 members of the Battersea Society celebrated Twelfth Night on 6 January at the traditional supper at Antipasto on Battersea Park Road.

### BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS COMING UP

● **Wednesday 21 February**  
6.30 for 7pm  
Film Night: *My Beautiful Launderette*

Dyson Building, RCA, Hester Road, £5 on the door  
Phone 07467 947885 to let us know if you're coming

● **Thursday 8 March**  
6.30 for 7pm  
Talk on significant Battersea women through history  
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, £5 on the door.

● **Thursday 15 March**  
6.30 for 7pm  
7pm Speaker from US Embassy.  
7.30 Battersea Society AGM. St Mary's Church

● **Monday 19 March 10.30 am**  
Visit to the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly  
£15, pay in advance, see enclosed sheet.

● **Thursday 12 April 2pm**  
Tour of JMW Turner's house, Twickenham. £8, pay in advance, see enclosed sheet.

## Going for gold with gardening

Learning in the garden is transforming pupils' behaviour and learning, says Sue Perry



Christ Church CE Primary School in Battersea is celebrating! We have become the first school in London to achieve national Gold Level Accreditation for Learning Outside the Classroom.

The school introduced gardening to pupils in 2009 and since then outdoor learning has grown to play a vital role in educating pupils and transforming behaviour. Additional natural outdoor classrooms have been created in the school's gardens.

School classes are named after different species of tree after head teacher Colette Morris discovered that the children did not know the names of trees.

### No gardens

Christchurch School is located in an area with high levels of deprivation and surrounded by tower blocks. Many of the children have little contact with nature and most do not have a garden. 65% of the pupils are 'pupils premium' (ie from a disadvantaged background with parents on a low income), 17% have special educational needs (SEN) and 40% do not have English as their first language. There are issues of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse in the area. Some children do not meet the national average for behaviour and achievement when they start school.

Outdoor learning is now however a successful daily occurrence used by this school to teach the curriculum

and raise standards.

The four school gardens are used for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers. They also act as outdoor classrooms, where pupils solve maths problems, listen to and write stories, draw and take photographs, learn about plants and their botanical names, or simply enjoy nurturing the beautiful scented perfume garden that they designed and created themselves. Their hard work has just paid off by winning £2,000 in Cultivation Street's competition for the best school garden in the UK.

Children love being outside in nature. There is space, it is fun and they learn through exploring and discovering for

themselves. Having lessons outside balances the intensity of working in a classroom. Pupils who struggle with emotions let go of what they were worried about and want to join in with outdoor learning.

Outdoor learning is a whole school approach for us. Having worked at Kew and Chelsea Physic Garden as well as having trained to teach, I bring gardening expertise to the school. Led by our inspiring head teacher, Colette Morris, we are the first school in London to get the Gold Level Accreditation, and we have had to be very creative and innovative to make it happen.

As well as leading whole class planting sessions, I and the outdoor learning team take small referral groups of pupils outside to support SEN provision. This includes work with autistic children, developing speech and language, offering emotional support to bereaved children and generally helping pupils to build resilience, confidence and skills for learning outside.

The children were also recently involved in a whole week of planting at a local community memorial garden to commemorate 500 local civilians who were bombed and killed in the second world war (War Comes Home project). Pupils feel a sense of

pride in their environment and they are starting to understand that they can make a difference to people and places through their actions.

Spurred on by parents saying that they couldn't afford to buy organic fruit and vegetables, the school worked with local residents to develop a community garden near the school. This now produces a huge selection of fruit and vegetables, which are used by the children to learn about healthy eating. A market place in the playground is a regular event to sell or give away excess produce. We also ran a popular healthy eating and art project in the garden last summer due to local demand. The school has a weekly gardening club and offers lunchtime gardening sessions.

Colette Morris believes that school gardening has lots of benefits: 'Our

experience is that outdoor learning significantly improves pupils' learning and behaviour in English, maths and science. Pupils look forward to going out into the garden, they enjoy working together and will always try foods

that they have grown themselves.'

**'I love gardening. If I feel angry or upset, the garden makes me feel better' (year 3 pupil).**

### Vegetables

The school has pro-actively reached out and gained support from the local community, who have given time, money and labour to build the gardens. Our next project is to transform the playground garden to create a natural environment, with wild flowers, compost area, log pile, fruit bushes, vegetables, water feature, sculpture, seating and water butts. We also want to make a sensory area and small den-like areas with seating for pupils when they need quiet or if they get upset.

We aspire to create a beautiful and peaceful space for our children to enjoy and remember as a happy place. We welcome ideas, volunteers, expertise (and funds!) from our local community.

*www.christchurchbattersea.co.uk*  
*Sue Perry is specialist outdoor learning teacher at Christchurch Primary School, Battersea*



**Battersea went wonderfully bonkers this Christmas with glamour and tradition in Spencer Park, moody blues and the full Monty in Bolingbroke Grove**

## Save our commons!

Harvey Heath outlines an important legal case

If you live near Wandsworth Common, you may know that Wandsworth Council recently lost a judicial review brought by a local resident. The topic was local but the principle is relevant to all open spaces. The aim was to prevent the council from leasing out Neals Lodge and cottage (next to and above the Skylark Café) to a commercially operated chain of nurseries.

Without going into too much detailed legalese, the basis of the challenge was that the use of common land for a commercial venture which had exclusive use of the premises, fell outside the powers of the council under legislation governing the use of the common. The judgement may be viewed on line at ([www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2017/1947.html](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2017/1947.html)) but the gist



**Neals Lodge: thin end of the wedge?**

was that the council should provide and maintain recreational facilities for the public. The lease to the private nursery would restrict public access and would be contrary to the statutory provision under which the common is held in trust for the use and enjoyment of all local inhabitants.

This High Court judgement laid down an important principle that the Common is a public resource that must be managed in the interest of its users and not as a financial asset for the Council. It can be described as

a landmark decision of great importance nationally.

The judge did not give permission for an appeal but Wandsworth Council have now applied to the Court of Appeal and have been given the right to appeal which presumably will be heard sometime in 2018. The local resident who took the council to judicial review faces the task of raising funds, getting a legal team together and submitting a defence to the appeal.

It is important to understand that if the judgement is overturned on appeal, Wandsworth Council will effectively be given a green light to exploit the common and other open spaces for practically any commercial venture. This unique facility that we love could be unrecognisable to future generations.

*If you are interested and could offer some support, please get in touch with me:  
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