



Battersea elects its first woman MP

Battersea has a new MP: a Conservative for the first time in 13 years and a woman for the first time ever. In 2005 Labour won Battersea with the smallest of margins: 163 votes. This time round Jane Ellison (pictured) came first with a 6,000 majority.

The result represents a swing to the Conservatives of 6.5 per cent, following a similar swing at the last general election. Despite the expectations raised by the televised debates the Liberal Democrats scarcely increased their share of the vote. With a few exceptions London does not appear to be fertile ground for the Lib Dems.

Young professionals

Battersea had a strong left-wing tradition, electing one of the first black mayors and a communist MP, Shapurji Saklatvala, in the 1920s. However the pattern has been changing, with an exceptionally large number of young professionals moving in and a very high turnover of residents. More than half the voters on the register can change from one election to



the next.

The Conservatives held the seat between 1987, when John Bowis won it from Alf Dubs, and 1997. Both Mr Bowis and Lord Dubs are patrons of the Battersea Society.

High turnout

Turnout was 66%, the highest since 1997, when it reached a high of 71 per cent. There was considerable variation between wards, with just half the electoral register voting in the new ward of Roehampton and Putney Heath, compared to 70 per

cent in Wandsworth Common.

Elections for Wandsworth Council were also held on 6 May. Labour gained four seats, so the council now has 47 Conservative members with a Labour opposition of 13.

Councillors elected for the seven Battersea wards

Balham: Paul Ellis, Russell King, Caroline Usher.

Fairfield: Vanessa Graham, Piers McCausland, Stuart Thom.

Latchmere: Tony Belton, Simon Hogg, Wendy Speck.

Northcote: Jenny Browne, Peter Dawson, Martin Johnson.

Queenstown: Jo-Anne Nadler, Nicola Nardelli, Alexander Raubitschek.

St Mary's Park: Mark Davies, John Hallmark, Tessa Strickland.

Shaftesbury: Jonathan Cook, James Cousins, Guy Senior.

See page 3 and 7 for interviews with the new and former MPs and page 9 for interviews with two of the new Wandsworth councillors.

The Battersea, Putney and Wandsworth Societies plan to make a joint approach in calling on Wandsworth Borough Council to establish 20mph zones in all side road across the borough.

The BBC reported last year on a study which shows the benefit of such schemes. You can read the report by going to tinyurl.com/2uhgwdg.

Local societies to press for 20mph zone in residential roads



We have set up a poll on our website,

The Battersea Society is anxious to find out the views of as many of its members as possible on this matter.

and would be very grateful if you could spare the very short time it will take to answer a couple of simple questions. We will publish the result in the next issue of *Battersea Matters*.

You can find the poll at batterseasociety.org.uk/20mph

Don't forget to visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk

for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events & planning matters

From the Editor

I make no apology for the fact that this issue of Battersea Matters is full of politics. The government and the council affect all our lives and local government in particular influences the way our community develops. While the national media explore the wider picture we need to get to know the views of our local representatives.

Open Gardens

Yet again there is no SW11 garden in the National Gardens Scheme's open gardens project. However I hope that many members will enter the free Wandsworth in Bloom awards before the closing date of 18 June (see page 8). Walking round my neighbourhood recently I have seen far too many privet hedges and spotted laurel bushes for my liking, but there have also been many delights. A foxglove has

sown itself in a small window box, like a salmon landing in a goldfish bowl. Jasmine scents the evening air. In my street a couple of us did a little autumnal guerilla gardening and it has been fun to see the wallflowers and daffodils we planted bloom on a neglected site.

Buzzing

The article on urban beekeeping (page 10) is inspiring. Could some of us make space in our gardens or roof terraces to host a hive? Just think of the peaceful buzzing, not to mention the benefit to your **plants from the free pollination. It's** a reminder too to opt for buying local honey.

Heritage

In the last issue we showcased a new booklet on heritage walks in Battersea. This is now in all local libraries, and very attractive it is.



Perhaps the Society should develop some guided walks using the trails.

As someone who has delivered the occasional leaflet in my time, I have a proposal to put to Jane Ellison. The government should make ankle-level and stiff-to-open letterboxes illegal, with dire but appropriate penalties (finger amputation?) for law-breakers. Postmen and election workers everywhere would be grateful.

Jenny Sheridan

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So the new Routemaster bus is unveiled – and a sleek looking beastie it is (see below). For those still agile enough, the pleasures of leaping onto an open platform have returned. As indeed have the less pleasurable possibilities of dismounting into the path of a cyclist overtaking the bus on the inside. Then a cheery London bus conductor will clip chunks from your oyster card and urge you to move along inside.

Well, some of the time perhaps. **At night, and 'during quiet times'** the open door will be closed, and the uniformed helper nowhere to be seen. Progress of a kind I



daresay – a new bus which costs six times the price of the much vilified bendy bus and carries half the number of passengers...

Coalition

Coalition politics is of course something that the Battersea Society understands well. As a Society we are not partisan in any way, other than when standing up for the rights of Battersea. Our members hold differing views on many other subjects of course – and it was instructive (and heartening) to see that members who get on perfectly well at Society events, were involved in more than one fierce electoral battle on different sides, for the Council, and even in the Parliamentary election.

Walk this way

As a regular walker along the riverside between St Mary's Church and Putney I'm

The Man on the Battersea bus

Mike Roden reflects on buses, politics and walking

delighted to see improvements. The closure of the old heliport control tower means that shortly a new stretch of footpath will be opened removing an irritating detour via Lombard Road.

There is already an exit near Battersea Reach onto Wandsworth Bridge, ending another lengthy detour onto the noise of York Road – and in a matter of months walkers, runners and cyclists will be able to pass under the bridge arriving conveniently at the Ship Inn.

Small changes for the better are always worth celebrating, because in the end they add up to big changes for the better.

See you next time
Mike Roden

“I’m a ‘small I’ liberal Conservative”

Jenny Sheridan meets Battersea’s new MP

“I’m very excited to be Battersea’s MP. And a little daunted,” said Jane Ellison over a cappuccino in a Northcote Road café in May. “All of us new MPs need to get clued up quickly about constituency casework. I want to get stuck in as soon as possible.”



Diverse

Ms Ellison has lived in the constituency since March 2007, having been selected as the Conservative Party’s candidate the previous year. “My partner John and I love it. It’s so vibrant and lively and diverse. There are bustling high streets and then London landmarks like the Power Station and the park. And it’s unusual to have such a lot of greenery so near to central London. I used sometimes to cycle through Battersea Park and it was joyous to see such a cross-section of people enjoying themselves – young people picnicking, kids playing, families, older people with dogs. It’s one of London’s great treasures.”

Music

While she cycles occasionally at weekends, her usual mode of transport is bus and train. She has a car – mainly, she says, for ferrying boxes of leaflets around.

Brought up in Bradford, Ms Ellison attended a comprehensive school before studying politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford University. Now aged 45, until elected she worked for John Lewis, latterly as manager of the customers’ magazine.

As a trustee of the charity Sing for Pleasure and founder of a music festival in Barnet (Humphrey Lyttleton was a patron), Ms Ellison

appreciates the hard work that volunteers do. “I’m a member of the Battersea Society and the Friends of Battersea Park. I hugely enjoy going to community events.”

Opportunity

Why did she become a Conservative? “I have a strong belief in the freedom of the individual. We should give people the opportunity to succeed rather than the state dictating the course of their life to them. However I see myself very much as a ‘small I’ liberal Conservative – so I’m quite fashionable at the moment!” She says she would have opposed the Iraq war even if she had been in Parliament at the time. She was strongly against Labour’s identity card scheme (now scrapped by the coalition government) and feels that other civil liberties have been chipped away.

Ms Ellison believes that the coalition government has much to recommend it in the current financial crisis. “It’s a broader set of shoulders to set us back on track. We will only carry people with us if everyone is doing their bit right

across society. Everyone will be asked to make sacrifices.”

On local issues, she points out that planning is a matter for the local council, though she spoke out against the Clapham Junction towers proposal. “I’m not against tall buildings in general, but it depends on the context. But Battersea isn’t a suburb, it’s close to central London.” At the Society’s meeting with the architects of the new American embassy she was impressed by the intellectual clarity with which they outlined their decision-making about the building’s shape.

Hidden homes

The MP is full of praise for the Council’s ‘hidden homes’ scheme. All new large developments should include affordable housing, she says, though she would not be drawn on the proportion. She is in favour of schemes to convert rent to mortgage, believing that people who own their home are more committed to their locality.

Regarding the Power Station redevelopment, she says that the only way to make it affordable is to improve the transport infrastructure by bringing in the Tube. Bearing in mind future public spending cuts, she speaks of the need to stimulate the private sector to bring jobs into the area.

As a governor of Honeywell School, Ms Ellison has a keen interest in education. She supports the parents’ campaign for a new secondary school in the Northcote area and has a commitment from education secretary Michael Gove that such ‘free schools’ will be encouraged.

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Battersea's new MP

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Asked about the dearth of women in Parliament and government, Ms Ellison points out that there are a number of women at junior ministerial level, including Putney MP Justine Greening. Parliamentary hours, though improved, are long and unpredictable, difficult for families with young children. However she believes that it is important to bring the perspective of the working mother into Parliament – many women in this area are juggling work and family,

and their voice needs to be heard, she says.

Priorities

What are her priorities for **Battersea?** **"Healthcare for all,** including young professionals – I'm looking forward to the new health centre in Grant Road. I have a particular interest in transport, especially trains and stations. School choice is a huge issue in the medium to long term. And I am keen to support local economic development, especially for small **businesses. It's rare for an MP to** have such a large development as

Nine Elms in their constituency. There will be new homes and jobs and an exciting new quarter for London, incorporating an iconic 30s building and good new modern **architecture."**

Neighbourhood

Ms Ellison wants to hear local views. She is organising neighbourhood walkabouts together with ward councillors and the police, to encourage people to talk to their representatives easily and informally.

The Association of Somali Women and children (ASWAC), based on the Doddington Estate, operates **like a Citizens' Advice Bureau for** the Somali community, says co-ordinator **Farhia Tarmum. "People don't know their rights. The most common problems are overcrowding and health issues such as damp and there are neighbourhood and school issues too."**

Refugees

Somalis have arrived in the UK as refugees over the past twenty years as their homeland has been wrecked by constant civil war. **"Since 1990 there has been no government, no education, just violence. Arrivals since then have had no education and are usually illiterate, which makes it much harder for them to learn English. Before the civil war, when I was a kid, education was free. I went to university,"** says Farhia.

Housing advice

ASWAC accompanies mothers to school meetings and parents' evenings to translate and explain the system. Its staff help

Helping the Somali community

Jenny Sheridan hears about the work of one of the charities that received a Battersea Society donation

people in their own language with benefits and housing advice. Farhia told of a desperate family who were about to be evicted. ASWAC explained the situation to the council and negotiated a manageable rent payment regime and the threat of homelessness was averted.

"Language is an absolutely basic problem. There is not enough ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teaching either in schools or for adults and they don't make allowance for the fact that people can't read and write in any language. So when the teacher gives the student a hand-out, it makes no

sense to them. Without English the **parents can't work and kids who arrive after Year 5 often get into trouble with drugs or gangs.**

Younger children adapt better."

Fundraising

The organization is hoping to start a new ESOL project at Chestnut Grove School in Balham. It would like to work with teenage boys, who are often affected by a lack of male mentors and role models. **"The men are on benefits, they don't work, so they are no longer respected as real fathers."**

ASWAC has been funded through a Big Lottery Fund grant over the last three years but this is now ending. Farhia is re-applying but has limited fund-raising experience. She appreciates the help that the Battersea Society gave her organisation and hopes that ASWAC will be able to continue to provide support for her community in the future.



Members of ASWAC meet with local GPs

US embassy: beacon or bunker?

Architects make the case at Battersea Society meeting

Will the new American embassy at Nine Elms (pictured below as it would be seen from the east) be a fortress, a reflection of political transparency or an iceberg? All three images rose to the surface at **the Battersea Society's meeting on 17 May**, addressed by the architects and attended by over 100 local people.

Competition

Philadelphia-based architects Kieran Timberlake won a fiercely-fought competition to design the embassy, with the two British members of the jury, including Lord Richard Rogers, apparently opposing their selection. The design has now received outline planning consent from Wandsworth Council, but the architects insist that there is still plenty of time to change the detail following consultation. They are talking with English Heritage, the GLA, all the transport bodies and local land-owners and developers, as well as with community groups such as the Battersea Society and the Friends of Battersea Park.

Both the firm's partners, James Timberlake and Stephen Kieran, presented the plans to the meeting. Explaining that the decision to

move out of the Grosvenor Square building had been due to space and security considerations, they had researched 90 sites across the London area, from Mill Hill to Croydon. Nine Elms was chosen for its transport links, its closeness to the river and to central London and the support from the council and the Mayor.

Landscaped park

At present the site is home to 1970s warehouses, car showrooms and a Royal Mail depot. The embassy will bring a landscaped park and a semi-circular pond (carefully not described as a moat) as well as the new building. Mr Timberlake described this as a transparent beacon with views out from inside and into the interior of the consular part from outside. One of the aims is to symbolise the open nature of American democracy, he said. The walls will be glass with a blast-resistant transparent screen and there will be numerous energy-saving features including a solar roof. The firm is known for its emphasis on environmental responsibility.

The form of the building is a simple cube, described by some in **the audience as "a Lego brick"** but

defended by the architects as a classic building form projecting **strength and security**. **"The crystalline quality comes from the lacy glass screen, which will gather solar energy and reflect light into the interior spaces,"** said Mr Timberlake.

Woodland

Security is of course a prime concern for both the embassy and local residents, who may fear being caught up in terrorist attacks. The landscaping will be used as a defence and there will also be many secret features – **"If I told you I would have to shoot you and then shoot myself," quipped landscape architect Hallie Boyce**. Security devices will be incorporated into the park surrounding the building to avoid unsightly and threatening perimeter walls and fences. The surrounding area will be thickly planted, with woodland, meadow and perennial areas as well as lawns. The pond will be shaded from Nine Elms Lane by shrubs and London plane trees.

A green path runs through the scheme from Vauxhall to Battersea Power Station. Another welcome transport innovation is a pedestrian

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US Embassy
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bridge between Vauxhall and Pimlico but while this has been included in the plans it has no budget and is an aspiration not a certainty. Preliminary work will start in 2012, when the site becomes vacant. The aim is to finish building in 2017, when it will officially become part of the United States of America.

Questions

The architects emphasized that at this stage all views are welcome and could contribute to the development of the design. Taking them at their word, the audience fired questions and comments at them. What about cycle access to and through the area? Bicycle parking is included and bikes will be permitted on the green path and along the river walk as well as along Nine Elms Lane as

at present. The ambassador will still live in Regents Park and will have to drive across London. Perhaps he may consider paying the congestion charge? (Ken Livingstone described a former US ambassador as “a chiselling little crook” for refusing to pay the charge and parking fines).



Critical

One or two audience members were fiercely critical of the design as “a Perspex bunker”. The architects were perplexed that a transparent building could be described as a bunker; they believe that it will

be a beacon of light and “ultimately, quite beautiful.”

Contrast

Taking up the theme of light, residents of nearby flats had concerns about lighting at night. Local offices leave their lights on all night and are seen as a beacon of waste, not light. As the flats’ living rooms face the river, all the rooms facing the future embassy are bedrooms and a brightly lit building would have serious impacts on residents’ sleep patterns. This was new to the architects, who promised to take it on board.

Most of the audience seemed enthusiastic about the new addition to Battersea. As one said, “I’m looking forward to this building. It will be a very pleasant contrast to the monstrosities at Vauxhall Cross.”

Enjoyable green spaces for everyone, where you can have fun and relax. That’s the aim of Wandsworth Council’s Parks Service. In the last few years, part of this ongoing process has been to gather together all our information about a place into a management plan for each site. This includes a summary of the history; key features and activities and what we think needs improving for the future.

Need for improvements

This process has enabled us to look again at some of the local parks, gardens, greens and open spaces within the borough to identify actions for improvement. Within the Battersea area we have looked at all of our sites including Falcon Park & Shillington Street.

One thing we identified was the need for improvements to sight lines, opening up visibility over and through planting, especially near

Falcon Park and Shillington Street open space
Valerie Selby, Wandsworth’s principal parks officer, describes recent improvements and asks for input

paths and corners so people feel safer. Also, hidden spaces had developed behind a frontage of shrubs where drug users were congregating and leaving their paraphernalia behind. These spaces have been removed. There have been improvements to the play area, and we have put up notices giving contact details. All these changes have taken place recently.

Footpaths

We still have work to do on improving the condition of footpaths, management of maintenance vehicles within the spaces and improving the diversity of tree stock to give more interest. We also await the outcome of a funding bid which, if successful, will enable us to install outdoor gym equipment

in the Shillington Street open space. We have installed similar equipment in York Gardens recently where it has been well received and well used.

Ongoing

This process is ongoing and we intend to keep our action plans up to date and rolling forwards. Crucially, we’d love to hear your views, now and in the future. Why do you like or dislike any of our parks, gardens, commons and open spaces? What would enhance your visits?

Whether it’s about Falcon Park or any of the other spaces we manage, please do get in touch. Email us at: parks@wandsworth.gov.uk or write to us at: Parks Development, Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ.

“Battersea is a complex constituency”

Outgoing MP Martin Linton talks to Jenny Sheridan

Martin Linton was Battersea’s MP from 1997 until 6 May this year. His predecessor, John Bowis, said that losing one’s seat was “like a bereavement.” Is that how Mr Linton feels? “No, I knew it would be really difficult to hold onto the seat so it was not a huge surprise, though we fought the election as hard as we possibly could. The only bereavement I could compare it to is losing one’s 106-year-old mother. Sad but not a shock.

“**Battersea is a complex constituency.** There are lots of people with very serious individual problems with housing, benefits and immigration issues. And there are also a lot of very articulate people who have concerns with aspects of policy. So there’s a heavy mail-bag as well as casework and a lot of important local issues. Often the government and the council are at odds, a problem that may not disappear even with a Conservative MP.”

Chalk and cheese

He has lived here for almost 40 years; what does Martin Linton think of Battersea? “It has changed hugely - it is a chalk and cheese society now. The main reasons are the increase in house prices and the council’s policies on selling off council housing. People suddenly realized that just across the river from Chelsea houses were a quarter of the price. And now prices are prohibitively high here too; a first-time buyer would need an income of £60,000.

“It’s still very friendly and community-minded, despite the high turnover of residents. I’m afraid though that it’s beginning to lose its character. There used to be a very strong community, with a lot of people working locally and relatives living nearby. Now many people

have no local base, their circle of friends may be scattered across London.

“I am not against the right to buy – people should be able to own their home. But it has had some unintended consequences. Older people don’t have a daughter or son living nearby to pop in and help with the shopping, there’s nowhere for their children and grandchildren to live, families are dispersed and only get together once a year. There are just a few pockets left,



such as the Shaftesbury Estate, where there is a really good mix of generations. It’s a Peabody property, and there is no right to buy.”

Persistence

Mr Linton is proud of what Labour achieved for the area. “The NHS has improved a great deal locally. We are on course for five new health centres. Bus services have improved enormously. On a personal level, I can’t tell you how much work I put in to get the tube link to Clapham Junction. It took a huge amount of persistence over many years, lobbying ministers, Transport for London, Network Rail, the Strategic Rail Authority. And now Clapham Junction will be linked to Docklands and the City. But there’s still more to do. We need more stations.”

What of the future? “Above all we need to stop the desecration of our town centres. It is important not to

have tall buildings in inappropriate places. Nine Elms should remain a focus for employment and not just for luxury flats. I’m glad the American embassy isn’t taller but what people notice and experience is the whole townscape rather than one individual building. There’s a huge opportunity to get something really good planned.”

Voting reform

And what of Mr Linton’s own future? “We (his wife Sara and her two daughters) are going to have a holiday in Sweden. And Sara and I are going to the West Bank in August.” He plans to devote more time to Labour Friends of Palestine, the organisation he founded following an all-party parliamentary tour in 2007.

He also has a longstanding interest in reforming the voting system and intends to campaign for this change in the promised referendum. Reform of party funding is another priority: “I want an end to the system where the rich can fund political parties.”

Clear vision

Finally Mr Linton returns to the topic of transport. “Battersea High Street used to have a station, which was closed during the war. Now that the West London line stops at Shepherd’s Bush and West Brompton there is a strong case for re-opening it. Network Rail is very resistant to opening new stations. There’s a need to build up a momentum of support for that and for a new station in north Battersea to link to the East London line. The Battersea Society and the MP should campaign hard on this issue.

“Above all there is a need for a clear vision for the area. The council doesn’t have it; the Battersea Society does. We need an MP who does, and who can deliver it.”

Silver treasure comes to Wandsworth

Director Andrew Leitch updates us on the new Wandsworth Museum

Substantial amounts of asbestos were found in the office and classroom areas of West Hill Library building during refurbishment. So there have been unexpected delays while these areas were cleared of hazardous materials and made safe for use by the public and staff. The revised opening date for the museum has now been scheduled for 3 September. Prior to this there will be several open days for the Friends of the Museum and other groups so that they may get the opportunity to have a first viewing of the new exhibitions.

The museum has made tremendous progress on other fronts in recent months:

It will be the first museum in the world to use LED lighting for all its lighting. This will have the beneficial effect of lowering our operating electrical bill by 80% and reducing the heat generated in the building.

More than 300 items have been donated to the museum collections in the past year. The new collections catalogue is currently being created following a complete inventory of the objects in our care.

We are working with the developer at the Battersea Power Station to investigate the shared programmes and exhibitions we could work on together in the future.

The museum has been offered a **'treasure' from the Battersea sec-**

tion of the Thames Riverbank through the Portable Antiquities Programme. This is a lump of a dozen or so silver medieval pennies.

The education team is continuing its work with schools in the borough and we have recently received funding to expand two of our new projects.

The museum will soon be advertising for volunteers to assist in a variety of activities on site from teaching to visitor guides and collections assistants.

For those of you who are members of Facebook you will find a Wandsworth Museum fan site online. If you join up you will be able to see update photographs and even a video on the making of the museum.

London's parks (including of course Battersea) are some of her greatest glories, used and loved by locals **and visitors. But we needn't walk or take a bus to a park to enjoy colour and scent:** many of our streets are lined with front gardens. In May wisteria clothed local front walls with perfumed plumes of mauve. The double yellow buttons of rosa banksia romped over a brick wall by the side of Battersea Arts Centre. These are **individuals' personal pleasures** extended to all of us.

The Council's Wandsworth in Bloom competition celebrates this horticultural generosity. The aim is to reward the contribution of individuals, businesses and organisations to **the borough's green-ness** and sense of place. A photo gallery on our website shows that our streets can be a riot of colour from gardens and window boxes.

There are two competition categories for individuals: one for front gardens and one for window boxes, hanging baskets or tubs, so those with minimal outdoor space are

included. Then there are prizes for schools, for restaurants or pubs and for public buildings – last year proudly won by Wandsworth Prison. The best community area award could go to a community garden or to a street where residents or shopkeepers have come



together to plant up their environment. In Old York Road, businesses have planted spring bulbs beneath **the street's trees.**

Battersea has done well in previous years. Last year a house in Shuttleworth Road (above) won the best window box section and the Lavender Guest House in Lavender

Blooming Battersea
Jenny Sheridan celebrates Wandsworth in Bloom

Sweep went on to take part in the *London in Bloom* competition. Sacred Heart School in Este Road won the Best Blooming School category.

To enter the competition, pick up an entry form from a library or download it from the Council website www.wandsworth.gov.uk. The closing date for entries is 18 June and the entries will be judged in mid-July. **If you don't have a garden or window box, you can still celebrate your enjoyment of other people's efforts by nominating a neighbour or your local pub or church.** Winners will receive a cash prize and be invited to an award-giving ceremony.

A word of warning: a few years ago I entered my front garden in early May, when it was full of daffodils, with a cloud of heavenly blue ceanothus overhanging the pavement. By July, when the judges peered over the gate, they could see little but weeds, bare earth and brown daffodil leaves.

Getting things done and helping people

Two of the new intake of councillors elected on 6 May talk to Jenny Sheridan

What makes people want to give up a chunk of their lives to become a councillor? It can't be the glamour, surely! Yet at each election people come forward to give their time to the borough. Why? *Battersea Matters* talked to two of the new councillors elected on 6 May, Conservative Jenny Browne and Labour's Simon Hogg.

Jenny Browne

Jenny Browne, 53, a Northcote councillor, has lived in Battersea since her marriage 30 years ago. She drives a car in preference to public transport.



Jenny lived abroad as a child and was educated privately overseas and in the UK. After studying history and art at St Andrew's University she enjoyed a career as a photographer. She has a theory that people who were brought up overseas are more likely to become politically engaged, perhaps because they need to create a community rather than having a ready-made family around them, perhaps because they can see what is wrong with an outsider's eyes.

Leaflets

How did she get involved in politics? "Elizabeth Forbes, a Conservative councillor, was canvassing around here four years ago. I took her leaflet and said "That's a dreadful photo!" so I offered to take some photographs, then I started to help with delivering leaflets and then I was put in charge of delivery. I became chair of Balham Coservatives. The more you get drawn in

the more you see that needs doing. Standing for the council seemed like the next step. I like sorting things out, the faster the better. I'm not interested in higher politics at all."

Education

Jenny is joining the Leisure and Amenities committee, with a particular interest in policing, having chaired the Safer Neighbourhood Team Panel. She is also interested in education and is a governor of Belleville Primary School. Asked about the prospect of a parent-led secondary school in Northcote, she said that many families who would previously have moved out of London for schooling could no longer afford to do so due to the recession. If parents were prepared to put in the huge effort needed, the council would be behind them.

Simon Hogg

Simon Hogg lives in Balham and represents Latchmere. Before university (MSc in physics), he went to the local school in south Birmingham. Aged 31, he works in architectural publishing. "I am married to Tara and we have two cats, one of whom, Leo, seems to live with each of our neighbours in rotation as a sort of community cat."

Housing

Simon does not own a car and depends on public transport to get to work and to the Town Hall. "I wanted to become a councillor to help people," he says. "I've had extraordinary opportunities and it seems right to put some time into our community. Latchmere is a deprived area; more children grow up with one parent than two and there are chronic housing problems. My time on the council will be spent seeking to improve the built environment and to help all our resi-

dents realize they live in the best city in the world and that they can be anything they want to be if they put in the work.



Community

"One example: there's a great group of parents determined to create a new school – a wonderful community asset – on the Bolingbroke site. I would like to help the parents of Latchmere feel confident enough within the system that they can do the same thing for themselves."

Simon's father came over from Ireland to watch the World Cup in 1966 and stayed on. He was a member of the Labour Party. "It was clear that if you felt things were OK as they used to be you were a Tory, and if you thought they could be changed to be fairer you were Labour.

Development

"Wandsworth is a popular council, but the Conservative administration faces a difficult few years. It cannot cut spending much further, as it already operates a skeleton service in many areas. But nor can it quickly increase its income as the rock-bottom council tax contributes less than ten per cent of what is spent.

"It seems likely to me that Wandsworth will try to balance the books through development deals, intensifying what is already a pretty crowded borough. I'd ask the Battersea Society to keep a close eye on things over the next year."

Urban Beekeeping

Alison Benjamin invites us to help embattled bees



People are always surprised when we say we keep bees in our small back garden in Battersea and have done ever since I moved in three years ago. On a sunny morning, I'll eat my breakfast not 10 feet from the hive unbothered by its inhabitants who are busy collecting nectar and pollen from flowers in the surrounding parks, railway sidings and tree-lined streets.

City apiarists

So it's a myth that you need to live in the countryside to pursue this hobby. Apiarists can be city dwellers, if you have some outside space, a shed to store all the paraphernalia that goes with beekeeping – such as a protective suit with veil; a smoker that quietens the bees when you open up the hive; frames and wax that go in the hive – and can spare an hour a week in the summer to check on your hive. Bees only get agitated when you are opening up their home, so as long as you do your weekly inspections when the neighbours have finished their barbecue or are out, there shouldn't be a problem with living in close proximity to people.

Beekeepers do little during the autumn and winter months when the bees huddle together in the hive keeping warm, eating their honey stores and venturing out on mild days. Come spring, the 10,000 bees in a hive start to expand as the queen lays up to 2,000 eggs a day. That's a lot of mouths to feed so the bees are busy foraging for food. The beekeeper needs to ensure their bees are healthy and have enough room to store the nectar that they turn into honey. So during the summer the hive gets taller as we add boxes called 'supers' to their home. By the height of the summer, there will be 50,000 bees in the hive. They live for about six weeks, or 500 miles, and die on the wing from exhaustion. And an average colony of bees can expect to make some 40lbs of honey for our consumption.

Harvest

Expect the first harvest by the end of May if the weather's been fine. It's said that urban honey tastes better than rural varieties because there is a much richer diversity of flowers in towns and cities than in

fields planted with a single crop. We've certainly found our honey is always delicious; light coloured and delicate in early summer and a thicker and stronger consistency from July when the bees forage from London's lime trees.

Making honey isn't the most important function the bees perform. It is the pollination services they provide to the flowers they visit as they collect pollen and nectar that makes them crucial to the environment. Yet honeybees are under threat from a number of assailants across the globe. If you become an apiarist, joining a London-based beekeeping association is essential to learn how best to keep bee pests, such as the varroa mite, under control throughout the year.

Host a hive

But keeping bees is not the only way that a city dweller can help save bees. If you live in a flat, planting a window box with bee-friendly plants such as lavender will provide food not just for honeybees but for bumblebees and solitary bees. If you have a garden, you can turn it into a haven for pollinators with wild flowers, fruit trees, ditching the decking and leaving the lawn strewn with dandelions. And if you have a garden where a hive could happily sit, but don't want to become a beekeeper yourself, then why not offer to host a hive for an aspiring apiarist who may not have a suitable location?

Alison Benjamin and Brian McCallum are authors of *Keeping Bees and Making Honey* and *A World without Bees* and their social enterprise, Urban Bees, encourages beekeeping in cities through training, education and matching hive hosts with apiarists. www.urbanbees.co.uk

Planning Matters

There's a lot going on in Battersea. Monica Tross gives us a guide.

Battersea Power Station

Treasury Holdings continue to develop their plans and we understand that revisions will be submitted to Wandsworth Council in June. There will be consultation on these, with the application then considered by the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) in the autumn.

Earlier this year CABE, the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space, reviewed the original plans. CABE's press release headlined their support; however the full review expressed substantial concerns about aspects of the plans. The Society has written to CABE expressing concern at this dissonance. The full report can be seen on the WBC planning site ref. 2009/3575, as can the first page of the Society's letter. Also on the site are comments by SAVE, English Heritage and the 20th Century Society.

New US Embassy

There is a report on the Society's meeting with the architects on page 5. We will keep you in touch as their plans progress.

Northern Line Extension

A consultation leaflet on options for the route of this extension from Kennington has just been published. It can be found at www.battersea-powerstation.com. The closing date for comments is 28 June.

Bus Countdown Indicators – we need your help

Does your local stop have a countdown indicator? And if not, should there be one? TfL are currently consulting with Wandsworth Council on adding to their countdown network so let us know at the email address shown at the end if you want us to put your local stop forward.

Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework (VNEB)

The society submitted a lengthy response to the consultation leaflet. We said, among other things, that we are concerned at the lack of an overall strategy for the area as planning applications come forward from individual developers for approval rather than being made as

part of a whole. In particular we are concerned at the density of development proposed and the lack of an overall strategy for the amount of affordable housing to be made available. See our comments at <http://tinyurl.com/bsvneb>

Tideway Tunnel

Thames Water is expected to publish outline plans for consultation before long. The plans may be a concern for some riverside boroughs but are not thought likely to affect Battersea. We will check this out when the plans are published.

Recent planning applications Approval for development of the Haberdashers Arms in Culvert Road has been given, conditional on the Brian Barnes mural being 'retained in perpetuity.' Less happily the Trade Tower application was agreed. Proposals for a new hotel in Falcon Road have been submitted, ref 2010/1455.

If you have comments or queries on any planning or transport matter, email us at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk

I have a note in my recipe book of **“an excellent barbecue” on 7 June 1986 (“the first evening fine enough to eat outside”)**.

We ate:

Kebabs of halved kidneys, mushrooms and shallots barbecued then sprinkled with garden herbs.

A piece of chicken marinated in yogurt with turmeric, cinnamon and chilli powder and barbecued.

New potatoes

Lettuce salad

Mango puree (“75p for three over-ripe mangoes”) topped with Greek yogurt.

Spaghetti

And how about spaghetti with a summery sauce:

Chop up some good tomatoes or use passata. Open a packet of spinach leaves. Put both in a deep dish in the oven with plenty of olive oil, garlic and basil to get hot while you boil the spaghetti (ten minutes).

Mix the drained spaghetti into the tomato and spinach and season enthusiastically.

Strawberries

As an alternative to strawberries and cream, try whipping up fromage blanc to make it airy and light. Crush some strawberries to a puree and sweeten with a little

Battersea Kitchen

Jenny Sheridan shares some ideas for summer eating

sugar or honey. Pour the puree over the fromage blanc and scatter over a few whole strawberries. Looks pretty in a white bowl.



A Community Centre of Excellence

Jenny Sheridan talks to the second charity given a Battersea Society donation

The Katherine Low Settlement has been given a new minibus, thanks to the Variety Club, and the **Battersea Society's donation** is helping to pay for insurance and essential maintenance.

Refugee group

"Last autumn we took the refugee group to a caravan park outside Hastings," says community worker Sarah Rackham. Ninety seven mothers and kids had an amazing week. They went by coach and I took the minibus, crammed with food and sleeping bags. There was such a sense of freedom – we took them on nature walks, played PooH sticks, taught them to whistle through grass, and spent hours on the beach just paddling and

throwing stones into the sea. One **day it was one of the kids'** birthdays. We sat on the beach, the women with their arms around each other, the children in the middle, singing Happy Birthday in Somali, Arabic, Italian, French, Swedish, English. They had had amazing journeys through the world to get to that beach. When we went for a walk the children squelched through the mud and encouraged their mothers to go further than they ever thought they **could."**

The Junior Club of seven to twelve year olds had a week of freedom in the Isle of Wight; the refugee project is shortly to visit a traditional Somali-style village in, of all places, Powys.

Pensioners' group

Another exciting project is the **pensioners' group's invitations to Battersea Park School's tea dances.** **"The children are being assessed** both on their dance skills and their social and welcoming skills. They provide fantastic cakes and scones and sandwiches as well as tea. **There's low lighting with a disco ball but it's all ballroom dancing.** One of our ladies uses a zimmer frame and two of the girls danced with their arms round her in a threesome to make sure she was safe and could have fun. The kids loved it and so did our elderly **people."**

"None of these wonderful outings would be possible without the minibus," points out Sarah.

The Battersea Society

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Website

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Registered charity no.1103560

The Friends of Battersea Park

Charity Number 802905

The Friends of Battersea Park was formed in 1988 to help maintain and improve the Park as an oasis of tranquillity, natural beauty and recreation. Our aims are to provide a responsible group of people whom Wandsworth Council can consult as representatives of Park users; to preserve the natural and historic layout of the Park, and monitor any proposed changes; to organise walks and lectures and raise funds in order to make other positive contributions to the Park's amenities. **We publish a quarterly magazine, the Review, which provides a forum for members' ideas and opinions.**

We welcome new members – there is a downloadable membership form on www.batterseapark.org or contact Elizabeth Hood, the Hon Secretary, at 7 Park Mansions, Prince of Wales Drive, London, SW11 4HG, 020 7622 7658

2010 Summer Party
Thursday 8 July
6.30-9.30pm

Held by the river in the grounds of St Mary's Church. If it rains we will adjourn to the crypt. Either way, you can be sure of lots of good food and wine, music and - best of all - good company.

£10 in advance (£12 on the door)
Includes canapes and glass of wine.
To reserve tickets contact
Maureen Larkin
020 7228 4873
membership@batterseasociety.org.uk

The Battersea Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Thursday 15 July
7 for 7.30pm

Business will be followed by a talk from Susan Stewart of THRIVE talking about that organisation's work. At St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road

Find details of more Battersea Society events at
batterseasociety.org.uk/events