

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2023



PHOTO COMPETITION 2023: THE WINNERS

Overall winner of the Battersea Past, Present & Future Photography Award is Hector Chatriot for his picture of the Clapham Common Bandstand entitled *Empyrean*. 'A very atmospheric image and a welcome reminder that the bandstand on Clapham Common falls within the boundary of Battersea', said Mark Hodgkinson, Battersea Society trustee and one of the competition judges.

Hector also won the Past category of the Award. Winner of the Present category was Fred Barrington for his picture of swimmers in the pool at Embassy Gardens. Philip Poppy won the Future category with his *Electric Boulevard Bot* image of a riverside surveillance camera.

The winner of each category receives a cash prize of £200 and the overall winner receives a further £200. Winners

will also receive a framed print of their winning image.

There were over 150 entries to the competition.

Battersea Society members and the general public are invited to see 30 specially selected entries, including the winners, in an exhibition at the Dyson Gallery at the Royal College Art on 13 and 14 October, 11am – 4pm.



Clockwise from far left:
Hector Chatriot, Empyrean;
Fred Barrington, Embassy Pool;
Philip Poppy, Electric Boulevard Bot



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

FROM THE EDITOR



During the pandemic we worried about losing our sense of smell. Now I wonder whether we are in danger of losing our

sense of place – that feeling of being dug into an area, whether it's our home, our neighbourhood or our borough.

What gives me that feeling of impending loss? Well, it's partly the change to mobile phones. When I phone a friend on her landline (as we now call our home telephones), I picture her in her kitchen or living room, with

the newspaper I know she reads, her recognisable mug of tea, her cat or dog at her feet. She is grounded in a place. When I phone her on her mobile she could be anywhere. She is floating in space.

A Syrian refugee I knew tried to teach me a few words of Arabic. After 'Hello', the first phrase he thought I would need to know was 'Where are you?' I was startled; why would I want to know that? But of course for anyone who has had to be constantly on the move and whose phone is not their landline but their lifeline, it's vital.

And for young people 'home' is so often temporary. Forced by the cost of housing and the near-impossibility of renting, they move frequently, with little or no time to put down roots or become

part of a community.

I think the Battersea Society (and other similar civic societies) can help here. If you hear a talk about the history of the place you live in or walk through a green space you have read about in our magazine or website, you become embedded in your area, more deeply connected. You develop and cultivate your sense of place and the community that lives in it. And if you become more involved you also develop local knowledge and friendships that tie you more closely to Battersea. 'Love where you live' is one of our mottoes.

If you do feel you would like to be more involved, do get in touch.

Jenny Sheridan
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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden tries to find reasons to be cheerful

I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers.

I came across that quotation from *Anne of Green Gables* many years ago. I've never read the book but back then that sentiment made sense. The change of seasons has a soothing rhythm to it. Since my childhood I've enjoyed the winding down of the year in October, when the nights draw in, and there's a slight autumnal chill in the air, even the occasional early morning frost.

The chances of frost are a bit low these days and I wonder whether we really notice much difference today, other than the arrival in supermarkets of displays of pumpkins and shelves full of Halloween merchandise. A nearly full size (hopefully plastic) articulated skeleton will set you back £30 but a plastic skull designed to hold sweets for trick or treaters is a snip at £7. (You can also use it to try out your 'Alas poor Yorick' party piece)

What was once a very low-key festival with the most exciting event being the chance to get soaked while bobbing for apples has become a mad shopping spree, with £687m being spent in the UK last year. And – depressingly – most Halloween costumes are worn just once before being binned, generating an estimated 2,000 tonnes of plastic waste.

Creating all that unnecessary junk makes its small contribution to the

carbon emissions which are changing our climate and slowly but surely raising the temperature of the planet towards the point of no return. Still, unlike holidaymakers in Rhodes, those in Devon and Cornwall haven't yet needed evacuation so maybe – like Number 10 – we should stop worrying for a while.

Primitive

The recent death at the age of 90 of David Macallum – Ilya Kuryakin in the 1960s *Man from Uncle* tv series brought back memories of a time when you had to wait a whole seven days for the next episode to come round. There was no 'box set binging' in those days before instant gratification became the norm. And you had to make sure to be sitting in front of the set in time to watch the show. There were no video recorders, or catch up tv in those primitive times.

These days we rarely if ever watch live television, relying on streaming services like Netflix and ITVX. But even when we're watching a tv series with all the episodes available to us we still can't kick the habit of rationing ourselves to one instalment a week. I have to acknowledge it's becoming a bit harder to recall what happened in the previous episode of a serial, but there are worse things to worry about so I'll complain about one of those instead.

Is there any more pointless sign than Cyclists Dismount? The river walk between Battersea Bridge and Albert Bridge is currently narrowed because of work on the Foster's Building. Pedestrians, people pushing buggies or walking dogs must squeeze through a narrow gap, while contending with cyclists – most of whom who are apparently glued to their bikes and determined to ignore the extremely obvious exhortation on the notice.

Anyway to end as I began – with a quotation. This time from Winnie the Pooh's creator A A Milne. Pub quiz fans might find it useful to note that those initials stand for Alan Alexander. Not a lot of people know that, well I certainly didn't:

The end of the summer is not the end of the world. Here's to October...

And so say all of us. Take care and see you next time





A Nubian Jak/Battersea Society commemorative plaque celebrating singer and cabaret performer Evelyn Dove 1902–1987, the first black woman to sing on BBC radio in 1925. Speakers included Stephen Bourne, her biographer; Rick Dove her great nephew and slam poetry winner; Dr Jak Beula, entrepreneur and cultural activist; and Marsha de Cordova MP.

BATTERSEA SOCIETY TRUSTEES

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BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS OCTOBER 2023 – JANUARY 2024

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

● Tuesday 18 October, 7pm

Talk and poetry reading
Battersea Bookshop
Turbine Hall B
Battersea Power Station
Jeanne Rathbone introduces
Inspiring Women of Battersea
and Hilaire and Joolz Sparkes
read from their anthology *London Undercurrents*
Free event

● Wednesday 7 November, 1pm

Tour of World Heart Beat Academy
3 Ponton Road, London SW11
7BD
A private guided tour round the
innovative and joyful World
Heart Beat Academy, ending
with an exclusive musical
performance in the concert
hall. 20 people max.
£20 per person payable in advance
(which will be donated to World Heart
Beat Academy)

● Wednesday 15 November, 6pm

Talk on the Branson family
Online
Clive Branson was an English artist
and poet and an active communist
in the 1930s who lived in Battersea
with his family. His wife Noreen was a
historian of the Communist Party and
his daughter Rosa is a painter and
fabric designer.
Free event

● Tuesday 5 December, 6pm

Virtual Christmas tour
round Jane Austen's
House
Online
Visit Jane Austen's
House from the
comfort of your
own home. A special
Christmas version
of the popular Jane
Austen's House virtual
guided tour. Free online event for
members only



● Saturday 6 January at 7pm

Twelfth Night Supper
L'Antipasto, 511 Battersea Park Road,
London SW11 3BW
Join us at this popular local
restaurant for our annual Twelfth
Night supper.
£29 for three courses, including
coffee (excluding drinks), payable in
advance

● Tuesday 23 January at 6.30pm for
7pm

'Only objects that blot the landscape'
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church
Road, London SW11 3NA
A talk by Wandsworth archivist Emma
Anthony on Battersea's industrial and
agricultural heritage, with insights
from the local archives.
£5 payable in advance online or on
the door

A FUTURE IN POLITICS?

Battersea's MP Marsha de Cordova outlines her Political Summer School

The world of politics can appear to be off limits to some young people. All too often, they think politics isn't for them. That's why I established my Political Summer School. Its purpose is to give them an inside perspective and a better understanding of how our political system works as well as to break down the barriers which might otherwise prevent access to politics.

While many of my contacts are of course from the Labour Party, the School is intended to be non-partisan, and the programming reflects that.

My plan was to launch the Summer School in 2020, but unfortunately the pandemic intervened. However, since its launch in 2021, it has gone from strength to strength, featuring speakers including the Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy MP, the former Leader of the Labour Party Ed Miliband MP and Baroness Doreen Lawrence.

This year, following a record number of applicants, I welcomed a diverse group of 16 young people – nine girls and seven boys - to participate in five days filled with talks, workshops and interactive sessions. Aged between 16 and 24, they were recruited from both independent and state schools, including Harris Academy Battersea, Emanuel and Burntwood. We also worked with youth groups and advertised on social media and posters.

Prime Minister's Questions

While the success of previous Summer Schools set a high bar, I think this year raised it even higher. Participants had the opportunity to hear from prominent politicians including the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party Angela Rayner MP, former Home Secretary Lord David Blunkett and the Deputy Speaker of the House, Nigel Evans MP (Conservative). And rather than just hearing from parliamentarians, I was determined that this year the students got to see MPs in action. After queuing up at 8:30 on a Wednesday morning, I managed to secure tickets for them all to watch Prime Ministers Questions (PMQs) from the Commons viewing gallery.

As politics isn't just limited to Westminster, there were sessions led by



representatives from London and local government including the Deputy Mayor for Housing and local councillors.

Aside from elected politicians there were sessions with Lobby journalists from the Daily Mirror and POLITICO. The GMB and Unite unions spoke about the role of trade unionism in our political system – particularly relevant given the ongoing industrial disputes. There were also sessions from charity campaigners and PR and public affairs experts, who were not affiliated with any political party. The young people also enjoyed a tour of the magnificent Palace of Westminster.

Embassy

While the Summer School was full of highlights from the Houses of Parliament, my favourite part of the week was spending the day in Battersea to visit some of our fantastic organisations. We started with a visit to Caius House where students heard from its CEO, Delrita Agyapong, who talked about her career working to support young people. This was followed by a meeting at Apple's new UK Headquarters and then the United States Embassy where they discussed the role of diplomacy in negotiating political change, Anglo-American relations and the differences between our respective democratic systems. To finish the day, we had a visit from the community champion Elizabeth Oddono, founder of the beloved Battersea business, Oddono's Gelati, who delivered an inspiring speech about social purpose within business.

We finished the week with a final session with me, followed by the presentation of a certificate to each of



Top: Participants proudly displaying their certificates,

Above: Marsha introduces the course

the participants.

There's no doubt the 2023 Political Summer School was an unforgettable experience for the young people, with one describing the program as 'one of the best spent weeks in my summer holidays of all time' and another saying it was 'genuinely more than anything I could have imagined'; These encouraging words show the value of the initiative.

However, if more evidence was desired, one need look no further than the trajectories of past Summer School alumni. These include Jamie Colclough, who is now an elected Labour Councillor in Battersea. Many others have gone on to study politics and related subjects at prestigious universities across the country.

I look forward to seeing what this year's participants go on to achieve and have every confidence that they have bright futures ahead of them.

BEATING THE BOUNDS OF BATTERSEA

Sue Demont celebrates the revival of an ancient tradition

Back in July, inspired by local heritage expert Philip Boys' fascinating research, an intrepid group of Battersea Society members and Friends of Wandsworth Common (FOWC) set out to try and replicate the ancient parish tradition of Beating the Bounds. This custom dates right back to Anglo-Saxon times and continues to operate in a few country parishes and even the odd London borough today. Its original purpose was to mark out the parish boundary by walking around it, using greenery or sticks to beat the boundary posts and stones that delineated the route.

Schoolboys

The *Parish Dial* magazine of 1862 features an entertaining account of one such occasion in Battersea, where it was customary to beat the bounds of the original Battersea Vestry district every three years. Starting at Battersea Square, a large number of local schoolboys carrying 'white wands' were marshalled to walk alongside the churchwardens and other parochial officers. Other dignitaries like the Juer and Poupart families, not to mention John Buckmaster (the saviour of Wandsworth Common), also turned out to encourage the walkers. The highlight of the outing appeared to be the refreshments provided on Wandsworth Common, which saw a sudden influx of enthusiastic bounds-beaters who proceeded to consume industrial quantities of bread, cheese and ham – not to mention beer!



Our walk was a more sober affair, but still a lot of fun. Six BS members, the chair of the FOWC Heritage Group and Tiger the greyhound set out from St Mary's Church with the aim of completing as much of the 11-mile circuit as we felt able. The first stage along the riverbank through Battersea Park was very pleasant, but once we hit the new road layouts at Nine Elms things got a little trickier and rather less pleasant. After much criss-crossing we eventually found ourselves back in more



interesting territory, particularly once we left Wandsworth Road. There had been no boundary markers up until this stage, but the garage where we turned off was called Boundary Autos.

Our first official boundary post materialised in a narrow alley through which we gained access to some attractive terraced streets before hitting Heathbrook Park en route for Park Town. Queenstown Road also provided some well-preserved boundary markers dated 1866 and there were many more to come as we headed up to Clapham Common. Here we were met by Richard Fox, co-chair of FOWC who distributed willow wands to add authenticity.

Sadly, no free refreshments were provided but the café by the bandstand made a welcome pit stop before we tackled the interesting task of locating the boundary markers lost in the undergrowth to the south and west of the bandstand. It was rather easier to spot markers along Nightingale Lane, but puzzlingly these were erected by the London County Council, not the Battersea Vestry.

Boundary oak

The next leg was of limited interest apart from the surprise we had when we realised just how far south the historic borough of Battersea used to go (perhaps the name Boundaries Road ought to have given us a clue.) We then doubled back to Bellevue Field on Wandsworth Common, noting more boundary markers and admiring the beautiful 'boundary oak'; here we said goodbye to three of our number (well done Jenny Sheridan, Carol Rahn and

Richard Fox) leaving the remaining five plus the intrepid Tiger to complete the circuit.

We continued to Wandsworth Common Northside, where we were intrigued to see a little parish marker on the wall of two of our members' house! We next descended via Harbut Road to a little-known subway, from which to our surprise we emerged into a small 'pocket park' where someone was keeping chickens! Truly *rus in urbis*, and a significant contrast with the dual carriageway of York Road which had to be crossed so that we could regain the river.

By now there was definitely a feeling of weariness, but also a sense of the 'home straight' and we enjoyed the relative tranquillity of the river for our hike back to St Mary's. On arrival willow wands were cast aside and the completists – Clare Graham, Sally Sellers, Dave Rathbone, Stephen Midlane and Sue Demont, plus Tiger of course – made for Battersea Square for a welcome cup of tea/ bowl of water. The circuit took us about six hours compared with eight in 1862, though our Victorian forebears may have spent longer on refreshments....

The occasion was exhausting, but the collaboration between the two societies was much enjoyed and all felt it would be fun to devise a wider ranging version of Beating the Bounds next spring or summer, with people opting into different stretches of the walk and going at different paces. A working group to progress ideas will be convened early in the new year.

In the meantime, do email any ideas/suggestions to heritage@batterseasociety.org.uk or openspaces@batterseasociety.org.uk

Sue Demont is member of Battersea Society Heritage Committee



DEVOTED TO LOCAL YOUTH WORK

Sue Demont reviews *One year is not enough* by Robert Musgrave

This is an extraordinary book, written by a man of unshakeable religious faith about his 50-year journey alongside some of the most disadvantaged young people in Battersea. Meet Robert 'Robsky' Musgrave MBE, of Providence House, a youth club whose mission (and passion) is to improve the lives and outcomes for children and young adults on the Winstanley and York Gardens Estates.

Musgrave came to Battersea to undertake a year's voluntary work back in 1973 and as he tells us 'I never found the exit'. He was to work in the Winstanley area for the rest of his working life – indeed he still volunteers at Providence despite having retired from his paid youth worker role. During his 50-year stint he shared many of the experiences of his young members, right down to a night in the cells during the 1981 riots.

Social history

When Providence opened in 1963, the original terraces of Winstanley Road and its environs were still standing, though increasingly derelict as they awaited redevelopment. The original Providence Chapel on the corner of Speke and Winstanley Roads, commandeered by the astonishing Elizabeth Braund (for whose own memoir see below) was almost the last building standing. By now the social and cultural make-up of the area was changing fast due to a combination of immigration and gentrification, and an interesting aspect of the book is its well-observed accounts of these changes, contributing to north Battersea's rich social history.

Surprisingly (providentially?)

Musgrave was born in British Guyana where his father had been appointed as minister to the Congregational Chapel in Georgetown. He has no memories of his brief time

there, but his family's experience may have informed his thinking about race and community. He writes of the impact of immigration on both white and black residents, noting the 'double adjustment' families had to make when moving into high-rise flats with a new set of neighbours of different backgrounds. Some found this enriching, others struggled, and their experiences were reflected in the dynamics of local youth provision. Musgrave observed that when St Peter's Church on Plough Road opened its own youth club, it drew away most of the white members of Providence, leaving it to become 'more and more a black identified youth provision'.

What did not change was the ethos of Providence House, whose six core values are enshrined, with illustrations, on the front of the building. Only one of these references God, but Musgrave's Christian beliefs are fundamental to his whole approach to his role. Biblical references pepper these pages, which some readers may find uncomfortable, yet the book does not proselytise.

Musgrave quotes from the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen as well as the Book of Ecclesiastes, and regards 'being there for people' whatever their spiritual state as an important act in itself. Other values include finding identity, belonging in the community and developing skills and talents – specifically sport and music. The hip hop collective So Solid Crew and the band The Pasadenas are cited as indicators of Providence's rich artistic heritage, and West Ham midfielder Michail Antonio, who joined the youth club aged 11 also gets a passage to himself.

Musgrave tells his story through vignettes, diary extracts, feedback from community members and his own acute observations. Chapter 6, echoing Nell Dunn, describes 'something of my Junction and its people,' opening with a comparison of today's retail and business premises with those of the 1970s. There are heartwarming descriptions of the annual trips to East Shallowford Farm in Devon, bought by Elizabeth Braund in 1976 to provide a 'lung for the city', and amusing accounts of the exploits of the feisty football teams that emerged year on year, always playing to win and not always cleanly.

Riots

In one of the most poignant chapters, Musgrave describes how a journey home from the farm in the summer of 2011 was interrupted by a phone call announcing the onset of the Clapham Junction riots. His subsequent account is one of the best I have read of those torrid few days.

In recent years Providence, like youth clubs up and down the land, has suffered from chronic underfunding and a complete failure by those in authority to recognise the worth of high-quality youth provision. In a supreme irony, Robert Musgrave was awarded the MBE for services to youth work in the very week that Wandsworth Council abolished his job. If nothing else, this book should be compulsory reading for government and councils.

One Year is Not Enough, R. Musgrave. Available from Providence House, 138 Falcon Road, SW11 2LW. £10 + p&p if not collecting.

See also

Elizabeth Braund Young Woman Who lived in a Shoe, 1984, (Pickering)

Sue Demont is a member of the Battersea Society's heritage committee.



PLANNING MATTERS: EVER MORE CONSULTATIONS FOR MONICA TROSS

I started last time saying that I hoped that endless rounds of consultations were at an end. I had just taken delivery of all 2kg of the printed Local Plan when news came of a partial review. This centres on changes to affordable housing policy LP23. The Council will be seeking 50% affordable housing rather than 35% with a greater proportion genuinely affordable – ideally a 70/30 split in favour of social rent. They are also looking to extend the requirement for affordable provision to small sites below the current threshold of 10 or more homes. The Council are already consulting on their Housing and Homelessness Strategy and you will read our response on our website in due course.

In July the Government announced a consultation on proposals to further widen the scope of developments which can go ahead without needing a full planning application, including in conservation areas. Permitted development is a complex subject but essentially it is the ability to undertake certain building work to extend existing buildings, to increase the size of such conversions or to convert non-residential buildings to residential. The Government is also proposing 'reforms' to the process for the making of Local Plans. Please email planning@batterseasociety.org.uk if you would like a link to more detailed information on either of these – or for anything else in this article.

The Council's transport committee meeting on 21 September included a review of action relating to two specifically Battersea plans: safety changes to the Culvert Road underpass and improvements to Battersea Park Station. Anyone who uses the route through from Culvert Road to the business centre and the Shaftesbury Park Estate will know that the road and the footway are narrow. The addition of signalling will help maintain pedestrian safety.

Paper 23-305 set out plans to open up a second, fully accessible, entrance to Battersea Park Station from the eastern end of Prince of Wales Drive, and gained support for money to be spent

on the next phase. It is clearly going to be a long haul but our meeting earlier in the year suggested that both Network Rail and Wandsworth Council are fully committed to this essential work.

More generally the committee considered extending the trial of e-scooters taking place in other boroughs to Wandsworth and the continuing problems from e-bike users parking their bikes thoughtlessly. There are plans to require e-bikes to use docking stations; this makes good sense but until it is done it's good to know that both the Council and some renters are acting to stop thoughtless parking.

MEANWHILE AT THE POWER STATION

Consultations are taking place about plans for meanwhile uses for the large plot to the east of the Power Station. These consist of two buildings which would be in place for up to five years. One will contain four padel courts and associated amenities, the other is for exhibitions described as family-friendly, immersive and with a rolling programme of events on different themes. It seems these could take us from Pompeii to Jurassic World via Machu Picchu over a year. A further consultation will take place before a possible opening in Autumn 2024.

LOOKING BACK

It was 10 years ago that the first application was made to turn the Prince of Wales pub in Battersea Bridge Road into a retail store. I have lost count of the number of applications made although we have sent responses to more than sixteen covering the public house and the houses built on part of the land. Tesco Local was due to open in September but at the last moment a gas leak led to further delay. It could be open by the time you read this.

Back in 2017 an application was made for a courtyard development, Crosland Place off Taybridge Road. This first application was refused but amended plans were approved, residents are in and the development



Courtyard development, Crosland Place off Taybridge Road, shortlisted for the Stirling Prize

has been shortlisted for the Stirling Prize for Architecture.

Also in 2013 a report was discussed on possible development at Clapham Junction with a decision that no immediate action would be taken but that a long term strategy would be developed for the area. The Local Plan (p.146) states that 'The Council will work in collaboration with Network Rail ... to prepare the Urban Heart Masterplan for Clapham Junction'. We will keep you in touch with this one.

UPDATES AND NEWS

The Fraser & Ellis building on the corner of Gwynne Road and Lombard Road is to be developed. Consultation is taking place; again, email if you want more details. Plans for 220 Queenstown Road were approved in July (2021/3958) but the developer is planning changes, details at www.220queenstownroad.com. Conversion of St Mark's School on Battersea Rise took some time to go through the system but has now been approved, (2023/0662). We have objected strongly to plans to demolish all but the façade of 5 Albert Bridge Road, (2023/2447). We fear the application will be approved.

planning@batterseasociety.org.uk

THE TREMBLING LADY

Martin Ireland describes the engineering behind London's most beautiful bridge



As well as his innovative sewer system for London (see *BM* summer 2023), Sir Joseph Bazalgette was associated with strengthening several bridges spanning the Thames in west London, including Battersea and Albert Bridges. These made a huge impact on the appearance and development of both Battersea and Chelsea.

Before the late 19th century, crossing the Thames between Chelsea and Battersea by bridge was a precarious experience, with a rickety wooden structure between Battersea and Cheyne Walk. Hastily constructed by Henry Holland in 1771, old Battersea Bridge's 16 arches acted like a colander, considerably restricting the flow of the current and causing traffic jams for boatmen down river. The old bridge was in a near-continuous state of repair and was often closed for months on end while engineers and carpenters tried to upgrade the perpetually degrading wooden structure. Eventually it was replaced with Bazalgette's cast iron and steel bridge, completed in 1890.

The other Battersea bridge Bazalgette had influence on was Albert Bridge. The Albert Bridge Company was set up in 1863 and

designs were drawn up by the engineer Rowland Mason Ordish. Construction was delayed due to the ongoing construction of Bazalgette's embankment on the north side of the river. Work began in 1871 and it opened to traffic on 23 August 1873.

Albert Bridge is known for its detailing and also for its unique and very early cable-stayed bridge design. The bridge was soon named the Trembling Lady due to its tendency to vibrate when large numbers of people walked over it. Signs were put at its entrances warning troops to break step when crossing the bridge.

Innovative

The elaborate Gothic-style towers consist of a central cast-iron cylinder set on a base, with an eight-point star plan, resting on the piers and level with the bridge's cast-iron parapet. Each tower is capped by a lantern which contains the housing for the suspension cable, and is topped by a secondary tower. The design of the bridge was an innovative combination of a suspension bridge, where the deck is supported by vertical hangers suspended from catenary (curved) chains hung between pairs of towers, and a cable-stayed bridge, where the support of the deck comes

from inclined stays fanning out from the top of the tower, which provide greater rigidity. Albert Bridge had light suspension cables of wire steel rope which took the weight of 16 flat wrought-iron diagonal stays which supported the deck. At the time these were the largest cylindrical iron castings ever made, each weighing 10 tons. They were only possible because they could be floated down river from the foundry in Battersea. Bronze plaques at either end of the bridge state that it opened in 1874. The bridge is 241m long with a central span of 139m and is 12m wide.

Between 1884 and 1887 the bridge was strengthened by Sir Joseph Bazalgette. He replaced the original steel cables, which were rusting, with steel link chains. Ordish had specified this in his original design but was over-ruled by the owners on grounds of cost. Bazalgette modified the design by raising the height of the towers to accommodate upper cable stays incorporated into the design. This gave the bridge both lateral and vertical strength and connected the original Ordish design with additional cable stays. The two systems can be seen together, with suspension bridge eye-bars on top, passing



through the extended towers, while the cable-stayed original design remains below in the original Ordish design lower down in the ornamental towers.

At the ends of the bridge, adjoining the parapet, are four original tollbooths, one on either side of the roadway. These pavilion-like buildings are octagonal with timber panelled sides which have octagonal cast-iron columns with dog-tooth capitals. The overhanging octagonal leaded roofs have cast-iron brackets supporting the eaves with the same floral design as the metalwork on the bridge itself.

Staircases

At the northern end the roadway is extended as a bridge supported on an iron superstructure over the footpath of the Embankment. This has staircases on either side with a cast-iron balustrade terminating with cast-iron piers matching the bridge's parapet. There are 16 octagonal cast-iron gas lamp standards along the bridge with dog-tooth mouldings and crown finials to the lamps, which were later converted to electric light.

Both before and after the Second World War, Albert Bridge was threatened with demolition due to structural problems. These were

eventually resolved and the bridge was saved after a public campaign in 1957, involving Sir John Betjeman. He described the bridge as 'Shining with electric lights, grey and airy against the London sky. It is one of the beauties of the London river'. The lights were added in 1951 for the Festival of Britain.



Bazelgette's vertical strengthening rods with the original Rowland Mason Ordish 1874 Albert Bridge design.

In 1972/3 extensive strengthening work was carried out. This included the installation of two additional circular piers down into the riverbed, connected by a transverse steel beam beneath the middle of the bridge. These support the wooden decking of the roadway which was itself renewed. In 1992 the bridge was painted in its current pink colour scheme to make it more conspicuous in poor visibility and to reduce the risk of damage by passing boats. The 4,000 LED lights also make the bridge more visible and helped establish it as a London landmark. In 2010/11 the bridge and its tollbooths were refurbished and repainted, with the decking again replaced.

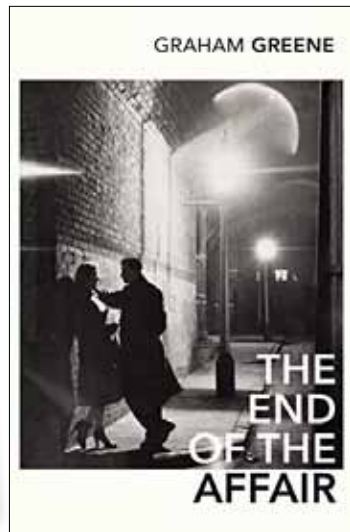
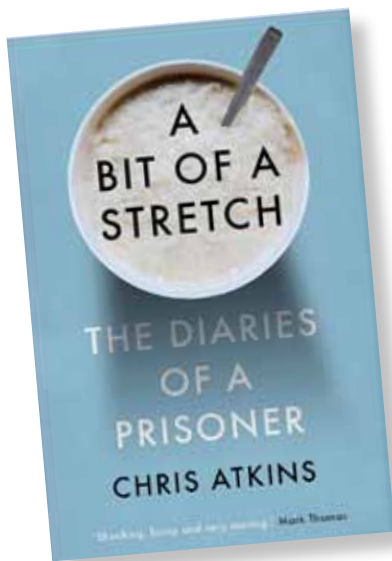
Albert Bridge remains open to vehicles almost 150 years after its opening. It is one of only two bridges across the Thames which has not been replaced, the other being Tower Bridge. Albert Bridge is listed at Grade II* for its architectural interest and Gothic embellishments.

The historical significance of the design of Albert Bridge is listed in HistoricBridges.org

Martin Ireland is an artist based in Battersea.

SET IN WANDSWORTH

The Wandsworth book group meets in Battersea Library. Emma Anthony describes her initiative



It starts with tea and Tunnocks. The group is divided on whether tea cakes or caramel wafers reign supreme, but as far as reading habits go we're a fairly broad (if modestly sized) church. In the last year, we've covered modern fiction (such as *Piranesi*, by Susanna Clarke; *Putney*, by Sofka Zinovieff; and *This Lovely City*, by Louise Hare) as well as classics and forgotten gems (including *Offshore* by Penelope Fitzgerald, *The End of the Affair*, by Graham Greene; *Frost in May* by Antonia White; and *The Vet's Daughter*, by Barbara Comyns). We've also ventured into biography, with *A Bit of a Stretch* documenting author Chris Atkins' time in Wandsworth Prison proving a harrowing if fascinating read.

All of them have one thing in common: they're set in or around

Wandsworth, or at the very least have a strong link to the borough.

It was through my work as the borough archivist that I realised just how many books are set in or around Wandsworth or written by authors who live here – in part thanks to the numerous articles published over the years in *Battersea Matters* and the endless knowledge of those I meet in the course of my work.

Out of print

Our problem certainly isn't finding books set in the area – but it can sometimes prove difficult sourcing them for the libraries if they are out of print (I'd love us to do *People Who Say Goodbye* by P Y Betts, for example, but it's very difficult to find copies for the library).

At the time of writing, we're about

to have our first author event, with T L Mogford joining us to discuss his book *The Plant Hunter*, which begins in Chelsea and Battersea and takes the reader to the Yangtse River and the Cape of Good Hope as its protagonist searches for a fabled tree.

There are no rules for the book group beyond a healthy respect for one another – you don't even have to have read the book! (I had to confess to the group that I didn't get past the first page of the *End of the Affair*...).

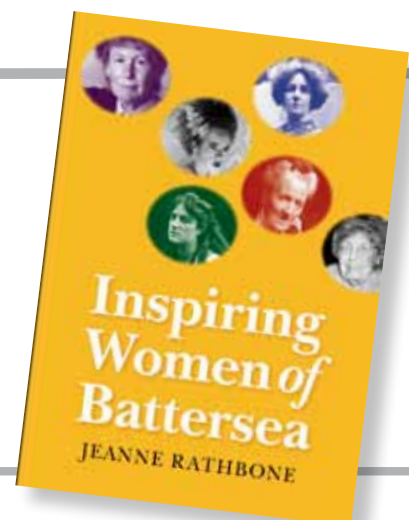
If you are interested in joining, you can contact me at Heritage@gll.org to find out more.

Emma Anthony, Archivist, Wandsworth Libraries & Heritage Service

THE WHS IS 70 YEARS OLD!

The Wandsworth Historical Society is celebrating its 70th anniversary. In the Autumn 2023 issue of *The Wandsworth Historian* (its 116th) it reprints several articles from its early days. No articles on Battersea were published in the first 12 years, as Battersea only became a part of the

Borough of Wandsworth in 1965, but an article from 1966 on the history of Emanuel School is republished. The issue also includes an enthusiastic review of the Battersea Society's *Inspiring Women of Battersea* by Jeanne Rathbone. www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk



LAST ORDERS

Tim Barrow salutes our lost pubs

At the time of the 1911 census, there were more than 80 pubs in north-west Battersea alone. Now only a fraction of that number remains in the whole of Battersea.

To an extent, this reflects changing tastes; many pubs have gone, but bars have sprung up elsewhere to replace them, resulting from the recent influx of younger people to the area. Yet the pubs have also had to weather wave after wave of 'enemies' other than time and fashion. Several were lost in the second world war. Others – especially in north Battersea – fell to widespread residential redevelopment of old Victorian streets in the second half of the 20th century. Also, over the last few decades high property prices in Battersea mean that many more pubs have been converted into housing by developers. Even some pubs which still exist have been rebuilt several times.

Fights

Many lost pubs have been demolished, but others still retain a ghostly existence, recognisable as ex-pubs if you look hard enough. The Invitation House in Auckland Road is now housing, yet it still looks like a pub. In the 1970s it was notorious as the place to go for fights on Saturday nights with local hard men and market traders. I imagine its neighbours prefer it as it is now....

Other lost pubs live on as backdrops to films or TV programmes of the 1940s onwards; 1970s episodes of the Sweeney being an especially rich source – for instance the Craven Arms (now a dentist) on the corner of Lavender Hill and Taybridge Road.

The full list of lost pubs (the Gladstone, Goat and Kids, Europa, Bucks Head, Burton Ale Stores etc) is too long to set out here, but a few examples should give an idea of what has gone.

Firstly, the Cricketers on the corner of Battersea Park Road and Austin Rd (demolished recently for a paint shop) This had a reputation in the 1960s and 1970s as a working-class gay pub, with drag nights and other musical entertainment. It also attracted a wide circle of artistic customers from outside Battersea – including Noel Coward and Rudolf Nureyev.



The Invitation House, The Gladstone, Plough Road, The Nags Head, York Road,

apparently a favourite of King Charles II, is still there, although it ceased to be a pub some 15 years ago, after more than 300 years. It's now an Italian restaurant.

Finally, in the late 1800s Chatham Road, between the commons, had six pubs. Now there is only one – the Eagle, and even that had to run a local campaign (thankfully successful) to stop it being replaced with a chain bar some 15 years ago.

Whilst the 'golden' age of pub closures may have passed, the battles are still not over. The last 20 years have seen many losses, including the Chopper in York Road, the Meyrick Arms in Falcon Road, the Original Woodman in Battersea High Street and the Rising Sun in Bridge Road. In 2008, the Bolingbroke Tavern in Chatham Road – the oldest surviving building in the area – was knocked down and replaced by gimcrack housing. In 2015, the Fishmongers in St John's Hill was demolished – without permission – by unscrupulous property developers. Fortunately, they were ordered by the council to rebuild it in its original form. And the current cost of living crisis will doubtless leave more pub victims in its wake.

Then there was the Nags Head in York Road, demolished in 1989. In the 1960s it was famous locally as a music venue. The rock bands Free and Savoy Brown gave their first live performances there before going on to worldwide success. The York Gardens Estate now stands on the site.

Battersea suffered badly from bombing in the Second World War; firstly during the blitz of 1940/41, and then from the V1 and V2 weapons unleashed by Hitler in 1944/45. Amongst others, in 1940 the Nelson on Wandsworth Road – now the Willard Estate – was destroyed by bombs. Four years later, the Surrey Hounds in St John's Hill was wrecked by a V1 doodlebug (the flats of Fineran Court now fill the site).

The Raven in Westbridge Road –

The Surrey Hounds after the bombing



Dick Turpin

But, to end on a more cheerful note, some pubs have a long history and seem determined to fight on. The Plough, in St John's Hill is on its fourth incarnation: the first built in the 17th century, the second Victorian building was destroyed in the Second World War, and its 1950s replacement was in turn replaced by a new building during the 1990s. How many of those who drink there now know that the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin allegedly stayed at the Plough in the early 1700s?

Meanwhile, the grand Victorian building of the Falcon, by Clapham Junction station, replaced a much older pub. In the early 1800s the landlord of the latter was a Mr Death – a source of much local mirth. A contemporary verse ran:

'When having eat and drank your fill, should ye, O hapless case, Neglect to pay your landlord's bill, Death stares you in the face.

This one advice my friends pursue whilst you have life and breath Ne'er pledge [toast] your host, for if you do you'll surely drink to Death.'
A warning to us all!

ST LUKE'S MUSIC SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS 21ST BIRTHDAY

Antony Lewis-Crosby tells the story behind the south Battersea concert series



I can hardly believe it, but St Luke's Music Society, based in St Luke's Church on Thurleigh Road has reached its 21st anniversary season. I'm grateful for this opportunity to reflect on those 21 years and to look forward to yet more wonderful concerts in the future.

St Luke's Music Society started with a meeting of two minds – mine and Robin Cooke-Hurle's. While I had been working in Liverpool with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society, running the orchestra and the concert hall, Robin had organised a few concerts with his wife, the well-known soprano Patrizia Kwella, to raise funds for the church's new community hall.

New season

I had previously run the biennial South Battersea Festival and managed the Festival Chorus and on my return I was keen to start some concerts in St Luke's. Robin and I received the support of St Luke's parish council to run a series of concerts in the winter of 2003/4. On 25 October 2003 Patrizia joined the London Mozart Players for our inaugural concert. To our delight audiences came to the concerts, we covered our costs and decided to form a Society and carry on.

And now, 21 years later, we are about to launch another new season.

Initially our plan was to start with young up-and-coming performers, partly for economic reasons. However we soon realised that when we presented bigger name performers, we not only attracted larger audiences but were able to cover our costs and build our profile. In that first season we presented a locally-based chamber choir and brass students from the Royal Academy of Music but also an evening with the great Humphrey Lyttleton and the poet Roger McGough, with whom I had worked in Liverpool.

We established a series of monthly concerts, mixing major name performers with rising stars and solo performers with choral concerts, ensuring there was a variety of styles to appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Some of the most memorable performances of the last 20 years include concerts by the great Mitsuko Uchida, who likes to play-in a season's international concerts with performances in smaller venues away from the public eye. Other well-known performers we have welcomed include violinists Nicola Benedetti and Tasmin Little and the bass Sir Willard White.

Choral concerts have featured the Sixteen, the Vasari Singers and the Tallis Scholars. Writers have included Michael Morpurgo and Benjamin Zephaniah. Counter-tenor Iestyn Davies described St Luke's Church as the 'Wigmore Hall of South London'.

Our coming-of-age season starts with international opera students from the Wandsworth-based National Opera Studio, the brilliant Bach and Mozart pianist Angela Hewitt, the Pasadena Roof Orchestra and soprano extraordinaire Lucy Crowe and the Ben Goldscheider Trio.. The Maxwell Quartet will bring Scottish folk music to the string quartet repertoire alongside Haydn and Beethoven. The season will end with the return of The Sixteen and the charismatic Harry Christophers. The regular Festival Chorus concerts will feature Verdi and Mozart Requiems. We hope that it will be a 21st season to appeal to everyone.

We have a wonderful advantage in the glorious acoustics of St Luke's, which ensures both that the performers give of their best and the audience hears the music at its best. Performers without exception refer to the concentration that they feel from the audience and the warmth of the reception.

Dedicated

The main point of putting on a concert or any art form is to entertain. The feedback from our audiences has certainly encouraged us to believe that we are achieving that aim. Our small team of dedicated volunteers runs the bar, manages the box office and stage manages each concert. This may involve dealing with tricky situations such as our stage manager having to find a vast screen for Anna Lapwood's organ recital last year at the last minute while organising his mother's funeral. A huge thanks are due to them all.

Thanks also to our local sponsors over the years, in particular to Gregsons solicitors who have supported a concert in all of the past 20 years, as well as Oranges & Lemons, SDS Security, Savills, and most recently Killik in Northcote Road. For many years we had support from Andy Staples and Northcote Music Shop and its legacy

is concerts by Sam Staples and his ensemble. And St Luke's PCC have always been encouraging.

Concert promoters have for decades wondered why we fail to attract younger people to our concerts. We can't deny that our audience overall is a mature one; however we are working closely with Wandsworth Music, which provides music lessons, orchestra rehearsals, jazz groups and opportunities for thousands of young people in all genres

of music. Many of our performers give master classes on the morning of their St Luke's performances and we invite students to come and enjoy our concerts free of charge. We believe that they are the audience of the future.

Acoustics

The enthusiasm of our audiences, the glorious acoustics and atmosphere of St Luke's and the wow factor of our performers provide the team with the

motivation to continue with our concerts. Some plans are already in place for 2025!

All we need now is for you to continue coming to these wonderful concerts. If you haven't already joined us for a concert, then please do. Just go to our website and find out more at www.slms.org.uk We look forward to welcoming you.

Antony Lewis-Crosby is general manager of St Luke's Music Society

KINDNESS, LAUGHTER AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Leaving Katherine Low Settlement, Aaron Barbour reflects upon his time with this Battersea charity

After 10 years, 10 months and one day at Katherine Low Settlement it is time for me to move on and have some new adventures. It's been a good innings, a friend remarked. Leading KLS has been an honour of a lifetime and the best job I have ever had. But it has been so much more than just a job. KLS and Battersea have been a major part of my life for over a decade.

I have just been reading Robert Musgrave's memoir (of Providence House fame), *One year is Not Enough*, (see page 6) and it certainly isn't. This type of work is all about building relationships with people, which takes time. Relationships need to be built with strong foundations of trust, kindness, respect, care, love and laughter. They

take energy. They take commitment. They take perseverance. A sense of humour helps enormously too. And as a result they are the best. They are rewarding. They are meaningful. They are deep and rich and life changing. They can last 100 years too. As KLS approaches its centenary in 2024, it is amazing

to see the number of relationships we have had with local people over the years: from families going back generations to those who have recently joined us. We have so many relationships, with so many people, from so many communities, living and working in Battersea. It's truly humbling.

Our relationships with our partners are equally important, be they other local charities and community groups, schools, faith groups, businesses, the Council; as well as our volunteers, supporters and donors. Together we are building this community here in Battersea. Making it a better place, a stronger place, to live. All of us, all of you. Together.

High quality

I am really proud of how we have evolved and adapted over the years, to work with our members to grow and develop Katherine Low and the communities of Battersea to what it is today. Our people, or our members as we call them, come first. We work 'with' people, listening to and being led by what they want to achieve. This ensures that we are truly providing high quality community services that people actually want and value to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important to them and the local community.

This collaborative approach and our organic growth have enabled us to provide the help and support that our members need. There is often a blurred line with our members being both users and volunteers. Our members initially come through our doors for help but many soon realise they have something

to contribute in return. People feel valued when they can be kind and give back, to help as much as they receive, to have a sense of purpose there by being actively involved in their local community.

Waiting lists

The wider ripple effect of our work means we're making a difference to about 5% of the local population here in Battersea. And yet we have waiting lists for all of our community programmes. We could be doing so much more. But of course we need the resources: staff and volunteer, buildings, transport, partnerships and funding to enable this to happen. That's all part of our new five-year strategy. I look forward to my successor, Sarah Gibb, leading on that, taking KLS into our centenary and continuing the KLS way.

Finally, I'd just like to say a simple farewell and thank you. Thank you for welcoming me into this community here in Battersea. Thank you for your support in good times and bad. Thank you for helping me be part of this amazing community. Thank you for being part of my life.

Aaron Barbour was CEO of Katherine Low Settlement from 2013 to October 2023.



GOING WILD IN FALCON PARK

Clare Graham describes the Battersea Society's first wildflower survey,

Are they weeds or are they wild flowers? It all depends where they are growing, but certainly in our parks they are generally seen as welcome flowers. We were delighted to join Enable's Biodiversity Team in early June to survey the wildflowers and grasses in an un-mown area of Falcon Park. Within this relatively small patch, we were able to identify 29 different species.

Citizen science

By now most of us will be familiar with the idea of No Mow May, the charity Plantlife's national campaign to which Wandsworth has subscribed for some years. Selected areas of suitable open spaces are left un-mown, and then in early June comes the fun of seeing what has come up within them. Enable Biodiversity carries out a series of surveys across the borough, and this year also offered Friends' groups and amenity societies like ours the chance to get involved in a 'citizen science survey'. Enable provided the expertise, and did the recording – I just had to drum up a few fellow committee and Society members who had a couple of hours free to enjoy doing some flower-spotting. This did of course involve some stooping, as well as some standing around to learn about what we were finding. Then six of us met up at the chosen site with Enable team members Briannah and Ling on a sunny afternoon.

We were focusing on the small triangular area of Falcon Park to the north of the bike and footpath that connects Cabul Road to Latchmere Passage, and through to Latchmere Road. That's situated between two railway embankments, and until a few years ago was closed off behind railings, with no public access. Long before that there had been a building on the site, used to store park maintenance equipment. That was taken down many years ago, but the soil within this triangular area remained thin, and full of stone chippings. An old drive on the west side had also been left intact,

The species we found

Listed by family, then species, then common name.]

- 1 *Apiaceae*, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Cow parsley;
- 2 *Apiaceae*, *Apiaceae* sp., Carrot-family species;
- 3 *Asteraceae*, *Achillea millefolium*, Yarrow;
- 4 *Asteraceae*, *Bellis perennis*, Common daisy;
- 5 *Asteraceae*, *Centaurea nigra*, Common knapweed;
- 6 *Asteraceae*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, Cat's ear;
- 7 *Asteraceae*, *Sonchus oleraceus*, Smooth sow-thistle;
- 8 *Asteraceae*, *Taraxacum* sp., Dandelion;
- 9 *Boraginaceae*, *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, Green alkanet;
- 10 *Brassicaceae*, *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, Shepherd's purse;
- 11 *Brassicaceae*, *Sisymbrium officinale*, Hedge mustard;
- 12 *Caryophyllaceae*, *Cerastium fontanum*, Common mouse-ear, chickweed;
- 13 *Caryophyllaceae*, *Silene latifolia*, White campion;
- 14 *Caryophyllaceae*, *Silene latifolia x dioica*, White/red campion hybrid;
- 15 *Fabaceae*, *Cracia sativa*, Common vetch;
- 16 *Fabaceae*, *Trifolium dubium*, Lesser Trefoil;
- 17 *Fabaceae*, *Trifolium* sp., Clover;
- 18 *Geraniaceae*, *Geranium molle*, Dove's-foot crane's-bill;
- 19 *Malvaceae*, *Malva sylvestris*, Common mallow;
- 20 *Plantaginaceae*, *Plantago lanceolata*, Ribwort plantain;
- 21 *Plantaginaceae*, *Plantago major*, Greater plantain;
- 22 *Poaceae*, *Hordeum murinum*, Wall barley;
- 23 *Poaceae*, *Lolium perenne*, Perennial rye-grass;
- 24 *Polygonaceae*, *Polygonum aviculare*, Knotgrass;
- 25 *Polygonaceae*, *Rumex acetosa*, Common sorrel;
- 26 *Ranunculaceae*, *Ranunculus acris*, Meadow buttercup;
- 27 *Ranunculaceae*, *Ranunculus repens*, Creeping buttercup;
- 28 *Rosaceae*, *Potentilla reptans*, Creeping cinquefoil;
- 29 *Urticaceae*, *Urtica dioica*, Common nettle.

since that's needed by Network Rail for occasional parking and access to its electrical substation beyond gates at the park's north end. When the railings came down as part of improvements to this end of the park in 2019, Enable left the mature trees in place, and did some new planting for biodiversity along the eastern embankment. But it left the central area alone as a potential habitat

for wildflowers, most of which actually prefer poor soil. From the path this area looked a bit scruffy and unpromising. A couple of trees on the western embankment had fallen down across it, crushing some of the vegetation. Those had been cleared away, but on the edge of the path in particular we encountered rubbish dropped by passers-by, despite the presence of three litter-bins directly opposite, on the other side of the path. Nevertheless, as we explored the site we encountered a rich variety of species, spending a most delightful hour and a half spotting and learning about no fewer than twenty-nine different wildflowers and grasses. The full list, kindly supplied by Enable, is given here.

New arrival

Two months after the survey, after lots more rain and not too much heat in August, the area was still looking good – but also, and pleasingly, rather different. The yarrow (*achillea millefolium*) identified from its low clumps of feathery green leaves in June, had shot up everywhere, its tall flat white flower heads dominating the fresh display of wildflowers. There is also a striking new arrival, bringing our recorded list of 29 species up to 30: a mullein (*verbascum*) has grown up near the path, its spikes of dark-centred yellow flowers rising up even above the yarrow. While there are several similar-looking species of mullein





around, Enable have confirmed for me that this one is most likely dark mullein (*verbascum nigrum*): here's a more detailed shot.

Hopefully next year we'll be able to repeat the survey, and see what else has come up. As it proved such an enjoyable

afternoon, we'd like to try and give all Society members the chance to take part. There's a maximum group size of fifteen, so we'll aim to set a date well in advance and advertise for participants. *Clare Graham is chair of the Battersea Society's Open Spaces Committee*

Top left: Common knapweed, growing on the survey site.

Below left: Green alkanet, one of the borage family.

Above: The group assembles on site.

Below: The June survey area on 17 August, Inset: The mullein.





On Saturday 2 September 2023 the Battersea Society unveiled a plaque to the novelist and biographer Penelope Fitzgerald at 25 Almeric Road, her home for many years. Jeanne Rathbone introduced a distinguished group of admirers of her books including her biographer Hermione Lee and the writer Alan Hollinghurst.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: Reproduced from *BM* Spring 2017

Living on a barge led to the Booker Prize

Janice Morphet explores the life and writings of Penelope Fitzgerald

When Penelope Fitzgerald won the Booker Prize in 1979 for her novel *Offshore*, about life aboard a Thames barge moored by Battersea Bridge, few readers appreciated how closely this was drawn from her own experience of living with her family on Grace between 1960 and 1962. The barge eventually sank, with all their possessions and papers in it. The novel was written nearly twenty years later, following her husband's death in 1976 when she was living with her daughter and son-in-law in Almeric Road. It recalled the lowest point in her life.

Penelope was born in 1913 into the Knox family and her aunts and uncles had distinguished careers including as a Bletchley Park codebreaker, a novelist and a theologian. Her father was editor of *Punch*. Penelope, known as Mops in her family, was the brightest child at school and after Oxford worked in the Ministry of Food and then of Information during the war. In 1942 she married Desmond Fitzgerald, whom she had met at university and shortly after this, he went to war, winning a military cross for his bravery. But when he came back he was an alcoholic and this was an issue that she contended with for the rest of his life, although without complaining or requesting help. Desmond was a barrister but was struck off when he was caught stealing client cheques.

Houseboat

There then followed a period in the 1950s and early sixties when the family was very short of money. Their time on the houseboat reflected the cheapest and most central home she could find. After the boat sank, they were taken into temporary



accommodation, eventually living in a council house in Poynders Road in Clapham for 11 years. During this time, Penelope worked at the Italia Conti Stage School in Clapham, the Queen's Gate School in Kensington, where her pupils included the Duchess of Cornwall, and at Westminster Tutors, where she met Antonia (A S) Byatt and taught Helena Bonham Carter amongst others.

Penelope started writing biographies before novels – of Burne Jones in 1975 and then her own family, the Knox Brothers (1977). Her first novel, *The Bookshop* (1978), was set in 1959, written about the time that she was living with her family in Southwold, and then came *Offshore* (1979). Her next two novels were also autobiographical – drawing on her time at the BBC, *Human Voices*, (1980) and at the Italia Conti School, *At Freddie's* (1982). Her later novels were more historical and philosophical including *The Blue Flower* (1995).

What did Penelope think about her time in Battersea Reach? The first draft of *Offshore* used the names of her own children and reflected on their lives there including being mudlarks, finding William de Morgan tiles and selling them in the Kings Road. We first learn about Nenna and her family through one of the

neighbouring barge owners. He reflects that she seems to have little or no contact with her husband and had little post. Nenna's children had to fend for themselves and 'the crucial moment when children realise that their parents are younger than they are had long since been passed by Martha'. For the children, this was also the waterside of Turner and Whistler, and on seeing their pictures in the Tate, their questions about them were about practical rather than artistic matters.

The move to Almeric Road after Desmond's death enabled Penelope to have more time to write and she reduced her teaching to two days a week, although she taught until she was 70. She was also researching a biography of L P Hartley and made friends with Francis King, an authority on him as well as being an author and publisher. In June 1978, she invited Francis to visit her in Battersea, sending directions by letter beforehand: 'the 49 stops at Arding and Hobbs, the Mecca of South London, and if you get out at the next request stop, quite soon after, in St John's Road, walk on a bit, then turn left up Battersea Rise, and Almeric Road is first on right – at the bottom is a notice board of the Tulipean Brethren, a religious sect – don't go in there – we are 25 with a laurel hedge'.

In 1980, Penelope moved to live in Hampstead with her other daughter. While *Offshore* brought her fame and some financial stability, it had a mixed reception following the prize, not least from television pundits like Robert Robinson who would have preferred a more well-known author to interview. Nevertheless, Penelope demonstrated that *Offshore* was not a one-off achievement and confounded these judgements in the end.

Penelope Fitzgerald: A Life Hermione Lee, *London, Vintage 2014*
So I have thought of you: The letters of Penelope Fitzgerald, ed. Terence Dooley, *London: Fourth Estate 2008*