

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2022



HEPWORTH SCULPTURE HEADS FOR AMSTERDAM

Jenny Sheridan previews the Hepworth loan

Battersea Park rejoices in two sculptures by world-famous artists: Henry Moore's *Three Standing Figures* and Barbara Hepworth's *Single Form (Memorial)*. The Hepworth will soon be leaving the park to travel to Amsterdam. The loan will form part of an exhibition of her work in the garden of the Rijksmuseum. The show is devoted to 'important public works that have never previously been moved from their place. This selection presents Hepworth at the very peak of her artistic prowess.'

Single Form was first shown in the park as part of an open-air sculpture exhibition in 1963. It was moved to its present lakeside position later, at Hepworth's request. A larger version, also in bronze, stands in front of the UN building in New York. The work was created in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, secretary general of the UN, who died in a plane crash in 1961. He was a friend of Hepworth's, who said it was 'made just to console myself, because I was so upset.'

The work is over three metres high and roughly oval in shape with a round hole to the higher side near the top. Seen up close the surface is pitted with lines. It was bought by the London County Council in 1963 for 6,000 guineas and placed by the lake in 1964.

Logistics

The logistics of moving a sculpture – safe packing, transport, insurance, safe installation at the new site – are extremely complex. *Single Form* will be handled with enormous care.

As the sculpture is Grade 2* listed, the loan will require planning permission;



Single Form in its setting in Battersea Park. Photo: Jenny Sheridan

Below right: the unveiling of Single Form (1961 – 4) at the United Nations Plaza in New York

a decision by Wandsworth Council is expected shortly. While the work is away, the Royal College of Art and the arts department of the council are working on a project to display a series of works by RCA sculpture students.

Reference: Battersea Park by Jennifer Ullman. FoBP 2016.

Barbara Hepworth in the Rijksmuseum gardens 3 June – 23 October 2022.



Visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

FROM THE EDITOR



Spring is here, with its contrary weather, its daffodils and its glorious blossom. Kew Gardens is a particular joy. I go

there frequently; at under £6 a month my membership is wonderful value and I take full advantage of it. Recent visits have revealed the gradual flowering of species tulips planted in the grass under the cherry trees, points of bright jewel-like colour set off by green spattered with blue scillas.

When depressed by the news I try to cheer myself by thinking of the things that have got better since I was young. One example is the reduction in smoking. I look back in horror at the

tube carriages full of smoke, their floors littered with butts. Going out meant coming home with my clothes and hair stinking of tobacco. In restaurants, diners would puff away between courses.

In 1988, almost a third of the population – 31.5% – smoked. After years of increasing scientific research (and despite fake news from the tobacco industry) and gradually tightening government regulations, the proportion of smokers has halved to about 14%. We can enjoy going to the pub or cinema without being asphyxiated. So some things do get better as time goes by!

Nowadays it's Covid that deters some of us from going out. I have returned to the theatre, culturally my greatest love. Theatres vary in their precautions. Some have enhanced their ventilation systems, some hand

out masks to audience members who arrive without them. A few – the Orange Tree in Richmond for example – still have distanced seating, which must be extremely costly but is welcomed by many.

Signs of the times perhaps in the retail sector in south Battersea: Blacks in St John's Road, a useful shop for rain-proof clothing, has been replaced by a cosmetic surgery clinic, matching the existing one on the next corner. And Dove the family butcher in Northcote Road is now a beauty shop – sorry – 'tactile adventure' – selling Resurrection Hand Wash. Bob Dove was famously irascible. I can imagine what he would say!

The council elections are on 5 April. Don't forget to vote.

Jenny Sheridan
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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Man on the Battersea Bus
Mike Roden complains about libertarians and fur babies.

The lifting of Covid restrictions has unsurprisingly resulted in infection rates and hospitalisations increasing. As scientist Professor Jim Al-Khalili observed: 'Too many people, when they say 'we have to learn to live with Covid', seem to think it means we can go back to behaving the way we did before Covid. That's not what it means.'

Still, the government remains very relaxed on the matter. The libertarian MPs who rejoiced when the UK threw off the European yoke, capered with delight at the end of compulsory mask-wearing on public transport. So it's all down to exercising our personal responsibility (@ Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson).

One lasting effect of the last two years has been the huge increase in pet ownership. Becoming a 'pet parent' during lockdown offered relief to young people confined to working at home or taking compulsory walks. Before the pandemic around a quarter of UK households were dog owners. That figure has jumped to a third. There are now 12 million dogs in the UK with under

35s accounting for over half the new owners.

Most of those new dogs – or 'fur babies' in the ghastly modern parlance – are usually in Battersea Park at the same time as me. They're frequently straining at the end of exceedingly long leads designed to trip up the unwary or elderly. I understand that badly behaved dogs are the result of poor training but I don't want any dog running up to me and leaping up or barking or simply getting in my way. The owner – sorry, fur-baby's mummy or daddy – looks hurt and assures me that 'he doesn't mean any harm – he's only playing/curious/simple-minded/hungry'>(*delete as applicable).

There are also 12 million cats, but they're a different matter. As a cat person myself I don't have a problem with them. Finding their calling cards buried in a shallow grave next to your uprooted bedding plants is a nuisance, but not on a par with the Hound of the Baskervilles pounding towards you with slavering jaws.

Frisky

Finally let's consider budgies. Seeing a Robin Redbreast in a cage might put heaven in a rage (@ W.Blake) but more than a million of us have caged birds in our houses. Budgies have never loomed large in my life. I doubt that any budgie would have

enjoyed the attentions of the predatory battle-scarred tomcat which lived with us when I was a kid.

My wife's family did have a budgie – saddled with the silly name of Frisky – who irritated her dad by being too noisy. He was cruelly banished to the school aviary (Frisky not her dad) because he whistled too loudly during Beethoven's 9th. Maybe he was singing along. Two things occur to me now: he must have been a very loud budgie to be heard over that piece of music and then again it was clearly a superior kind of school to be blessed with a home for unwanted budgies.

Everything I've written about so far fades into complete insignificance by comparison with what Ukraine is going through. I'm writing this on day 29 of the Russian invasion and the situation there seems to be getting more horrific by the day. Whatever happens before you read this, the people themselves are going to be in desperate straits, whether fleeing as refugees or staying put. They need all the help they can get.

The Disasters Emergency Committee is running a Humanitarian Appeal. If you feel you can contribute go to

<https://donation.dec.org.uk/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

Anyway that's all folks.

Stay safe yourselves. I'll see you next time.



FROM BATTERSEA TO POINTS NORTH

Monica Tross finds out where the Society's members are

Most of our members – 335 out of 395 – live in Battersea. No surprise there. But that leaves 60 who are further afield, including several who joined in the last year. I thought it would be interesting to ask them what had brought them to the Society and what keeps them with us.

One long-standing member has lived in the North (to us Londoners that means anywhere north of Watford) for many years. She moved from Battersea back to her roots in 2006 and is looking forward to retirement and having more time to come back here. Perhaps we can meet her at the summer party in July.

One lucky member decamped during lockdown from her flat to a family home in Scotland where there is a garden, a studio, and a beach just 200 metres from her house. She has started coming back to see friends and exhibitions but will continue to spend time in Scotland. Another member who moved to Scotland has roots as a former Battersea councillor and chair of the Doddington & Rollo Community Association. He said he will remain a member 'in order to keep up with events and news through your excellent magazine'.

Family history is a motivator for a member who is researching her family, the Mayles, some of whom were greengrocers at 42 Lavender Hill, having started off as costermongers with a horse and cart. Another family joined when their daughter moved to Battersea and they wanted to learn about the

area and make new friends through the events when they visit her.

History brought another member to us as some of you will know from last year's talk by Sarah Finch-Crisp, chair of The Friends of Lydiard Park, the country house of the St John family (*see page 7*). Our new member Sarah hopes to revive the close links between Battersea and Lydiard Manor in Wiltshire. Check out the Battersea section in their archives: www.thelydiardarchives.org.uk/collection/battersea

A new member who is now a vicar in Devon says he can't think why he hasn't joined before. He left Battersea in 1989 after living here and attending Chesterton School and then Sinjun's and serving as a churchwarden at Christ Church and St Stephen on Battersea Park Road. He too is interested in history and has a collection of print and drawings which reflect the area's past. He recently enjoyed re-visiting the High Street and also seeing 'a now much cleaner Thames from St Mary's, London's only riverside churchyard.'

To round off, 26 of our members live in Battersea post codes SW4, 8 and 12, with a further 18 in SW18 and a scattering slightly further afield in other SW post codes. Six live across the river in SW1 or SW3.

I am delighted to report that MPs from 1987 to the present day are members as well as a number of our current and past councillors. Long may all our members flourish, be they near at hand or even north of Watford.

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY WELCOMES THREE NEW TRUSTEES

Barbara Simmonds is a chartered accountant and financial consultant who has worked in the public, private and charitable sectors. She has lived in Battersea for 25 years and lives in Plantation Wharf.

Jenny Boehm's background is in educational administration. She lives near Northcote Road and used to run a small publishing company with her husband. A former school governor, she has lived in the area for almost 50 years.

Mark Hodgkinson recently retired as a solicitor. He has lived in Wandsworth for 35 years, 20 of them in Battersea, currently on Battersea Park Road. He has done some volunteer gardening in the park and is a keen photographer.

Three trustees have resigned: Sue Demont (who remains chair of the heritage committee), Duncan Parish and Sara Milne (still chair of the events committee). We thank them very much and wish them all well.

BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS APRIL – JUNE 2022

- **Thursday 21 April, 11.30am**
Tour of Dorich House
A private tour of one of London's hidden gems. Dorich House in Kingston Vale is the former studio home of the modernist sculptor Dora Gordine. Max 20 people. £5 per person payable in advance online
 - **Sunday 24 April, 12.30 for 1pm**
Spring Lunch at L'Antipasto
Our spring lunch is back on the menu at this popular family-run restaurant. Please make your reservation online, after which you will be contacted for your menu selection.
£27 for three course set menu, including coffee but excluding drinks. Payable in advance online
 - **Thursday 12 May, 2pm**
History Tour round Fulham Palace
The history tour will take you around the external site and through the Palace's historic interiors.
£9 per person, payable in advance online. Max 10 people.
 - **Thursday 19 May, 11am**
Guided walk around Battersea Park.
Explore the heritage and history of Battersea Park with Blue Badge Guide Christopher van Hayden
Free event, but please register online in advance.
 - **Wednesday 1 June, 5.30 for 6pm**
Battersea's Lost Baths
A fascinating talk by local historian Sue Demont at St Mary's Church. This talk is the society's contribution to the Wandsworth Heritage Festival.
Free entry, but please register online in advance.
 - **Sunday 26 June, 11am**
Guided walk around Battersea Park.
Join Roy Vickery, President of the South London Botanical Institute, for a 90-Minute World Tour: Exotic and Extraordinary Plants in Battersea Park.
£5 payable in advance online.
 - **Thursday 14 July, 6.30 – 9pm**
Battersea Society Summer Party in the grounds of St Mary's Church. Our annual Summer Party with great food, wine, live music from Junction Jazz, good company plus stunning river views.
£10 entrance, payable in advance online or on the door
- For any event enquiries, contact events@batterseasociety.org.uk*

SAVE ENERGY AND REDUCE COSTS

Toby Costin explains how to reduce the pain of energy bills

At CREW Energy we are passionate about reducing London's carbon emissions and working towards a net carbon future. CREW is a not-for-profit community benefit society (co-op) that is supporting south-west London's transition to a low carbon economy. We work with schools, civic buildings, local residents and businesses to help them cut carbon, improve air quality and reduce bills.

We also have an active community outreach programme, helping those struggling to pay bills with face to face consultations, phone advice and home visits. You can find out more about our current project at: <https://swleap.org.uk>

The gas crisis

I want to spend some time in this article talking about energy prices. As you will know by now, prices are set to rise by a huge 54% in April and are likely to rise further in October due to the war in Ukraine and its impact on the gas market. Current estimates are that the next price cap, in October, will see a further 24% rise and this could increase further if the war drags on.

It's easy to feel helpless, but there are things you can do. Firstly, make behavioural changes. Turn down your thermostat one degree, and reach for a jumper to keep warm. Put a 'snake' draught excluder at your front door to reduce drafts. Close doors so you keep warmth in the room. Make sure your dishwasher and washing machines are full before running them. Reduce the time you spend in the shower or even adopt my latest fad, cold showers. These improve circulation, reduce inflammation and increase endorphins.

Then consider adopting energy saving technologies like LED lights, which will save 50 – 90% depending on fitting type. Smart thermostats will learn how long it takes to warm your home and adjust that time depending on outside temperatures, something we geeks call weather compensation. Smart radiator valves will allow you to zone your home and only heat rooms when you need to. Why heat a bedroom at lunch time? Loft insulation is relatively inexpensive and can save up to 20% on heating

bills. Current Government guidance is to have 270mm of loft insulation, so if you have a loft go up there and measure yours to see if it is up to scratch. New technologies like Hydromx can cut heating demand by 25% by replacing water in your radiators and transferring heat more efficiently.

There has never been a better time to invest in solar panels. Prices have come down as energy costs have soared. Payback periods have fallen from a typical 12 – 13 years to 6 – 7 years as gas prices have risen. Wandsworth Council is running its Solar Together scheme currently or alternatively CREW can recommend a preferred installer.

Volatile

Heat pumps are an increasingly discussed option but remain expensive, although the Government's new boiler upgrade scheme will offer up to £5,000 towards the installation of a heat pump. Gas prices look likely to be volatile for years to come, what with Russian sanctions and increased demand from the Far East as Japan and China move away from coal. So the incentives for heat pumps will grow. For illustration, according to financial expert Martin Lewis, electricity prices are due to rise 33% in April (from 21 to 28p) while gas will be up a staggering 67% (from 4.5p to 7.5p).

If all this information feels somewhat overwhelming, help is at hand. If you are struggling to pay your bills, call our free

and independent helpline 0800 0862 706 or come to one of our energy cafés: <https://swleap.org.uk/events/>

Please bring a recent gas and electric bill.

Audit

If you would like help deciding on what technologies to invest in, CREW provides a service called the Home Carbon Audit that will offer suggestions including solar panels, energy efficiency measures and heat pumps. This service costs between £150 – £300, depending on the size of your home. It includes a 60 – 90 minute survey by a qualified and independent auditor, a report and 30 minute debrief call. Email us at Audit@crewenergy.london for more information.

The next year will be a difficult one for us all. However it can also be an opportunity to change behaviours, make our homes more energy efficient and make us more resilient to future price shocks from mad dictators and energy market swings. CREW is here should you need support or advice.

Toby Costin is a director of CREW Energy. www.crewenergy.london

Installing a domestic heat pump



BATTERSEA THROUGH AND THROUGH: MAUREEN LARKIN 1932 – 2022

Maureen's daughter Terry Barber shares her mother's story

Like a stick of seaside rock, Maureen had Battersea running through the centre of her being, thanks to a long family history in the area. Her widowed grandmother, Mary Tillier, who was born in Battersea in 1865, moved into Knowsley Road from Landseer Street (which was just off Battersea Park Road) with her five daughters and son in 1912. Her eldest daughter, Lily, was recently married, so her husband came too, but a few years later he was killed in the First World War, leaving her with a young daughter. In the same year, Lily's 23-year-old sister Lena died. Lena had been engaged to Harry, one of the Larkin boys next door, and he and Lily became close friends, eventually marrying in 1920. Monica came along later that year and Maureen in 1932 – born in the front bedroom of the same house where she lived the rest of her life.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Maureen was evacuated with her eldest sister and baby nephew to Eastbourne, where they slept eight to a room on straw mattresses on the floor. After an unhappy six weeks Harry brought them back to London and Maureen stayed at home for the rest of the war. In recent years she was interviewed by historian Sue Demont for the War Comes Home project and book *The Bombing of Battersea*. It's lovely that we can still watch her recounting her memories online.

She was also filmed by local schoolchildren for a project called Operation Pied Piper. The resulting film is called *Escaping the Blitz*.

Tragedy struck again in 1948 when Harry died suddenly, just one month after Grandma Tillier passed away. Maureen was 15 years old, but her memories of her dad remained strong, fondly remembering outings to The Grand at Clapham Junction to see films, trips to the fairground in Falcon Road, and holidays to Littlehampton, Clacton and the Isle of Wight.

Following her father's death, Maureen left Battersea County School to work as a shorthand typist at Convoys, an import and export company in Fleet Street. She left in 1955 to have me, then temped for a while before getting a part-time job at the Institute of Housing in Horseferry



Road. When I started secondary school in 1966, Maureen returned to shipping at Brushfield Sargent in Fenchurch Street, initially as the export manager's secretary.

Travelled

When the company moved to Barking, she went to work for LW Lambourn in Croydon as export manager, acting as the UK agent for the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria. During her 24 years in the rôle, she travelled regularly to West Africa, where she loved to fly around with the Institute's pilot in his little four-seater Cessna. Travel was her passion, and after retirement she became involved in many IITA alumni reunions all over the world.

Meanwhile, soon after her mother died in 1971, Maureen got the opportunity to buy her house from the landlord. It turned out to be a challenge as mortgages weren't available to single women, but she managed to finance it with the help of her sister and secured a home improvement loan from the council. Shortly after the work was finished, however, the area came under threat of compulsory purchase, and this was the beginning of her involvement with community projects – she helped found the Poyntz

Road Triangle Residents' Association who took up a long battle to save our homes. We were involved in a lot of fund-raising for this, which led to the first of the legendary Triangle street parties, for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Maureen, of course, was a key organiser and later became chair of the local Neighbourhood Watch. Her hard work was acknowledged in 2010 when she was presented with a Civic Award at Wandsworth Town Hall.

Maureen's glass was always half-full, never half-empty, and she always looked for the positive in every situation. She also loved to socialise and made friends wherever she went. It is testament to her loyal and caring nature that she maintained contact with – and enjoyed long friendships with – so many colleagues and their families right from her first job.

And then, of course, once retired Maureen joined the Battersea Society where she made many more new friends and enjoyed researching and organising trips for members – from behind the scenes tours at theatres and art galleries to Lloyds, The Magic Circle, Henry Moore's studio and the American Embassy, to name but a few. All this while also being a very hands-on and loving Nana to my own daughter, Madeleine.

Maureen died peacefully in her sleep on 4 January this year with myself and Madeleine by her side, where she always wanted to be – in her family home in Battersea.

Maureen Larkin, long-time member and for many years membership secretary and trustee of The Battersea Society, passed away on 4 January 2022.

Films featuring Maureen:
<https://vimeo.com/channels/warcomeshome>

<https://londonevacuees.org.uk/film.html> and <https://londonevacuees.org.uk/interviews.html>



BAKING CONKERS AND FISHING FOR TIDLERS

Cathy Rowntree describes her childhood playing on Wandsworth Common

Last year was the 150th anniversary of the 1871 Act which kept Wandsworth Common free for us all. The celebrations brought back happy memories, as I was born in a house in the 'Toast Rack'; my earliest memories are of being taken by my mother to the Chivalry Road swings, running up and down the hills on the way. Once there, it was a matter of how high you could swing, and how long you could cling to the fast-moving roundabout, or the dangerous witches' hat which swung precariously as it turned. There were no soft spongy landings then, so we often had grazed knees from the rough asphalt.

Safe

The post-war lack of cars meant that it was fairly safe to play in the street, but as Mum became busier with my growing number of siblings, we were allowed onto the common on our own. There were plenty of neighbouring children to play with, all part of the 'baby bulge' after the war.

Venturing through the alleyway, we would have a good look round to ascertain the possible whereabouts of the dreaded brown-uniformed common-keepers, whose main aim in life seemed to be stopping us from having fun. This included banning bike riding with wheels over a certain size, not allowing even a quiet walk around the beautiful gardens of the bowling green, and forbidding climbing trees.

If we heard a train coming (steam engine of course) we would rush to the cats' back bridge, to be enveloped by a mystical cloud of smoke and steam as the train thundered underneath. The large pond extended nearly as far as the bridge, but then it was drained to build a firmer edging. Most of the fish had been rescued, but there were still many left floundering in the mud, a sad sight. We had enjoyed watching the antics



Perching over the pond: fun and freedom on Wandsworth Common. Below: Hard landings if you fell off the roundabout

of the water voles, but by the time the pond was re-filled, they seem to have disappeared. We loved feeding the ducks and fishing for tiddlers. In spring, the pond was a good source of tadpoles to take to school.

In autumn, conkers were added to the Nature Table. We tried various methods of making them stronger for battles, such as soaking in vinegar or baking in the oven. With the blossoming of the may and the magnificent horse chestnuts in the spring, and the scrunching leaves to kick through in autumn, we were very aware of the changing seasons.

'Houses'

The sweet smell of cut grass reminds me of the hours we spent piling up the cuttings left behind, designing 'houses' with various rooms with doorways, beds and settees.



In 1945 my father and uncle founded the Baskerville Cricket Club, whose badge was a red hound. As we grew older, we enjoyed watching them on the cricket pitches, where visiting teams complained about the bumpy surface, perhaps left over from wartime allotments. If we were lucky someone bought us an ice-cream from the Refreshment House, now the Skylark Cafe.

Along Bolingbroke Grove were two rows of prefabs, housing bombed-out local residents. A Honeywell school register from 1950 – 51 shows five pupils in a class of fifty-one still housed in Bolingbroke Bungalows. When they were being demolished in the mid-fifties the ruins became our (dangerous) playground. There were no health & safety rules being enforced then and we often returned home with fibreglass painfully embedded in our bare arms.

Generally roaming free, we often left home with the exhortation not to go near the ponds when minding younger siblings. Once my eldest brother omitted to put the brakes on the pushchair. It overturned, trapping the toddler face down in the water, strapped into the pushchair on top of him. By the time friends had run to haul him out, he had swallowed an awful lot of muddy pond water before being rushed home. Although dreadfully sick, he survived. to everyone's relief..

In later years, I crossed the common regularly when attending Clapham County School in Broomwood Road (now Thomas's School). Sometimes Spencer Park boys travelling in the opposite direction did their best to knock our hats off, not knowing that we faced an instant hour's detention if we were seen in public without one.

Fifty years ago, I married one of those boys, and we have lived 'twixt the commons' ever since.

FUN AND LEARNING AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Jenny Sheridan outlines a project in Battersea Park for primary school children

Last summer, over a thousand local primary school children spent school days learning and exploring Battersea Park, thanks to a legacy made over 300 years ago. Sir Walter St John (pronounced Sinjun) was lord of the manor of Battersea in the 17th century. His endowment fund formed the basis of the educational charity that bears his name and which, thanks to the Friends of Battersea Park, enabled the project to go ahead. To read more about Sir Walter, his wife Johanna and their philanthropy, see the article by Sally Sellers in *Battersea Matters* Summer 2019.

What is the SWSJ charity and what would Sir Walter and Lady Johanna make of its work today?

The charity's object is 'to promote the education of young people under 25 who live in the Boroughs of Wandsworth or Lambeth'. It has a board of local trustees and a part-time manager, who works from a small office in St Mary's School. Organisations supporting young refugees, carers and children with disabilities are among those which have benefitted from SWSJ's grants.

Outdoor classroom

In 2020, the Friends of Battersea Park came to the charity with a proposal to help primary school children, who had had so many opportunities taken away from them by the pandemic.

The Friends offered a grant of £10,000 to enable pupils to visit the park for an educational project. For most, it would be their first school trip for 18 months. Five Battersea schools close to the park – Chesterton, Christ Church, Sacred Heart, St Mary's and Westbridge – received grants of £2,000 each. Susan Perry, SWSJ's manager and a former primary school teacher herself, says, 'Battersea Park is a natural outdoor classroom where pupils can engage, discover, and benefit from nature. The park offers space and opportunity to learn about science, history, geography, literacy, maths, art and more.'

Many of the children live in flats on local housing estates. They have no access to a garden and often little opportunity to run around and play

outside. One Year 3 pupil said she felt 'like a lion set free to roam' when she visited the park as part of a poetry project.

Each school approached the project in different ways. Chesterton pupils spent a whole day in the park (one class at a time) making use of natural materials to create maps, make bug hotels and explore the environment. Christ Church ran a poetry and art project, learning about the history of the park and using iPads to record ideas and develop their use of descriptive language. Sacred Heart pupils carried out geographical exercises such as

we all like to think we did when we were small. They enjoyed the Old English Garden. One child said, 'I will remember this day for ever.' Teachers found that their confidence in outdoor learning grew. They reported a greater interest in science and outdoor learning in the pupils.

Heartening

Susan Perry says, 'Learning to take care of our planet is so important. It's heartening to see young people discovering so much about their local flora and fauna, as well as having a tremendous amount of fun.'



devising simple maps, understanding grid references and surveying people's use of different areas of the park. St Mary's science project included studying the habits and habitats of different insects and birds while Westbridge pursued their school-wide focus on community, sustainability and equality. Older children researched proposals for making the park even more attractive to visitors, including a halal café, trampolining and ice skating.

Dens

As well as all the work, the children loved rolling down hills ('getting muddy is fun!') and building dens – the sort of things

This year new funders have come forward to support young people in Battersea trying to help tackle climate change.

Times have changed since Sir Walter St John was lord of the manor, but children in Battersea are still benefitting from his investment 300 years ago. I think he would be pleased.

If you would like to make a donation to support educational projects in our local vicinity or would like more information about SWSJ Charity, please contact: manager@swsjcharity.org.uk This article is based on a report by Susan Perry, administrator of the SWSJ Educational Charity.

GREAT BUS JOURNEYS NO 32

Mike Roden takes a very long trip on the 390 from Victoria to Archway Station

Note: The first part of this journey from Victoria to Oxford Street was covered extensively in the Spring 2020 edition of Battersea Matters (Great Bus Journeys No 26 – the 13)



It's strangely quiet here at the Grosvenor Gardens bus stop. Marshal Foch's statue looking towards Victoria Station is usually surrounded by backpackers and people eating their lunch but today only the pigeons are bothering him. This is the second stop after the station and the bus is fairly full downstairs. But there's plenty of room upstairs. We set off up Wilton Road.

At Hyde Park Corner we turn onto Park Lane past the Queen Elizabeth Gate with its centre piece featuring a lion and a unicorn. This was designed by sculptor David Wynne whose 'Boy on a Dolphin' on the Embankment should be familiar to many of you. The opening ceremony by the Queen in 1993 celebrated her mother's 90th birthday and it has become known as the Queen Mum's Gate.

Park Lane was once a quiet rather muddy country lane. It's now home to expensive hotels and high-end car dealers, though there is a Londis with added service station halfway along which always seems a little out of place.

The Animals in War memorial arrived in November 2004 and was unveiled by Princess Anne. It pays tribute to those animals – including horses, mules and dogs – that died in the wars of the 20th century. As it says on the memorial: 'They had no choice.'

The notorious Marble Arch mound is still being dismantled, and the cats' cradle of scaffolding and wooden struts has hi-vis jacket clad figures swarming over it. It failed abysmally in its aim of bringing extra footfall to Oxford Street after lockdown and so far has cost Westminster Council £6.5m – a little more than the projected £1.25m!

We leave the arch and the mound behind and head smartly along Oxford Street. Unlikely though it may seem, London's premier shopping street follows the line of a Roman road, the Via Trinobantina, which linked Hampshire with Colchester. From the middle ages as Tyburn Road it was the route taken by prisoners on their final journey from Newgate Prison to the gallows at Tyburn.

There aren't many people around. It's not long after ten in the morning, and Selfridges has only just opened for the day's business. Founded by Harry Gordon Selfridge in 1908 it is still apparently the second largest shop in the UK after Harrods.

Not far away the House of Fraser is no more. After several troubled years the store finally closed in January. The Art Deco building will be converted into an office complex with gyms, shops, and a rooftop restaurant. Nearby John Lewis has had problems of its own recently but survives to fight another day.

Manor

We hit Oxford Circus and cross Regent Street – the nearby tube station is one of the busiest on the underground network. The bus turns onto Tottenham Court Road just before we reach the station which bears its name. This was once the road to the Manor of Tottenham Court. The manor was described as Totehele in the Domesday Book, and by the end of the fifteenth century as Totenhale Court. The road was largely rural in nature until well into the 19th century.

In the mid-1960s some of Goodge Street's cafés gained a reputation as the source of 'illicit substances'. Donovan's 'Sunny Goodge Street' was one of the first pop songs to explicitly mention

drug-taking. I assume it's a much staidier place now. A little later we pass Goodge Street station which opened in 1907 as Tottenham Court Road station. The station down the road was then called Oxford Street. A couple of years later the two stations took up their current names.

Lunch spot

Whitfield Gardens occupies the site of a half-acre burial ground. The LCC acquired the land in 1894 and opened it as a public space. Long a popular lunch spot, it has recently been completely refurbished by Camden Council with new paving and seating. Also restored to its former glory is the huge Fitzrovia Mural, depicting life in the 1980s.

Across the road is Heal's Furniture Store. It has operated on this road since 1818 and took up residence here on a former farmland site in 1840. Curiously the lease demanded accommodation for 40 cows. These cowsheds were destroyed by fire in 1877. No sign of any farms now, although a 17th century farmhouse along here was not demolished until 1917.

Over to the left I get a quick glimpse of Warren Street Station before the bus turns onto Euston Road, past the buildings of University College Hospital. We arrive at Euston bus station after passing the London and North Western Railway War Memorial commemorating the 3,000 LNWR employees killed in the First World War.

The station itself is named after Euston Hall in Suffolk, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Grafton, the main landowners in the area when it opened in 1837 as the terminus of the London and Birmingham Railway. The old station

Left to right: Animals in War memorial, Park Lane; Selfridges, Oxford Street; mural, Whitfield Gardens; staircase in the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel, Euston Road; Maiden Lane Estate, Camden; the murderer George Joseph Smith



building was demolished in the 1960s.

We head back onto Euston Road, turning past the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Gallery. In 1865 Garrett Anderson was the first woman to qualify as a doctor in England. In the early 1890s she founded the New Hospital for Women (later renamed the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital). The hospital closed in 2000 and lay derelict until UNISON purchased and restored the building. It now forms part of the UNISON Centre.

The British Library was part of the British Museum until 1990. Its new home was built on the disused site of the Midland Railway's Somers Town Goods Yard and Potato Market. It was opened by the Queen in 1998.

Magnificent

Its neighbour is George Gilbert Scott's magnificent Gothic pile (the former Midland Grand Hotel) which opened in 1873 and closed in 1935. A preservationist campaign led by the Victorian Society thwarted a sixties plan to demolish the building, and in 1967 both the Hotel and St Pancras and Kings Cross stations were Grade I listed. The building closed in 1987 and remained empty until planning permission was granted in 2004 for it to be redeveloped into a new hotel. The luxury St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel opened in 2011.

St Pancras International – home of Eurostar – is often called the 'cathedral of the railways' It was officially opened in November 2007 by the Queen and Prince Philip.

In the late 20th century, the area

around neighbouring Kings Cross became notorious for its seedy and downmarket character. Major redevelopment in the 21st century included restoration of the original roof, and the station's rehabilitation was helped by its association with Harry Potter, particularly the fictional Platform 9^¾.

We turn left past Kings Cross and head up York Way towards the Regents Canal. On the edge of the canal is Kings Place which was opened in 2008. Home to seven floors of offices, public spaces, art galleries, and a café, restaurant and bar and London's first new concert hall for 25 years, it's also the HQ of the *Guardian*.

Crossing Regents Canal, the bus passes Copenhagen Street where the Danish ambassador lived in the late 1600s. Copenhagen Fields became known for radical demonstrations like the one in April 1834 when thousands marched from Copenhagen Fields in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The rest of this trip takes some forty minutes during which time I notice few interesting or quirky details to record – which is after all the main point of these journeys. This area was greatly redeveloped in the 1960s and 1970s by Camden Council which purchased disused railway land for housing developments. In 1971 it acquired 22 acres of land which would become the Maiden Lane Estate.

High rise

Despite the acres of modern housing estates built at that time, much more

renewal was needed and that is under way with a vengeance. Lots of high rise apartment blocks interspersed with building sites, and many large areas cleared ready for development. There are few visible pubs or shopping streets with their usual range of takeaways, hairdressers, betting shops and convenience stores. I hope they are there somewhere, but I didn't see them.

Occasionally there are a handful of survivals from the late Victorian or Edwardian periods, with rows of terraced cottages facing onto the main road. And then the housing does change as we approach Tufnell Park – entering long streets of more established suburban semis. There is a small shopping area around the tube station. but we're soon back into Metroland.

We near Archway station, opened in 1907 as Highgate station. This area was once seen as part of North Holloway, but when the station changed to its current name in 1939 the area gradually became known as Archway. There's a fairly substantial shopping area but nothing of real interest to report here.

Murder

The only claim to fame that stands out is that Archway was the location of the third and final 'brides in the bath' murder. George Joseph Smith drowned Margaret Lofty in the bath just two days after he had married her in December 1914.

As I dismount from the bus, the gloomy thought is reinforced as it occurs to me that my quickest way home will be to cross the road and catch the 390 back to Euston and the Victoria Line.

Note: All of the Great Bus Journeys have been cleverly extracted from *Battersea Matters* and can be downloaded from www.batterseabus.co.uk

LESS JAM AND JERUSALEM, MORE FORAGING AND FILM NIGHTS

Ann Coffey celebrates the Battersea WI

Battersea Women's Institute celebrated its fourth anniversary in February with a party and a quiz. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening in good company, and great to see life returning to normality. We are a modern, active group offering a wide range of activities and outings to our members. At our monthly meeting in January our speaker was Sarah Slater, a Hampton Court guide who talked about Secrets, Sex and Scandals of the Royal Court from 1660 to 1830. Future talks include a honey tasting, mending moth holes, the inside story of Vogue and the contribution of Battersea's suffragettes. We are also planning a printing workshop.

Future outings include a visit to Charlestown Farmhouse near Lewes. Nearer to home we will be visiting Kentish Town city farm, Strawberry Hill House and the Museum of Home. Social activities include a summer picnic, a Jubilee celebration, and a Christmas party.

Wild swimmers

We have many activities throughout the year organised by the walking group, the film group, book club and the art, photography, foraging and wild swimmers groups. We play online bridge, and our coffee group meets bi-weekly. We aim to provide a friendly, supportive

social environment where members can choose to take part in as many or as few events as they wish.

These last two years have been difficult with the restrictions on meeting. However, it has meant we have had to be innovative and resourceful within the guidelines at the time. Walks with social distancing and the art group meeting on Zoom to sketch meant we could continue to provide social contact to our members.

Battersea WI is one of over 6,000 branches with over 190,000 members of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The Queen has been a member since 1943 and she is the President of Sandringham WI.

We might think of the Women's Institute as being quintessentially British but it originated in Ontario, Canada in 1897. The first meeting in Great Britain took place in September 1915 in Anglesey, organised by Madge Watt, a founder member of the first WI in Canada. The organisation then had two aims: to revitalise rural communities and to encourage women to become more involved in producing food during The First World War.

Over 100 years later it is still going strong. Its aim now is 'to advance the education of women and girls for the public benefit in all areas.'

The first resolution passed in 1918



called for 'a sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses being of vital importance to women in the country'. In 1943 the WI was campaigning for equal pay. In 1954 it campaigned to 'preserve the countryside against desecration by litter'. This led to the formation of Keep Britain Tidy. Recent campaigns have included mental health, climate change, microplastic pollution and modern slavery.

Sociable

Battersea WI welcomes new members to enjoy our local activities and to be part of a strong national organisation committed to being a voice for women and girls. We meet on the third Tuesday evening of every month, often for a talk, sometimes for crafting. Our meetings are informal and sociable. Come and join us!

Contact Presidentbattersea@surreyfedwi.org.uk
Website www.batterseawi.com



PLANNING MATTERS: CO-LIVING ON THE RISE

Fewer homes for families could lead to a loss of community, says Monica Tross

In Spring 2020 an article in *Battersea Matters* on the local council election results told us that Battersea has the highest proportion (47.8%) of 25 – 39 year-olds in the country, nearly twice the national average, and more than three times the proportion in seats such as Arundel, North Norfolk or Totnes. Recent decisions by the Council's Planning Applications Committee (PAC) may even increase this percentage above 50%.

A major element of this change results from developers wishing to shift from conventional flats to co-living. This is essentially student accommodation for non-students, clearly targeted at those aiming to live here for a relatively short time. In February the Council approved the application at 3 Culvert Road (2021/5013) for a change from a mix of flats to 213 co-living spaces. This adds to the 341 co-living spaces already approved elsewhere in Battersea. Likewise the developer for the Big Yellow site in Lombard Road has an application in to change that building from a mix of flats to 594 co-living spaces (2021/4936).

This rise in accommodation for what is likely to be a transient population is increased by applications pushing for more one-bedroom units. At 100 York Road the developers have applied to increase the number of 1-bed flats from 36 to 82 with a consequent reduction in larger flats (2022/0249). Add to these the more modest proposal at Connaught Mansions to add 18 one-bed flats in place of two-bedroom flats (2021/5439) and the number of 'starter homes' planned in the Randall Close development. Finally, Battersea is attracting new student housing as approved at Palmerston Court opposite the Dog's Home and for the nearby Booker site whose development is planned to include accommodation for 750 students (2022/0748).

The glimmer of hope is that the Access storage application with 193 co-living spaces and a large number of one bedroom flats was turned down on the grounds that: 'The proposed mix of



1, Prince of Wales Drive

self-contained residential units and non-self-contained 'shared living' residential accommodation would result in the excessive provision of single occupancy and one bedroom residential units thus failing to achieve a mixed and balanced community' (2020/4285).

It is this loss of community with a lack of homes for families which continues to worry us, rather than any bias against younger people.

CLAPHAM JUNCTION BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The report on the Junction Placemaking and Wayfinding project, co-sponsored by a consortium led by the BID – including the Battersea Society – has now been finalised and can be found on the Battersea Society's webpage. A further short project is being commissioned to produce specific proposals for improvements. In the meantime, students from UCL's Bartlett Planning Department were working in the Junction as their project for this term; and the Junction had also been included in an Open University project on 'cross fertilisation' (working to expand and intensify networks of organisations interested in placemaking). The consortium is still planning to submit a proposal in mid-May to the Mayor's High Streets Challenge Fund for a larger project at the Junction.

STREET HUBS OR STREET CLUTTER?

There have been five applications to replace telephone boxes with Street Hubs in Battersea alone and many more throughout Wandsworth (2021/5387 is

typical). It is our view that these are essentially advertising hoardings, blocking the pavement and doing little or nothing to reduce street clutter. Sadly legislation within cities is not appropriate to current circumstances with little need for phone boxes – and even less need for advertising on the pavement. We suspect we are unlikely to be able to stop these.

OTHER NEWS OF INTEREST

Thomas's School has put in revised proposals for their expansion on the old Royal Academy of Dance site (2022/0282). We are broadly happy with the plans for the buildings but unconvinced by the travel plans and have written to say so. Palmerston Court has put in plans for the public open space around the development (2022/0369). We do not object to the plans but have written to comment on some of the detail. The current owners of the handsome but sadly neglected building at 179 Battersea Park Road (on the corner with Queenstown Road) continue to appeal against refusal of an advertising hoarding (2021/5252) despite the building now being advertised as for sale. Our work on the Local Plan continues with yet more input required in February. There is an update and a link to our response on our website.

Finally! Some very good news: 1 Prince of Wales Drive is out from behind its scaffolding. We first wrote to the Council about the development on 1 January 2014 and since then have seen many more applications – and commented on at least six. *Feedback appreciated.*

We always like to hear from our members so get in touch at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk with your concerns, queries – or even criticisms. We like to know what you think.

RUSSIANS PURSUE A UKRAINIAN – AT CLAPHAM JUNCTION

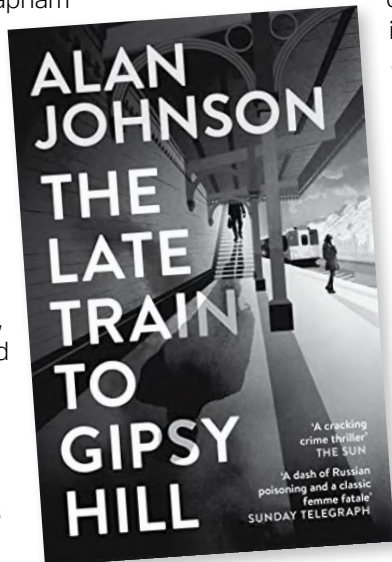
Janice Morphet explores Alan Johnson's first novel

Given its size and importance as a connecting point for a range of railway lines, it is not surprising that Clapham Junction station features in the plots of novels. In *The Fortnight in September* by R C Sherriff (1931, recently reissued by Persephone, crossing the railway bridge between platforms at Clapham Junction marks the break between home in Dulwich and the annual family holiday in Bognor Regis, as it must have done for many households in the past. The station also appears in at least two Sherlock Holmes stories, *The Greek Interpreter* and *The Naval Treaty*, where Holmes and Watson comment on the roofs of houses and the board schools like light-houses in the sky.

Makeup

In Alan Johnson's new novel, *The Late Train to Gipsy Hill* (2021), it is the station and its platforms which are at the centre of the plot's beginning. As the protagonist, Gary Nelson, travels from Gipsy Hill each day on his way to work, he sits opposite the same attractive young woman whom he watches applying her makeup, before she regularly alights at Clapham Junction station. Gary would like to start a conversation with her and takes advice from his friend about how to go about it.

However, one evening, on the late train home, the young woman speaks to him as if he is an old friend, inviting him to sit next to her. While fiddling with her make up, she holds up a message written on her mirror in mascara saying 'HELP ME'. In an effort to escape from whoever is following the girl, the pair quickly disembark at Gipsy Hill indicating that they are going to the Gipsy Hill Tavern for a drink – meanwhile jumping on a train going back to Clapham Junction.



What follows is a spy story about Russian networks in London and what the girl has witnessed while she has been waitressing at an event at which one of the guests, the wrong one, was poisoned. The girl is Ukrainian and her

fear is of the Russians who are trying to capture her. The two meander through the streets of Battersea on a bus, dropping their phones from Battersea Bridge into the river to evade detection.

As the plot develops, the in-fighting between different branches of the Russian security services and gangs intensifies and the presence of a bent Met police officer emerges as a means of finding out more of the UK government's plans to find the couple. The second part of the plot focuses on finding this officer, who needs to be of

high standing given the information that is being leaked. Other aspects of the plot involve Russian property owners in London. The end of the novel again involves Clapham Junction.

Memoirs

While Alan Johnson is well known as a longstanding MP for Hull, Secretary of State for Health and Home Secretary, the plot's focus on the relationship between Ukraine and Russia shows the prescience that might have been expected from a former Foreign Secretary.

Since resigning as an MP in 2017, Johnson has written three volumes of his autobiographical memoirs, each with a title of a Beatles song – *This Boy*, *Please, Mister Postman* and *The Long and Winding Road*. The first two volumes both won national awards and were also well received best sellers. *The Late Train to Gipsy Hill* is his first foray into fiction, with more titles promised.

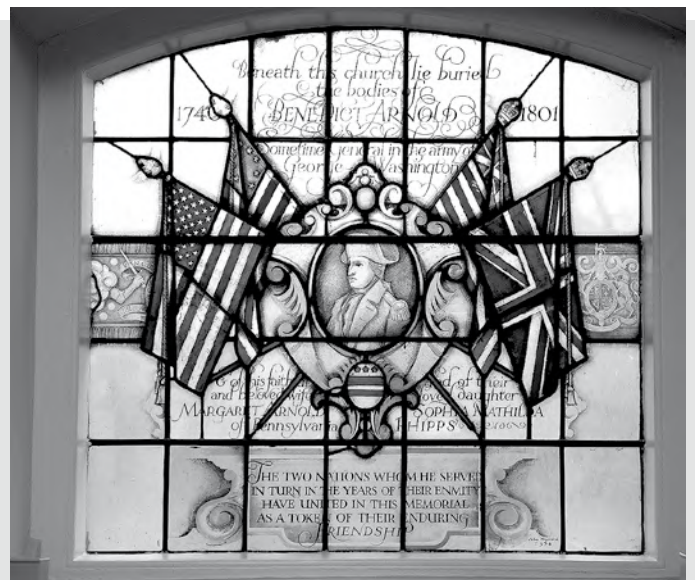
As a child, Johnson lived with his sister Linda in Pitt House, Maysoule Road, Battersea, near Clapham Junction. This was after his father absconded and his mother died. Linda was 16 then and the principal carer for both of them. Johnson attended Sloane Grammar School although he left at 15. Before he became an MP he was the General Secretary of the Union of Communications workers. This novel is set in a difficult relationship between Ukraine and Russia and, while published in 2021, sadly anticipates current events.

WINDOWS AND WORKHOUSES

In the apse of St Mary's Church, host to many Battersea Society events, is a stained glass window commemorating one Benedict Arnold. Dressed in 18th century American uniform, he looks a model army officer. But to many Americans he was a traitor who betrayed secrets to the British enemy.

To find out about Major-General Arnold go to the *Wandsworth Historian* spring 2022, where you will also find a carefully researched article tracking down the location of Battersea's old workhouse.

Contact the editor
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OUT OF SIGHT, NOT OUT OF MIND

What is the future for the Wandsworth Museum collection?
Jonathan Callaway hopes for the best

Wandsworth Museum closed in 2016, in spite of extensive local protests. Its collection of around 12,000 items, many donated by local citizens, now lies inaccessible and unseen in a basement.

In June 2021 the Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) ended their agreement with the Council to hold and maintain the collection previously the responsibility of Wandsworth Museum at their West Hill site. That museum sadly had to close in 2016 and responsibility for the collection moved to BAC and their Moving Museum. That too had to close, a victim of the pandemic crisis which has hit BAC's finances very hard. BAC no longer felt they had the resources to fulfil their obligations under the agreement. So currently this unique local history collection is unused and inaccessible in the basement of its former West Hill home.

An action group of eight local amenity and historical societies, including the Battersea Society, was formed to consider what options there now are for the collection. Letters have been written to the Council and a meeting held with Cllr Steffi Sutters, the cabinet member responsible for Arts & Culture, to explore the range of ideas we had developed for accessing and using the collection.

The collection is in a climate-controlled environment but our offer to provide a pro bono curator to survey the collection's condition has yet to be taken up. The Council says they are working with the Museum of London's museum development office to ensure it continues to be properly maintained.

Engagement

Our proposals, made in a spirit of constructive engagement with the Council and recognising their continuing funding constraints, are set out below, with the Council's responses.

The Council has now finalised and published its Arts & Culture Strategy 2021 – 31 and thanks in part to our campaign this now includes references to making use of the collection. To quote the Council, this is in the context of fostering collaboration

between 'libraries, cultural and heritage organisations, creative industries and educational organisations in order to provide a rich variety of lifelong learning opportunities using the borough collection'.

What remains, of course, is the concrete plan to turn these aspirations into reality. Discussions will continue but we cannot expect swift progress in the near term. Our ultimate aspiration would be for a new local museum, ideally in the soon-to-be-vacated Old Court House in Garratt Lane where the museum was originally located. But realistically this is highly unlikely to materialise in the foreseeable future.

Jonathan Callaway is a former trustee of Wandsworth Museum and of Battersea Arts Centre.

Right: The Battersea Shield, dredged from the Thames in London in 1857, a replica of which is part of the Wandsworth Museum collection



ACTION GROUP PROPOSAL

Digitisation of the collection with all material accessed by a dedicated website

Displays in libraries

Pop-up exhibitions of collection items in unused retail spaces on our high streets

Transfer of some collection items to the Heritage Service in Battersea Library

The use of Battersea Arts Centre as a location to host exhibitions of collection material

Education outreach (a major success for both the old museum and BAC)

COUNCIL POSITION

Work has now started in collaboration with the University of Roehampton with the first items due to be uploaded to the Wandsworth Art website this autumn. Budgeting remains a major challenge and the collection database is still incomplete

To be included in the Beacon Library programme (designed to enhance the offer in Wandsworth libraries). Apart from occasional ad hoc displays, such as in the imminent William Halle exhibition in Battersea Library, this is a long term aspiration over the next 10 years

Very unlikely due to capital and running costs, need for landlord support, security, insurance, etc

A possibility but subject to space availability

A possibility subject to funding, availability of curatorial expertise, etc

The Council is keen to re-establish the outreach programmes in some shape or form and is actively exploring options



GIVING THEATRE A LIFT

It only seats 63 people, but Theatre503 has expansive plans, says Andrew Shepherd

Theatre503 is the only theatre in the country that specialises solely in playwrights early in their careers and the artists who bring their words to life. We stage over 120 writers every year. Over the last 20 years Theatre503 has led the way in finding, nurturing and launching diverse new voices in theatre, film and TV.

We are a launchpad for the talent that has created modern classics like *The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall and *Rotterdam* by Jon Brittain – both Olivier Award winners. Other classics in the making include Yasmin Joseph's *J'Ouvert*, which won the 2020 James Tait Black Prize and Ross Willis' *Wolfie*, winner of the 2020 Writers Guild Award for Best New Play. Theatre503 alumni are now writing for *The Crown*, *Succession*, *Doctor Who*, *Killing Eve* and *Normal People*. Every major subsidised theatre in the country boasts a new play by a writer who started at Theatre503.

Now Theatre503 is about to undergo a radical transformation in the next few years. Not only are we opening a brand-new space as part of the Nine Elms development, but we're also planning to make our current home above the Latchmere Pub on the Battersea Park Road physically accessible.

The 503Studio at Nine Elms will be located in the new Nine Elms Park development, next to New Covent Garden Market. It will be a centre of international playwriting excellence for early career writers from every background. It'll be a new writing equivalent of the National Theatre Studio, focussing solely on debut and emerging talent and lifting barriers to

access. It will also create open spaces for anyone in the local community who wants to tell their story and explore their creativity.

Recent examples of our work in Wandsworth include Right to Write, an introduction to playwriting for residents and workers in the borough. The course brought together people of all ages and backgrounds to share their stories and take their first steps towards writing creatively. We are very excited about the prospect of continuing and expanding this work when we open the Nine Elms space towards the end of 2023.

Older writers

As part of the process of getting ready for our transformation, we will of course be fundraising. We will also be consulting with the local community about the kind of creative opportunities they want to see in our new spaces. As well as bringing different generations together, we are also looking at creating opportunities for older writers' groups, as our new writing theatre isn't just about younger people and audiences.

This ethos is reflected in our programming, ensuring a wide range of stories from all kinds of experiences from all over the world. As well as stories that reflect this country, our international playwriting award also sees exciting work from the best new writers around the globe, particularly from the USA.

One of the biggest motivations of the work we stage is ensuring that you have 'a great night out at the theatre' – this includes being able to get good food and drink downstairs at the Latchmere, before or after the show.

Making our shows financially accessible is important to us. While our full price tickets are only £17, we also offer £12 concessions for over 60's, students, NHS workers and a free ticket for any carers. Our previews and parent and baby matinees are £10, we offer five £5 tickets for every evening show after press night, our Saturday matinees are Pay What You Choose and SW11 residents get £11 tickets any time a show has a full price ticket available.

The Nine Elms space will be physically accessible, including access to a writers' mezzanine via lift. We've been longing to make our Latchmere space physically accessible. Visitors will be able to access our first floor via a lift that goes up the side of the building. We will be raising our foyer floor and putting in a new accessible entrance and WC where our current backstage workroom is. We are also putting together plans to make our space flexible, so it is not always in the raked, end-on seating configuration it is currently.

We are still in the planning phase and will start our fundraising in earnest in the coming months. The hope is to complete our Nine Elms space in time for December 2023 and to open our refurbished Latchmere space by spring 2024.

Livestreaming

In the meantime, all our main productions can be watched from the comfort of your home through our new livestreaming programme.

We are so proud to be playing our part in the Wandsworth community and we rely on some wonderful individuals

and organisations to support us, from donations to partnerships, advice and feedback, not to mention coming for a great night out at the theatre. But the truth is, we are not as well known in Wandsworth by the people who matter the most – those of you who live and work here – and we still have people coming upstairs and telling us they had no idea we existed, despite living in Wandsworth for quite some time.

We are about to embark on our most exciting adventure yet, and we need your help to shape that vision. We are looking to involve our local community in helping us plan for the future through your knowledge, support and participation. And not to mention, having a great night out at a local theatre with a big reach.

www.theatre503.com
Andrew Shepherd is executive director of Theatre503.



Studio503's new home in Nine Elms

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!

Young people met the candidates at a new-style hustings. Carol Rahn was there.



Left to right: Aydin Dikerdem Labour, Cyril Richert Green Party, Sue Wixley, Liberal Democrat, Jonathan Cook Conservative

In a twist designed to give younger voters a chance to interact with the candidates, this was preceded by a buffet lunch where everyone had the chance to mingle and talk with everyone else.

At least two candidates from all but one party took the opportunity to

participate in this part of the programme, where I overheard conversations about jobs, the environment and how local government works. Young people no longer learn about government in school and for many the political process at all levels is unknown territory.

Housing proved to be the hot topic in the panel discussion, as well as questions about what would be done

to address the crisis in mental health among young people, what was being done for disadvantaged families and which party would make Wandsworth an accredited London Living Wage employer (yes from Labour, the Greens and Lib Dems).

Thanks to a feedback form triggered by a QR code on participants' smartphones, we know the event was well appreciated by the young people who were there, but the turnout was disappointing. One takeaway was that if we are going to engage this generation in the local political process, this can't be something that only happens at election time.

Carol Rahn is a trustee of the Battersea Society.

On 5 April, Caius House played host to a local election event aimed specifically at younger voters in Battersea. Jointly sponsored by Caius House Youth Centre, Katherine Low Settlement and the Battersea Society, the event featured a 'Question Time' style format with local candidates from the Conservative, Green Party, Labour and Liberal Democrats.



STORM EUNICE HITS BATTERSEA

Clare Graham looks at how high winds affected our trees

On the morning of Friday 18 February, London woke up to a rare red weather warning as Storm Eunice came howling across Wales and southern England, setting a new record for wind speeds: one gust at The Needles, Isle of Wight hit 122 mph, the fastest to date in England. As well as bringing power cuts and travel chaos, the storm is estimated to have caused at least £360 million worth of damage across the UK; in London, the most notable casualty was the roof of the O2 Arena in North Greenwich, large portions of which were simply ripped away. And tragically, three people in England lost their lives, one here in London when a car was hit by a falling tree up in Highgate. Still closer to home, one person was injured by falling debris in Waterloo, and another in Streatham by a falling tree.

Locally everyone will no doubt have spotted some storm damage; I didn't see the big tree which fell right across Battersea Bridge Road, as that was swiftly cleared away by Transport for London, but have spotted quite a few on quieter streets since.

At the AGM of the Wandsworth Tree Wardens on 24 February, Neil Blackley, the head of parks at Enable Leisure and Culture (which manages our open spaces and street trees on behalf of Wandsworth Council) told us that its tree team had responded to over two hundred call outs over the weekend while the winds remained high.

Lost

Overall he estimated that some 70 trees had been lost to Storm Eunice across Wandsworth, including 23 in Battersea – actually a relatively low total compared to some other boroughs, with neighbouring Richmond having lost around twice that number, even before the trees in Richmond Park were taken into account.

Our local open spaces have nevertheless experienced some sad casualties, the saddest of all perhaps being the big hybrid strawberry tree (*arbutus x androchoides*) in Battersea Park. Planted in the 1860s, this was the largest specimen of its kind in Britain, formally listed as one of London's Great Trees. Some two-thirds of it has

Above: The damaged arbutus in Battersea Park

Below: A fallen street tree in Sabine Road, ten days after the storm.

been lost, but Enable is hopeful that with careful monitoring and pruning the remainder can survive.

On Wandsworth Common, two large and rare black poplars near Dorlcote Road are particularly regretted by the Friends. There was damage too on Clapham Common, and many of our other neighbourhood parks have also lost cherished trees both large and small.

At the time of writing, the clear-up is still ongoing; the planting season for trees is just finishing, so replacements will mostly await the autumn. But it was good to hear from Neil that where possible fallen wood will be left to rot down in situ, enriching natural habitats.

Clare Graham is chair of the Battersea Society's open spaces committee.

