

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023



EATING A RAINBOW AND CYCLING A SMOOTHIE

Susan Perry reports on climate initiatives in schools

Climate change is a pressing issue and I think all of us try to do our bit to reduce our carbon footprint. That applies to charities as well as individuals and we at Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity (SWSJ) also want to contribute.

In 2020 we signed up to the Association of Charitable Foundation's climate change charter, pledging to do what we could to raise awareness and support local initiatives to protect and safeguard our world and natural environment.

In 2021, with a generous donation of £30,000, SWSJ worked alongside local Battersea schools, charities and community groups to raise awareness of environmental issues. We particularly wanted to create a 'can do' positive attitude to meeting the challenges that climate change poses. SWSJ offered grants of up to £5,000 for local environmental projects involving children and young people.

Garden projects

The projects were varied. They included raising awareness and discussing climate facts and myths as well as garden projects, recycling and composting. One looked at alternative, renewable energy sources and another helped children make healthy food choices.

The projects culminated in a celebratory sharing event at St Mary's Primary School in December 2022 to celebrate the work of the many volunteers and students who took part. Teachers and other participants shared challenges, debated solutions and made connections.

Climate Ed, one of the grantees, reached out to 521 local students through their Carbon Literacy and Climate Action workshops, delivering sessions to nine schools across Wandsworth. Pupils learned about

the science of climate change: the greenhouse effect, greenhouse gases and the consequences of a warming planet. They took home practical ideas on how to reduce their carbon footprint, becoming powerful advocates for positive change.

'It's very important for children to know about it and now at home I'm basically a CO2 policeman', said one pupil.

Both primary and secondary schools enjoyed the quality of the conversations and activities.

Rather than feeling fearful and helpless about these global problems, many pupils reported feeling inspired to take positive action: 'This has changed my perspective of the Earth and now I actually care for it', said one student.

St Mary's Primary used part of their grant to buy a smoothie bike, so that they could recycle left over fruit and vegetables to make healthy drinks. Pupils learned how, through the power of cycling, their energy could be transferred to fuel the smoothie blender; getting fit and enjoying a delicious and healthy drink at the same time.

Sacred Heart Primary School are re-designing their school garden. It will become an environmental outdoor learning space to include a weather station so they can monitor changes in rainfall and temperature. Pupils will plant drought resistant plants (also useful for surviving the school holidays when

I planted a seed...

I planted a little brown bumpy seed.
I gave it some water and waited.
Time seems to be slowing
down because of the tiny seed.
Hours seem like days...
minutes seem like hours...
seconds seem like minutes...
I want to eat the beetroot so much,
but there is no sign of it!
It could have been swallowed by the ground,
or is still in there, not wanting to pop out.
Is the beetroot afraid of me?
Is it playing a prank on me?
I should leave it alone... maybe that's the problem.
I shall wait in a more comfortable position.
I am gone.

Abdulraheem



there are fewer people around to water!).

Recipes

Christ Church School focussed on growing their own fruit and vegetables to create, cook and share recipes with their families and the local community. They produced a colourful book of vegan recipes to share, called *Have you ever eaten a rainbow?* This project linked to the national curriculum to create literacy opportunities, whilst also improving health and wellbeing.

Vauxhall City Farm ran sustainability workshops for local school children which were so popular they decided to continue with the sessions and make them integral to their education offer.

CARAS, a local charity supporting refugee young adults and unaccompanied minors, are working to transform an outdoor space into a natural green haven so that their young people can work alongside each other, make new friendships and develop new language skills.

So much has come from this ►



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

FROM THE EDITOR



Since I got rid of my car a few months ago, friends sometimes ask me if I miss it. The answer is that I don't, or very

rarely. Public transport is good and in any case I can walk to most places in Battersea. It takes a bit longer, but I don't have the hassle of finding somewhere to park, not to mention the problem of finding my phone and glasses in my handbag or backpack and working out how to pay!

Given that London is aiming to be carbon-neutral by 2030, it is vital that we shift our ways of travelling around our city away from the private car.

And given too that cars are noisy and polluting and contribute to ill health (particularly for children) through their emissions, it is perhaps surprising that more people don't give up their cars. But the signs are promising: according to the 2011 census 45.3% households in Wandsworth didn't have a car (were 'car-free', to use Living Streets' term). In 2021 the figure had risen to 47.9%. In other words, almost half of Wandsworth families do not now drive a car – in some wards in Battersea it's over half. And even within car-owning households many of the individual people won't be able to use a car independently, for example children or people with some disabilities.

Freedom

Whether or not they own a car, pretty

much everyone travels by bus at some point, don't they? I'm a big fan of buses. Some friends and I are aiming to travel on all the capital's bus routes. Making use of our Freedom Passes and starting at bus Number 1 (New Oxford Street to Docklands) we are now, several years later, about to board Number 91 (Trafalgar Square to Tottenham YMCA). As we get on the bus at its starting point we generally bag the best seats: top deck, front seats. London spreads out before us with its hills and valleys, its mighty tidal river, its boarded shops, its smart streets, its trees and parks, glimpses into living rooms and gardens, cardboard-seated homeless people: all its glorious diversity.

Jenny Sheridan

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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden on rural walking, new technology, and the habits of Old Father Thames

I'm not sure you'd call Barnes – just ten minutes from Clapham Junction – a rural area, yet there is a definite countryish feel to the place. We'd gone to visit St Mary's Church to see the medieval wall paintings discovered in 1978 following a fire which destroyed much of the church. It was a very frosty day and walking from the station across the remains of Barnes Common we were acknowledged several times by people coming the other way with a friendly nod, or good morning. That is pretty much unheard of round here, yet out there in what is basically suburbia they keep up the country habit.

That bucolic cheeriness can be taken to extremes. Long ago we were on a walk in the Lake District – it was a warm, windless sunny day (something of a rarity in those parts). Not another soul in the world, until a long straggling line of ramblers appeared over the crest of the next hill. Obviously we nodded amicably to the group leader. 'Nice day for it' we observed with the true originality of the British. Of course everyone following – more than a dozen of them – felt the need to nod or grin, or wish us good morning, or comment on the glorious weather. Call me an old misery but I'm glad I don't have to face that kind of bonhomie when traipsing round



Battersea Reach at low tide

Battersea Park. It's bad enough dodging the dogs and the bikes and the electric scooters!

Locked

The technology that gave us things like electric scooters is a mixed blessing. When I'd stopped laughing, I did feel a bit sorry reading about the poor chap who got locked inside his electric car because the battery had gone flat and he didn't have a door handle. Back in the days when I was still a driver I was more likely to be locked outside the car, as I'd slammed the boot after lifting out the weekly shop, leaving the keys inside.

For most of our time in Battersea

we've lived in close proximity to Old Father Thames. And yes – in the words of Peter Dawson's classic song – he does keep rolling on down to the Mighty Sea, but round here after he's rolled out, he rolls back in again. We're so used to the tidal nature of this stretch of the river that we forget it might seem strange to others.

I tried to explain this phenomenon to my then three year old grandson when – returning from a walk along the river to

Battersea Park – he was astonished to see that the river was no longer lapping round the boats by St Mary's Church: 'Grandpa where's all the water gone?' He listened patiently while I explained about tidal rivers then shook his head in sudden realisation. 'No Grandpa, you're tricking me!' He's now nearly nineteen and often explains things to me which sometimes seem as daft as the idea of disappearing rivers seemed to him.

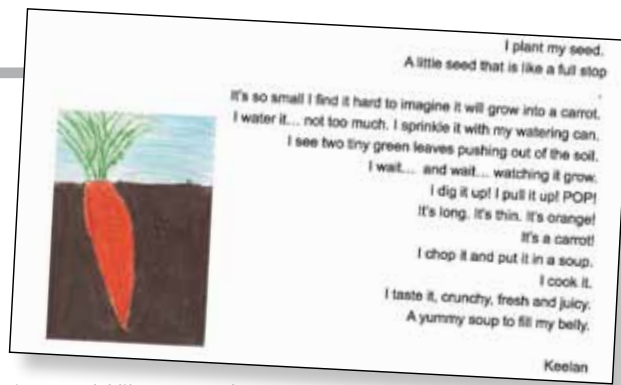
Anyway if you see me in Battersea Park and wish to say good morning, please wave your copy of *Battersea Matters* in my direction and I will respond with a gracious nod, and a fleeting smile. As I always say, mind how you go, and I'll see you next time.

◀ generous donation that will last way beyond the physical duration of the projects. Young people are sharing information and collaborating, enjoying positive experiences and creating good memories.

Positive

Soon enough many of these young people will be working in a sector that will demand skills and positive energy to meet the growing climate change issues. The young people of Battersea and our local community groups and schools are proving that they can rise to the challenge and face the future.

A further donation of £30k is being given to SWSJ to support more of this work. If your community group or charity would like to apply for a grant please have a look at the SWSJ website for more information www.swsjcharity.org.uk or email me: manager@swsjcharity.org.uk
If you would like to make a donation to support this work, please get in touch.



SWSJ is a small grant-giving foundation in Battersea that works to improve the educational outcomes of local young

people. Beneficiaries vary from young refugees to disadvantaged children and young adults with mental health challenges. .

Susan Perry is the manager of SWSJ Charity.

BATTERSEA BENT THE RULES

Shocking news: the old Borough of Battersea broke one of the most fundamental rules of heraldry with its coat of arms! It was corrected in late 1955 but just ten years later had to be subsumed into the arms of its new home, the Borough of Wandsworth. From the old arms, lavender and a

nod to the St John family survive.

A Ragged School was set up off Battersea Park Road in the 1890s to help the 'ragged and utterly uncared for' children in the district. Cabul Road hosted a travellers' community. This information is in the spring issue of *The Wandsworth Historian*, which

Below: A wisp of lavender signifies Battersea

also includes an interesting article on the Wandsworth Town Hall frieze. This has references to Putney, Tooting, Balham and Wandsworth, but not Battersea, a separate borough until 1965. *Wandsworth Historian*, Neil Robson 020neil119@gmail.com



BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS APRIL – JULY 2023

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

- Sunday 23 April at 2.30pm

From Cradle to the Grave walk
A guided walk in South Battersea with local historian Sue Demont. Meet at the corner of Thurleigh Road and Bolingbroke Grove. Ends on Battersea Rise. Free event

- Thursday 11 May 6 – 7.30pm
Members' Private View at Webbs Fine Art Gallery, 1 Burland Road, SW11 6SA

An exclusive members' private view of the *Vanished Battersea: Street Scenes from the 1970s* exhibition. Some paintings feature the Silver Jubilee celebrations. Free event

- Sunday 21 May at 2pm

Down the Junction walk
A walk with local historian Jeanne Rathbone, starting at Battersea Arts Centre along Lavender Hill and up St John's Hill. Free event

- Thursday 25 May 6.30pm for 7pm
Teaching Battersea talk
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA

A heritage double act. Jeanne

Rathbone will talk about jazz star George Shearing. Sue Demont will speak about the Workers Education Association and Albert Mansbridge, a pioneer of adult education. Free

- Sunday 4 June 11am
Whistler While You Walk
Ropers Garden, opposite Chelsea Old Church, Old Church Street, SW3 5AX
A walk around the riversides of Chelsea and Battersea, following the footsteps of artist James McNeill Whistler. Led by local artist Martin Ireland.
£7 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk

- Thursday 22 June 6.30pm for 7pm
Breakspear: The English Pope talk
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA
Author of highly acclaimed *Breakspear: The English Pope*, Battersea resident Adrian Waddingham CBE gives us an insight into Pope Adrian IV.
£5 in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door

- Thursday 6 July at 11am
Sir Christopher Wren walk
Meet at Cannon Street Station
A special tour to celebrate Wren300, created by Blue Badge Guide Jenny Mill, showcasing eight different churches and finishing with a lunchtime recital at St Mary le Bow. The tour lasts two hours.
£15 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk

- Thursday 13 July 6.30 – 9pm
Battersea Society Summer Party in the grounds of St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA
Our annual Summer Party with great food, wine, live music, good company plus stunning river views
We look forward to seeing you.
£10 entrance, payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door (includes first drink and canapés)

George Shearing



WHAT DO COUNCILLORS ACTUALLY DO?

Jenny Sheridan finds out from two of the new councillors

In May 2022 a new Labour administration took on the leadership of Wandsworth Council. Many of the councillors from both parties were new to the role, including 13 of Battersea's 23 council members. Jenny Sheridan spoke to Cllr Juliana Annan (Labour) and Cllr Tom Pridham (Conservative) about their new roles.

Councillor Juliana Annan

Councillor Juliana Annan has lived experience of the problems faced by many residents in her ward. Battersea Park ward runs between the railways and the river and includes the park itself, its mansion blocks and the Ethelburga estate as well as numerous Victorian streets. Born in Ghana,

Cllr Juliana Annan



Juliana emigrated to the UK in 2006 and has lived in Wandsworth ever since. 'As a councillor, I want especially to represent people like myself', she says. 'People who struggle with the system because they come from a different country, may have English as a second language, and don't know where to turn to cope with difficulties.'

'I came to London to help look after my elderly auntie, who died two years ago. I shared her one bedroom flat on the Winstanley Estate. It was a bit of a shock as I'd come from a five-bedroom house in Ghana, where my father was an architect.'

After a spell in a homeless hostel and a move to Surrey Lane, Juliana (aged 43) is back on the Winstanley estate in a flat she shares with her two young children. She gets around Battersea on foot or sometimes by car.

How did Juliana find the duties of council membership? 'It's more work than I had expected but I'm getting used to it. It's hard to fit it all in with family life. I started off on several committees but I think I will have to drop some. I am on the children's committee, which is so important.'

Before she was elected to the council Juliana had a part-time job

in a supermarket, supplemented by benefits. Now she is involved in running two projects. She founded Agee Empowerment Network, which works through coffee mornings and advice sessions to support underprivileged women and families. Juliana and her team offer advice and signposting on issues such as school applications, housing and benefits. She is studying to become an ESOL teacher (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Her other project, Support4Support, is a community project which aims to support children on the Winstanley Estate with their reading skills. 'It's essential - everything starts with reading', Juliana says. 'Forty or forty five children turn up at York Gardens Library every Saturday and 25 come to our homework club.'

What does she hope to achieve as a councillor? 'We've already achieved some things such as support for school uniforms for deprived families. I'd like to see the holiday grant for those children increased and I would love to see all schools in Wandsworth returning to swimming, which stopped with Covid and hasn't started again.'

Councillor Tom Pridham

Councillor Tom Pridham's parents were both Labour voters but he joined the Conservative Party in his 20s (he is now 34). Tom represents the newly formed Lavender ward, which runs between Clapham Common and Lavender Hill south of Clapham Junction Station and includes a portion of Northcote Road.

Tom would like to see the return of the pedestrianisation of Northcote Road, axed by the new Labour administration. He says it was popular with his constituents, many of whom are families and young professionals who moved to the area for its buzzy atmosphere. Tom says, 'I realise there were some downsides - the loss of the buses and some noise and disruption in its early days. And some of the hospitality businesses on Battersea Rise felt it was a disruption for them, but on balance it was a good thing.'

Cllr Tom Pridham



Hospitality and restaurants are close to Tom's heart. His first job was as a sommelier and he maintains a keen interest in wine: 'If my friends are in a restaurant they'll send me a picture of the wine list and ask my advice on what to drink!'

One of Tom's council commitments is to sit on the council's licensing committee. He is also on the adult health and social care committee. 'Having been involved in organising care for a family member with dementia I thought I could put that experience to good use.'

How has the reality of Council membership tallied with his expectations? 'Well, I'd previously done some casework for an MP so I had a sense of what it would be like. There's a lot of reading, but I like that. And the amount of work varies. Some weeks there are four evening meetings plus canvassing at weekends, sometimes it's a bit less. I spend about an hour a day on emails. There are always different initiatives to get involved with.'

Tom's day job is with a large international consultancy firm. 'I advise companies on government relations, international trade, Brexit, in general how government works. I enjoy it.'

What does he enjoy about his councillor role, and what does he hope to achieve? 'Well, we're in opposition so we don't have the power to change things. Our job is to challenge, to flag up issues that could cause problems in the longer term and to make sure that the council is accountable.'

'I really enjoy sorting things out for individuals - missed bin collections, potholes, local noise or nuisance. That's very rewarding. And I enjoy meeting new people. When you're out canvassing, people's views are sometimes quite different from what you'd expect.'

Tom lives in his ward with his girlfriend; they bought a flat here in December. He doesn't drive and often uses buses as extra office space to reply to Council emails. He regularly runs round Clapham Common and Battersea Park, so is 'very mindful of how important our green spaces are to me and to my constituents.'

Cllr Daniel Hamilton



Cllr Lynsey Hedges



Cllr Jo Rigby



Cllr Sarah Davies



Cllr Sana Jafri



Cllr Will Sweet



BATTERSEA COUNCILLORS – MEA CULPA

It has been pointed out to me that there were errors and omissions in the photographs and lists of councillors in the winter 22/23 issue of Battersea Matters. To clarify:

- The photographs show only new councillors, not those elected prior to May 2022.
- The wrong photograph was published for Cllr Juliana Annan. The correct photo is on the previous page.
- Council members for the wards of Balham and Wandsworth Town, which fall within the Battersea parliamentary

constituency boundaries, were omitted. You will find them below.

I apologise sincerely for these errors. Jenny Sheridan.

Balham

Daniel Hamilton (Conservative) NEW
Grants, Transport committees

Lynsey Hedges (C) NEW
Audit, finance and general purpose committees

Jo Rigby (Labour)
Children's and transport committees

Wandsworth Town

Sarah Davies (L) NEW
Children's and housing committees

Sana Jafri (L) NEW
Environment, grants, licensing and transport committees

Will Sweet (C)
Leader of the Opposition Housing committee

GEORGIAN SOIRÉE FOR BOOK

Paperback launched with music and wine

What were politicians, literary figures and people at the heart of Battersea life doing in Waterstones on St John's Road one convivial Friday evening in March? Why was London's longest-standing councillor on barman duty? And who were the young musicians playing *Amazing Grace* alongside Purcell and Handel?

The occasion was the launch of the paperback edition of *The Georgians: the deeds and misdeeds of 18th century Britain* by distinguished historian Professor Penelope J Corfield. It was her life partner (and 'favourite critical reader') Councillor Tony Belton who was filling the wine glasses. And the young musicians were Hannah (aged 14, cello) and Alice (12, violin) Chadwick-Jones. During



and since the pandemic they have given occasional outdoor concerts with their mother Olivia (harpsichord) on Northcote and Salcott Roads. The reason for including *Amazing Grace* was its date: the words were written in 1772. All the music played was written in the Georgian period, apart from the sisters' signature tune, *Over the Rainbow*.

Professor Corfield commented, 'The period is not much taught in schools; and really should be much better



known. I deeply enjoyed writing *The Georgians*; and I hope that readers will enjoy reading about their epic deeds and misdeeds – and the debates that rage to this day'.

Published in hardback in January 2022 and a best-seller for Yale University Press, the book has been swiftly re-issued in paperback.

BUILT UPON BOMBSITES

In her second article, Clare Graham describes parks laid out after WW2

The last of the Victorian and Edwardian parks covered in my first article (*BM* Winter 2022) was Latchmere Recreation Ground, in 1902–3. There were no more new ones until after the Second World War, when a whole group appeared. This was because the London County Council had identified some districts of Battersea as areas of 'Open Space Deficiency' failing to meet the target of 1.5 acres of open space per 1000 inhabitants within its 1951 County of London Development Plan. So these new open spaces would need to be created on land that had already been built over; some could utilise bomb sites, but others had to be freed up within programmes of slum clearance. It was to prove a relatively slow process: the first new park opened in 1966, the last in the early 1980s. Today they remain a readily identifiable group, with many common features.

Commemorating Battersea's war dead

First though, we need to return briefly to Victorian Christchurch Gardens on Cabul Road. This little park, together with the neighbouring church, had been destroyed by a rocket bomb in 1944. Initially the LCC hoped to take both sites over, throwing them together to create an enlarged park. However events took a different turn when the Church of England committed to rebuilding Christ Church, and Battersea Borough Council chose the old Gardens as a setting for a memorial to all the men, women and children who had lost their lives in Battersea during the WW2. This was an unusual decision: 1939–45 memorials are much rarer than 1914–18 ones, those for civilian populations rarer still – and so today it is a listed building (Grade II). Unveiled in 1951, it's a dignified little shelter with a central plaque and seating, designed by the Borough Engineer and Surveyor and surrounded by a formal garden with iron railings.

Bomb sites and mounds of rubble

Three other, entirely new, post-war



parks are also very small, making use of pockets of war-time bomb damage. Queenstown Green on Queenstown Road, Montefiore Gardens between Montefiore and Tennyson Streets and Lavender Gardens between Dorothy Road and Asda's car park show up still as seemingly-random gaps within terraces of Victorian housing. Montefiore and Lavender Gardens have become cherished neighbourhood parks, with space for popular playgrounds and pleasant ornamental planting.

Queenstown Green remains bleaker, a railed-off area of shrubs and trees and grassy mounds. Similarly landscaped mounds are a feature of most local post-war parks. It was an easy way to dispose of rubble on the site, intended also perhaps to discourage rowdy ball games. They look rather quaint now; sometimes they can make a park feel insecure too, by blocking sightlines. They're not easy to remove though, given that many are now topped by mature trees, and that all would

require preliminary testing for soil contamination.

Open Space Deficiency Parks

Initially the LCC took on the responsibility for new open spaces in deficiency areas, working in co-operation with Battersea Council to provide them within programmes of slum clearance, and as components of new housing schemes. Not all its plans came to fruition: Christchurch Gardens for instance was a non-starter, as we have already seen, while Montefiore Gardens shrank drastically from the 4.5 acres originally proposed.

Sites had to be purchased, and cleared; some owners were uncooperative, and some sites when cleared were needed for interim uses, like prefab housing.

The LCC (or rather its successor the Greater London Council, created in 1965) was only able to see one project through to completion: Falcon Park off Cabul Road, which was opened in 1966. In 1971, its three remaining



Clockwise from far left: Plaque on the WW2 memorial, reflecting Christchurch Gardens, Montefiore Gardens, showing the playground, entrance to Fred Wells Gardens, Heathbrook Park.

unfinished projects were handed on to Wandsworth Council (itself successor to Battersea, abolished in 1965).

These were Falcon Park's neighbour Shillington Park, and Heathbrook Park off St Rule Street. Both opened later in the 1970s; Fred Wells Gardens off Vicarage Crescent took longer still, being named for a local councillor following his death in 1982. These

four parks have much in common: all sited rather obscurely, but adjacent to the new social housing that they were intended in the first instance to serve. They sit beside or even between railway lines, utilising less-desirable sites cleared of terraced housing, light industry and (in the case of Fred Wells) an old greyhound racing track. Laid out initially as flexible greenspace offering mostly just grass and trees and shrubs, plus the necessary playgrounds and games areas, today they have matured into places of more individual character, acquiring extra plantings and facilities along the way: an artificial football pitch in Falcon Park, a community tennis court in Fred Wells Gardens, outdoor gyms in Shillington and Heathbrook Parks.

Wandsworth Council parks

The two last public open spaces in this group are York Gardens off York Road and Harroway Gardens off Yelverton Road. Both were projects initiated and carried through by Wandsworth

Council, again to complement new social housing schemes. York Gardens opened in 1972; the main path with its circle of beds and other features, were designed by the architects Howes, Jackman & Partners Harroway Gardens opened later in the 1970s; it is small, but extravagantly mounded.

Finally, the new housing estates themselves were designed with generous amounts of amenity greenspace. Some areas, like the greens at the south end of Petergate or the centre of Carey Gardens might almost be seen as public open spaces in their own right, but are not listed as such by the Council. These spaces are maintained by Wandsworth's Housing department rather than Enable, who care for most public open spaces.

This is the second article in a series of three on Battersea's smaller open spaces by Clare Graham, chair of the Battersea Society's open spaces committee.

HOW THE HEPWORTH WENT TO AMSTERDAM

Anna Vickery outlines the work entailed in sending a precious sculpture overseas

In December 2019 Wandsworth Council received a letter from Taco Dibbitts, director of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, requesting the loan of Barbara Hepworth's seminal work *Single Form (Memorial)* for exhibition. The work was to accompany eight more of Hepworth's monumental outdoor sculptures for the ninth edition of the free annual sculpture exhibition in the Rijksmuseum Garden.

The request highlighted the importance of sharing this work with our European neighbours. It is a work of local, national and international significance that exemplifies 20th Century sculpture. As its guardians we have, where possible, a duty to share the work with new audiences on new sites and in new situations. *Single Form (Memorial)* is also Grade II* listed, which gives the work certain protections by law and places it on a Heritage List owing to its artistic and historic importance and international association (it is a cast of the model for an exceptional piece commissioned for the UN building in New York) and to its association with the other identical

Single Form (Memorial), which stands at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington DC.

Once the loan was agreed in principle by councillors, as lead officer in the Arts & Culture Service at Wandsworth, I set about the complex process of overseeing the project. Loaning a significant, monumental bronze artwork for exhibition, when not operating from a museum dedicated to such work, required a new way of working. Although the sculpture had been loaned for an exhibition in the UK years before, it had not been abroad for exhibition.

Dialogue

In many ways, this was a project without precedent for our team. It entailed close working with colleagues and specialists, as well as excellent communication with all those involved: the museum team and registrar, shipping agents abroad and at home, conservators, heritage consultants, planning officers and legal advisers. Equally key were dialogue with the Hepworth Estate and Friends of Battersea Park and the invaluable support of the Head of Parks and the

Parks Operation Manager at Enable. Without these the project would have been impossible.

There is a huge but invisible process involved in moving artworks around for exhibition, nationally or internationally, and it requires meticulous planning. All paperwork, loan agreements, costings (covered by the museum), condition reports, conservation, specialist insurance, security, risk/method statements, deinstallation, logistics, crating and specialist shipping – everything had to come together seamlessly within a specific timeframe to ensure the work arrived safely ready for exhibition. And before it left for Amsterdam it was cleaned and thoroughly checked by a specialist sculptor conservator.

We were not allowed to deinstall it before planning permission and listed buildings consent were applied for, consulted upon and granted. Only once all was in place and permissions had been given could the work be deinstalled. It set sail on its journey to Amsterdam in May 2022, along with several other works from around the UK and Europe. ▶

◀ In parallel with this, we saw an opportunity to respond to Hepworth's work and the soon-to-be-vacant site in Battersea Park. In 2021 we worked in partnership with the Royal College of Art and its MA sculpture students to develop a programme of temporary art works for the site, to be realised in 2022, with an accompanying public

constraints of the museum, the public could view these works in the open. They could touch and interact with the sculptures.

With this background in mind, and with *Single Form* due to embark on its journey to Amsterdam, we wrote a detailed brief inviting students to respond through the lens of their

The Hepworth sculpture leaving to be shipped to the Rijksmuseum and a temporary sculpture by RCA students. Photo: Anna Vickery

to a project of temporary art works by a new generation of sculptors. Working closely with the RCA's sculpture department, community engagement manager and technical team and the team at Enable who look after our parks, artists from the MA programme produced five unique artworks for installation. These were displayed on rotation for the duration of the loan of the Hepworth sculpture.

Engagement works included a community picnic, public performance and poetry readings, as well as family workshops and photography workshops with students from St John Bosco School.

Responses to these new works was varied, ranging from the positive to the perplexed, intrigued or challenged. In each case, the public engaged and interacted with the works, which generated dialogue and discussion. Each work left their own imprint in the imagination of the public and this opportunity gave invaluable experience to students in working collaboratively in a public space outside the institution.

International peace

Single Form (Memorial) returned to Battersea Park safely to take up residence again in November 2022. While on loan, it is estimated that the Hepworth exhibition at the Rijksmuseum had 500,000 visitors. It is worth noting that Hepworth made this work as a memorial to her dear friend Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General to the UN, who died in 1961. Hepworth was a staunch supporter of the UN and its mandate for international peace and security. The relationship between Hepworth's work and landscape and nature – one that she felt very deeply – has been much written about. These two touchstones are equally prescient today, perhaps more so given the climate crisis and the continuing need for international peace and security in such uncertain times.

We are lucky to have *Single Form (Memorial)*, a powerful, iconic work with contemporary resonance, in our public park, for all to see, contemplate and draw courage from.

Anna Vickery is arts programme and partnerships manager for Wandsworth Council.



engagement programme.

Battersea Park has an interesting history of showcasing sculpture in the open air. Between 1948 and 1966, the park hosted an innovative series of outdoor sculpture exhibitions at a time when Britain was determined to overcome the destruction of the Second World War. The remit of the newly formed Arts Council was to increase access to and democratise the arts.

Touch

These exhibitions served to introduce some of modern art's biggest names to the British public. Hepworth's *Single Form (Memorial)* was first shown in the 1963 edition of the open-air exhibition at Battersea Park. Free from the



contemporary practice. Dr Sophie Bowness, guest curator of the Rijksmuseum exhibition, has noted that Hepworth studied at the RCA in the 1920s, which gives additional resonance

PLANNING MATTERS: MONICA TROSS LOOKS BACK AND FORWARD

I have been re-reading the Spring 2013 issue of *Battersea Matters* and I can't believe so much has happened in just ten years – and so much has been built which seems to have been there for longer. The Tower at St. George Wharf (aka the Prescott Tower) and the US embassy are just two at the Vauxhall end of Nine Elms; now firmly embedded in the landscape yet only completed in 2014 and 2017 respectively.

The demolition of the gasholders in Prince of Wales Drive hadn't yet happened in 2013 and now this site is nearing completion (as the new Prince of Wales development). In 2013 stands for 'Boris' bikes were just being rolled out; and we expressed reservations about their impact. Little did we know how much better these would prove to be compared with the way electric bikes are left carelessly on pavements (and, as I have found, are heavy to move out of the way).

An article by Jenny Sheridan headed *Wandsworth's Design Review Panel: toothless tiger or community watchdog?* marked the introduction of these panels by the Council. All in all we have welcomed their trenchant comments on major schemes and the clarity of their views. Not all result in the changes to plans which we and they might want but they play a valuable role and we trust they will continue.

We welcomed the lengthening of the platforms at Queenstown Road Station but noted the lack of step-free access. This has not yet been rectified except for the forthcoming step-free access from the Battersea Exchange development into the rear of the booking office. A fuller upgrading is still needed.

But perhaps the article most worth re-reading is Robert Molteno's *Nine Elms: A new city on our doorstep*. As you would expect from Robert, it is highly readable but fully detailed. One thing he did underestimate was the long-term impact of the 'huge construction effort' which he suggests might last 'three or four years ahead'. Ten years on, it remains anyone's guess how long it will be before construction is complete on all sites, not least those



around the Cringle Dock Waste Transfer Station. Do re-read this (back copies of *Battersea Matters* are on the Society's web site) and take a real-life trip along Battersea Park Road and Nine Elms to see for yourself what has been built and what remains behind hoardings.

OUT AND ABOUT

We have enjoyed moving away from Zoom meetings and getting updates in person. We went to Network Rail's Puddle Dock headquarters to hear about their plans for improvements to Battersea Park Station, working in partnership with the Council. These include proposals for a second entrance with step-free access. We welcome these, and the fact that the existing entrance will remain open, and we will keep you informed when we hear more.

We visited Battersea Power Station for an update, much of it concerning plans for a second entrance to the underground station, with access under the road from Stewarts Road.

We discussed plans for a new internal bridge at the Falcon Road end of Clapham Junction Station to ease congestion for those changing trains (2022/4923). Two long meetings at the Town Hall covered the wider Nine Elms and Battersea area and specifically the Battersea Design and Technical Quarter (BDTQ). Not a lot was new but it was good to meet Steve Riches, the new head of the Nine Elms team, and

St Mark's school

to hear about the work the Council are commissioning for the strategic development of the BDTQ.

UPDATES

We were delighted to see an application for the restoration of St Mark's School, Battersea Rise, 2023/0662 (see photo). Do check out their Design and Access Statement (DAS) which includes lots of illustrations and history. We are less happy with an application for intrusive clutter on the roof of the restored Arding & Hobbs 2022/5180 and plans for part of the Covent Garden site, 2022/4809.

The Local Plan saga continues with the latest stage being consultation on the Minor Modifications to the draft. Perhaps next time I will be able to tell you that the plan has been approved. Who knows!

A draft of the Battersea Square Conservation Area appraisal has been published for consultation. It is disappointing and our response will be on our website. To end on a low note, there has been no new initiative regarding Cremorne Bridge. Mistaken reporting misled me in the last issue.

Feedback appreciated

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

GODMOTHER OF PLAY

Sue Demont pays tribute to Lady Allen and the adventure playground movement

Historically, Battersea has no shortage of remarkable women, and I'm delighted here to be able to introduce another fascinating character with local connections – the extraordinary Marjory, later Lady Allen of Hurtwood, self-styled uneducated lady whose achievements for children endure to this day.

Marjory Gill – her father was Eric Gill's cousin – was born in 1897, the fourth of five children and the only girl. She grew up on a farm in Kent and later described her childhood as one of 'deep security and abiding affection'. Extended camping holidays with her parents and brothers fuelled a love of the outdoors which was to underpin all her activities and interests, starting aged 19 with her training as a gardener and horticulturist for which she gained a diploma from Reading University

Prison

The Gill family were well connected, thus Marjory met artists such as Augustus John, patrons like Lady Ottoline Morrell, and most significantly, the politician Clifford Allen, eight years her senior. They met during the First World War when he was Chairman of the No-Conscription Fellowship and an outspoken pacifist. His refusal to undertake any form of war work saw him sent to prison three times, severely damaging his health.

The young Marjory saw Clifford as 'this poetic romantic person'. They went walking together in Italy and he visited her regularly in the countryside. Clifford shared a flat overlooking Battersea Park with Bertrand Russell and when Russell moved out, controversially Marjory moved in with him. They married six weeks later, walking together across the park to Chelsea Registry Office. Their only child Polly was born ten months later. Marjory recalled that Clifford would spend hours pushing her round Battersea Park whilst he argued politics and philosophy with Russell, also a new father.

Recognising that Battersea's polluted air was damaging Clifford's fragile health, in 1923 the family moved out to Surrey, eventually settling at Hurtwood House, home to Marjory and Polly until 1951.



Lady Allen with a group of children

Marjory continued gardening and in 1929 was admitted as the first Fellow of the Institute of Landscape Gardeners. Surprisingly, Clifford was raised to the peerage as Lord Allen of Hurtwood three years later.

Marjory became increasingly interested in nursery education, establishing a successful nursery school at Hurtwood and joining the national Nursery School Association (NSA). In 1933 her two interests combined in a commission to design a rooftop garden for a nursery school in St Pancras. When George VI became king, she was appointed Chairman of the Coronation Planting Committee, a role she embraced creatively by extending the brief to include children's 'playparks,' many of which survived into the 1970s.

Opportunities

In 1939 Clifford died. Marjory missed him greatly but notes in her memoir that 'we had both lived very independent lives' and that aged just 42 she was 'still young enough to have the energy to start a new life'. Ironically the Second World War provided opportunities; by 1941 Marjory was chairing the NSA and campaigning for high quality nationwide provision for the under 5s so that their mothers could go out to work. Ever practical, she encouraged volunteers to construct

toys and play apparatus from bomb-damaged materials whilst at the same time lobbying the Ministries of Education and Health to take a more wholistic approach to nursery education.

Bomb sites

Children's emotional wellbeing was a recurring theme; Marjory refers to the 'tragic evils of boredom, unhappiness and lassitude and how they can be avoided' through exploratory play. She was inspired by a visit to the first 'junk playground' in Denmark where children were let loose on a wealth of waste material with no man-made fixtures, allowing their imaginations to run riot. Marjory immediately saw how Britain's bomb sites could provide similar opportunities. An effective campaigner and pamphleteer, she generated widespread interest with an illustrated article in *Picture Post* which led to the establishment of two early adventure playgrounds in Camberwell and North Kensington, though the term itself was not coined until 1953.

Marjory became personally involved in the North Kensington project and learned valuable lessons from its teething troubles. Sufficient monies had to be raised to employ a play leader; secure fencing was needed; and local landowners had to be kept onside, as did the local borough council. Most of all, the neighbours had to be pacified – 'they seemed to think their very lives were threatened' Marjory wrote in frustration.

The playground committee was variously accused of promoting communism, anarchy and vandalism, as children could choose to destroy the 'junk' within their space. But Marjory was not deterred, and in 1954 she secured another bomb site in Kennington. Nicknamed 'The Ruins' by locals, the future Lollard Street Adventure Playground was the ultimate derelict rubbish dump. Even Marjory agreed it was 'terrible' – but her involvement of children in clearing the site and painting

the signage attracted their interest from the outset, and the numbers flooded in. The playground remains in use today.

The London Adventure Playground Association (LAPA) went on to thrive, with 61 clubs across the capital. Marjory stepped down after ten years as Chairman but she was not done yet. Having also become Chairman of the Holiday Clubs initiative, she had become aware of the extremely popular Chelsea Holiday Club for 'spastic' children (ie those with forms of cerebral palsy). Marjory set herself the goal of establishing a range of 'Handicapped' Adventure Playgrounds and in 1970 after four years careful planning the first

HAP opened in Chelsea, catering weekly for 500 children with mental, emotional and physical disabilities.

Permission

Now in her seventies, Marjory spearheaded HAPA's campaign to open more playgrounds. A potential site was identified on Wandsworth Common next to Chivalry Road. The proposal was not universally welcomed, with campaigners denouncing the handover of common land to an individual interest group. The Council received 200 letters of objection and 2000 people signed a petition opposing the plan. Despite this, planning permission was granted and the Lady

Allen Adventure Playground opened in the late 1970s. Described today as 'a safe and secure oasis... surrounded by trees and shrubbery... it provides adventurous, imaginative and exciting play opportunities for disabled children and their siblings between the ages of 5 and 14'.

Marjory Allen died in 1976 just as the scheme was coming to fruition, but her work is far from forgotten either nationally or locally. A former teacher at a local school for children with severe disabilities captures this well, stating 'Lady Allen Playground is a massive part of lots of Paddock children's lives. They absolutely love it'.

SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Emily Corner describes the revamped playground in Shillington Park

Play happens everywhere, every day, and is key to fostering healthier, happier communities. At Enable, we understand the importance of this, and we have managed four extensive playground refurbishments across Wandsworth since the start of 2022 on behalf of Wandsworth Borough Council. The total value of these refurbishments is over £759,000. Work is about to finish at one of the most recent investments, the refurbishment of the junior and toddler playground and the outdoor gym in Shillington Park.

Adjacent to Falcon Park, which has recently received a £2.3m investment in sports facilities, play equipment and activity facilities, the investment at Shillington is worth £194,000 and funded entirely by the Wandsworth Local Fund (also known as the neighbourhood Community

Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is a charge the Council levies on developers (mainly of new homes) to pay for the infrastructure needed to support the new development and the surrounding community. For example it can be used for new or safer roads, park improvements or a new health centre. The new playground will hugely benefit the local community around Shillington Park, adding to the overall play offer of the area.

Consultation

Two rounds of community consultation were held at Shillington, to ensure that the playground meets the wants and needs of local residents. The new equipment was chosen by local people as part of this public consultation process, with participants being asked to provide comments and also rank three different layout and equipment

choices. The final design incorporated this feedback and merged the most popular elements of two designs. The revamped playground will offer younger children brand new play equipment including swings, a roundabout, multiplay activity tower, village shop playhouse and junior exercise trail. In addition, adults and older children will also be able to use an upgraded outdoor gym with new air walker, cross trainer, back and abs bench, resistant training poles and step boxes.

This recent investment has allowed us to provide state-of-the-art modern play offers, which encompass the latest in inclusivity and safety standards and the greatest variety of play styles. This not only ensures safety but also keeps Wandsworth playgrounds modern, fun, accessible and appealing for more frequent repeat visits within the community as well as from visitors who live outside the borough who visit Wandsworth parks and open spaces.

The refurbishment aims to provide challenge and activities which are ▶



◀ essential to children's health, wellbeing and development. It will help them learn and advance essential skills such as social play, risk assessment, strength, balance and agility as well as gross and fine motor skills. With families and carers citing playgrounds as the top reason to visit parks, these new facilities are designed to encourage and maximise play, which actively helps build a lifelong enjoyment of physical pursuits and a love of outdoor spaces.

Enable's projects officer responsible



for leading on these refurbishments says, 'It's been wonderful to be involved with so many exciting play areas over the last year. This is thanks to the fantastic combination of Wandsworth Council and Enable, working together.'

Enable are delighted to provide such a strong play offer across Wandsworth and hope to lead the way in pioneering and encouraging urban play across London.

Emily Corner is a member of Enable's parks development team.

A DIOR DRESS – OR SIMPLY A BUNCH OF FLOWERS?

Janice Morphet unveils the original Mrs Harris

In 1958 when the novel on which the recent film *Mrs Harris goes to Paris* was based was first published, it was called *Flowers for Mrs Harris*. In some ways this is a better title for the story of a Battersea 'charlady' who hankers for a Dior dress after seeing two in the wardrobe of one her 'ladies'. It is the story of a woman, long widowed, who kept herself by working without holidays – but only for those she liked. Her home in north Battersea, in the basement of a house which had no access to a garden, was quite close to Eaton and Belgrave Squares.

Once Mrs Harris had set her heart on going to Paris to buy the Dior dress, she started walking to work and gave up some of her few pleasures, including her weekly flutter on the football pools. However, she kept her love of flowers, particularly the geraniums on her windowsill and in her home. Her pleasure was also to revive cut flowers thrown out from the homes that she cleaned, by putting a copper coin in the vase.

Pools

While everyone she met, from the airline check-in to the vendeuse at Dior, could immediately spot that she was a charlady, her qualities as a friend came only after meeting her. Her greatest friend was her near neighbour with whom she shared her scant leisure time and her hopes and dreams of buying the dress. In addition to the sessions to complete their pools coupons, they went to the races as Mrs Harris thought that she was on a winning streak and could add to her slowly mounting pile of cash for the dress.

Exchange controls meant that she could only take £10 in cash with her, so one of her American ladies paid her in dollars and arranged for the rest of her cash to be exchanged. In Paris she soon found out about the troubles of the vendeuse and accountant at Dior and through her own perceptiveness and kindness, unravelled their problems for them. Monsieur Dior helped Mrs Harris to get the dress home without having to pay import duty and took an interest in her kindness.

Kindness

Yet it was her kindness that caused problems with the dress when she returned – loaning it to one of her least reliable ladies so as to help her gain a part as an actress was a mistake. Her sadness was lifted by the flowers that were sent to Battersea from all the friends that she had made in Paris – a richer reward than the dress, in the end. In later stories, these friends invited Mrs Harris to stay in New York and Moscow, and she also became an MP.

It is a mystery how Paul Gallico (1897 – 1976) came to write these books about Mrs Harris. An American citizen, he lived in Salcombe in Devon when he wrote the first Mrs Harris book. He later travelled for 20 years, dying in the south of France, in Antibes. Gallico is more famous for his book *The Snow Goose* which he wrote while staying at the home of naturalist Sir Peter Scott in a lighthouse on the Rive Nene.

Other books included *Thomamina*, the novel and film of *The Poseidon Adventure* and the *Hiram Holliday* TV series. Until 1938 he was a sports writer

and journalist. His father was an Italian magician and together with his Austrian mother they had emigrated to the US in 1895. Gallico served in WW1 and

was a war correspondent in WW2. While giving up his early sports writing, he remained athletic and served as a fencing instructor to the French army until a year before his death.

Gallico always saw himself as a story-teller and did not mind that his stories were sometimes seen as sentimental but they all seemed to be about friendship. Altogether he wrote 118 books and was writing two at the time of his death. His literary friends included Ian Fleming, with whom he worked on *The Sunday Times* and who was a neighbour in Antibes. Fleming gave him a first edition of *Casino Royale* after Gallico had read it in manuscript, describing it as 'a knockout'. Other friends were Noel Coward and Graham Greene, who also spent time with Gallico in Antibes. Both had Clapham and Battersea connections. Did Paul Gallico get the idea for Mrs Harris from visiting them or meeting their charladies? Who knows? But both Mrs Harris and Battersea are celebrated in these Gallico books.





LA DOLCE VITA?

Heidi Wenyon left Battersea for Rome. How has she found it?

I'm writing this from a comfortable seat on a smart high-speed train whisking me from Rome, where I have been living since last October, to Venice, where I lived back in the 80s and 90s and which I'm revisiting for a few days. I have fond memories of that time, one of the reasons why I decided to return to Italy.

Having recently graduated in Art and Design as a very mature student, I applied and was accepted on an MA course in painting (the course is in English) at RUFA (Rome University of Fine Arts). I'm probably four decades older than most of my fellow students, who hail from every corner of the globe and who, like me, must often compare their current existence in Rome with life back home, whether that be Sao Paulo, Karachi or Split.

Choked

It's a far cry from Battersea. The efficiency of the Italian railways sharply contrasts with the patchy – though astonishingly cheap – public transport system in Rome itself, which often finds me reminiscing wistfully about the 319 and G1 buses that so reliably bore me in and out of London from my home near Northcote Road. In Rome, scheduled buses seem to be cancelled on a whim while the number 19 tram I board each morning rattles and wheezes like an old jalopy. Perhaps that explains why no self-respecting Roman seems to be without a car, or to miss an opportunity to drive it. So the streets are permanently choked with vehicles, often double- and even triple-parked. Crossing the road is a risky business, even at a traffic light or pedestrian crossing, while the cacophony of blaring horns testifies to a still gladiatorial Roman temperament.

Now to the good things, of which there are many. It goes without saying that the architecture of Rome, from its ancient ruins to its Baroque masterpieces, is sublime, reminding me daily how lucky I am to be there.

The climate, of course, is much more temperate than ours, so that this winter I've rarely felt the need to switch on the heating. And what a joy it is, in darkest February, to admire the orange and lemon trees that exuberantly flank the city streets. Not to mention sipping a cup of really good coffee that, taken standing at the bar, costs just one euro.

Otherwise, Rome is expensive. Eating out is an occasional treat but luckily the quality of the food, its preparation and impeccable service mean that one rarely leaves a restaurant disappointed. I can only describe my first taste of *carciofi all romana* (braised artichokes) as a near-spiritual experience.

Vegetarians and vegans may struggle – tripe and veal usually dominate the menu, along with creamy pasta dishes spiked with pork and cheese, such as *carbonara* and *cacio e pepe*. Pizza is a good and economical alternative – the varieties are infinite and they are almost always delicious. And while the prices of many standard food items match or even exceed those we pay in London (much to my surprise, tinned tomatoes cost considerably more in Rome's supermarkets than they do in Waitrose) fresh, local seasonal vegetables and fruit are cheap and abundant, piled high in ravishing displays in the shops and markets.

Volunteers

One stark difference between Battersea and the districts of Rome I've come to know is the relatively small number of rough sleepers. On paper, there are around 22,000 homeless persons in Rome, but an army of volunteers, charities and religious organisations ensures that most of them have a daily hot meal and a bed for the night. According to a journalist friend of mine, this is largely thanks to the long arm of the Vatican; the Pope himself has been known to personally respond to requests for assistance.

I've always enjoyed the villagey feel

of Battersea and have yet to find that cosy, welcoming environment replicated in Rome. Perhaps that's because I'm currently residing in the swish but rather soulless Parioli district, inhabited chiefly by politicians, lawyers and diplomatic staff from the nearby consulates and embassies.*

In time one gets used to the sight of armed soldiers patrolling outside the fabulous Art Nouveau villas that line the quiet streets. The flamboyant graffiti daubing buildings across the rest of the city are notably absent here. Pedestrians are a rare sight and, unlike my corner of Battersea, there is only a handful of shops. One of them sells uniforms for domestic staff, another the wispiest of lingerie, neither particularly useful for everyday life.

Unlike a good proportion of Battersea residents, most Romans live in apartments, but this does not deter them from being enthusiastic dog owners. Like Wandsworth Common, on Sunday mornings the park at the Villa Borghese, close to my flat, is thronged with dogs of all sizes and breeds, attired in elegant canine wear, often matching that of their equally chic owners. The Romans do pick up after their dogs although, as in London, they sometimes abandon the poo bags in the street.

If Rome is nothing like my old home town of Venice, then it is a world away from Battersea. At first I desperately missed home, family and friends while coming to grips with a spectacularly disorganised MA programme, underwhelming apartment and only a few acquaintances in the city. But watching the winter sun set ablaze the dusky pink and ochre fronts of even the dullest of buildings, sipping a perfectly mixed aperitivo, and anticipating the warmth of the coming spring, I know that my Roman adventure is far from over.

**In Parioli*, a short film I made about the neighbourhood, is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL95fvA6XrY>

No To The Clones!

Starbucks, Greggs, Gap, Next, Tesco Express: you could be anywhere. So many high streets now look and feel identical, with all their soul ironed out by the blandness of chain stores and cafes. Battersea, fortunately, is not one of these identikit areas and we must try to make sure it retains its individuality.

Clone Town is a phrase coined by the New Economics Foundation (Nef) to describe the identical high streets developing all over Britain. In these towns, chains outnumber independent shops and most of the retail activity goes on outside the centre, leaving a dead heart. The worst, Exeter, has only one independent shop in the city centre.

Northcote Road

The Northcote Road Action Group (NRAG) has been campaigning for over two years to retain the diversity of the road and to promote it as a centre of food culture. Recently (October 2008) it carried out a survey of the road to assess whether, in Nef's terms, it is a 'home town' or a 'clone town'. (While the group used Nef's survey, it did not carry it out in the prescribed way).

Out of a total of 118 shops, 75 were independents and 43 were chains. Twenty five were restaurants or cafes and four were pubs or bars – nearly a quarter of the total. No wonder residents object when planning applications appear for yet another café masquerading as a coffee 'shop'! Almost 25% of the road consisted of clothes shops, most of them chains. Eight hairdressers and beauty

shops add to the impression that Northcote Road caters largely for the young and wealthy. This area 'between the commons' in estate agents' jargon, is indeed largely well off. But it includes estates and a walk around the streets suggests that many houses are lived in by people who do not have money to burn.

Six shops catered exclusively for children, confirming the area's 'Nappy Valley' reputation. There were eight estate agents. Seven shops stood empty. Only nine shops were primarily food retailers – though the road does of course have its much-loved street market on Fridays and Saturdays.

So is Northcote Road a home town, with real local, individual shops or a clone town like so many others? Using Nef's calculations, NRAG discovered that it would be classified as a border town, between the two, though happily hovering near home town status. It will be interesting to repeat the survey in a year's time, to explore the difference the recession makes.

What's wrong?

What's wrong with clone towns, some may ask. Supermarkets, for example, offer the convenience of buying a large range of goods under one roof. But Nef has shown that as well as decreasing the sense of community that people need, chain stores damage the local economy by draining profits out to distant headquarters and shareholders. Small



local businesses on the other hand tend to keep money circulating locally.

Loss of diversity ultimately leads to less choice for the consumer, as well as, frequently, higher prices. Supermarkets are well known too for forcing down prices to producers, leading to farmers and other artisans going out of business.

The Federation of Small Businesses has launched a campaign to "Keep Trade Local", supported by several Northcote Road shops which carry an FSB petition. According to the organization, Britain's high streets face extinction, with the potential loss of 50, 000 small businesses over the next seven years.

NRAG urges everyone in Battersea to support their local shops by shopping locally. Otherwise we may realize too late that our 'home town' has turned insidiously into yet another clone town.

Jenny Sheridan.
www.neweconomics.org
www.fsb.org.uk

UPDATE

Thanks to research by Battersea Society trustee Carol Rahn, I can offer a 2023 update to this article.

There are still more independent than chain stores, but the chains are increasing, as the original article feared. In 2008 there were 75 independent shops compared to 43 chains. Now the proportion is 68 independents to 59 chains. The number of empty shopfronts is almost identical (seven now, six then).

Despite some closures, shops catering for babies and children have increased from six to nine; the area is still Nappy Valley. One of the biggest changes is that while the number of estate agents has remained static, there are now at least 13 businesses dealing in furniture, paint and home furnishings. Perhaps the people who bought homes

15 or 20 years ago are frantically re-decorating!

Another noticeable increase is in the number of businesses devoted to beauty products and hairdressing, from eight to 14. This includes physiotherapists and yoga studios. On St John's Road two cosmetic surgery clinics face each other (no doubt smoothly and wrinkle-free). A recent influx has led to a glut of opticians: there are now five on Northcote Road.

In 2008 the road boasted 25 restaurants and cafés and four pubs or bars. The numbers have risen: 28 restaurants and cafes, eight pubs and bars. At least six of these opened post-pandemic. While we have lost Dove the butcher and two excellent Italian delis, the number of shops selling primarily food and drink has stayed the same, at nine. New planning regulations have

blurred the distinction between cafés and food shops. Many cafes also sell food to take away and delis such as the new Pizziccheria have a few tables for lasagna-loving lunchers.

In 2008 the road still had its 'much loved street market on Fridays and Saturdays,' although it was already much decreased in size and splendour compared to ten or 20 years earlier. Now it is a shadow of its former self, with no fruit and veg stalls and a focus on street food – still welcome of course.

To sum up, Northcote Road has not – as the Northcote Road Action Group feared – become a clone town. It remains a successful and lively shopping street with a large choice of places to eat and drink. But in the age of internet shopping, NRAG's plea to shop local still needs to be heard,

MUSIC IN THE AIR

Musician Hugo Jennings brings a jazz festival to Battersea

Before the pandemic, my connection to Battersea stretched no further than a few trips to the Asparagus, occasional use of Clapham Junction station, and rushing to the Falcon pub on a glorious afternoon after Ben Stokes hit the winning boundary against Australia in the third Ashes Test in 2019. It was not until I answered an advert from St Mary's Church about a vacant bass choral scholar position that I would start spending so much time in this wonderful area.

I'm a freelance musician, primarily jazz. When I started working at St Mary's in 2021, with the pandemic still looming and opportunities to perform rare, I was not at the easiest point in my life. I was immediately welcomed into a community of friendly, caring people, many of whom have become dear friends.

Angels

I first introduced jazz to the church when my trio played on the steps of St Mary's for the Battersea Coronavirus Angels event in August 2021. Afterwards, Simon Butler, the vicar, approached me and said he would love to have a 'jazz Eucharist' of sorts one Sunday at the church. With a great choir and an open-minded congregation, St Mary's was the place for it.

In January 2022, St Mary's were kind enough to let me host a jazz night in the church featuring my trio. We had the pleasure of playing to a large and appreciative audience, ranging from hardened jazz fans to those attracted by the BYOB part of the evening's proceedings. It proved a huge success and since then I have hosted some of the best musicians on the London jazz scene once or twice a month. There's a series of evenings already in the diary from March to June.

In March 2022, eight months after our initial discussion, Simon Butler commissioned me to write a Jazz Mass for the choir, with the date set for that July. That's when the idea hit me: it might be fun to have the service at the centre of an entire weekend of jazz in Battersea!

Much of my spare time in the following months was spent frantically putting together the inaugural Battersea Jazz Festival, including composing the Mass. The festival took place from 15 to 17 July, and featured some of the best talent that London has to offer. Every event was completely free for all audience members, and charity collections at each performance raised £1,162.20 for the Battersea Summer Scheme.

The opening night at the Prince Albert pub featured the Sam Braysher Quartet. After all the stress of organising and promoting the festival, it was satisfying to be putting out rows of extra chairs for the considerable audience who turned up for this special evening. The following afternoon saw four hours of world-class jazz in Battersea Square on a scorching summer's day, with delightful performances from the Windy City Weatherbirds, Andrea Rinciari Trio, Robbie Ellison Septet, and Isobel Gathercole Quartet.

On the Sunday morning came the Jazz Mass. The dedicated work of the St Mary's choir, as well as the top quality six-piece band (actually, a top quality five-piece band with myself thrashing away at the piano whilst conducting the choir), meant that I was delighted with how my composition's premiere came off, and several hundred people filled the church to boot. After an emotive tribute to Cole Porter by opera singer Leilani Barratt and pianist Neal Thornton, we rushed off to the Magic Garden for the

festival finale, where Fraser Smith's band helped create a carnival atmosphere.

Throughout the process, I met so many friendly and helpful people who help make this part of the world tick. It would have been impossible to put on such a successful weekend without the help of volunteers and friends who were involved in the entire process. I will also be eternally grateful for those who supported the Battersea Jazz Festival financially through the crowd-funder. Their belief in my mad plan meant all costs were covered.

Free

For 2023, I am expanding the Battersea Jazz Festival, now a registered Community Interest Company, across a wider range of venues, stretching all the way to Nine Elms and the further reaches of Clapham, during the whole month of July. As with last year, all events will be completely free. I believe that live music should be accessible to all, and hope that, through this, many more of the Battersea community will be exposed to the wonders of jazz and the superb musicians we are so lucky to have in London.

The upcoming St Mary's jazz evenings will take place on 29 April, 19 May, 3 June and 23 June. Tickets are always reasonably priced (usually a fiver, under-16s go free). And yes, audience members are always welcome to BYOB.

Follow @jazzatstmarys on Instagram for more information.

If you are interested in supporting the Battersea Jazz Festival this year, consider donating to our crowd-funder at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/battersea-jazz-festival-2023>. All donations go towards making this free event happen.

To find out more join our mailing list batterseajazzfest@gmail.com and follow @batterseajazzfestival on Instagram





Hoarding by Maria Gasparian on Battersea Bridge Road for the Randall Close development. See *Heritage inspires new public art in Battersea Matters Winter 2022.*

ELBOWS AT THE READY!

Jenny Sheridan goes to a charity jumble sale

They used to happen all the time. Every primary school, every church hall, every local political party – they all held jumble sales. And then they stopped. I can't say I missed the pushing and shoving, but there was often something desirable to be found among the tightly packed coat-hangers of dresses and coats, and the bulging bags and boxes of books and shoes. And they were cheap.

I hadn't been to a jumble sale for at least ten years. Until, on 3 February, I did! The Katherine Low Settlement held a highly successful sale, staffed by their ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students. It was well attended, largely but not entirely by older women, and I saw no unseemly shoving.

Cheaper

Fran Jukes, ESOL lead at KLS, explains how it came about: 'My class did a long topic on the environment (including a visit to the recycling centre on



An ESOL student staffs an abundant stall

Smugglers Way), part of which was about the sustainability of the fashion industry. The students said it was cheaper for them to buy fast fashion than to go to charity or second-hand shops, which have become expensive. I explained that when I was younger I bought all my clothes in jumble sales. They'd never heard of them but loved the idea. They also wanted to give something back to KLS by raising money.'

The sale was publicised on various local WhatsApp groups and Instagram as well as within KLS and through its many friends and volunteers. Donations arrived in a steady stream of carrier bags the day before the sale and on the

day all the tables were piled high.

Most items cost 50 pence, some more, some less. Five transactions in six were made in cash, though a card reader was also available.

Fran says that while 'lovely teamwork at KLS' helped with the organisation, she will probably not do it regularly. One of the issues was lack of storage space in the building

A huge amount of donated clothes remained unsold and Fran feared it might all go to the tip and then on to landfill or incineration, rather cancelling out the sustainability aims of the venture.

However a KLS volunteer was delighted to take it on for the RSPCA charity shops. Battersea's circular economy worked well.

The sale raised over £600 for KLS. And I came away the proud owner of a handsome tiger face cushion (pictured) for the princely sum of 50p!

