

The Battersea Society

Registered charity Number No: 1103560

Chair's Report for 2008/2009

We continue to work hard to represent the main issues facing the communities of Battersea and at the same time to provide a service to our members by informing you of these issues and also to entertain and enlighten by a diverse series of events.

Communications

In 2007, Mike Roden and Jenny Sheridan undertook respectively the responsibilities of web master and newsletter editor. This year has been the first full year when the fruits have been garnered from these decisions and they have brought to the Society a new found richness. The web site has developed with many special and original features and, for many members, it has become an indispensable tool for checking forthcoming events and keeping up with Battersea related news stories. The web site also links to press releases from Wandsworth Council and stories from local press and items of Society news. Accordingly, in 2008, we recorded 25,000 visitor hits to our site, and I would say that it is one of the best web sites for a civic society to be found anywhere in the country.

In addition to the website, Mike Roden as our Communication Officer has launched a regular monthly email newsletter that makes it possible to quickly and very cheaply contact more than half the membership with changes to the events calendar reminders about events and forthcoming meetings. I hope that more members over the coming years will provide email addresses to the Society to enable us to expand this facility.

Alongside this our Newsletter, now renamed "Battersea Matters", has received many congratulatory plaudits from all sides for the four excellent editions that have been produced since the 2008 AGM. For example, Maureen Larkin, our membership secretary, has been overwhelmed and of course very pleased at the number of people who have contacted her about the article outlining the conditions found in her youth in thirties and forties Battersea in the Spring 2009 edition. Jenny Sheridan, the editor, has brought a great degree of professionalism to the Newsletter which we all appreciate. You can, if you wish, receive your copies by email, and in colour at that, as some members already do. The current Newsletter, together with earlier ones, can all be found in glorious technicolour on our web site.

Membership

Our membership is 260 full individual and family members, which is slightly up on last year. In addition we have some collective memberships of residents' associations. We do need more members and our marketing committee have undertaken a number of initiatives to improve this situation. Considering our size it would seem that we are able

to punch well over our weight. We also would like members to consider becoming active members either by joining one of our committees or volunteering to lend a hand at our public meetings and events. Contact lists are at the end of this report.

Campaigning

Three Committees, Planning, Community, and Open Spaces have been campaigning actively throughout the year in taking up various issues affecting Battersea. **Planning** has had a very full plate indeed and major issues that it has taken up have included the Nine Elms developments including the proposed new American Embassy, Battersea Power Station, Clapham Junction's Delancey Proposals, the Royal College of Art development and Ralph West Hall.

About the time of the last AGM, our planning committee produced a timely paper on development of **Battersea Nine Elms area** which received wide circulation and this year we have been successful in getting the Planning Forum of Wandsworth Borough Council to table it at their next meeting to be held in November. (This paper is available on our website.) Meanwhile the Council held a launch meeting of Nine Elms as a Regeneration Area in March 2009 with Edward Lister, the Leader of the Council stating "There's no bigger regeneration opportunity in the capital than Nine Elms".

Battersea Power Station. The new owners consulted on their development proposals last summer and hosted a Society meeting in September where these were debated. Opinions of members about these specific designs particularly the 300 metres eco-chimney were mixed but the meeting was unanimous on the need for development to go ahead to ensure that the long-neglected site comes back into productive use. Early in 2009 the plans for the eco-chimney were withdrawn and we now await further consultation.

Clapham Junction. The issue of the Delancey scheme for Clapham Junction, our town centre, has excited more interest amongst our members than any other topic. Our critical comments (which can be seen on our website and also on the council's website) were echoed by many, not least by the government's own Council for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). The Clapham Junction Action Group of residents local to Clapham Junction has been working tirelessly to oppose the proposals and held a public meeting in January at which I spoke, alongside Cyril Richert and Kate Williams and Martin Linton MP.

This year saw the approval of the planning application for the **Royal College of Art** development in Elcho Street and the start of the planning process for a **new US Embassy** at Nine Elms. We welcome both these developments and will continue to work with both organisations. The consultants working on the US Embassy have promised to hold a meeting with the Society when they have submitted their planning application. On a sadder note the year saw the approval of plans for **Ralph West Hall** which we opposed and which differ little from those rejected both by Wandsworth Council and, on appeal, by the government inspector.

The Community Committee has been active in areas of health, recycling and repair of roads. On **Healthcare**, as was reported last year, we submitted our evidence to the Primary Care Trust as part of the PCT's consultation exercise. This is on the web site and was reported fully in the Newsletter in the summer. We can now report that we are to hold a follow up public meeting addressed by the PCT on 13 July 2009 at All Saints Church, Prince of Wales Drive. This meeting will explore the implementation of the PCT's decisions.

I fully acknowledge that many people, particularly those who wished to preserve the Bolingbroke Hospital as a full scale hospital, were disappointed at the position we took in supporting the development of four health centres for Battersea, including the establishment of the proposed new main clinic at Grant Road. However, the committee felt it important that we should speak for the people of Battersea as a whole and support the accessible Grant Road proposition.

A public meeting on **recycling** was held in March 2009 and we noted that Wandsworth has few community schemes and we wish to rectify this by considering possible developments. A visit to the waste management centre in Rochester is also planned for the autumn.

The Open Spaces Committee has taken part in the Council's consultation on a new Cultural Strategy. It has pressed to know the future plans for Falcon Park, opposed the white line on footpaths on Wandsworth Common and is undertaking a review of the Thames riverside walkways.

Events

The Events programme has proved to be very popular this year with many events being oversubscribed. The spring lunch and the Summer Party proved especially popular. As you will note from our financial statement, the events income is by now more or less equal to our income from subscriptions. This is a stunning achievement and I would like to offer huge thanks to the Events team, and their range of willing and able volunteers, for this vital success in enriching our lives.

Finally I would like to record a special thanks to St Mary's Church for providing us with such a beautiful venue for so many of our events and activities.

Trustees

In July last year we learned of the death of John Johnson. Many eulogies were written at the time and we attended the tree planting in his honour organised by the Friends of Battersea Park. I have to say we miss him still. What a tragic loss for us all.

Contacts

We are of course delighted that so many members turn out for these and other events but we would welcome more members coming forward to help at all events or partake in our deliberations . Contact details are:

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7th May 2009

Tony Tuck
Chair: The Battersea Society