

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2022



ARDING & HOBBS: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Sascha Lewin, CEO of the developers, talks to Jenny Sheridan

Arding & Hobbs, the grand Edwardian building close to Clapham Junction Station, has been at the heart of Battersea since 1884. Through numerous owners and occupiers, it has always been known as Arding & Hobbs. For years it was where local people bought their bedding, their carpets, their suits and summer dresses.

There was some dismay locally when, after the collapse of Debenhams, its most recent tenant, the shop doors closed. The much loved building was bought, however, by a property development company which seems to love it too.

In September I met virtually with Sascha Lewin, the CEO of W.RE who now own it. 'It was a love affair at first sight', he said. 'I'd never been to Clapham Junction before and I was impressed with the speed of getting here from our offices in the



West End – it took less than 25 minutes. And I loved the building and saw its potential.

'The worlds of both offices and retail were changing even before Coronavirus. The department store concept over four or five floors isn't working any more. We needed to bring in a different mix of uses to activate this building. We looked at hotel and residential but quickly focused on workspaces – offices – and retail.

Connectivity

'Companies don't necessarily want to be in places where offices have been before. What they want is connectivity – which Clapham Junction has in spades – and a building which has character, in an area that their staff will want to come to. And one which reflects their culture, which is increasingly about sustainability. Our building is exciting and cool and links into heritage aspects.



'As an example, Apple made the decision to move into Battersea Power Station largely because of the iconic building. Connectivity isn't as good there as here, even with the Northern Line Extension. Here we're tapping into the Clapham Junction/Northcote Road community and infrastructure; it's already a nice place to be. And you can be in Victoria or Waterloo in five to ten minutes.'

The ground floor of buildings is where they interact with the street, with the public. What plans does W.RE have for that level? I suggested that what local people would like is small independent retailers (though personally I'd love

a Robert Dyas style shop). Mr Lewin pointed out that buildings designed to be department stores are deep and lit on only one side: 'People don't want to walk along lots of corridors to get to a small shop at the back, so there are limits to what we can do. We have designed the building to be flexible. We have been inundated by large-scale retailers such as supermarkets but that's not the vibe we want to create.'

'We are currently talking to a gym, which would be mainly in the basement with access at ground level, and to a restaurant.'

'We have just started showing potential occupiers around. Our new website, www.ardingandhobbs.london is aimed at them. We will hand over to retailers and restaurants to fit out in February or March, and to offices in late June. We're hoping the building will open in late spring 2023.'



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

FROM THE EDITOR



The cost of living crisis is confusing. As I write this, in late September, the media are full of accounts of massively

increased poverty and misery. Yet still queues of young people line up outside Northcote Road's cocktail bars, cafés are full of coffee drinkers and shoppers are still buying ready-made mashed potato in M&S. (For that matter, I'm still buying salted nuts, a not strictly necessary purchase). I aim to examine the local effects of these national phenomena in the next issue of *Battersea Matters*.

There was a discussion a few weeks ago on a radio phone-in programme on 'the luxury you would most hate to give up'. The responses ranged from

haircuts to Netflix to smoking and long hot baths. My own choice would be my membership of Kew Gardens. It costs me £74 a year but I can go as many times as I want – and I do. Sometimes I visit twice in a week, either alone or with a friend. Especially during lockdowns it felt almost like a life-saver. It's so peaceful, especially during the week, and it is rarely overcrowded. I can choose whether to have an energetic walk or a gentle stroll, I can study which salvias or grasses survive best in heatwaves, admire the kitchen garden or wander among the glorious trees. And it's so quick to get there from Clapham Junction.

What would (or will?) be the luxury you would (will?) most hate to give up?

A luxury I am going to live without is individual travel. I have sold my car – for scrap, as the poor old thing was in terminal decline. This was partly for environmental reasons but also

because I rarely used it, except to go to the tip or the garden centre. We are lucky to live in a place where we have plentiful public transport, with Clapham Junction for trains and many bus routes – though of course a tube station would be nice.

Cordial

Reading the letters behind the late Queen's visit to Young's Brewery (*page 4*) was fascinating. The visit was meticulously planned but also full of human warmth. The letters between the Palace and the head of the brewery are cordial, friendly and direct, and entirely free of PR puffery. I wonder if the same could be said today.

Jenny Sheridan
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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden considers horses, the theatre and the future...

Recently a reader of my *Battersea Insider* email newsletter sent me a couple of pictures from the 1950s showing a Battersea milkman's horse. That set me thinking about the time horses helped to deliver everything from milk and bread to coal and beer. When the milkman's cart came to my grandmother's house all of us visiting grandchildren used to delight in taking sugar out to the gentle old creature. If the milkman didn't want it we gave it to the horse instead.

Horses have pretty much disappeared from the street scene these days, though some years ago we were lucky enough to win the prize of a ride through London in a horse drawn carriage. We took our then young grandchildren with us and they were hugely embarrassed at the amount of attention given to us by watching tourists especially past Horseguards and Buckingham Palace. We of

course took great delight in perfecting the Royal Wave.

Rhubarb

I'm reminded now of the oft told tale of the little girl watching an old man walking behind a coalman's cart. 'What you doing with that?' she enquires, pointing to the equine offering being scooped up onto his shovel. 'Puts it on me rhubarb' says he. Little girl stares in horror. 'We put custard on ours!'

A sign on Surrey Lane near the

junction with Bridge Lane points rather redundantly towards the 'Bridge Lane Theatre' which was demolished in 2001. In its last years it provided a home for the Moving Theatre group run by Corin and Vanessa Redgrave with – among other delights – productions from foreign touring companies, and Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* with Corin Redgrave directed by Trevor Nunn in association with the National Theatre. It's now a block of flats but I wonder if the Society's Heritage Committee might consider a commemorative plaque on the site.

September was certainly a month of momentous change bringing us a King and – for now – a different Prime Minister. But this new world feels remarkably like the old one. Despite sticking plaster remedies the energy crisis seems to be moving us inexorably towards the unlit uplands, and inflation continues to rocket.

Still the Man on the Bus tries to look on the bright side. After all, soon be Christmas. Until then, mind how you go.



THE SOCIETY'S SUMMER PARTY

Good company, sunny weather, and Junction Jazz



BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS NOV 2022 – JAN 2023

For any enquiries please contact events@batterseasociety.org.uk

- **3 November 6.30 for 7pm**
Biodiversity in Battersea Parks and Commons.
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
Annabel Osborn, parks operations manager at Enable.
£5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Wednesday 16 November 6pm**
Online: Swimming with the tide – the story of Battersea's Lost Baths
An illustrated online talk by local historian Sue Demont on some of Battersea's finest municipal swimming baths.
Free of charge
Link available at www.batterseasociety.org.uk
- **Thurs 24 November 6.30 for 7pm**
The Georgians
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
A fascinating talk by historian and author Penelope J Corfield:
The Georgians: How Eighteenth-Century Britain became a world hub for exploration, invention, literary

creativity and contentious trade.
£5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door

- **Thursday 8 December 6.30 for 7pm**
A seasonal celebration
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
A musical evening to celebrate the festive season with songs from the Battersea Power Station Community Choir along with readings and our very own Christmas Quiz.
£5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door
- **Friday 6 January 6.30 for 7pm**
Twelfth Night Supper at L'Antipasto
L'Antipasto, 511 Battersea Park Road, London SW11 3BW
Please register online. Once payment received you will be contacted for your menu selection:
Starter: Tricolore Salad or Fritto Misto or Minestrone
Main: Polo alla Milanese or Parmigiana de melanze or Linguine alla Siciliana
Dessert: Own choice from restaurant menu



£27 for three courses, including coffee/excluding drinks, payable in advance www.batterseasociety.org.uk

- **Thursday 19 January 6.30 for 7pm**
Living Streets
A talk by Wandsworth Living Streets who aim to ensure we have safe, attractive and enjoyable streets across the borough.
£5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door



‘TO BE REMEMBERED ALL OUR LIVES’

The Queen visited two Wandsworth institutions during her reign. Jenny Sheridan reports.

In September we mourned the death of the Queen and celebrated her life. During her long reign she visited Wandsworth at least three times, though not in the last 40 years. The first was a simple drive-through after her coronation in 1953.

In November 1974, as patron of the Royal Academy of Dance, she officially opened its then new home in Battersea Square. Margot Fonteyn, the celebrated ballet dancer who was the Academy’s president, acted as her host.

Trophies

Young’s Brewery was famous for its huge Shire horses, which pulled drays laden with beer to local pubs until the 1990s. A team of Young’s Shires was a frequent sight at horse shows and county fairs and often came away with trophies.

In 1979 the head of the Royal Mews wrote to John Young, chair of the brewery, saying that the highlight of the Windsor Show (perhaps attended by the Queen) had been Young’s ‘superb eight-horse team’. He added ‘Mr Ramrod (Young’s mascot) stole the show, especially when he butted his lady attendant in full view of the spectators’.

The following year arrangements started for a visit by the Queen to the brewery to celebrate its 150th

anniversary in 1981. Letters were exchanged between her private secretary, Sir William Heseltine, and John Young – the latter writing by hand with a fountain pen.

Waving

On 1 February 1981 the great day arrived; the Queen was greeted on Wandsworth High Street by the band of the Royal Marines and a crowd of about 400 locals waving Union Jacks, provided by Young’s. She was introduced to the company’s directors and several members of staff, including Ramrod, a Dorset Horn ram with magnificent curling horns. This sheep was however an interloper. The former Ramrod, already washed, primped and curled, had died suddenly just days before the royal visit. His entourage were horrified, and blamed inappropriate food given him by a visitor (the Young’s stable, which included a cockerel and a donkey as well as the heavy horses, were open to the public). After a short but anxious search a shepherd in Dorset found a replacement ram, who was rushed to Wandsworth and duly smartened up to meet Her Majesty.

The visit went well. The next day John Young wrote to the Queen – again in fountain pen – to say ‘your visit yesterday gave us all such immense



pleasure, to be remembered all our lives.’ A few months later 100 dozen bottles of Young’s celebration ale were sent to the Palace for distribution among the staff. Mr Young also sent a film of the visit which was shown to staff in the Palace cinema and kept for the royal archives.

With thanks to Wandsworth’s Heritage Service.

PLANNING MATTERS: CONSERVING CONSERVATION AREAS

Monica Tross voices concerns over changes on the Latchmere Estate

Work on major developments in Nine Elms and elsewhere accounts for much of the work we do in terms of time spent but checking out applications in conservation areas and objecting where necessary still accounts for around three-quarters of the letters we send. In most cases our letters are short, often asking for a reduction in the number of rooflights to limit the effect on the streetscape. While mostly the applications are approved, in a heartening number of cases this is with changes which make the work acceptable. Sometimes things don't go so well, as at 23 Henning Street. First an application for very substantial changes was approved, followed by approval to the second application to demolish all but the front façade – on the grounds that the approved work was so extensive it could be argued there was little going to be left of the original so it might as well be demolished completely. (2021/3417 and 3419 refer).

Our letter regarding the wholesale changes to the Latchmere Estate conservation area was rather longer (possibly still visible on 2022/3220), not least because the Housing Department is undertaking work to the majority of buildings in the area. Both windows and doors are being replaced except where the building is not leased from or owned by the Council and this will lead to a patchwork effect to the detriment of the streetscape and the conservation area.

At their recent meeting the Wandsworth Conservation Areas Advisory Committee supported our concerns and hopefully new doors fitted in the future will be a like for like replacement rather than a near match as in the photo – much more obvious in real life than in the photo.

HACAN – A VOICE FOR THOSE UNDER THE HEATHROW FLIGHTPATH

HACAN – the Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise – is a campaigning organisation formed in the 1970s to give a voice to residents under the Heathrow flight paths. It has several thousand members including the



Doors will be like for like, not mismatched, as above.

Battersea Society and its website is a good source of information about ways to make complaints and what changes are in the pipeline. There is no active campaign running at the moment but do check out its website, www.hacan.org.uk to read about the Airspace Change which was accepted by the Civil Aviation Authority at the start of this year.

GLASSMILL BUILDING

Plans for this are at an early stage and we and others were disappointed that the exhibition had not moved on from the meeting at which they had outlined their thinking to us. It seems that Rockwell are seeking input as to what is wanted rather than telling us what they plan. You can see their outline thinking and give feedback at glassmills.co.uk

We are hoping for something more substantial later in the year and will keep you in touch.

NINE ELMS

Celebrations are taking place from 14th October when the Power Station opens for business at last. Check out application 2022/3359 which covers access within the Power Station and

has interesting heritage details as part of the paperwork. I am sure that plans for the Power Station were on the agenda when I first joined the committee in 2002 and in 2006 it was minuted that: 'We are to meet the Chair of the Planning Committee on 22nd March. The principal aim is to achieve an understanding of the manner in which the Council plan to monitor activity to ensure that Parkview do not default on their agreements with the Council.' I am confident that plans for the site will continue to be discussed long after I have handed over as secretary but in the meantime I am looking forward to joining in the celebrations.

On a rather different scale we are very pleased to hear that the owners of the Booker site (2022/1835) are re-thinking their plans and will be holding an exhibition to show new proposals. We will keep you in touch.

Kathryn Stewart, who up till last month led the Nine Elms team, has returned home to New Zealand. She is succeeded by Steve Riches, a town planner and design advisor who joins the Council on 24 October. Originally from Canada he is currently the Design and Heritage Manager for Bristol City Council.

GOOD NEWS

I was gobsmacked to learn that all the applications for Inlink columns had been refused (2021/5699). We had thought that the installation of these noisy, energy consuming pavement blockers was a done deal. We were equally pleased that the change from flats to a collective living scheme at 57 – 59 Lombard Road (2021/4936) was refused. We had good meetings with Cllrs Belton, Dikerdem and Hogg and were encouraged by plans for increased affordable housing and for constructive engagement with the Local Plan examination rather than wholesale change.

*Feedback appreciated
We always like to hear from our members on the Glassmill proposals or any other planning or transport matter, so do get in touch at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk*

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A DISASTER STRUCK LONDON?

Sumitra Tikaram answered the call. Jenny Sheridan met her.

Sumitra Tikaram, known as Sumi, was born in Fiji, far from the Battersea which has been her home since the 1970s. In Fiji, she says, 'there was semi apartheid. It was a British colony; we were brought up not to mix with the white settlers. My parents came there from India as indentured labourers and were treated not much better than slaves, although they did get paid. After five years of working hard in the sugar cane and coconut plantations they were able to start a transport business - with a horse and cart to begin with. I got a good education thanks to the Methodist missionaries.'

Sumi left Fiji for the UK in the 1960s and has lived in Battersea for almost fifty years. Her career was spent in administrative roles in a number of London boroughs.

A highlight of Sumi's life is, she says, her membership of the FANY Corps, the first Aid Nursing Yeomanry, an all-female voluntary organisation which offers trained support to civil and military organisations, especially in times of crisis. 'I was bored one day and reading through the personal columns in *The Times*. I saw an ad saying 'What would you do if a disaster struck London? If you'd like to help, we'll teach you the skills'. That sounded interesting so I applied. I didn't realise it was anything military but the interview was at the old Duke of York's barracks opposite Peter Jones. The interviewer said 'What do you know about the Fannies?' I had no idea what she meant so she gave me a book to read about the FANY's work in both world wars. I discovered that the celebrated secret agent Odette Sansom had been in the FANY during the Second World War. So I joined up.

Combat

'It's run by a charity not the government, but it does use military buildings and training. The main aim activity is communications. I was trained in wireless, voice procedures and using a walkie-talkie. Some of the training, including unarmed combat, was done by the SAS.'

Sumi's chance to put her training into action and fulfil her aim of helping



if a disaster struck London came on 28 February 1975. Forty-three people died and 74 were injured in the Moorgate train crash. 'The City police asked us to mobilise to take on the running of the incident room and casualty bureau. We worked to match the people who were seriously injured or who had died with their personal effects and with their relatives. Some of the girls went out to hospitals all over London with the police and sent information back to us in the casualty bureau. It was a daunting experience.'

During the Second World War FANY members were involved in the Special Operations Executive (SOE). They were trained in communications, coding and other skills to be used if Britain was invaded. 39 women were dropped behind enemy lines in France to liaise with the Resistance. All these rôles were skilled and highly secret, most were potentially or actually dangerous. Other FANY members specialised in training, including teaching the then Princess Elizabeth the rudiments of car mechanics. More recently, members of the FANY were involved in ushering duties at the late Queen's funeral.

Sumi got to know some of the agents who survived the war. 'We went out to

Ravensbruck concentration camp to put up a plaque to the girls who were murdered there. I met Odette Sansom there, a tall thin wiry person, very nice to talk to. I also knew Nancy Wake, who the Germans called the White Mouse. She had lived in France, where she helped pilots who had been shot down to escape. Discovered, she crossed the Pyrenees into Spain and arrived in England, where she was recruited into the SOE before being parachuted back into France as a secret agent. I wouldn't be surprised if she was interviewed in the Royal Victoria Patriotic building before returning to France as part of the SOE.'

The FANY Corps, says Sumi, 'has changed my life completely.

It's something you do for the country. I've seen so many different aspects of life in Britain. Being part of it makes you feel you belong.'

Sumi's impressive-sounding other name is la Comtesse de Boucheron de Bergeyck, an aristocratic title she acquired through marriage to a Belgian diplomat. They wed in Wandsworth Town Hall but sadly he died suddenly three months later.

Undaunted

Now in her eighties, Sumi remains very active. Despite a recent knee replacement she goes for long walks with Clare Graham's Battersea WI walking group, enjoys Pilates and aqua aerobics and goes on Battersea Society outings. An undaunted traveller, she has visited North Korea and is soon off on a tour of Saudi Arabia.

Sumi still feels deeply attached to the FANY Corps. Recently she attended the unveiling of a statue in Gordon Square to Noor Inayat Khan, a FANY SOE agent executed in Dachau.

EVELYN DOVE, QUEEN OF CABARET

Jeanne Rathbone celebrates a cabaret star

I have been going on about unsung women in Battersea for quite a while and indeed this has become the latest Battersea Society book. I have also led walks, given talks and written blogs.

My latest blog features cabaret star Evelyn Dove 1902 – 1987. In the 1920s she was the first woman of African heritage to be broadcast on BBC Radio.

London-born Evelyn lived at 25a Barnard Road SW11, daughter of a barrister from Sierra Leone and his English wife Augusta. It was through Wandsworth archivist Emma Anthony that I discovered Stephen Bourne's book *Evelyn Dove: Britain's black cabaret queen*. Evelyn trained at the Royal Academy of Music but the classical music world wasn't welcoming. She was versatile and comfortable with singing spirituals, ballads and torch songs as well as being a dancer and actress.

Palace

In 1921 she was performing in the Southern Syncopated Orchestra comprised of Caribbean, West African and African American performers which once performed at Buckingham Palace. With The Chocolate Kiddies, starring Adelaide Hall, she toured Europe for a year, playing in Moscow with Stalin in the audience.



During the Second World War she had as much recognition as Vera Lynn and was fêted by black and white audiences in Britain, Europe, India and the US as a soloist and with various troupes. At the height of her fame she replaced Josephine Baker as the star attraction at the Casino de Paris.

From 1939 – 49 she had her own music series on the radio, *Sweet and Lovely*, co-hosted *Rhapsody in Black* with African American singer Elisabeth Welch. She also hosted *Serenade in Sepia*

with Trinidadian folk singer Edric Conner, which was so popular it was also aired on television.

Sadly, she found it hard to get work from the fifties except for some acting rôles and died alone in a nursing home. Her work was highlighted by broadcaster Moira Stuart in the early 90s. Evelyn seems to be finally getting recognition as a trail blazer as Google celebrated her life with a Doodle on her birthday in 2019. Of course, I hope she will be commemorated with a Battersea Society plaque one day.

Inspiring Women of Battersea
by Jeanne Rathbone
Available from www.batterseasociety.org.uk or at Battersea Society events



PREFABS IN BATTERSEA

The Blitz, which lasted from September 1940 to May 1941 resulted in the destruction and demolition of hundreds of houses in Battersea, especially close to the railway lines. Later in the war, homes were destroyed by V1 bombs (doodlebugs). In a single V1 incident in June 1944 at the junction of Battersea High Street and Gwynne Road, 106 homes were demolished or damaged. Over 100 people were made homeless.

After the war there was an urgent need for new houses for people who had lost their homes as well as for returning servicemen. One of the Government's solutions was to provide prefabs – houses whose components were assembled in a factory and transported by road to their site. As these had an inside toilet, bathroom and hot water they were seen by residents as palatial in comparison with their previous slum houses. Although they were intended to be temporary, many were occupied for 20-30 years, lasting into the 1970s.



The story of the prefabs is told in a fascinating article in The Wandsworth Historian Autumn 2022. www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk

GREAT FOOT JOURNEYS OF THE WORLD NO 1

Mike Roden takes a break from the buses this time and strolls through the history of the Worlds End area of Chelsea.



The walk starts at the south-west side of Battersea Bridge, near the bus stop. You're crossing the river on Joseph Bazalgette's 1890 replacement for the 1771 wooden toll bridge commissioned by Earl Spencer.

Turn left along the embankment – officially Cheyne Walk and named after William Cheyne, Viscount Newhaven the owner of Chelsea Manor until 1712. The statue of James McNeil Whistler is the work of Nicholas Dumbleby (younger brother of David and Jonathan).

Across the road what's now 91 – 101 Cheyne Walk was originally one property known as Lindsey House which was built in 1674 and is probably the oldest house in Chelsea.

Whistler

An ornate LCC plaque on the wall of number 96 celebrates Whistler who lived here from 1867 until 1878 and it was here he painted the iconic portrait of his mother. Next door at number 98 there's a blue plaque commemorating Marc Brunel, who lived here with his son Isambard from 1808 until 1824.

As you walk along here you should remember that until Bazalgette's building of the embankment – completed in 1874 as part of his scheme to create a modern sewage system – the houses here were much closer to the river.

At number 104 on the corner of Millman's Street one of the plaques commemorates artist Walter Greaves – the son of the boatman who used to row Turner on the river. In his turn he did the same for Whistler. The second plaque on number 104 recalls the poet Hilaire Belloc's short stay there from 1900 – 1905.

Number 114 was until 1991 the home of the Kings Arms. Then the singer Bryan Adams moved nearby and – disturbed by the pub's noise – he bought it and promptly closed it down. That's the story anyway. It would have horrified Hilaire Belloc: 'when you have lost your inns drown your empty selves, for you will have lost the last of England.'

JMW Turner spent the last years of his life at what is now 119 Cheyne Walk being looked after by his old landlady Sophia Booth. The neighbours assumed that the pair were married and he was known locally as 'Puggy Booth'. He died here in 1851. There is an ornate metal commemorative plaque on the wall.

At number 120 a plaque honours Sylvia Pankhurst who championed the use of militant tactics in the Votes for Women campaign. She lived here from 1906 to 1909.

Construction of the high rise World's End Estate began in 1968 after the demolition by the council of 11 acres of 'low standard' Victorian housing. It was completed after several delays in 1977.

Heading past the boatyard we come onto Lots Road, once known as Pooles Lane and arrive at the riverside park called Cremorne Gardens. It's located on the site of the pier to which from 1845 to 1877 steamboats arrived carrying visitors to the original Cremorne Gardens, with its wooded groves, theatre, tea-rooms, fine dining opportunities and other genteel pursuits.

Splendid

There is an excellent information board in the park, which stands next to the splendid wrought iron gates which once stood at the Gardens' entrance on Kings Road. This is a pleasant place to sit on a

sunny day, with an excellent view across to St Mary's Church.

London's premier Victorian attraction gradually went downhill as a seedier element gradually started to dominate the entertainments on offer. Large number of prostitutes plied their trade, and bare-knuckle boxing contests brought in in gamblers and a less respectable clientèle.

Eventually the opposition from locals reached such a pitch – especially from the local ratepayers association – that the annual licence application was rejected and the Gardens closed for ever on 5 October 1877.

Developers soon moved in to fill the space and the resulting grid of streets of terraced houses leading off Lots Road is more or less what we can see today.

Power station

The transformation of the Lots Road Power station into the frontage of the 'exclusive' Chelsea Waterfront development is almost complete. This power station – claimed at the time to be the largest ever built – eventually powered most of the railways and tramways in the Underground Group. It ceased operations in October 2002.

Across from the power station is the entrance to the 606 Club which operates from the basement at 90 Lots Road. The jazz club moved here in 1988 from 606 King's Road (explaining the name).

Next door to Chelsea Academy is the Lots Road Pub and Dining Room. It was called the Balloon Tavern when it opened in 1869, referring to the hot-air balloon displays which were a popular attraction at Cremorne Gardens. Craft ale fans will be spoiled for choice here.

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

Left to right: Statue of Whistler, Chelsea Embankment; World's End Estate; 606 Club; Lots Road Auction Rooms; backwards clock, 430 King's Road; Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood



Lots Road now takes a sharp turn to the right. If you've ever had your car clamped you may have had to travel here to the Chelsea Creek Vehicle Pound. Seekers after bargains will enjoy visiting the Lots Road Auction house.

Head into the estate along Burnaby Street. At the junction with Uverdale Road you'll see the Chelsea Ram. This was built in 1887 but failed to get a licence and for nearly a century it was a parish hall.

Turn left onto Uverdale Road and keep going until you reach the entrance to Westfield Park which was created on land freed up by demolishing four streets affected by bomb damage. There's a path at the top of the park, leading out onto Kings Road, past the Health Centre. Turn right here and walk briskly until you've reached Edith Grove.

Stand near the Co-op store and look across at the Paddy Power betting shop. From the 1880s until the end of the 1960s this was the site of the Wetherby Arms. It was here that in 1962 bassist Bill Wyman met up with and joined the Rolling Stones.

A little further along, at number 488 is the very expensive Rocco Borghese Lighting Shop. Back in the 60s you'd have found the 'psychedelic boutique' Granny Takes a Trip here. It sold expensive good quality clothes which tended to attract an elite clientèle, which just added to its legendary status. The shop closed in 1974.

Hippie

There were many such icons of the alternative 60s culture in this part of Chelsea. Dartrey Terrace was obliterated by the World's End Estate, but before it disappeared the former Home

and Colonial store was occupied by Gandalf's Garden. This counter-cultural community centre flourished for a short time at the end of the Sixties as one of the 'in' establishments of the hippie and underground scene.

And what of the name World's End, which has been applied to this area at least since the 17th century when we find the first records of an inn with that name. One reading of the name points out that 'end' is simply an Old English word for a field and the name may be agricultural rather than apocalyptic. The current pub dates from 1897. It went through a shaky period some years ago but it seems to be thriving again now.

Pheasants

Keep walking along. Nothing of particular interest in the shops here although City Meat – a mixture of butchers and deli – usually has game for sale: rabbits, pheasants and so on.

Almost directly opposite Cancer Research, you'll see a real survivor. Vivienne Westwood and her then partner Malcolm McLaren opened their first shop here in 1971, changing the name as their ideas evolved, until fixing on Worlds End Store in 1979. The famous backwards-running clock is still here.

Escape the bustle of Kings Road by taking a walk round the Moravian burial ground on Millman's Street. This dates from 1751 when there was an attempt to found a Moravian community here. It's now owned by the Fetter Lane Moravian congregation which lost their city chapel to bombing in 1941.

The World's End Bookshop has been a fixture here since 1986. It sits at the foot of the Moravian Tower - probably

the ugliest building in Chelsea. A late 1960s council development, it was riddled with faults and by the 1970s was essentially falling apart and facing demolition. In 1988 it was sold and revamped as private flats, with (to my mind) ghastly custard-coloured cladding.

Theatre

Across Kings Road just along from Park Road you'll see the Mestizo Restaurant. Until 2003 this was the Man in the Moon which housed a popular fringe theatre.

Beaufort Street is journey's end. On the opposite corner is Beaufort House – a trendy cocktail bar and restaurant. In 1975 this was the Roebuck pub where their manager Malcolm McLaren introduced the Sex Pistols to John Lydon – soon to be known as Johnny Rotten. He was given an impromptu audition, got the job as their lead singer, and the age of punk began in a Chelsea pub.

By the 1990s the Roebuck was gone. Not even a plaque on the wall to record the historic moment. And that more or less sums up the history of the Kings Road. It's there but only as a memory.

In this short article I can only scratch the surface of the history of this part of Chelsea. Much of the information came from a website called Sixties City which covers the length of Kings Road starting at Sloane Square. (<https://sixtiescity.net/Culture/KingsRoad2.htm>). Time to visit one of the hostleries that has not been overtaken by time, I think.

BL SW11: WHAT IS IT?

David Stone outlines the reach of this community programme

In 2012 the national Big Local programme (funded by the National Lottery) awarded £1 million over ten years to 150 of the most deprived communities in the UK. In that year Big Local SW11 was designated as an eligible area; comprising all of the former Latchmere Ward and a small part of St Mary's Ward.

The first few years of BL SW11 were devoted to extensive public consultation on the needs and challenges of the area and a 'quick wins' programme of small grants before the first official plan was approved in 2015.

In the intervening seven years BLSW11:

- Undertook extensive research to identify the main barriers that prevent local people from reaching their potential. This identified tackling loneliness, isolation and mental health (depression and anxiety) as its main focus for action. A detailed needs assessment has been produced building on this work.
- Developed and managed the Falcon Road Festival (until Covid-19 lockdown), attracting thousands of local people and involving up to 30 volunteers.
- Established Battersea Alliance – a partnership of Carney's Community, Katherine Low Settlement, St Peter's Battersea, Caius House and Providence House – who have delivered multiple shared initiatives designed to bring all parts of the community together. The rationale is based on a partnership approach which, with shared values, can call on greater resources with more capacity to act, reaching more people with greater effects.
- Match funded the appointment of two posts, one for volunteering and the other to establish a Youth Voice – both in Battersea
- Funded an intergenerational project for three years. The work of Women of Wandsworth has a main focus on residential homes in our area including lunches, entertainment and outings.
- Undertook a 'State of the Sector' (2019) analysis to identify the breadth, range and gaps in community voluntary sector activities in the BLSW11 area
- Leveraged an additional £410,000 into the area to be spend on community projects across Battersea
- Ran a £100,000 Covid 19 Grants programme that supported 30 projects; benefitting over 3,000 people.
- Delivered a £60,000 Community and Belonging programme that has supported the start-up of 12 local projects involving 56 volunteers and benefitting 570 members of the community.
- Produced a comprehensive Community Needs Analysis (2021) as part of its ongoing review of local issues and challenges.
- Partnered with Battersea Alliance, Battersea United Charities, Battersea Power Station and Community Foundation, Battersea Arts Centre, Battersea Crime Prevention Panel and others, to deliver the £35,000 Battersea Jubilee Festival Fund.
- With Battersea Alliance, ran Battersea Together networking and partnership-building events each year from 2016 (with a gap in 2019/20) attracting up to 80 participants. The next event will be on 14 November 2022.

For the remaining three years BL SW11 will, with its partners, aim to:

- Begin work on a ten year Battersea Community Investment Plan.
- Consolidate or build on initiatives that have proven to work.
- Support community events that bring people together.
- Establish legacy aims that include building stronger, more reliant and self-confident communities in Battersea.

To find out more about BL SW11 visit: www.biglocalsw11.co.uk

David Stone is programme co-ordinator of Big Local SW11.

If you want to get involved (residents especially!) contact David Stone at david@biglocalsw11.co.uk



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Diana Hardman tells you how to go about it



People volunteer for many reasons. Some might want to change career direction and don't have the experience required. You might have professional skills that you can use to help a c=harity thrive. You might feel isolated and want to get out of the house and meet new people. Perhaps you want to learn new skills, brush up on old ones, gain confidence in your abilities or try something different.

Whatever your reason, it's important to enjoy it. You get to meet people you don't usually come across and make new friends while supporting a charity that's making a difference to the community you live in. And it may only take a couple of hours a week.

Skills

Try to find a rôle that is right for you. What is important to you? Do you feel strongly about people who are hungry and want to ensure they can eat? Well, there you go, you now have a cause you want to support. Go for what you are passionate about and for which you have the skills that are needed.

There are many charities in Battersea and some are bound to have a cause that is close to your heart. For example some support people with cancer or those with a mental health diagnosis. Others work with children from a refugee background, or those with special needs. Helping ex-offenders or those at risk of offending to find a new direction are other avenues. You might be able to help older people to get out more, or run art sessions with young people. Helping in a charity shop or community garden are also practical ways to help. If you have professional skills, you can use these to support the charity through business development

LORNA'S STORY

My name is Lorna, I have been volunteering at Katherine Low Settlement (KLS) since 2019.

I got interested in volunteering when I went to tai chi classes at KLS; I was struck by the welcoming atmosphere.

I enjoyed meeting members of the lunch club on my way to and from the class, so when I saw a poster about volunteering there, I made enquiries and got involved.

Having lived and worked abroad, I was interested in working with people from other countries..I am a teaching assistant in an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class. Before class, I read the lesson plan the teacher sends to me so that I am prepared to support the students.

I'm also a learning mentor for a



primary school child who doesn't speak English at home. I meet him weekly for an hour. We do all kinds of things: follow up his interests, read, discuss, play word games, do quizzes...

I love meeting people from different backgrounds and cultures, learning from them, hearing about their hopes and dreams for the future and I hope in a small way helping them to achieve their goals. I love meeting the staff and other volunteers, and being supported by the staff in my volunteering work. I also enjoy the celebrations we have and the fun times with students.

I'd say to people considering volunteering: give it a try; there are so many opportunities that you are bound to find something that is right for you. Volunteering is also a great way to meet new people, to acquire or develop skills, to broaden horizons and to make a contribution to the local community.

or creating a marketing strategy, for example.

If you live in Battersea and are not sure what you would like to do, arrange to meet up with me (contact details below) and I'll try to find the right volunteering opportunity for you.

Training

If you know what you would like to do, that's great! Visit one of the brokerage websites below, browse and register your interest in a role. The organisation which posts the opportunity will contact you and take it from there. You may be asked to fill out an online or paper application form, come for an interview, do a DBS (criminal record) check, provide references or do on-the-job training.

Bear in mind that you may need to be patient. Most charities are under-funded and some will not have a dedicated volunteer co-ordinator. So the person

recruiting the volunteers might be busy with other roles and you may have to follow up the enquiry yourself.

Brokerage sites

Battersea Volunteers:

Diana Hardman

Tel 07956 617 084

diana@klsettlement.org.uk

website: blsw11alliance.org/volunteer

General volunteering in Wandsworth:

volunteer.wandsworthcarealliance.org.uk

Link-Up London: Skilled volunteering to

support charities:

linkuplondon.org

Do-it life: National Volunteering:

doit.life/discover

Diana Hardman is volunteer

development co-ordinator for the BL

SW11 Alliance. She is based at KLS.

WOMBLING FREE

Janice Morphet explores the Wandsworth links of Elisabeth Beresford



Elisabeth Beresford, creator of The Wombles lived not on Wimbledon Common but at the edge of Wandsworth Common. A Wandsworth Council green plaque marks the house at the start of Earlsfield Road where she lived between 1952-1971. At the unveiling ceremony her daughter Kate mentioned that the inspiration for the Wombles books came after a Boxing Day family trip to Wimbledon Common, after which she had remarked that she had enjoyed her trip to 'Wombledon' Common. The Wombles books were written during Beresford's long literary and journalistic career and at a point when her literary fortunes were said to be waning.

Literary

Liza, as Elisabeth Beresford was known, was born in Paris to a literary family. Her father was a novelist, critic and journalist and her godparents were Walter de la Mare, C Day Lewis and Eleanor Farjeon (who also had distant Battersea links through her friendship with the poet Edward Thomas). Her parents had a wide range of friendships with leading literary figures of their day including H G Wells, George Bernard Shaw, D H Lawrence, John Galsworthy, W Somerset Maugham and Hugh Walpole. Her own career started in the Wrens as a radio operator, after which she trained to be a journalist and worked for a time at the BBC. In 1949 she married Max Robertson, whom she met while working there. Robertson started as a BBC sports correspondent and is now best remembered for his

40 years of radio reporting of tennis from Wimbledon.

The idea for the Wombles seems to have been generated quickly after her daughter's mispronunciation. Beresford had been writing children's books in the style of E Nesbit but they were waning

in popularity. The names for the characters came to her on the same day as the Boxing Day visit and were based on members of her own wider family. Her son inspired Orinoco, her daughter Bungo and her father-in-law Great Uncle Bulgaria.

The first Wombles book was published in 1968 and the books were then followed by a BBC children's TV series. Initially the stories were picked up by BBC children's programme *Jackanory* and then animated. The focus of the Wombles on recycling was much ahead of its time with their motto 'Make good use of bad rubbish'. Children organised clearing up and recycling parties in response to the Wombles activities and Bernard Cribbins made them popular through his theme song 'Wombling Free'. Cribbins, a renowned children's story teller, was also involved in the series through his voices and the series was animated by Ivor Wood, who also animated Paddington. Like Beresford, Wood was Anglo-French.

Within ten years, Beresford had written over 20 Wombles books which were translated into over 40 languages.

She went on tours to Australia and South Africa. She wrote over 30 Wombles television episodes and there was also a West End stage show with Lionel Jeffries. In 1971, Beresford moved from Wandsworth and eventually settled on Alderney in the Channel Islands, where she continued to write for children and television.

'Womblemania'

Beresford was very supportive of ecological and environmental concerns. The Wombles are seen as a family with traditional values concerned with these newer issues. This was understood to be at the heart of their popularity, making recycling a mainstream cause in which everyone could participate. This eventually rose to 'Womblemania' in the 1970s and 1980s according to Julia Eccleshare in her *Guardian* obituary of Beresford. The Wombles have become recognisable outside their literary incarnations.

Rooted

Beresford supported the Wombles through personal appearances and developed their adventures alongside their international popularity. However, it was the rooted nature of the Wombles in a real place and basing the characters on members of her family that is said to provide them with their enduring qualities and popularity. Like Paddington Bear, whose transfer from the page to public icon has been similar, it is as much for the values these characters promote through their actions as their wider characterisations, that have made them popular.

Beresford never stopped writing, with books for both adults and children – sometimes more than three per year. Amongst these books she set the 'Magic' series of novels about ordinary children engaged in a struggle between good and evil while growing up in London tower blocks – perhaps drawn on those children she may have seen emerging in Trinity Road near to her Wandsworth Common home.



POETRY IN THE COMMUNITY

Poet Hilaire introduced locals in Nine Elms to the joy of writing

Perhaps it's a by-product of the pandemic, but over the last year or so my poetry activities have largely had a local focus.

Late last year I ran a series of poetry taster workshops in Battersea Park Library, which I'd started planning with the library just before the pandemic hit. Finally delivering in-person sessions almost two years after our initial discussions seemed like an achievement in itself. It was also very rewarding opening people's eyes to poetry's possibilities, and witnessing the sense of achievement and pride as participants wrote and shared new poems, created from exercises and prompts I had devised.

Nosing around

In March this year, the Nine Elms team at Wandsworth Council invited local artists to submit proposals for new work on the theme of 'movement & metamorphosis', responding to the changes taking place in Nine Elms. This felt like an unmissable opportunity. As a near neighbour of Nine Elms, I've taken a keen interest in the new developments, attending public consultations, community forums, and generally nosing around the area and peering through gaps in hoardings. I thought hard about what kind of work I wanted to create and how it related to the theme.

Although it wasn't a requirement to have a participatory element to the proposal, I felt strongly that I wanted to give local people an opportunity to contribute to the work I planned to make. In recent years I've come across several 'cultural offerings' that felt to me, as a local, like they had been parachuted in or were an exercise to get the community engagement box ticked. What form then would the community participation in my project take?

The core of my idea was to create poems from 'found text' – words and phrases on signs, posters, hoardings and so on – and publish them in a booklet titled *found ~ flow ~ flux*; to capture a poetic snapshot of a rapidly changing area. I proposed offering



Found texts can inspire poetry

three free workshops, consisting of a walk around part of Nine Elms to gather found texts, followed by time at the ROSE Community Clubroom for participants to start composing their found text poem. In my proposal I included the cost of printing of the booklet, as I wanted it to be distributed for free to participants and the local community.

A few weeks after submitting my proposal, there was a community decision making event – the first of its kind in Wandsworth – to determine which of the proposals would go ahead. Each artist had three minutes to pitch their proposal to the room, before everyone voted for their first and second choice. Thankfully, it wasn't an all-night vote count, and less than an hour after the ballot I was thrilled to be announced as one of seven commissioned artists.

Conversations

Then the hard but enjoyable work began. I devised three routes covering different sections of Nine Elms, and prepared the handouts and content for the workshops. These took place in June, in favourable weather, and with enthusiastic participants. We had some good conversations as we explored several new developments, all the while noting down words and phrases that caught the eye. Back at the ROSE, we started by writing initial impressions from the walk. Then I suggested

different approaches for creating their found text poem. Some poems were completed there and then, and others worked on at home and emailed to me.

Every participant contributed at least one poem and I was delighted with the variety and inventiveness. Drawing on all the found texts, I created a poem for each route, and interspersed these between the other poems. A week before the 25th August launch date I collected 150 beautiful copies of found ~ flow ~ flux from PowerPrint on Lavender Hill.

Joyous

The launch was a wonderful celebration, with almost all the contributors there, plus friends and locals. For many of the contributors, this was their first published poem, and their first time reading a poem in public. It was joyous!

It's important to me that the booklet is also available in libraries. There are copies in all of Battersea's libraries, the British Library and National Poetry Library. A reading at Northcote Library is pencilled in for Thursday 17th November at 5:30pm, where you'll be able to hear some of the poems and take home a copy of the booklet.

And on Saturday 5th November I'm running a free drop-in Plant-based Poetry workshop at Merchants Way South Alcove from 2-4pm. All welcome!



SEND FOOD TO SPAIN NOW!

KNITTING, SWIMMING, FIGHTING, DYING

As another war disfigures Europe, historian Sue Demont reveals Battersea's links with the Spanish Civil War 1936 – 39

The Spanish Civil War is now widely regarded as the harbinger of World War II. The studied neutrality of most European countries during the Spanish government's struggle to defeat General Franco allowed Italy and Germany to test their new weapons of war on a largely defenceless population. The era-defining image is Picasso's *Guernica*, an abstract yet graphic illustration of the effects of mass bombing on civilians.

'Red Battersea' had long been renowned for its radical politics, so it was unsurprising that the Republican cause appealed to the borough's Labour and Communist Party members. However support for the plight of Spain spread far beyond the activist base, with hundreds of ordinary citizens throwing themselves into fundraising activities in response to the brutality and suffering exposed in the newsreels shown in Battersea's many cinemas.

Enthusiasm

The first public meeting on Spain was called by the Communist Party (CP) but subsequent rallies were usually organised by the less overtly partisan Aid to Spain movement. Star speakers such as Aneurin Bevan MP, future architect of the NHS, addressed rallies of up to a thousand people. By December enthusiasm was so high that a whole week was dedicated to Aid to Spain. Young Communists and Socialists collected tins of milk, sugar and other foodstuffs to be sent on the 'Spanish Youth Food Ship'. Employees at Battersea Bus Garage and Dorman Long's engineering works organised

collections, while others took up the seasonal opportunity of carol singing in aid of Spain.

At number 115 Lavender Hill, Battersea women positioned themselves in a bookshop window where they knitted over 60 garments for the people of Spain, a tableau poignantly evoked in local poet Hilaire's *Knitting for Spain* in the People's Bookshop

*Numb fingers, numb thumbs
Gloves for brave Republicans
We are knitting to save their lives
To save our lives*

1937 saw a new campaign, to raise money for a Battersea ambulance. Caroline Ganley, a director of the London Co-operative Society and future MP for Battersea South, addressed the inaugural rally. The local Women's Co-operative Guilds - especially the North Battersea branch - were particularly active, making regular collections and staging elaborate fundraising events. Over 600 attended a concert at the Latchmere Baths, while a themed bazaar at the Town Hall with stallholders in Spanish national costume attracted much attention. Swimming galas, dancing displays and a mammoth children's tea party raised further funds.

Such were the monies raised in Battersea for the Spanish cause that the local *South Western Star* - no supporter of left wing causes - was moved to comment that 'there are still people of moderate means who are prepared to make sacrifices for their opinions'. Aneurin Bevan's rally raised over £1400 in today's money.

Battersea's League of Nations branch also got involved; at their annual garden party (Arding & Hobbs contributed to the tea) they were addressed by ambulanceman Gordon Davies, who had experienced being 'peppered with bullets from airplanes'. Davies stressed the fact that 'whatever else might be in dispute ... humanitarian work was badly needed' and urged the continuation of cross-party co-operation where it existed. However, despite expressions of regret at civilian suffering, the majority position remained one of non-intervention. Battersea South MP Harry Selley (Conservative) typified this view, stating that 'the trouble in Spain had got to be ended by the Spanish people themselves.'

Sacrifice

The ultimate sacrifice was made by those who went out to join the International Brigades. Most prominent among them was Young Communist leader David Guest (1911 – 38) who founded the People's Bookshop on Lavender Hill, entitling him to join the Shop Assistants' Union. Guest moved to Battersea from Cambridge University aged 22, lodging with fellow volunteer and Communist Bert Sines at his family home, 67 Bolingbroke Grove. Guest took his leadership role seriously, even establishing a Young Communist swimming club. He was killed in action during the Ebro offensive.

Guest's comrade Bert Sines is the only volunteer known to have been born in Battersea (though little is known about most of the other sixteen). He went out to fight early in 1937, but was wounded

and invalided out, enabling him to give the vote of thanks at a concert for Spain on 17 December. He re-joined the International Brigade the next year and served until its disbandment in 1939.

Sines was one of four Battersea volunteers who joined up in January 1937 and the only avowed Communist amongst them. J Broomfield had no affiliation, Edwin (Eddy) Bee was Labour and GW Barker signed himself as 'trade unionist'. A month into their service the four wrote to the local paper describing their 'great pride... that you and the workers of Battersea are raising the necessary cash for a field ambulance... all your efforts regarding the fight for democracy in Spain gives us all (Battersea lads especially) extra confidence.'

All four of the above survived the war, but six of their comrades did not. Ralph Fox was a northerner and Communist living in Wandsworth Road, described in the local press as 'particularly well

known in Battersea'. At 36 he was older than many

volunteers and sufficiently established as a writer to earn an obituary in the *New Statesman*, which praised his 'rare breadth of understanding and sympathy' which carried weight beyond his party.

Battersea's other four casualties were Michael Kelly, David Halloran, Martin Messer and Tom Oldershaw. Little is known of the first two beyond the fact that their names were inscribed on a heroes' banner carried at the Battersea CP's May Day Rally in 1937. We know that Messer was a railway clerk from Glasgow and member of the Young Communist League, his death being marked by the Battersea Trades Council with a minute's silence and the sending of letters of condolence to his relatives. More is known about Tom Oldershaw, who became Political Commissar for



the Machine Gun Company in the International Brigades. His mother lived in Reform Street, but Tom lodged at a 'Community House' for CP members in Balham Park

Road. He was secretary of Battersea Trades Council and a member of its Aid to Spain sub-committee from 1936 - 7. Oldershaw was wounded on 16 March 1938 and never seen again.

In September 1938 several thousand citizens paid homage to Tom Oldershaw and David Guest via a memorial march from Queen's Circus to Battersea Town Hall. The latter was decorated with banners and mottoes, one of which read, poignantly, They will live forever in the memory of the Battersea workers.

Acknowledgements

Joolz Sparkes and Hilaire London Undercurrents.

Mike Squires with Noreen Branson The Aid to Spain Movement in Battersea 1936 - 39

MUSIC IN THE AIR

A music academy opens in Nine Elms. Jenny Sheridan reports

On 1 November Battersea will become a more harmonious place. You may not notice it instantly; there will be no sudden outbreak of unconfined joy, but - at least in Nine Elms - there will be music in the air.

The World Heart Beat Music Academy is opening its doors on Ponton Road, next to the US Embassy. The Academy's current base is in Southfields, in a former warehouse. Sahana Gero MBE, its artistic director, founded the school in 2009 with a handful of students and her grandfather's beaten-up upright piano. This has grown to 350 children and young people who come in several times each week. The number is set to double when the new venue opens.

The Academy takes in students between the ages of 5 and 25. Its music programmes cover a wide range of genres including gypsy and Indian classical as well as jazz and western classical. Students can learn to play

instruments from the trombone to the tabla and from the bass guitar to the Celtic fiddle. 'It's not just the instruments', says Ms Gero, 'it's all the skills connected with music - sound production, recording techniques, song-writing and a lot of life skills. Children who learn to play music have so many transferable skills such as self-discipline, teamwork, confidence, kindness.'

Bursary

Students who can afford to pay the school's fee do so, while others receive a bursary to support them; around 50% receive free tuition.

'Foundations and generous individuals donate funding to support students,' says Ms Gero, 'and we're always looking for more.'

As it moves to a different part of Wandsworth, the



Academy has been developing close ties with the local community. It produced a memorable suite of music videos, the Nine Elms Sessions, showcasing the area and available on YouTube. A flash mob in Griffin Primary School, a concert in its forest school and a drumming march through local estates were all popular. In the summer

they were awarded a pop-up space on Merchants Way, the colourful walkway between Nine Elms tube station on Wandsworth Road and Ponton Road. With a brightly painted piano and several visiting musicians, they offered free professionally-taught piano lessons in the sunshine to local children.

The Nine Elms venue will not only allow more young people to develop their musical interests, it will provide a new concert hall for the area, something that is currently lacking. 'It's not large; it's a boutique space, seating 120 and with space for 200 standing,' says Ms Gero. 'But it's beautiful and the acoustics are amazing.' As well as the hall, there are recording studios and teaching spaces - and a green room which contains famous pianist Lang Lang's own piano. There are also three Steinway grand pianos, one of them fresh from a starring role at the Proms.

The Academy has an ambitious concert programme. Starting in January 2023 it will offer three concerts each week, ranging from emerging talent to established musicians in a wide range of genres.

Ms Gero is hugely excited about the new venue: 'It will be a home to musicians and something precious for the local community. It's there for everybody.'

worldheartbeat.org

WILHELMINA STERLING HONOURED WITH A PLAQUE

Jenny Sheridan attended the unveiling

On Saturday 24 September a Battersea Society plaque was unveiled on Old Battersea House to Mrs Wilhelmina Stirling, founder of the De Morgan Foundation, who lived there for over 30 years. Mrs Stirling's advocacy secured the lasting reputations of her artist sister Evelyn and her brother-in-law William de Morgan, the famous ceramicist. Mrs Stirling wrote a biography of the couple, *William de Morgan and his Wife*.

The plaque was unveiled by the three young daughters of the house's owner, Matthew Csidei, who spoke about his family's affection for their new home. Wandsworth Council leader Cllr Simon

Hogg and Battersea MP Marsha de Cordova also spoke, as did Jeanne Rathbone and Sarah Hardy, curator of the De Morgan Foundation.

Oldest

Old Battersea House was built in 1699 and is Battersea's oldest building. It is situated on Vicarage Crescent, facing the river. You can see the plaque if you walk through the passage to Eaton House.

The great moment!
Photo: Suzanne Perkins



Photos: ©2022 Mark Hodgkinson

A ROYAL TRIBUTE

Clare Graham watched a historic pageant

It was delightful to watch the Thames Festival Trust Reflections Flotilla setting off from Battersea's Albert Bridge, on the evening of Saturday 24 September. This event was the river community's tribute to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the accession of King Charles III; it also helped raise funds

towards the construction of a new RNLI lifeboat station at Waterloo Bridge.

The first illuminated flotilla on the Thames for over 300 years, Reflections was both a beautiful spectacle and an impressive feat of organisation. Some 150 river craft of all types took part, decorated with white lights. Royal rowbarge Gloriana was the centrepiece, having been moored in preparation at Cadogan Pier.

As dusk fell, the decorations were switched on, and at 18.50 the flotilla set

off downriver. It made a wonderful sight, with the illuminated oars used by some of the boats creating a striking effect.

Moving surprisingly fast, it soon passed out of view to make its way through central London. It passed under all seven of the bridges participating in the long-term Illuminated River bridges, all relit for the occasion with a special display by lighting artist Leo Villareal. It finished at Tower Bridge, bathed for the night in purple light, which was raised in a culminating salute as Gloriana arrived.