

# BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2023



## A FEATHERY MOAT FOR THE POWER STATION

Landscape architect Ben Wallace describes the Power Station's plantscape

If a new landscape works, it doesn't feel new at all but familiar, as if it has always been there. A walk around Battersea Power Station feels like this, as London's newest destination invites people in.

The transformation of the post-industrial land surrounding Battersea Power Station is a decade-long labour of love for LDA Design. Decommissioned in 1983, the iconic Power Station lay derelict for almost thirty years after several failed attempts to redevelop the site and with the building ending up on Historic England's 'At Risk' register.

Restored, the Grade II\* listed Power Station opened to the public late last year, as the centrepiece of a new riverside neighbourhood with a six-acre park, a colourful children's playground, new homes, a London Underground station, cultural, retail, office and leisure venues. Regeneration opens a stretch of the Thames inaccessible to the public for nearly a century. Since opening, the area has welcomed over five million visitors. For the first time, Battersea Power Station has become about much more than a building.

### Monumental

The design challenge was to develop a landscape that could respond to the monumental architecture of the Power Station and ambitious new builds, so that the place could feel green and hospitable. The project team's ethos was 'don't do ordinary'

Our aim was to create an ecologically rich and memorable public realm, connected to the wider neighbourhood and easy to get around. A place that was able to flex to accommodate crowds, but also intimate enough to provide respite. Slow and fast routes meet different needs, the latter providing direct ways through to key vistas and destinations.

Nearly half of the 42-acre site is



Nature benefits from wildlife-friendly planting

given over to public realm, a landscape with a diverse but coherent series of spaces united by common principles to promote wellbeing, sustainability, inclusion, heritage and biodiversity. Three acres of planting have been delivered and there is more to come. At the outset we listed all the plants that had self-seeded here and have reintroduced as many as possible.

When the scheme was first consented, the idea was that a body of water would surround the Power Station, but we worked to make this a dramatic garden space instead, so that seasonality, colour and movement would soften the architecture. Today, prairie grasses the colour of brick and weathered Corten steel circle the building's base, creating a feathery moat. They are beautiful and surprising.

Embedded within the grasses are bulbs and flowering perennials. In fact, in this area alone there are 10 different planting mixes to suit sun and shade; north, south, east or west; city facing

or river facing. Designed in partnership with Nigel Dunnett, there are tens of thousands of grasses and perennials and over 100,000 bulbs.

In May and June, kniphofia (red hot pokers) tower over swathes of calamagrostis and miscanthus. Later in the year, clusters of salvias and sanguisorba or burnet combine with drifts of hakonechloa or Japanese forest grass and stipa. Persecaria, rudbeckia and asters add almost year-round structure and colour complimented by rangy verbena and echinacea. All of this is thriving without irrigation and minimal soil build up, showing dry and arid conditions can be made beautiful.

### Nest boxes

Nature is gaining here. Ninety-five bird species have been recorded across the new neighbourhood, including wagtails and charms of goldfinches, with last year 11 pairs of goldfinches breeding. Black redstarts are making use of 19



Visit our website: [batterseasociety.org.uk](https://batterseasociety.org.uk) for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

## FROM THE EDITOR



In an article in the spring issue of the Friends of Battersea Park's *Review*, Valerie Selby suggested we take up slow walking – walking

using all the senses. I decided to try this out on Easter Sunday which, if you remember, was a glorious spring day. As well as enjoying the warmth of the sunshine I focused on listening.

In Battersea Park there was birdsong and the occasional parakeet shriek. Less welcome was the ear-splitting revving of Ferrari engines near Chelsea Bridge. Bright green, pink and blue, they outdid the parakeets for noise as well as colour.

After crossing over Chelsea Bridge I walked through the empty manicured

spaces of the Chelsea Barracks neo-classical development, where what was notable was not sound but its absence: no voices, no children, no cars, no scooters, no shops. Just up the road, at the Victorian St Barnabas Church, I was arrested by the sound of beautiful sonorous chanting. It sounded decidedly non-Anglican, and turned out to be from the Melkite church, a middle eastern (and Orthodox-sounding) branch of the Catholic Church.

### Geese

My aural walk continued through various overheard mobile phone chats, including an extremely loud declaration of undying love. It ended with the opening rustle of a bag of crisps and the unmelodious honking of geese at the Serpentine in Hyde Park.

June must be the smelliest month for walking – in a good way. I tried to ignore sickly privet hedges and focused on the headily romantic perfumes of jasmine

and star jasmine (*trachelospermum jasminoides*) which waft across the road from gardens 50 metres away. And in the parks and commons there's the evocative scent of lime tree flowers, even better in the early evening than in daytime.

Walks I'd recommend to readers include around the excellent planting at the Power Station (see *our cover article*) and heritage walks in Nine Elms, led by historian, poet and gardener Hilaire (see *p14*).

And if your walk starts from home and you notice a street tree looking droopy, do cheer it up with a canfull of water.

Wandsworth Council is bidding to be the next London Borough of Culture. This is a genuinely exciting opportunity to bring funding and fun to our borough. Do take part in the survey (see *p16*).

Jenny Sheridan

[newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk)  
020 7350 2749

## MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden reflects on walking slowly and fast, the benefits of relaxation, and holiday souvenirs

Margaret Thatcher allegedly said that 'If a man finds himself a passenger on a bus having attained the age of 26, he can count himself a failure in life'. Sounds more like Jane Austen than the Iron Lady. Someone who preferred walking would doubtless be beneath contempt! Yet it has been the main method of transport for around two million years since Homo Erectus evolved longer legs and started striding about looking for somewhere interesting to go.

A neighbour once remarked about me to my wife that she had never seen a man walk so slowly. I walk three to four miles most days but almost everyone is faster than me. On my strolls by the river or round Battersea Park young people speed past taking three steps to my one en route to work, college or coffee shop. Even people just a little younger (sometimes even older) zoom by as if chased by Furies. I walk at a nicely measured tread because, as Aesop pointed out, speed is not everything.

The tortoise plods on, while up ahead the over-confident hare falls asleep letting his rival trudge past to the winning post. I reckon that winning mattered less to the hare than taking

a nap. Recent research has found that naps are good for you, improving your cognitive processes. It's heartening to learn that something relaxing you do already is good for you. Red wine in moderation can keep your brain alert, add in an afternoon nap and you'll probably finish *The Times* crossword in ten minutes.

We're told that on holiday we should leave only footprints, take only memories. These days people rely more on their smartphone camera than on their memory. Watching the coronation on TV it was striking that most of those holding their phones up to film the passing procession were silent. I suppose cheering (as the crowds did in 1953) would spoil the soundtrack of their 'I was there' movie.

### Mementoes

Another way of recalling your hols is with a souvenir. The sort of thing you see languishing in charity shops: a jug with Welcome to Wales or announcing itself as 'a present from Whitby'. We don't usually bother these days and recently returned sans souvenir from

a group visit to the Scottish borders. Among the mementoes in the gift shops of Edinburgh Castle, Jedburgh Abbey or Walter Scott's house (to name but a few) there's invariably a tea towel telling the stirring history of the building or its owner, or a map of the area. Are these items bought to use in the purchaser's own kitchen? One of the fellow travellers told us her reason for buying them. 'I'm educating my husband one tea towel at a time!'. Presumably while he does the drying up.

The fridge magnet favourite Leave only footprints... is attributed to the 19th century Chief Si'ahl of the Duwamish nation whose tribal lands were in what is now Washington state on the Pacific coast. His name lives on in the city of Seattle. That's a useful fact for pub quiz addicts, but I leave you with another of his sayings: 'The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know, all things are connected like the blood which unites one family'. Not a bad thought to end with.

So enjoy the summer, mind how you go and I'll see you next time.





#### Planting on Circus Road West

trees include acers, betulas, carpinus, gleditsias, prunus and quercus. Planting to the flanks of the park features drought tolerant hedging. Certain species such as phlomis and persicaria dominate, whilst space has also been set aside for wildflowers to grow showing that no matter how big or small the space, a spectrum of colour can be provided.

#### Quality

Battersea Power Station is both an incredible building and a hugely complex project, and designing and delivering the public realm for this new neighbourhood has been quite a journey. Looking back at the original brief, it is very different to where we are today as we responded to changes in modes of transport and tech disruptors, but that is the nature of design over a ten-year period in a fast-changing world. As a place, it speaks of quality, and there is much to delight and entertain. It will be a popular London destination and a firm favourite for families for years to come.

*Ben Walker is a director of LDA Design.*

nest boxes and peregrine falcons have nested in the north-east chimney. New community gardening clubs have started up.

The detailing is to the highest specification and designed to unify contrasting architecture. The site's working heritage is reflected throughout the choice of materials, with steel, timber, coal-like black speckled concrete used for seating walls, and metalwork inspired by the Power

Station's control room. When complete, 25,000 people will be living and working within the Battersea Power Station estate. To cater for all of these needs there is a new pedestrianised high street, Electric Boulevard. Generous pavements ensure there is space for restaurants and cafés to spill out.

Along Circus Road West, a ring of disease-resistant Elm define the streetscape. Across the riverside park,

## BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS AUGUST – OCTOBER 2023

For any enquiries please contact [events@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:events@batterseasociety.org.uk)

#### ● Sunday 6 August, 12noon

##### **Municipal Mecca walk**

A walk with local historian Jeanne Rathbone, starting at Battersea Arts Centre, looking at sites and survivors of our most iconic buildings and plaques to women. Free event

#### ● Saturday 2 September, 2pm

**Unveiling of Battersea Society commemorative plaque to author Penelope Fitzgerald**

25 Almeric Road, London SW11 1HL  
Members of the Fitzgerald family will be present and her biographer Hermione Lee is the speaker. Free event

#### ● Thursday 14 September, 11.45am

**Bluebell Line train trip – exclusive members only event.**  
Re-live the experience of steam train travel on the much-loved Bluebell Line, the earliest preserved standard gauge railway in the country. £18, excluding cost of travel to and from East Grinstead.

#### ● Sunday 17 September, 2.30pm

##### **From Cradle to the Grave**

A guided walk with local historian Sue Demont taking in the sites and buildings that span every stage of life. The walk starts at the corner of Thurleigh Road & Bolingbroke Grove and ends on Battersea Rise. Free event

#### ● Thursday 28 September

6.30pm for 7pm

##### **History of the Handshake**

Recreation Room, Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11 5TN

Historian Penelope Corfield explores the antiquity of the gesture, explains its emergence as a daily greeting and briefly speculates on its future prospects.

£5 payable in advance online at [www.batterseasociety.org.uk](http://www.batterseasociety.org.uk) or on the door

#### ● Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18

October, 10.30am

**Battersea Power Station coffee morning tour**

No.1 Village Courtyard, Circus West Village, Battersea Power Station, London SW11 8AH

A behind-the-scenes tour round Battersea Power Station, followed by coffee in Control Room B. Max 20 people. Free event



#### ● Date and time to be confirmed – October

**Battersea Society Photography Award Exhibition**

Private View for members  
Royal College of Art, 1 Hester Road, London SW11 4AN

A pop-up exhibition showcasing finalists and winners in the Battersea Past, Present & Future Photography Award.

Free event

# BLACK HAIRDRESSERS

Michael Jubb celebrates Battersea's Afro-Caribbean hairdressers and barbers

I'm writing this just before the 75th anniversary of the arrival in Tilbury of the Empire Windrush and the first large group of West Indian immigrants to arrive in the UK in 1948. Many were Jamaican ex-servicemen, and more than 200 of those who had no friends or relatives in the UK were housed initially in the wartime deep shelter near Clapham South tube station.

Their arrival is now being rightly celebrated. They, their successors, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have brought profound changes to British society; many have made, after some hard-fought battles, contributions of fundamental importance to our economic, social, and cultural life.

One feature of the change they have brought about can be seen on streets throughout inner London, but is not much remarked upon. Most of the shops on our high streets cater for people from all ethnic backgrounds. But mainstream hairdressers and barbers did not – and for the most part still do not – meet the distinctive needs of Afro-Caribbean men and women. So to meet those needs, through the 1950s, 1960s and beyond African Caribbeans had to find relatives and friends to cut their hair in their own houses.

## Stylists

But in more recent years, members of the community have established at least ten shops in Battersea – on Battersea Park Road, Falcon Road and other streets. The owners and stylists tend to know each other, and there's a fair amount of swapping of stylists. This article focuses on two businesses on Lavender Hill.

Hype Coiffure was founded by Calvin Rattray. He began his working life as a gas engineer, working for many years for British Gas. The idea of opening hair salons for women arose from a dinner conversation with one of his wife's friends, and he began with salons in Brixton and Balham. There were soon queues outside, and he opened the

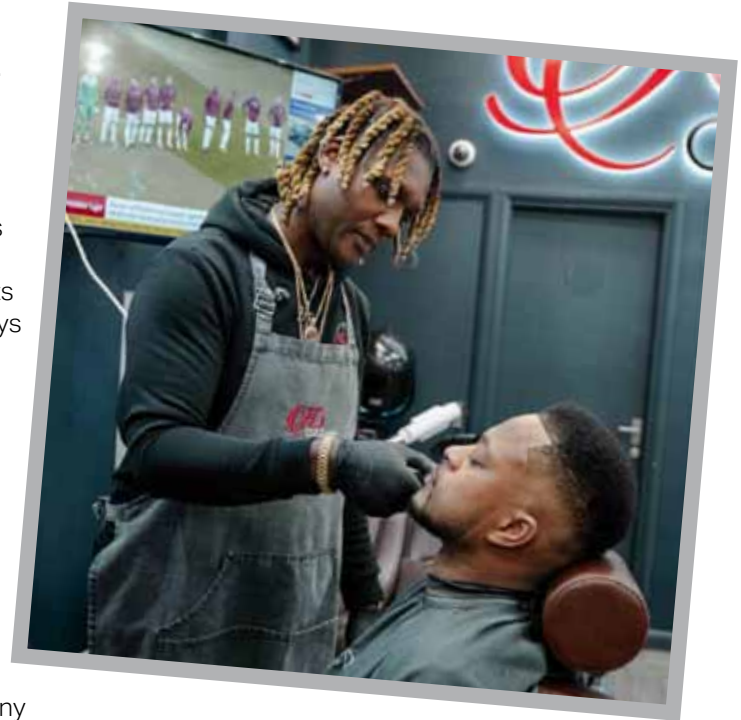
salon on Lavender Hill. Calvin had ambitions to establish the black version of Tony and Guy, and he soon had a small chain of salons in the area, plus one in Shoreditch. The stylists Calvin hired have always been at the centre of the business, and they were involved in choosing the name, inspired by the American magazine Hype Hair, with the addition of Coiffure to reflect the type of salons he and they wanted to run.

Calvin has seen many changes in the styles that his clients want, and in how they are created. Harsh chemical relaxers and straighteners are a thing of the past for him. He still provides a service for those women who want wigs, with skilled stylists who often work for West End theatres. For some years Calvin has been consolidating the business, and Lavender Hill is the only salon now in operation. He intends to hand it over to the stylists and to sit in the background until he eventually retires.

The HD Cutz shop on the other side of Lavender Hill is very different. Few of us who watched the World Cup in November and December last year will have recognised the close connection between what we were seeing on our TV screens and a small local barber's shop. Several of the England team – Raheem Sterling, Jude Bellingham, Calvin Phillips, Phil Foden and others – have their hair cut by Sheldon Edwards, who established HD Cutz a few years ago.

## Premier League

Sheldon started cutting hair in his dad's shop in Jamaica and when he arrived here aged 16 with his mum, he walked into a barber's shop on Lavender Hill to ask for a job. They took a chance on him, and he's been working ever



## Sheldon Edwards perfecting a style

since. He met some Premier League footballers and was soon travelling to cut hair in Italy, where he became barber to the Roma team, and later to France, Belgium and Germany. He describes building up his impressive list of clients as like a ripple effect, one leading on to another. He works on a retainer for all his clients, who pay for him to travel to the major championships, starting with the European Championships in 2016, and then the World Cup in Russia in 2018. He hit the highlights when he dyed Phil Foden's hair blonde for the Euros in 2020.

## Pundits

The shop on Lavender Hill remains busy, but Sheldon was in Qatar throughout the 2022 World Cup. If you saw the quarter-final between England and France, you'll have seen several players on both sides with hair cut by Sheldon. He even cut the hair of some of the TV pundits, including Rio Ferdinand and Micah Richards. For many of us, how our hair looks is pretty important. But for some of the footballers, Sheldon says that the haircut is as important as their boots: if they don't feel good, they won't play well. *Hype Coiffure, 186 Lavender Hill  
HD Cutz 103a Lavender Hill  
Michael Jubb is chair of the Battersea Society*



## BOOKS FOR ALL

Jenny Sheridan welcomes the new Northcote library

**S**outh Battersea has a new library building. The new Northcote Library opened in May across the road from the old 1960s building, loved for its brutalism by some (mostly architects) and heartily disliked by many locals.

The new building has a much more welcoming feel – though some first-time visitors appear flummoxed by the need to press a pad to open and close the doors. According to chief librarian Matt Cockshutt it is busier than the old library. Numbers are up across the board – all ages – and people are taking out a greater number of books. The large children’s library is particularly well used and appreciated by its members. Adult users appreciate the noise-excluding glass walls separating it from the rest of the ground floor. And there is no longer any need to negotiate a path through dozens of parked buggies to reach the librarian’s desk.

### Seating

Books for teenagers and attractive seating for individual children or small groups can be found on the ground floor.

Students particularly like the separate study space upstairs. The seven computers for public use are frequently occupied. Several sitting areas offer spaces where readers can sit in comfortable chairs with their chosen books. Newspapers are available.

Regular activities and events are re-starting, including story time for children and two book groups for adults. Schools and nurseries visit almost every day. There are three meeting rooms for hire and a new community hall behind the building will open once construction work is completed – before the end of the year, Matt assured me.

While the building is larger in square metres than the old ones, new space problems have arisen. On the two upper floors, non-fiction is split between two floors. And signage and labelling are still not in place; I could not find the book I was searching for and had to enlist the help of a friendly librarian.

Solar panels and a heat pump will reduce the building’s carbon footprint and make it less expensive to run.



**Top: A new library for the 21st century**  
**Above: the old building, now being demolished**

There are lifts to all three floors and – a boon in these toilet-free times – there are public toilets.

### Buzzy

While I chatted with librarian Matt, children ran in to their library, full of enthusiasm and waving their books. A young girl was ensconced in a special seat in the teenagers’ area and another in a booth. The atmosphere was quietly buzzy – just what you’d want from a library.

phone: 020 7223 2336  
[northcote.library@gll.org](mailto:northcote.library@gll.org)

Opening hours:

Monday 9.00 – 19.00

Tuesday/Wednesday closed

Thursday 9.00 – 19.00

Friday 9.00 – 17.00

Saturday 9.30 – 14.30

Sunday closed

# OUR NEWEST OPEN SPACES

Clare Graham's third and final article in this series surveys the open spaces created in the last fifty years.

It may be a surprise to learn that until fairly recently there was no public access to much of Battersea's riverside. Battersea Park had its esplanade, and St Mary's its churchyard and slipway, but otherwise the Thames was largely blocked off by industrial buildings. Freight came in and out by river, but there was no need for a towpath since horse-drawn barges were only used upstream above Putney Bridge, where a surviving towpath was created around 1800 to link the Thames to its growing canal network. It stretched as far as Ingatestone in Essex. In 1948 came the first suggestion that it might become the foundation of a new recreational route. The Thames Path became a serious project in 1973, and only in 1996 did it open as a National Trail, extending now from the source of the river down to Woolwich.

## Detours

Those delays actually proved good news for Battersea, since as riverside industries vanished and their sites became available for redevelopment in the 1970s and 1980s, there was now planning guidance in place to ensure that providing a fully accessible riverside path was a prerequisite for any new build. Our Thames Path then grew piecemeal, running today all the way from Wandsworth Bridge to Vauxhall Bridge, apart from detours around Battersea Heliport and the Thames Super Sewer works at Kirtling Street and Heathwall Pumping Station. However we may feel about some of our local riverside developments, we can surely welcome this as our greatest new open space asset – Battersea's longest new park, if you like.

Note however that the Thames Path is not a publicly-owned space, like a highway or a council park, but a permissive one: a patchwork of separate properties, mostly privately owned, through which we are allowed to walk or cycle. Most of our other newer open spaces are also 'permissive' or 'developers' parks.' Some are along the Thames Path itself, places where that swells out into landscaping and seating, letting us pause and enjoy the view. The



new Riverside Park in front of the Power Station is more ambitious, as are the public gardens of the Battersea Reach development, up by Wandsworth Bridge. Nearby is a Tidal Planting Zone on the Thames foreshore itself, a welcome and interesting biodiversity feature: could this be copied elsewhere?

Away from the river, a new public garden at 101 Prince of Wales Drive is attractive, with its trees, shaded seats and other plantings. Another interesting new development is the Linear Park to the south of Nine Elms Lane, which will eventually provide a quiet route through to Vauxhall Station. Different sections are the responsibility of different developers, but there's a common palette of materials and finishes, for consistency. Also, everybody has signed up to a park charter, one which emphasises rights and responsibilities rather than just listing restrictions in the style of Council open space byelaws. It's an approach designed to disarm critics of the 'privatisation of public space;' you can find more information on the website of its author, Professor

Matthew Carmona of the Bartlett School of Architecture.

These days councils rarely get the chance to provide new public parks; the exception locally is York Gardens, already partially closed and due to be re-sited nearer the station, within the regeneration of the Winstanley and York Road estates. We have been told that it will remain in public ownership, have high-quality landscaping partially funded by developers, and offer pedestrian and cycle through-routes to Clapham Junction.

## Pocket park

Meanwhile, a welcome recent trend is the pocket park, which is actually a great idea: taking small sad spaces, and turning these into green oases for both humans and nature within busy, hard-edged urban environments. So far, Battersea's only official pocket park is Falcon Glade, created in 2013 on the edge of the Falcon Estate, using a grant from a GLA Pocket Park Initiative. Sadly, it hasn't worn well; there was never a proper maintenance budget, and now



**Above: Thames Path signage at Vicarage Crescent,**

**Left: Thames Path, Tidal Planting Zone,**



Far left: Public garden at 101 Prince of Wales Drive  
Left: Doddington Garden Square,

as the original play features rot, there's no money to replace them. A Garden Square created in 2020 at the centre of the Doddington Estate around Paula Haughney's jolly sculptures of 1991, is wearing rather better.

In 2022 the current Wandsworth administration promised in its election manifesto that it would create more

pocket parks and community gardens. We'd love to see this happen, and have already suggested that a bleak new paved space at Sphere Walk, off Battersea High Street, would make an excellent candidate.

Community gardens aren't necessarily publicly accessible, and so largely fall outside the scope

of this article, but let's finish by mentioning the one at Battersea Arts Centre; that's open to everybody all of the time, and it's always fun to walk through and see what's coming up in its stencilled planters.

*Clare Graham, is a Battersea Society trustee and chair of the open spaces committee.*

## A PLAQUE ON BOTH YOUR HOUSES

Historic women are being commemorated in Battersea. Jenny Sheridan reports

**A** plaque – blue, green or brown depending on the organisation sponsoring it – is a way of honouring a significant person in the place where they lived or worked. Two plaques have recently been placed in Battersea and two more are planned for the autumn.

In April, Marie Spartali was commemorated by English Heritage at her family home in The Shrubbery, on the corner of Lavender Gardens and Clapham Common North Side. Marie Spartali was a pre-Raphaelite artist who also modelled for her male peers, including Edward Burne Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Unusually for a woman in the Victorian era, Spartali's art was recognised and appreciated in her lifetime.

### Extraordinary figure

Art historian Andrew Graham Dixon commented, 'There are only a handful of female artists commemorated by the blue plaques scheme ... she was an extraordinary figure in 19th century art.'

The Battersea Society was represented at the unveiling of the plaque by Jeanne Rathbone and Michael Jubb.

### Vote

In June, Wandsworth Council commemorated the Diederichs-Duval family with a green plaque at 97 Lavender Sweep.

The whole family was involved in the struggle for women to get the vote. Emily Diederichs Duval, three of her daughters and her son and son-in-law were all imprisoned, and Emily and her daughter Elsie were force-fed many times. The family's story is told in Jeanne Rathbone's *Inspiring Women of Battersea* (obtainable from the Battersea Society).

The plaque was unveiled in a ceremony masterminded by Jeanne Rathbone and attended by over 70 people, including several descendants of the family.

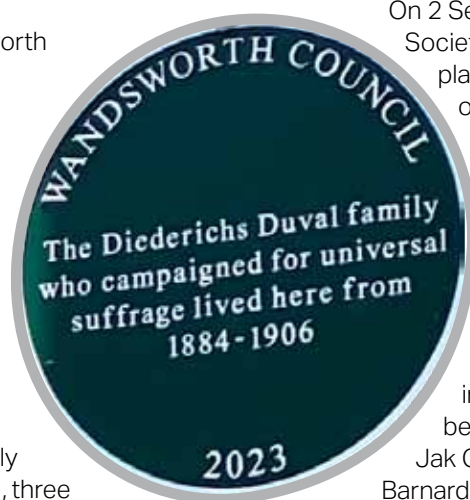
On 2 September the Battersea

Society will unveil a green plaque to the memory of author Penelope Fitzgerald. Her Booker Prize-winning novel *Offshore* is partially set in Battersea.

Her story is also told in *Inspiring Women of Battersea*.

Jeanne Rathbone is involved in a plaque to be installed by the Nubian Jak Community Trust at 25A Barnard Road on 29 September.

This will commemorate Evelyn Dove, radio and cabaret star. (*Battersea Matters* Autumn 2022).



# THE BIGGEST ENGINEERING PROJECT IN THE WORLD

Martin Ireland explores Bazalgette's influence on the Embankment

Sir Joseph Bazalgette's engineering programme for developing a new sewer system for London, along with replacing and strengthening a number of bridges spanning the Thames in west London made a huge impact on the appearance and development of Chelsea and Battersea during the latter half of the 19th century.

In 1848 a serious cholera outbreak killed nearly 15,000 Londoners. At the time there was no unified system of sewage so drainage and sewage were mixed with drinking water. In 1849 Bazalgette was appointed as Surveyor for the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers in London. He planned a systematic solution to separate sewage from drinking water. In 1855 the Metropolitan Management Act created the Metropolitan Board of Works which ensured that London was fit for living in and included the construction of roads, lighting, bridges, tunnels and sewers.

## Sewage system

Over the next 31 years Bazalgette transformed the riverside neighbourhoods in London, particularly in Chelsea, Westminster and the City. He insisted that the new sewage system had to link up every street in London, then coping with a population of over three million.

The new London sewer was the biggest civil engineering project in the



**Bazalgette monument, Cheyne Walk**  
Below: A map of Bazalgette's sewers

world. To avoid digging up crowded roads in central London, Bazalgette's design introduced embankments along the Thames which contain massive main sewer pipes which diverted waste water into steam powered treatment works including Abbey Mills pumping station in east London, before discharging into the Thames at Crossness 15

miles away. Over a period of 16 years, Bazalgette constructed 82 miles of main intercepting sewers, 1100 miles of street sewers, four pumping stations and two treatment works.

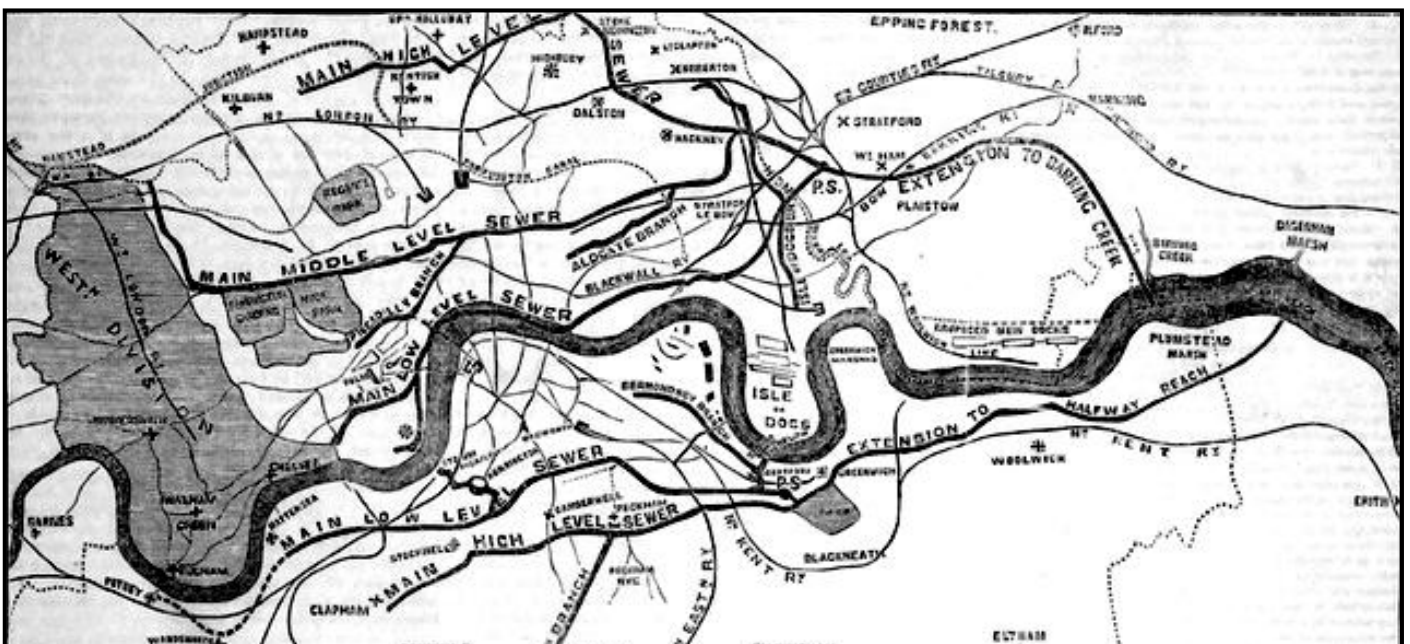
The Victoria, Albert and Chelsea Embankments built to contain the huge sewers narrowed the Thames by 45 metres, reclaiming over 52 acres of land. Wide new roads were built over the sewers including Chelsea Embankment, Grosvenor Road and Millbank. At Chelsea, the new embankments gave rise to smart new mansion apartments overlooking Cheyne Walk and Chelsea Embankment Gardens, constructed from the 1880's onwards. Swan House on Cheyne Walk is one such example.

## Cleanest

Bazalgette made the single biggest contribution to the health of Victorian Londoners. It is because of his work that the Thames is now the cleanest metropolitan river in the world and cholera and typhoid are part of history. A monument to Bazalgette's achievements is at Cheyne Walk, adjacent to All Saints Church at the bottom of Old Church Street.

*Martin Ireland is an artist based in Battersea. He offers oil painting classes in Tooting.*

*In his next article, Martin will focus on Bazalgette's contribution to Battersea and Albert Bridges.*





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# PLANNING MATTERS: MONICA TROSS CALLS FOR MORE GENUINE CONSULTATIONS

## LOCAL PLAN TO BE ADOPTED

I am hoping that by the time you read this the endless rounds of consultations, revisions, modifications and committees will be over and the Local Plan will be considered sound. It has to be approved by the Transport and Scrutiny Committee on 5 July and by full Council on 19 July. I am sure that colleagues on our Planning Committee will look through the many Main Modifications in more detail and you can expect more from us in due course.

However, I was sad to read a repeated change from 'must' to 'should' so that sentences now read 'the maximum appropriate height range for the site should be in accordance with the tall buildings map'. I don't need a dictionary to tell me that this weakens the policy and is, I regret, in line with past policy documents where phrasing opens the door to exceptions. I am reminded of a quote from a BBC2 documentary several years ago about planning decisions: 'We used to say, "is it good enough to approve?" now we say, "is it bad enough to refuse?"'.

## CROSSINGS

With Cabinet Member for Transport Jenny Yates, we welcome proposed changes at the northbound end of Battersea Bridge Road and across the bridge in Chelsea. We are less happy about other changes. We spent time with TfL reviewing the proposals and sent detailed comments. In particular we did not think that the crossing points at the junction of Battersea Bridge Road and Prince of Wales Drive needed to be changed and were concerned that banning the left turn into Westbridge Road was both unnecessary and would lead to increased traffic in Battersea Church Road. Others were concerned at additional parking restrictions and the lack of direct consultation with residents. Our views were not taken into account and it seems that on our side of the river the consultation has had no effect on the outcome.

Another TfL change we and the Chelsea Society argued against is the route change to the 11. It now joins the 211 in its journey to Waterloo meaning



that travellers to Trafalgar Square and the Aldwych have to change to a 26 at Victoria – or if you follow TfL's journey planner advice, walk for 41 minutes. The response to the consultation suggested that the 211 would be rerouted to start at the Power Station and the Sloane Square – Waterloo leg dropped. However, no timing for this change seems to have been announced as yet.

## BATTERSEA TANGLE

Or to give it its formal name, the Battersea Design and Technology Quarter (BDTQ). This designation of the area off Queenstown Road at Silverthorne Road and through to Havelock Terrace is designed to build on the existing creative economy of the area, not least the presence of the Apple HQ in the Power Station and Penguin Random House at One Embassy Gardens. We sit on the steering panel now to be chaired by Tom Boyd of BPR Architects. Work is in hand to set down a future direction for the area and again, we will keep you in touch as this develops. Just one planning application is awaiting a decision, 2023/0856 but other work in Havelock Terrace has been approved. Nearby Palmerston Court is moving forward and we look forward to building work being finished and the new route up from the site to Battersea Park Road opposite the Cats and Dogs Home being opened.

## MEETINGS AND CONSULTATIONS

We had a good afternoon at the Town Hall last month meeting Steve Riches

and the Nine Elms team. Not much news yet but later we heard about plans for New Mansion Square, Thessaly Road. This building will include 12 self-contained workspace units for local businesses with on-site business support and networking opportunities.

After this we met Grace Crannis to discuss 'Raising the Bar' the Council project to review consultation processes with the aim being: 'to improve developer engagement with the community and make sure it starts early and goes beyond tick-box consultation to something more meaningful.' We were encouraged by the approach being taken but amongst other things called for more openness about pre-application discussions between developers and the Council and some sense that feed-back will actually affect plans and the decisions the Council takes.

## UPDATES

We continue to object to plans for clutter on the roof of Arding & Hobbs, most recently 2023/3294. We have also written to voice concerns about the colour and dominance of the work done to the roof. It may be dulling down now but it is still a very unfortunate topping to a cherished building (*see photo above*).

RCA hoardings are still up but a charming 'sculpture' has appeared on the wall next to the Parkgate Road southbound bus stop. Work on the nearby empty site at Elcho Street may at last be going ahead with minor modifications to approved plans approved (2023/1767). One of the new buildings on the Patmore Estate is to be named after Brian Barnes. New plans are in hand for the Crewkerne Garages site in Battersea Church Road; details of the consultation were given in the latest *Battersea Insider*, do let us know your views if you attended this.

*Feedback on this or any other planning or transport matter to [planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org.uk)*

*We like to hear from you.*

# RINGING THE CHANGES AT ST MARY'S

Jenny Sheridan hears about the ancient and modern craft of bell-ringing

When the bells rang out on 7 May for the King's coronation, the glorious sound was thanks to the band of ringers in the tower of St Mary's Church, by the river in Battersea. It was, says tower captain (leader of the group) Caroline Prescott, 'really good fun. And it was good to be part of such a national but also local community event. We had a party after the service.'

The Ring for the King campaign in the lead-up to the coronation (reaching as far as Ambridge!) was successful both nationally and locally. It brought four new recruits to St Mary's, who are continuing their training.

Bell ringing is a popular and passionate pastime, and for many enthusiasts a lifelong one. Caroline has been a ringer for 50 years; her older sister and brother were ringers and at the age of 10 she couldn't wait to join them. The age range for the current band at St Mary's is from 14 or 15 to mid-70s, she says. 'Children learn very quickly, but when you're older, like most physical skills it will take longer, up to six months. But anyone can start at any time. You need to be fairly physically fit – mainly to climb the stairs in the tower (the top ones are rather steep). For the actual ringing, technique and co-ordination are more important than strength.'

At the top of the stairs, ringers find themselves in a small circular space hung with eight looped ropes, one per bell and per ringer. The bells are out of sight above the wooden ceiling. Each rope turns a wheel which enables the bell to turn in a full circle and back again. The smallest bell produces the highest sound, the heaviest the deepest.

## Permutations

The simplest ring of bells is produced by each bell being rung in turn – like singing or playing scales. It gets more complicated when 'methods' are made; these are different permutations of the eight bells. Every time the bells ring, it is in a different order till they get back to the start. 'There are thousands of possible mathematical permutations and it's not like music – you don't have a score,' says Caroline. 'It's very geeky and



The St Mary's team rang in the Coronation

you have to learn them by heart.' These changes, as they are called, have curious names such as Plain Bob or Yorkshire Surprise.

## Change ringing

Church bells have been rung for many centuries but the present style of change-ringing only evolved in the late 16th century. While it has spread to Scotland, Wales and some Commonwealth countries, change

ringing remains almost entirely English. Most continental European bells only have a half-circle wheel which offers ringers less control and limits the number of permutations.

St Mary's is the only church in Battersea with a full peal of bells. Its nearest ringing neighbour is across the river in Chelsea Old Church. The Battersea bells were re-cast in 1777 from earlier bells. They arrived at the newly built church from the foundry in Chelsea in celebratory style, 'with drums, fifes and colours displayed, attended by a great concourse of people'. Repaired in 1907 and 1938, they have undergone regular maintenance since then.

Caroline tells me that it is not necessary to be a church-goer or a Christian to become a bell ringer. Some people do it as a form of worship or as an alternative to more traditional ways of worshipping, others enjoy it purely for the physical exercise and intellectual challenge. About half of the St Mary's band are church-goers.

## Exercise

Bell ringers at St Mary's are asked to commit to practice sessions on Monday evenings as well as the Sunday morning service. They enjoy the exercise and the experience of being part of the



Caroline Prescott shows how it's done

local community as well as a national community of ringers. 'You feel you're giving something back', says Caroline. 'It brings people into the church and even non-church-goers want to keep churches open.'

Charlotte Kirwan has rung at St Mary's for 50 years and lives near the church. She says, 'It's a different form of concentration. It takes you away from life's everyday stresses.'

Caroline has been tower captain

for over a year, following on from Bob Cooles who held the position for 60 years before moving out of London. A nurse in her professional life, she was brought up in Battersea but now lives outside London.

People are welcome to come and have a look at the church and the bells, she says. She would particularly welcome any lapsed ringers who might think of getting back into the swing. Jo Brand, Ed Balls and the poet Ian

McMillan have all been bell-ringers at various points – perhaps one of them might be interested!

If so, they should contact [Carolineprescott@btinternet.com](mailto:Carolineprescott@btinternet.com)

After my introduction to the craft and art of bell ringing, I will listen to *Bells on Sunday* on Radio 4 with greater respect and even more enjoyment from now on.

*With thanks to Chris Ridley for technical and historical information.*

## SMARTPHONES AT THE READY!

Our photography competition is open to all, says Sara Milne

**T**he Battersea Society's second Photography Award is now open for entries. Battersea Past, Present & Future, which is supported by the Royal College of Art, aims to celebrate and explore all aspects of Battersea life with images of its rich heritage, vibrant present or possible future.

The competition is open to the general public from Belfast to Bognor – but all the entries must be photographed in Battersea. The winner of each category – Past, Present, Future – will receive a cash prize of £200. And a further £200 will be awarded to the overall winner. Winners will also receive a framed print of their winning image.

### Prizes

A shortlist of 30 entries will be displayed in a special Battersea Past, Present & Future pop-up show at the Royal College of Art in October, when the winners will be presented with their prizes.

Judges for the Battersea Past, Present & Future Photography Award are Hermione Wiltshire, senior tutor in photography at the Royal College of Art; Alan Burles, former art director of Saatchi & Saatchi and winner of the Leica Street Photography International Award 2018; and Mark Hodgkinson, trustee of the Battersea Society.

We hope to receive hundreds of entries, so do pick up your smartphone or camera and head out to the streets, riverside, parks and gardens of Battersea and start snapping.

Age is no hindrance; the photographer of the winning entry in 2021 was just 11 years old (see *Battersea Matters* Autumn 2021).



**A selection of last year's runners-up: Sunset before the storm, Kelmscott Road, Fountain fun**



*To take part, simply submit your entry online before the closing date of Thursday 31 August 2023. [www.batterseasociety.org.uk/photo-competition](http://www.batterseasociety.org.uk/photo-competition)*

*Sara Milne is chair of the Battersea Society's events committee.*



## PRIVATE LIVES

Janice Morphet reveals Noël Coward's early links to Battersea

It is fifty years since the death of Noël Coward (1899 – 1973) and this has stimulated a re-examination of his life and contribution to British culture. A new biography by Oliver Soden considers the range of Coward's activities as author, playwright, spy and painter. For South London, it is the brief period of his early life spent in Clapham and his play and subsequent film *This Happy Breed* (1939/1944) which are the most well-known associations, following the life of the nation through the experience of an ordinary family between 1919 – 1939, living not far from Wandsworth Road. Soden argues that the daughter of the family, Queenie, in her bid for freedom from the family home and class, was a model for Arnold Wesker's *Beatie in Roots* (1958).

### Mansions

But Clapham was not the only South London influence on Coward's life and writing. In 1908, when he was eight, he moved with his family to 70 Prince of Wales Mansions. While it was closer to central London and overlooked Battersea Park, Soden describes their move as downsizing into a smaller living space but with the intention of taking lodgers to contribute to the family's income. Coward's mother's family had been a distinguished one with a family seat in Scotland and she was the granddaughter of George III's consul-general to Madeira; his paternal grandfather had been a choirboy in Westminster Abbey and his father a music salesman. In an autobiographic piece in the *Melbourne Argus* in 1937, Noël described it as a 'top flat, with a little balcony, overlooking the park' Noël lived there with his parents, younger brother Eric, a maid and eventually some lodgers. The lodgers, who included two bachelors Mr Baker and Mr Denison, re-introduced a more formal way of living into their lives and



**Above: 'top flat, with a little balcony, overlooking the park'**  
**Inset: Noël Coward as young man**



Noël could observe their behaviour and interactions with other friends and family. Noël describes their dressing formally for dinner for the first time in years, with group sing-songs where the musical basis of his parents came to the fore. He described this as a very jolly period with his father singing 'all his old songs' and his mother playing his accompaniments. Other than this, Noël played with children in neighbouring flats and Soden states that he became a ring-leader with other children for both silly and sometimes dangerous pranks, 'Residents communicated with the porter by a long speaking tube into which Noël poured boiling water that ran down the floors and into the porter's ear. Another favourite game was to tie perambulators kept in the corridors to the apartments' front doors, and he was said to have pushed a pram, with baby in it, down a flight of stairs.

Any repercussions were lost in these escapades' gleeful recounting' (p14).

Noël attended the Chapel Royal school in Clapham and also dancing classes in Hanover Square, a journey that he made by train from Battersea Park to Victoria and then by bus to Conduit Street. He was soon launched on his stage career through a three-week contract with the Italia Conti school for a production in Liverpool.

### Charlady

Noël's career both in performance and as an artist were developed through his relationship with Philip Streatfeild (1879 – 1915). They met in 1914 when it is said that Noël's mother was Streatfeild's charlady at his studio in Chelsea. The Streatfeild family came from Chiddingstone Castle in Kent and included the other Noël – Noël Streatfeild who wrote *Ballet Shoes*. The relationship between the 34 year-old painter and the 14-year-old Noël was significant; they met when his mother suggested that he might be a stand in for an aristocratic portrait. Streatfeild and Noël had two holidays in Cornwall where artists like Henry Tuke were painting. One of Streatfeild's works may include Noël, suggests Soden. While on their second trip to Cornwall, in Polperro, the First World War was declared and Streatfeild arranged for Noël to travel back to London by train in the care of novelist Hugh Walpole.

Streatfeild died of TB in 1915 but had asked his friend Mrs Cooper to look after Noël and his career. From her home in Hambleton Hall in Rutland, Noël put on the first performance of a play that he had written in the village hall there and the rest, is history.

The time that Noël Coward spent in Battersea appears to have been formative in a range of ways – what he observed, who he met and what he did. Clearly, it was a period that he never forgot.

Masquerade The Lives of Noël Coward by Oliver Soden Weidenfeld and Nicholson

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/11052353>  
with thanks to Monica Tross

# DESIGNING FOR AGE, AGENCY AND JOY

Victoria Patrick says good design can change the world for older people

**D**o you have an interest in design and innovation and in the idea of positive ageing? If you would like to see a world where it is more possible to age joyfully and where design helps make for a better world for us all, then read on and find out how you can join the conversation.

Inclusive design means making products and buildings that are designed to be usable by as many people as possible, particularly those who are traditionally excluded. [Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design](#) (HHCD), based at the [Royal College of Art](#) (RCA) in Battersea, has been championing and shaping the practice of inclusive design for over 30 years. During this time, countless products, services, and environments have been re-designed to be useful for as many people as possible.

## Potential

In 2020, Design Age Institute was established by the HHCD with funding from [Research England](#), to demonstrate and expand the transformative potential of design to support the UK's ageing population. We aim to help people to age well. We also aim to tap into the assets of an older and perhaps wiser population's passions, experiences, and interests, to drive positive change, not just in people's daily lives, but across industry and society.

Most people are aware that in the UK and globally we have a rapidly ageing population, but many younger people forget that everybody is part of that population – after all, we are all ageing! The question is not if we will become older, but how we can age with both agency and joy.

At [Design Age Institute](#), we believe that good design can not only help to lessen the impacts of ageing on our mental, physical, social and financial capabilities, but can also support all of us to spend extra years healthier and happier. Since launching in 2020, our work has been impact-driven, supporting the development of 30



## Get involved in the design conversation

[pathfinder projects](#) for the healthy ageing marketplace, publishing [new research](#) and insights into later life, delivering [masterclasses](#) in designing for an ageing population and inviting the public to explore their future selves via [exhibitions](#) and workshops across the country.

By helping to move business and society away from a medicalised and negative view of later life that focuses on disease and decline, our mission is to shift the healthy ageing marketplace to focus more on aspiration than desperation.

As longevity increases, the traditional life stages of education, employment and retirement are being transformed for good. More and more people are challenging the perception that our later lives cannot be fulfilling, adventurous and joyful. Unfortunately this is not what we tend to see reflected in our media. Across news cycles, articles, books, movies and television screens, the ubiquitous myths that 'the elderly', 'pensioners' and 'seniors' are either burdened with physical ailments, dismissed as irrelevant and out of touch, or a source of society's woes, from the housing crisis to climate catastrophe to economic inequality.

## Products

To help shift the too-often negative perception of ageing, Design Age Institute set up [This Age Thing](#), a digital platform that connects older communities and those passionate about ageing well. It aims to connect real people with the designers, researchers and innovators shaping the products, services and environments of the future, and to raise the profile of the diverse stories of later life.

Get inspired by contributions from Professor Bobby Duffy [debunking the](#)

[myths of generational divide around the climate crisis](#); Karen Arthur, host of the podcast *Menopause while Black*, sharing her tips on style at any age; and age campaigner Ashton Applewhite outlining [five ways to counter ageism](#).

As our Battersea neighbours, we invite members of the Battersea Society to get involved in the conversation around the future of ageing joyfully and redesigning a world that works better for all of us!

Want to get involved? Here is how!

- [Tell us your story](#): Share your story of ageing well and help us to showcase the diversity of later life and challenge the too often negative stereotypes of getting older.
- [Join our Insights Group](#): Work with designers and innovators to shape new products. Sign up to be the first to hear about upcoming consultations, focus groups and design activities at the RCA's Battersea Campus.
- Have your say on spending in later life in our [latest poll](#).
- [Subscribe to our newsletter](#): Receive our monthly newsletters, which collate research, events, stories and surveys around a monthly theme.
- Follow us on social media: Stay up to date with our work via social media by following Design Age Institute ([Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#)) and This Age Thing ([Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#))

*For any questions or to contact us, please email [hello@thisagething.co](mailto:hello@thisagething.co). We do not have a reliably useful phone number as many of us work from home.*

*Victoria Patrick is impact manager of the Design Age Institute*

A mass of plants donated from Chelsea  
Inset: Jay Blades with the upcycled chairs

## BATTERSEA GOES TO CHELSEA

Hilaire describes how a community garden became an inspiration

This is the true tale of how a community garden in Battersea inspired a show garden at the fabled Chelsea Flower Show. Read on ....

Last summer, as part of London Open Garden Squares Weekend, the property developer London Square sponsored a free barbeque for the local community in the Doddington & Rollo Community Roof Garden. Over the course of the afternoon more than 100 people visited the garden, with local charity STORM overseeing the barbeque, Vibes Café providing a juice bar and contributions from other local businesses.

For Jo McDonagh, London Square's sales & marketing director, the event made a deep impression. Not only was she wowed by the roof garden: half an acre of green growing space on the roof of a former car park in the heart of the Doddington Estate, and managed entirely by volunteers; she was also struck by the strong community spirit evident on the day. A seed was sown that bloomed into a very special show garden at Chelsea Flower Show this past May.

### Upcycled

London Square commissioned garden designer James Smith to create a sanctuary garden inspired by our roof garden. James visited the garden twice to find out how the community use the garden and our hopes for the space. His garden included an area for people to meet under a pergola, and featured a large terrazzo table with inlaid chess and draughts boards, upcycled chairs made by The Repair Shop's Jay Blades, and an outdoor kitchen, complete with pizza oven. Wooden planters surrounding this area provided fresh herbs and vegetables for the kitchen.

The garden also incorporated a contemplative area planted with a mix of shady and sun-loving plants, flowering species and plants to attract pollinators.



Nestled in the greenery, a double swing seat and outdoor bookcase provided an opportunity for visitors to pause and reflect. Excitingly for those of us involved in the roof garden, London Square promised to donate many elements of their show garden to the roof garden at the end of Chelsea Flower Show.

In the run up to the Flower Show, there was an intense week's work to build London Square's garden on site. Several volunteers from the roof garden, as well as Wandsworth GoodGym (who regularly put in a shift at the roof garden) and Chesterton School's forest school teacher, helped with the build, gaining invaluable experience working alongside professional horticulturalists and garden designers. All the hard work was worth it when it was announced that the London Square Community Garden had won a Gold Medal in the sanctuary garden category.

London Square also generously provided passes to the Flower Show for a number of the garden's regular volunteers. We had a wonderful afternoon browsing the different gardens and specialist growers' stands, but the highlight was seeing the sanctuary garden inspired by our humble and patchwork roof garden. It was also an honour to meet gold-medal winning designer James Smith, who welcomed us and showed us round his garden.

At the end of the Flower Show, it was all hands on deck again, to dismantle the garden and ferry hundreds of plants across to Battersea and into the roof garden. Members of the community, GoodGym volunteers and Chesterton School's forest school teacher gave up their bank holiday to carry plants, watering cans, logs and more up onto the roof. The range of plants donated included lots of herbs, which will replenish the garden's herb maze; vegetables such as kohlrabi, purple kale and even quinoa; a semi-mature magnolia tree and fragrant creepers.

### Pizza oven

Heavier elements of the show garden will be delivered in mid-August, with the terrazzo table, wood-fired pizza oven, planters and outdoor kitchen cabinets lowered in by crane. The company donating the pizza oven has promised a demonstration of how to cook with it, which should prove popular.

London Square also designed and printed a large banner for the garden. Located on top of a two-storey business and community centre, with access via a caged metal staircase, the garden can be hard for visitors to find. Now, with a large banner in place, it's hard to miss the entrance from Doddington Square. And when visitors do venture up the stairs, they'll find a garden brimming with vibrant plants and oodles of community spirit; a sanctuary in the heart of a busy council estate.

To find out more about the roof garden see the website: <https://www.drgardens.org> Instagram & Twitter: @doddgarden

Opening hours

Wednesdays 12:30 – 3:30pm

Thursdays: 2 – 6:30pm

Fridays: 10:30am – 1:30pm

Saturdays 10am – 1pm

Hilaire is a committee member for the roof garden.

# WHEN CLARE MET ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

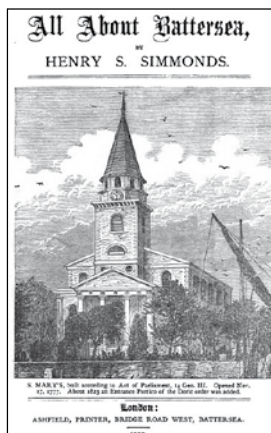
Clare Graham reveals what lies behind *Who Do You Think You Are?*

Members may have spotted me briefly on screen during the first episode of the most recent series of the BBC's history programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*. I was telling Andrew Lloyd Webber about his maternal great-great-grandfather Henry Samuel Simmonds' book, *All About Battersea*.

Simmonds (1829 – 1892) has always been a hero of mine: a hard-working missionary of humble origins, who lived with his large family in Palmerston Terrace, off Battersea Park Road. He tramped the streets of Battersea by day, and then in his spare time sat down and incorporated what he saw into this lively, rambling, genuinely remarkable book: the first standalone account of our area. He delves into its history, and indeed its prehistory and its geology, but it's *All About Battersea's* vivid descriptions of contemporary churches, chapels, railways, industries and many other local institutions that make it such a valuable source still today. It was published by a local printer, Ashfield of Battersea Bridge Road; there's a scarce first edition of 1877, which was the one I showed Andrew; that sold well enough to justify an expanded edition in 1882.

## Biography

You'll find a good biography of Simmonds by Keith Bailey within *Wandsworth Historian* no. 104 (autumn 2017). The 1882 version of *All About Battersea* can also be downloaded from Project Gutenberg in a digital edition, coincidentally created by myself around the same time (see *Battersea Matters*, summer 2017, p13). This was why, last October, I was emailed via the Battersea Society website by TV production company Wall to Wall. Initially, I was only told that it was planning a history programme which would feature Simmonds: could I, as his digital editor and an architectural historian, perhaps help out? Then came some chats on Zoom with the mysterious programme's delightful historical researcher, producer and director; gradually (and in strict secrecy) it emerged



The frontispiece of Simmonds' book (1882) edition, showing St Mary's  
Below: Clare listens as Andrew Lloyd Webber reads from his great-great grandfather's obituary

that we were talking about the next series of *WDYT YA?* and that the episode in question would feature Andrew Lloyd Webber. Also, that they would love me to appear on it, telling him all about *All About Battersea* – gulping a bit, I agreed and arranged to rendezvous next at St Mary's, for a location check. It was the obvious place to film this section of the programme, given that the book's frontispiece shows the church.

With the location confirmed, the rush was on to prepare for filming the next month. *WDYT YA?* actually has an unusually long commissioning period, with episodes sometimes taking several years to make and air. The genealogical research takes time, and then each series needs the right balance of subjects – chosen to provide an interesting, diverse spread of stories. Finally, the subject must block out a fortnight for filming. Presumably this was an issue for Andrew: the footnotes



of Keith Bailey's article show this particular episode already in planning, back in 2017. Come 2023, Keith had moved away and was no longer available for filming, so I got approached instead.

Each location is filmed in the order in which it will eventually be shown, so on a dark wet November morning Andrew went to Whitechapel to learn about Simmonds' work for the London City Mission, before coming to Battersea in the afternoon for his book. Here and elsewhere, the series reveals are completely genuine – celebrities are discouraged from doing their own research ahead of time apparently, so as not to spoil the surprise. Certainly Andrew had no idea of the book's existence beforehand, or of the sad story of the drowning of Simmonds' little son.

On the day I wasn't working to a script but rather a filming brief, which the production team and I had finalised in the weeks beforehand. That listed the documents I was to show him, and the points I needed to make: each episode of *WDYT YA?* has a story to tell – and only an hour to get it across. There are so many things one could say about Henry Simmonds, but it made sense to focus on his book's contribution to architectural history, given Andrew's longstanding enthusiasm for this subject. Indeed, the first thing he told me when he arrived was that he well remembered visiting St Mary's before, as a young man on one of many church-crawls.

## Experienced team

By that point, I'd already spent some time down at the church with the small production crew, setting up and running through what I was to do. After that, I was firmly told to relax and enjoy myself – which did prove just about possible, despite my initial nerves. It felt so nice to be working with such an experienced, professional and indeed happy team of people, all clearly delighted to be making this particular episode at last. And Andrew himself proved to be engaged, curious and ultimately thrilled by the book itself – we did manage to wrest that borrowed copy away from him again eventually, but he was quite definite about finding one of his own to buy afterwards! Clare Graham is chair of the Battersea Society's Open Spaces Committee.

# LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!

Councillor Kemi Akinola introduces Wandsworth's bid to be London's next Borough of Culture

This summer I'm really excited to be part of Wandsworth's campaign to become London Borough of Culture 2025. Not only is this the first time Wandsworth has gone for the title, but we were also the first London borough to officially announce that we are going for it!

Most importantly this campaign relies on the whole borough coming together to showcase all the fantastic culture, creativity and communities that our area has to offer. From dance and music to food and heritage, there are so many ways in which we all experience our own culture and other people's – so this really has to be a joint effort that we can all own.

We're incredibly proud of our borough. Wandsworth is full of people who create, innovate and share their time with others in the community and we can't wait to show London and the world what our wonderful borough has to offer.

## Award-winning

So over the summer, we will work with communities across Wandsworth to develop a London Borough of Culture bid. We will be building on all the creativity and vibrancy of our area, from award-winning cultural organisations to heritage and grassroots community groups, freelance creatives and artists.

The Mayor of London's culture scheme provides the winning borough with funding towards a year-long programme which celebrates local culture and heritage and helps transform people's lives.

The final bid submission is due in November 2023, and the successful London Borough of Culture for 2025 will be announced in early 2024.

Recognising the rich mix of places, artists and communities in Wandsworth, the London Borough of Culture title would attract investment to develop our borough's cultural and heritage sector, create new employment opportunities and develop culture projects.

And this is where you come in.

We'd like you to take part in shaping our bid to be named London Borough of Culture and spread the word through



your networks. As well as the first round of in-person workshops, there's an online survey in which you can tell us why you love Wandsworth and let us know about inspirational local people.

We'll also be sending out email newsletters with the latest news so please do sign up to keep in touch.

You can find the survey and email sign-up links on our dedicated webpage [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/culture](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/culture) We're looking forward to hearing your ideas and contributions!

## Launching the bid.

**Above: Beatbox Academy at Battersea Arts Centre**

**Below: Council leader Simon Hogg, Marsha de Cordova MP and deputy leader Kemi Akinola at the Royal Academy of Dance**

*Kemi Akinola is Deputy Leader of Wandsworth Council*

