

# Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society AUTUMN 2020



## No cars, no buses; just people and bikes

Jenny Sheridan explores the experiment on Northcote Road



On Saturday 11 July, people living around Northcote Road in south Battersea awoke to a new normal: no cars, buses or delivery vans on the usually busy road. Some had been woken early by barriers being erected and filled with water at 5.30am. Since then every weekend has been traffic-free. Cars can cross the road but not travel along it. It enables bars and restaurants to spread their tables across the roadway, enabling safe social distancing.

The issue of partial pedestrianisation had previously been discussed by the Council and the Clapham Junction BID but it wasn't until the last moment that Transport for London (TfL) gave permission for the road to be closed and buses diverted. Unfortunately the 319 was diverted to Trinity Road rather than the much closer Bolingbroke Grove. This TfL decision has now been reversed, but it was a considerable inconvenience to residents, particularly as little or no information was given.

Cafés, bars and restaurants all over the country had been closed for three months by the time the Prime Minister

announced an easing of restrictions from 4 July. Northcote Road is – or was – one of the most commercially successful streets in Battersea and 35 of its 115 businesses are in the hospitality field. Nationwide, many of these had closed permanently. In Battersea as elsewhere, they made hugely damaging losses between March and July.

### Specialities

'It has made the difference between us staying open or closing,' says Marzio Zacchi, the chef-owner of long-established Osteria Antica Bologna. 'We couldn't have gone on for very much longer otherwise.' Like some other restaurants and cafes, Marzio has been proactive: he opened a deli selling Italian specialities such as Parma ham, pasta and peaches before the restaurant was allowed to re-open. 'Local people and our customers are what has kept us going mentally – they have been so supportive.'

The Draft House pub on the corner of Salcott Road has been one of the great successes of the experiment. 'Our staff were furloughed for 12

weeks but we are doing well now,' says manager Chris. 'It's really good good fun and almost everyone enjoys it. Saturday afternoon is our busiest time and on Sunday it's more families. We put out high chairs and we have colouring books for the kids.' The Draft House staff set out 70 or more tables in the roadway every weekend.

Some of those who did not enjoy the first few weekends were local people. Unsurprisingly, the Next Door social media platform resonated with the fury of residents who had to endure not only drunken noise late at night but their front gardens being used as toilets. There was also a litter problem, largely caused by people drinking and disposing of take-away plastic glasses, as well as pizza boxes and the like.

Since then things have improved. Lorinda Freint, the Council's business manager, and her team and the BID director have been out on the street every weekend, looking and listening. Eating and drinking establishments now have to erect temporary barriers around their tables on the pavement and roadway and can only serve drinks to customers seated at

*continued on p3*



Don't forget to visit our website:

[www.batterseasociety.org.uk](http://www.batterseasociety.org.uk)

for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

---

## From the editor



In last issue's Page 2 piece I said 'wouldn't it be good to have a car-free day once a month?' Well, in Northcote

Road we have been having car-free days every weekend! The experiment is going to continue until the end of October, so if you haven't been, do visit. It's fun, especially on a sunny day. I still find walking down the middle of the road a bit of a thrill.

Life has moved on since the last issue in April. When playgrounds in parks and commons re-opened it was joyful to see the rush of excited children. And to see parents gathered

round the swings and slides for a companionable natter about the strains of keeping the kids indoors. For others, it was a joy when park toilets re-opened at last.

I have always enjoyed treats whenever possible. In the olden days, a treat might be supper in a restaurant followed by a play at the Orange Tree in Richmond or Theatre 503 in Battersea, or perhaps a few days holiday. Now, a treat is a long phone call with a friend, or the weekly litter pick on Wandsworth Common.

Many galleries and museums have re-opened, so they count as mega-treats, to be carefully rationed. Apart from special exhibitions they remain free, but you have to book in advance. Spontaneity has disappeared.

Trust is also something that is in short supply. Not only trust in the government, but trust in each other. If

someone won't sit down for a coffee in a café that they know well, aren't they saying that they don't trust the owners and staff to make the place safe? If I don't want to go into a friend's home, aren't I saying that I don't trust her to protect herself? But all of us have different amounts of tolerance of risk. Me? I went to the theatre last week and I got there by train and tube – masked throughout of course. Foolish, over-trusting or just trying to lead a new normal life?

Speaking of masks, whoever thought we would one day see face masks hanging on the washing line alongside the undies?

*Jenny Sheridan*  
*newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk*  
*020 7350 2749*

---

## Man Not on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden considers risk, concern for others, and the sounds of summer

In retrospect the riskiest thing I've ever done is to go up in a hot air balloon in Egypt and float soundlessly over the Valley of the Kings, coming down safely but with a considerable jolt in the middle of a field. Three weeks later there was a collision between two of these balloons, one of which plummeted to the ground and three tourists died. I won't be doing that again – though I doubt I'll ever be visiting Egypt again. Or possibly anywhere, in that mystical land called Abroad.

I might be less bothered about the threat from Covid-19 if I were 25 years old and I daresay I wouldn't worry about social distancing, or wearing a face-covering. But my twenties are a distant memory, I'm cautious and I do my best to obey the rules. OK, by itself my mask may not do much for me, but it might protect other people, and I do wish everyone else acted on that presumption. What infuriates me is the number of older men who take the view that wearing a mask is an infringement of their liberties and concern for others is not their business.

They're doubtless part of that horrifyingly large number who have

no sympathy for those desperate migrants crossing the Channel. Apologies for the unseasonal reference but in *A Christmas Carol* Scrooge wonders why Marley's ghost is being punished by having to wander the earth when he was such a good businessman.

### Pride

Marley replies sorrowfully: 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!' So wear your mask with pride even if you're inadvertently protecting those who maintain that the virus was created in a Chinese lab and that 5G transmissions are designed to help spread it! I suppose it's true that those who believe in nothing will believe anything.

What is the quintessential sound of a traditional English summer? The tinkling nuisance of 'Greensleeves' as an ice-cream van turns up in a suburban street? The incessant drumming of rain on a holiday

caravan roof? Or the insistent buzz of a wasp heading for your quinoa and kale salad, piña colada or jam sandwich? (Does anyone actually still eat jam sandwiches?) There's an Agatha Christie mystery where a wasp is brought on a plane in a matchbox and let free to cause confusion about how a murder was committed. Poirot of course works out what has happened. (*Death in the Clouds* if you're interested). It strikes me that a wasp would be an ideal accomplice to a murder given their inherently evil nature. If you get on the wrong side of a wasp you'll get a nasty reminder that their bite is even worse than their buzz.

Yet I gather that I've got these yellow and black striped creatures all wrong, and we should be cherishing them as ecological marvels. A world without wasps would be a world with a much larger number of insect pests chomping on our crops and gardens. So let's hear it for wasps, the key workers of the insect world. And as your cheers die away, that's it for now. As ever, mind how you go. See you next time.



*continued from p1*

tables. Security has been increased to prevent street drinking and the resultant anti-social behaviour and litter.

At the southern end of the road, the café Uncommon stopped serving customers in its interior. In May it pivoted (to use a popular post-Corona term) to become a food shop selling cakes, coffee and fresh fruit and vegetables. Business was fairly brisk but the owner Neb is enthusiastic about the new car-free state that enables him to serve cocktails and wine to families and groups of friends. 'They can see their neighbours, it's like a village, it's very safe. You see the kids running around or riding their little bikes.'

Sea Fare, the fish and chip shop, was refurbished last year and gained a small pavement-side terrace, where it now serves draught beer and watermelon mojitos alongside the cod and mushy peas.

### **Continental**

'It's like being abroad', 'You feel like you're on holiday.' The atmosphere at sunny weekends is continental and most of the people walking or cycling down the middle of the road seem to be having a great time. But shopkeepers are not so sure. Some, including upmarket cheesemonger Hamish Johnston and hairdresser Head South, say it has made little difference to their business. Others say business is down – while acknowledging that August is always quiet. Retailers who rely on car drivers say that takings are noticeably down. Wine merchant Philglas and Swigot explain that customers can't buy and carry away a case of wine and the Antique Market is not able to sell furniture.

On Wakehurst Road the Cabinet Room is one of a small parade of owner-run shops. Lisa Daunton says, 'As a resident – I've lived here 50 years – I absolutely love it. But as a shopkeeper for 15 years I'm not keen. People come here to eat and drink, they're not going to buy a mirror or a bedside table. The Council has done this for the sake of the restaurants and bars, but it should benefit all the street. Maybe they could bring in some market stalls so people would see that it's about



People can stroll or ride bikes down the road at weekends.  
Photo: Nathan Jones

shopping as well. I am fearful about October, when furlough ends. There will be redundancies, people will lose their jobs and there'll be less money about.'

Steve Hennessy, of Hennessy's butchers, commented, 'It'll become quite routine. It would be better if they did it once a month, so it was more special, more like a festival.'

Clothes boutiques have suffered from the move to online shopping and from the dearth of events for people to dress up for. The manager of one says that although she enjoys the life and footfall on the road she, like others, was furloughed on 80% of her salary so has less to spend on clothes.

Peter works in the pet shop, which has been in the same family for 98 years. 'Now that Doves has gone it's the oldest shop in the road,' he says. 'Business is 50% down compared to a normal Saturday, because there's no parking.' Charity shops find their donations are reduced for the same reason. Several retailers commented that they observed a lack of social distancing at weekends.

### **Takings down**

Webbs Road runs parallel to Northcote Road at the top of the small hill on one side of the Falcon valley. It is known more for hairdressers than shops or cafes but Tierra Verde, a café/deli with a greengrocer next door, has become a well loved part of the community since it opened in 2013. Stefan Bala, the owner, says that takings are down recently but he is not sure if it is due to the changes in Northcote Road or for other reasons. 'We stopped serving food, for Covid safety reasons, so that we could just have one person at the counter doing coffee. We did well in

Lior's fruit and veg shop during and since lockdown; more people have discovered us.'

Deli Boutique, also on Webbs Road, on the other hand, is certain that the change has been bad for business. It now closes on Saturday afternoons, formerly a busy time.

### **Employed**

A prime aim of the project was to secure the futures of the eating and drinking places along Northcote Road. How successful has it been? A few have closed, and some of these may never re-open. But for others it has made a significant difference. According to a Council survey, sixteen have been able to de-furlough staff and altogether 48 people have been taken off furlough, a saving to the tax-payer and a relief to the individuals and their families. And 42 people have been newly employed.

What is the future of the scheme? At around £14,000 per weekend, this is not a cheap project for the Council, though it came from grant money, including from the EU. That of course won't be available next year. But Cllr Aled Richard-Jones, cabinet member for business, says 'The trial has certainly achieved its purpose of providing a lifeline to many businesses and has restored consumer confidence on Northcote Road. The overwhelming majority of comments we have received are positive.

'We are going to continue it for two months, if we can come to an agreement with businesses on a funding contribution.'

*If you would like to express your views to the Council, write to them at [socialdistancing@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:socialdistancing@wandsworth.gov.uk)*



## Phoneline friends and food deliveries

Age UK responds to the the pandemic.  
Emma Chisholm reports

The Coronavirus pandemic has been difficult for everyone but especially so for our older residents, who are the people most at risk. At Age UK Wandsworth we needed to rapidly change our services to meet the needs of our community, in addition to running our existing services in a new way.

We have delivered over 3500 emergency food parcels, have over 350 people receiving telephone befriending and have started a new service to promote mobility at home.

Since the onset of the Coronavirus, we received an influx of calls from older residents worried about how they would get their shopping and basic household essentials. We had an existing shopping service, where people telephone their orders and we do the online shop. However, it was impossible to get delivery slots and we were overwhelmed with people wanting to use this service. So in response we set up an emergency food delivery service and started a food bank at our offices. We recruited existing volunteers to become delivery drivers.

### Chef

As the numbers grew we moved our operation to the Town Hall and started working in partnership with the council to support the older residents in our borough. We relied on donated items but also did daily shopping trips to cash & carry to top up the food supplies. Our teams of volunteers sorted and packed the bags and then minibuses from Wandsworth Community Transport made daily deliveries across the borough. In 13 weeks we delivered over 3500 food parcels. Each is free, and contains enough food for up to two weeks.

We also worked in partnership with celebrity chef Jimmy Garcia, who has prepared fresh nutrient-dense meals for our most vulnerable residents. Our food parcel delivery service and work with Jimmy Garcia was featured on the BBC news and also in the

*Financial Times.*

In parallel to responding to the food crisis, we re-purposed our befriending service to become telephone befriending and currently have over 350 people receiving regular telephone calls from our volunteers.

As the pandemic progressed it became clear that another issue for those isolating was physical inactivity, due to staying at home. There is a wealth of fitness content online, but many older people don't have digital devices or, if they do, may not be comfortable using them in this way. And prolonged isolation may cause a lack of motivation in this area that is so important to physical and mental wellbeing.

In May we developed and established a new service to address this issue – Active Chats. This service matches isolated older people with trained telephone befrienders who will call up for a chat and to work through some gentle seated exercises. All the exercises are designed by a professional personal trainer and physiotherapist. The movements are from a seated position to avoid the risk of falling. They focus on moving all the major joint and muscle groups to promote mobility and reduce muscle wastage.

### Grab rails

In addition to running the new services, we have also been keeping our existing services going. Information and advice is given by phone. We have managed to continue our Handyperson service, which helps to prevent falls and also helps people discharged from hospital by installing grab rails or moving beds etc, In normal times we also offer services such as general repair jobs (eg putting up curtains,



**A socially distanced tablet training session**

unblocking sinks) which are charged at a heavily subsidised £15 per hour. This service is on hold.

Digipals is a service which provides friendly computer support sessions in local libraries and sheltered accommodation. We have had to suspend these sessions but have continued to provide support over the phone, where possible. We have also had some tablets donated which we are setting up and matching with service users who would benefit from being digitally connected.

### Outpouring

We have been amazed by the outpouring of support from the public, local businesses and community groups. In the most terrible of circumstances, the most amazing things have happened. We would like to thank everyone who has helped us by donating food or money. We would also like to pay tribute to our army of volunteers who have allowed us to respond so effectively to this crisis. We will continue to support our older residents for the duration of the pandemic and beyond

*If you would like to support Age UK Wandsworth please visit:  
<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AgeUKWandsworth>*

*Emma Chisholm is Age UK Wandsworth's lead for community and wellbeing*

## Planning Matters: Ambitious housing plans

Despite the virus, planning applications continue, says Monica Tross

### WEBINARS AND ZOOM MEETINGS: NEW SKILLS FOR A PANDEMIC

Since March we have participated in several online presentations. These have included specific sessions for us with the teams from the Arding and Hobbs redevelopment and the Dominvs Hotel development and input to virtual meetings of the Wandsworth Community Planning Forum and Wandsworth Council Conservation Areas (Advisory) Committee (WCAAC).

We also joined a public consultation webinar on the Arding & Hobbs proposals and had a useful discussion with the new lead of the Wandsworth Housing Department's Development Management team. Nothing really compensates for exchanging views in person but it has helped us understand plans from developers and the Council and we have appreciated having them. All in all it seems to have been busier than ever.

### PALMERSTON COURT, (BATTERSEA PARK ROAD) AND THOMAS'S SCHOOL (BATTERSEA SQUARE)

These are two sites where there is already approval for schemes but the sites have changed hands and new schemes are coming forward. In both cases these appear to be an improvement – in the case of Palmerston Court a really major improvement with a scheme for student living (plus some small office units and community facilities) by Urbanest. The original scheme, 2016/5422 for this site opposite the Dogs' and Cats' Home (I refuse to call it by its new brand name, 'Battersea') with Flanagan's Pub part of the site was a vast and unfriendly over-development which would have added considerably to traffic congestion and pollution on this stretch of Battersea Park Road. The colour of the new buildings may divide opinion but they are set back from the road with what looks to be pleasant open space at ground level. Details may be at [urbanestbattersea.whatyouthink.co.uk](http://urbanestbattersea.whatyouthink.co.uk), and are now on



WBC's planning page (2020/2837).

Approved plans for a residential development at 36 Battersea Square were not nearly so bad but the current proposal for a secondary school for Thomas's involves less new building. Further details at [thomas-s-batterseasq.co.uk](http://thomas-s-batterseasq.co.uk)

### NEW HOUSING PLANNED BY WANDSWORTH COUNCIL

The Council has an ambitious housing programme for over 1000 new homes across the borough on their own estates including four major developments in Battersea, on the Patmore Estate 2020/0636, in Battersea Church Road (Crewkerne Garages), Randall Close on the Surrey Lane Estate, 2020/0635, and the former Sphere studios in Shuttleworth Road, now being built after longer than anticipated site preparation works.

Patmore Estate's plans are for 57 new affordable homes and look fine. Two buildings are planned for the Crewkerne Garages site, one a tower to match the height of the neighbouring block and one four-storey building. Further design development is taking place with a consultation planned for September. We will keep you in touch.

We have more concerns about the plans for Randall Close and you can see our detailed letter on the Council's application website. Plans here are seen as complementing those for the Patmore with 106 units in total, of which 57 are for market sale and 49 affordable homes, split between 27 affordable rent and 22 shared ownership.

### NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR NINE ELMS

Plans are being developed for the new school promised for the Royal Mail site and can be seen on 2020/1119.

We are holding back on commenting until the Design Review Panel report is available but at first sight this looks an interesting building which should sit well on the site. Take a look and see what you think.

### OTHER NEWS AND UPDATES

An application for a co-living space at Hazel Court, Haydon Way 2020/2560 is in hand as is the Dominvs

Hotel application, 2020/2047. We are particularly concerned about the latter which is vastly increased in size from the original plans agreed for the whole Embassy Gardens site (2011/1815). Mount Carmel, (next to Battersea Park Station) 2016/5803, is an example of two unhappy planning issues. First it is a retrospective application for work already done without planning consent and second it is a case when plans we considered overbearing were made worse when the council allowed an application for an increase in height. You can read our views our own and the applications website.

A consultation on traffic plans for Battersea Church Road took place back in March and we were unhappy with the fact it treated this road in isolation, taking no account of the effect of any change on neighbouring roads. Nor did it seem that the Council had yet engaged with TfL on their plans. Our comments are on our website, as are those on major applications and consultations. And finally, the Vauxhall Twin Towers scheme has been approved by the Secretary of State. This will lead to major changes to the Vauxhall gyratory system and bus station. We are expecting further consultation when (if?) TfL get going on the changes. The last consultation was back in 2017.

*Feedback appreciated*

*We always like to hear from our members so do let us have any comments, on this article, or on planning in general.*

*[planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org.uk)*



---

## Love your park – don't litter it!

Valerie Selby explains how the increased use of our green spaces has impacted wildlife

Over the last few months we have all realised how important access to free public greenspace is for our health and mental wellbeing. It allows us to feel we are still part of a place we share with others, even if those interactions have substantially changed.

Where this greenspace includes varied landscapes and habitats, it is more popular than smaller spaces even when these are on people's doorsteps. This was particularly evident during lockdown when people were allowed very limited outside access. What many have overlooked however is that we share our treasured greenspaces with millions of other creatures as well as our fellow humans. In our rush to be outside we are affecting them more severely than ever before.

### Trampling

The combination of vastly more people trying (in most cases) to adhere to social distancing guidelines has led to every square centimetre of our parks being walked or jogged over, cycled through or sat upon. And this came after an unusually dry spring with no April showers to bring both welcome water and some respite for wildlife.

Soil compaction from trampling and picnicking leads to less grass and fewer worms, which spells trouble. Earthworms are severely affected by above ground trampling

and compaction, with both numbers and size reduced. These populations may take many months to recover and that recovery won't start until the pressures ease. Our grass areas won't recover until the worms do. Without earthworms the roots of grasses are restricted and the plants become smaller and weaker and more easily ripped out of the ground. Grass plants hold soils in place with their roots so with fewer grasses the green spaces will get dustier in dry weather. You may have noticed that when the mower is out it is followed by a large cloud of dust, this is why.

In addition, the hard dry grasslands will be far more susceptible to fire damage this year. Fires will travel below ground as quickly as above and in conditions like this a dropped cigarette stub or an abandoned glass beer bottle are as likely to start a fire as a BBQ. And when it does rain (particularly if it is heavy) most of it will run straight off and into surface drains rather than soaking in. I'm sure we will see residual impacts of this in the autumn/winter with standing water to be expected in places where we don't normally see it and the ground generally remaining wetter for far longer after the rain stops.

For birds, busier woodlands mean reduced nesting and food. There has been a significant increase in human movement and noise in wooded and shrubby areas, together with damage from people creating new routes

through ground cover. Children moving logs and branches to make dens is having a significant impact on invertebrates and nesting birds. The more secretive species such as the goldcrest may well not have nested at all. And if birds have found the confidence to nest, their ability to feed their young successfully has been affected due to both increased visitor pressure and the dry weather. A higher proportion of fledglings than usual may have starved or died of dehydration.

### Logs

The sudden prevalence of den building in our woodlands, along with adults using cut logs for personal training when the outdoor gyms were out of use, will I think be devastating for dead wood invertebrates such as stag beetles for many years to come. They spend several years as larvae feeding on rotting wood (either in standing dead tree trunks or in logs and branches on the woodland floor). If they are disturbed, they die – meaning the time lag between activities now and when we spot these impacts could be 5 – 7 years ahead.

Fewer invertebrates will in future years have a knock-on effect on the birds and small mammals that usually feed on them. Rolling a log over carefully to see what lives there and then carefully rolling it back is a good way to educate ourselves and our



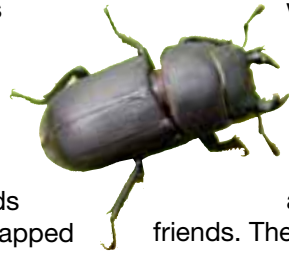
children on the variety of creatures in this habitat. Picking the log up, moving it, dropping it, propping it up (exposing the usually damp side to the warmth and air which will cause it to dry out rapidly) to make a den, will render these marvellous mini-beasts homeless and quite possibly trampled or desiccated to death.

Since some of the restrictions have eased, the one challenge we continue to face is the extremely high levels of litter people now think fit to leave behind them. So far this has required an 82% increase in resources to clear and remove on some weekends. Distressing and disappointing though this is in general terms this behaviour has specific impacts on wildlife. Small birds and mammals can become trapped in discarded bottles, cans, packets and boxes and die rapidly from stress, over-heating and dehydration. If fires are started by an abandoned glass bottle on a hot day, or a cigarette stub, they will be devastating to woodland and grassland habitats. Broken glass is not only a fire risk but

is damaging to wildlife and indeed to dogs and children too who all too easily suffer cuts to feet and paws.

### Dawn chorus

It's not all doom and gloom though. People have been appreciating nature more than ever this spring and summer. People claim to be seeing or hearing more of many species from the dawn chorus to moths and butterflies. My personal view is that this is because people have more time to appreciate the wildlife around them and have spent that time in a way that allows them to focus on the experience, such as walking either alone or with family or friends. The regular repetition of walking through the same spaces allows you to watch the changes unfurl before your eyes. And we have perhaps been able to walk at different times of day than usual – not having to squeeze a dog walk in quickly before we rush off to work. Walking at times when we might normally



be commuting allows us a different encounter with the nature on our doorsteps.

Personally, I hope that you find ways to continue to appreciate and care for the myriad of creatures we share our greenspaces with. Whether that is sharing your observations of wildlife with friends or letting us know (biodiversity@enablelc.org) if you see habitats being adversely affected, the more we can all work together to share our enjoyment of the natural world close by, the better chance we have of getting others to appreciate and value it too.

*Valerie Selby is parks development and biodiversity manager for Enable Lc.*



## BATTERSEA SOCIETY AUTUMN TALKS AND EVENTS

We hope that many of you will attend both online and socially distanced events.

### SEPTEMBER

- **Tuesday 22 September**  
*Urban Greening in Wandsworth*  
Speaker: Nina Kowalska, co-founder of Green the Grid in Southfields and keen to encourage urban greening in other areas of the borough.  
6pm on Zoom

### OCTOBER

- **Tuesday 6 October**  
*The Hidden Rivers of South London*  
Speaker: Local historian and author Jon Newman talks about the underground rivers of South London: the Effra, the Peck, the Heathwall and the Falcon Brook. Their presence has played a defining role in the history of South London.  
6pm on Zoom

*Online events: we will inform members shortly before the meeting by email how to join the Zoom meeting.*

- **Thursday 29 October**  
Talk on Elsa Lanchester and screening of *The Bride of Frankenstein*  
Speaker: local historian Jeanne Rathbone on silver screen actress and Battersea resident Elsa Lanchester, followed by a screening of *The Bride of Frankenstein* in which she starred.  
6.30 for 7pm, St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road SW11 3EN  
Talk: 30 minutes. Film: 75 minutes.  
£5 donation on the door

### NOVEMBER

- **Wednesday 11 November**  
The War Memorial Sculptures of Jagger and Kennington.  
Speaker: Dr Jonathan Black, senior research fellow in History of Art at Kingston School of Art. Battersea-based Charles Jagger (1885 – 1934) was a leading war memorial sculptor. His work included the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde

Park Corner. Eric Kennington (1888 – 1960) was an official war artist in both World Wars. His war memorial in Battersea Park, unveiled in 1924, was his first public commission. 6.30 for 7pm, St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road SW11 3EN £5 donation on the door

*Events at St Mary's Church will adhere strictly to social distancing guidelines. Pews have been roped off with room for 50 people downstairs and the gallery has been cleared for a similar number. All have been cleaned. Sanitiser, tissues and masks will be available. We plan to serve drinks in disposable containers. There will be no nibbles.*







---

## Power to connect

Sarah Banham describes how Battersea Power Station stepped in to help

As the whole country went into lockdown, the importance of community spirit became more a part of national life than ever before. Throughout the first few weeks the team at Battersea Power Station kept asking ourselves the same question – what could we do locally to help? We had brilliant colleagues who were volunteering with the NHS and other great charities, but we wanted to do more. We were keen to be a good neighbour and provide some sort of support that wasn't being offered by anyone else locally.

The answer came by talking to the headteachers on Patmore Estate, just opposite Battersea Power Station. The heads were organising support packages for families at their schools and through discussions with them, we realised that many families were really struggling with their phone data. Children were suddenly at home using mobile phones to access the internet, leaving parents with big bills.

Sarah Collymore, headteacher of St George's Primary School, was also collecting donations of second-hand laptops and the school's IT technician was refurbishing these so that they could be given to families. Realising this was a brilliant idea, we started looking into how we might scale it up.

### Hidden issue

So on 17 April, Battersea Power Station teamed up with Wandsworth Council to launch the Power to Connect campaign, to support families across Wandsworth who have struggled to stay digitally connected during the COVID-19 crisis. Digital poverty has been a long-term hidden issue for many families, which the pandemic has shone a light on because it has affected children's ability to continue with their education from home.

Local residents and businesses across Wandsworth have been asked to donate old laptops and tablets that are in full working order, which are being re-purposed by



**Michelle and family get connected**

volunteers into Chromebooks. A computer renovation hub was set up in Battersea, with social distancing practices in place, and with the help of volunteers, 340 devices have been turned into Chromebooks and donated to local families so far.

As part of the campaign and to provide further support to families in the borough, Battersea Power Station and Wandsworth Council have also issued hundreds of emergency phone data top-up vouchers funded by a £10,000 donation from the Battersea Power Station Foundation. The vouchers are being donated to schools who will distribute them to households in need of a data boost. In total, the Foundation pledged £150,000 to the local community during the peak of lockdown to help tackle digital poverty amongst other key issues such as access to food, mental health, domestic violence and supporting the elderly.

### Challenging

Michelle, a Battersea resident who received a laptop donation through the Power to Connect campaign, said: 'Homeschooling without access to a laptop has been incredibly

challenging. As a family we found it difficult to continue with the school's curriculum at home without the necessary technology. With the laptop received from the Power to Connect campaign, we are now in a much stronger position to continue the pace of learning similar to that pre-COVID-19 and are therefore very grateful to Battersea Power Station and Wandsworth Council for getting this great initiative up and running.'

### Local families

Since the launch of Power to Connect in April, over 902 local families have been supported by the campaign but there are still many more who are experiencing digital poverty and need help.

*To find out more about the Power to Connect campaign and how you can get involved, please visit*

[www.powertoconnect.co.uk](http://www.powertoconnect.co.uk)

*Sarah Banham is head of community and sustainability at Battersea Power Station.*

---

## Surrey Lane needs a community centre

Aaron Kennedy outlines the local campaign

I am not a Battersea native; in fact, I took up my rôle as associate vicar at St Mary's Church but two years ago. My remit is community development, and so it was that I found myself wandering the parish with intent in the summer of 2019 and walking into Randall Close Day Centre. There I learned from the centre manager for the then tenant, Leonard Cheshire Disability, of the Council's plan to knock down the building as part of their Homes for All campaign. It happens to be the one remaining public space on Surrey Lane Estate.

Shortly after my arrival in Battersea I had set up a campaign group for local people, which became known as Battersea Communities [www.batterseacommunities.org.uk](http://www.batterseacommunities.org.uk). It is a grass roots community organising group, open to all local citizens. Through our collective strength in numbers we campaign on issues that our members care about.

### Depressing

I brought my concerns about the planned development of Randall Close to members of this group, some of whom are residents of Surrey Lane Estate. They told me something of the back story, and it made for a rather depressing tale. Recent years have seen a distinct withdrawal of Council investment in the estate with the demolishing of the community centre beside Gardiner House. The sale of the police station to make room for new dwellings (many of which still appear to be unoccupied) has not helped. I couldn't help but make the link with the death of Lejean Richards, a 19-year-old who was stabbed near his home not 100 yards from Randall Close Day Centre in February 2019, whose funeral I conducted.

In fact, there have been two murders of young men in the ward in the past few years; Malachi Brookes (2017) being the other. And not far from St Mary's Park ward there have been three recent murders: Ian Tomlin (2018), Iderval da Silva (2019) and Tesfa Campbell (2019).

Battersea Communities members convened a meeting between our three St Mary's Park ward councillors (both Conservative and Labour), Aaron Barbour (director of Katherine Low Settlement), myself and other members. We all agreed on the need to act to bring about a different future in which our young people could have more, and better, opportunities in life.

Our first action was to conduct a survey of local residents to find out how they felt about the situation, and if there was any desire for a new community space. We found that 98% of those surveyed would like a new community centre, and that 72% of residents do not think there are sufficient safe indoor spaces on the estate.

We published the findings in a report that we publicised widely; you can download it from our website. Since then we have been campaigning for a change in the designs of the Randall Close development to include space for a community centre. We have met with Council officers and

recently received a report of their assessment of the situation – which boils down to the belief that there is no clear unmet need in the locality for further public space. In a list of alternative venues they unhelpfully list at-capacity venues such as Katherine Low Settlement, Caius House and Providence House, or religious buildings such as St Mary's Church, Sacred Heart Church, and the Bridge mission hall. The crucial point we want to get across is that until the people of Surrey Lane Estate have a properly funded and staffed community space of their own there will be no improvement in community life there. If the nearby facilities were able to meet the clear need we identified they would have done so already. What the estate needs is more, not less, investment per capita in community spaces.

### Support

Battersea Communities has since produced a comprehensive rationale document for the community centre, authored by Aaron Barbour (which you can also download from our website). This was accompanied by letters of support from the leaders of several respected local organisations as well as scans of 74 hand-written letters of support from local residents.

We anticipate that the decision on whether or not to grant permission for the Council's plans will be taken at the committee meeting in either September or October. We are seeking to build awareness through the press, social media, and other community groups.

*If you would like to take action to support our campaign, please visit [www.battersea.communities.org.uk](http://www.battersea.communities.org.uk) and sign up.*





## Refugees' burial ground is safe at last

The restored Huguenot Burial Ground will be open soon.  
Sam Kemp tells its story

The Huguenot Burial Ground or Mount Nod as it is known to some locals has stood at the top of East Hill since it was opened in about 1687. It was first intended for the French Church which previously stood opposite All Saints Church on what is now Wandsworth High Street.

The Huguenots were French Calvinist Protestants who left France in search of religious freedom after the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685. Those who settled in Wandsworth during this period are thought to be a small number of the estimated half a million Huguenots who fled to Protestant countries in Europe and beyond. A bronze wall plaque in the north-west corner, provided by the Wandsworth Society in 1985, marks the 300th anniversary of the revocation of the Treaty of Nantes.

In 1911 a memorial was erected to the memory of the Wandsworth Huguenots and notes:

'HERE REST MANY HUGUENOTS WHO ON THE REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES IN 1685 LEFT THEIR NATIVE LAND FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE AND FOUND IN WANDSWORTH FREEDOM TO WORSHIP GOD AFTER THEIR OWN MANNER THEY ESTABLISHED IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES AND ADDED TO THE CREDIT AND PROSPERITY OF THE TOWN OF THEIR ADOPTION.'

The burial ground was enlarged in 1700 and again in 1735. It was closed to burials in 1854 and later reopened as a public garden. It was closed to the public in 2011 when it was deemed unsafe with many of the tombs unstable and near collapse. The site has continued to be maintained during this time to prevent it becoming swamped with vegetation and to protect the tombs where possible. In 2018 the site was acquired



as Council land as a possessory registration. This has allowed for restoration work to be planned and funding to be spent on these works. Funding was identified and the total of £330,000 is made up of two Section 106 contributions and £76,000 from the Conservation Enhancement and Grants Programme enabling this multi phased and complex project to go ahead.

A consultant conservator was appointed in 2019 to undertake a full condition survey and produce a schedule of works to be used for tendering of the restoration works. Odgers Conservation Consultants have done a fantastic job in making sense of the 145 plus tombs and monuments. Odgers continue to work with Enable and the Council in managing the restoration. Sally Strachey Historic Conservation have, at the time of writing in early August, almost completed restoration and conservation work on all the tombs and monuments.

### Sensitive

The work required for each individual monument varied from a light brush-off and clean right through to full dismantling and re-build. The aim has been to ensure that all tombs and monuments can be protected for years to come in the most sensitive way possible.

The work to date has been completed to a very high standard that does justice to the historic

importance of the site. Restoration work is due for completion by the end of August 2020.

The five Grade 2 listed tombs were entered on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in 2004. These were prioritised for restoration and will now be removed from the Register as they are no longer at risk.

Enable have been working closely this year with The Huguenot Society and Wandsworth Historical Society to produce text and plan for interpretation that will be installed on site to give historical context to the burial ground and some of the prominent tombs. The various panels will tell more of their fascinating story than I have had space to expand on here. We have appointed Differentia to design and produce the interpretation panels, including illustrations that will be unique to the Huguenot Burial Ground.

We are preparing a to appoint a landscape contractor to complete subtle landscaping works to allow for access improvements, removal of tree stumps and installation of furniture. Soft landscaping will contribute to wildlife conservation in maintaining and improving existing habitats. This will help protect the future of this historically important site in the Borough.

The Burial Ground will be open to the public this autumn.

More information on the Huguenot Burial Ground and its history can be found at [wandsworth.gov.uk/media/4797/huguenotburialground2010-2015.pdf](http://wandsworth.gov.uk/media/4797/huguenotburialground2010-2015.pdf)

There are also interesting articles found online including [flickeringlamps.com/2014/09/12/mount-nod-the-almost-forgotten-resting-place-of-wandsworths-huguenots](http://flickeringlamps.com/2014/09/12/mount-nod-the-almost-forgotten-resting-place-of-wandsworths-huguenots) and [knowyourlondon.wordpress.com/2017/06/05/huguenot-burial-ground-wandsworth](http://knowyourlondon.wordpress.com/2017/06/05/huguenot-burial-ground-wandsworth) both written independently.

*Any questions or suggestions about the ongoing management of Huguenot Burial Ground please get in touch at [parks@enablelc.org](mailto:parks@enablelc.org)*

*Sam Kemp is deputy parks development manager at Enable Ic.*

# Great Bus Journeys of the World: a retrospective

Mike Roden looks back over eight years, and wonders what the future holds...

Let's start with a quiz to see how well you've been following Great Bus Journeys of the World:

**1 What's the oldest unchanged bus route in London (and for a bonus point how much was the fare when it started)?**

**2 What does the 'G' signify in bus route G1?**

**3 What's the name of the theatre which the C3 passes on its way to Earls Court?**

**4 Which pub on the 170 and 14 routes features in *The War of the Worlds* by HG Wells?**

**5. The 137 follows the Via Tribonantia for part of its route. What's the modern name for the street?**

*Answers on page 17.*

Since 2012 I've undertaken 27 of these journeys, including a circular trip on the Overground from Clapham Junction, riding the riverbus to Canary Wharf and venturing into 'darkest Kent' via bus and train.

Two of my journeys were on buses which were culled last year by TfL – the RV1 and the 436. Thankfully Battersea's favourite bus the no 19 was saved by public outcry, aided by the Battersea Society.

I shudder to think what our brilliant bus network will look like once the full effects of the pandemic on TfL kick in. Dr Beeching all over again, perhaps. Like many people

I'm still reluctant to take unnecessary journeys on public transport. So I decided to take a headlong dash round the highs and lows of all of my journeys, on the way spooling out some of those useful or not so useful nuggets of information I've picked up.

It can be pretty dull as you move from one London 'village' to another. Once isolated rural hamlets, with the arrival of the railways they became

small towns, spreading out to merge with their neighbours. I've watched acres of anonymous residential property pass me by punctuated by countless small shopping parades with a mix of hairdressers, newsagents, convenience stores and takeaways. These places will have taken on a new lease of life while we were forced to exercise and shop locally.

Many of them have a long history. Tooting appears in the Domesday book as Totinges. The name Shepherds Bush may recall the use of the local common as a resting point for shepherds leading their flocks to Smithfield Market. Earls Court probably derives its name from the court presided over by Lords of the Manor the Earls of Oxford. Earlsfield on the other hand has no exotic history and is simply called after the station. This was built in 1884 on the site of a Victorian villa called Earlsfield, with a stipulation that the name be retained.

## Gossip

In a couple of years will I still be able to travel along Coldharbour Lane towards Camberwell on the 345, and see the place where in 1955, when John Major was 12, his family rented a dingy flat on this road? And learn that a future British prime minister earned pocket money by delivering bets to an unlicensed bookie. Would it matter? Of course it would. I don't believe the human mind can exist without trivia and gossip. There are lots of interesting things I could tell you about another of John Major's homes at 10 Downing Street but what sticks in mind from my journey on the 11 is that the house's last private inhabitant was called Mr Chicken. Frustratingly I know nothing else!

Churches often have a story to tell. The magnificent arts and crafts Holy Trinity Church in Sloane Street

is officially called 'The Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity with Saint Jude, Upper Chelsea.' Less impressively Brompton Oratory on the no 14 route is formally the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Chelsea Old Church near Albert Bridge was demolished by a parachute landmine in 1941, and completely rebuilt by 1954. And St Luke's Chelsea – which apparently has the tallest tower of any London parish church – was the venue for Charles Dickens' ill-fated marriage. Maybe you'll need one of those facts at your next pub quiz.

## Myths

On the other hand there are facts and there are urban myths. Naturally I used to believe that the obelisks on Lambeth Bridge – near where botanist John Tradescant is buried – display pineapples as a reminder that he introduced us to that fruit. Not so. They're actually pinecones – ancient symbols of hospitality (*inset, left*). Of course any fule kno' that Elephant and Castle is a corruption of Infanta de Castile. Nonsense. The name refers to a coaching inn which appeared in the area in the late eighteenth century.

Just occasionally a real surprise leaps out at you from an otherwise undistinguished shopping parade. Out of the corner of my eye as the bus went through South Finchley I saw Etles Uyghur restaurant. Over the last couple of years frequent reports from Xinjiang province in north west China refer to government persecution of the Turkic speaking Uyghur people. Mukaddes Yadikar and her husband Ablikim Rahman are part of the tiny Uyghur community in Britain. They already have a restaurant in Walthamstow. One day maybe I'll get a chance to try their traditional 'big plate chicken' – fresh hand-pulled noodles, chicken and vegetables and a rich, aromatic gravy.

I've been to so many different parts of London that I would not have seen without Great Bus Journeys.

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





And I finally got to go somewhere I'd wondered about for years. I'd stood countless times at Victoria waiting for the 170 and watched the regular departure of a 38 bus towards Clapton Pond asking myself if there really was a pond. So one chilly winter's day I boarded a 38 and set off for Xanadu... And yes, there is a pond. Though its fortunes have waxed and waned over the years it's now at the centre of a small

unpretentious park – fed by a natural spring which once helped with the irrigation of surrounding farmland.

### **Fish**

One of my favourite memories to finish. We were on our way to Peckham station after a long trip on the 345. Attracted by a noisy shop brimming with fish and meat we settle boringly for three sea bass and catch the train back. Our

purchases accompany us all the way to Battersea Park station (before the Overground was completed) and we change for Clapham Junction. Unfortunately the fish carry on to Victoria, and were never seen again. I think about them sometimes and hope they went to a good home.

And I hope that next time I'll be taking a real bus journey and learning lots of new and pointless facts to pass on to you.

## **Lockdown in the Herb Garden**

Wildlife flourished but the plants shrivelled, says Sara Milne

Thrive, a national charity that uses gardening as a therapy, helps in the maintenance of four gardens in Battersea Park; the Winter Garden, the Herb Garden, the Old English Garden and the Thrive Garden (next to the Millennium Sports Centre) where their main London office is located. The gardens are tended by clients, therapists and volunteers all year round, in all weathers. The Herb Garden is a walled garden that is also home to the park's administration offices and police office. It is also a working nursery where plants are grown and nurtured before being rehomed into the various gardens or offered for sale as part of the charity's fundraising activities.

### **Peak season**

At peak growing season in March and April, the Herb Garden glasshouse and growing-on areas are populated by thousands of plants at varying stages of development. Seed trays are germinating, seedlings are being potted up, young plants are potted on into larger pots to encourage growth and vigour, dormant plants dug up and separated in the winter are beginning to show shoots and spring bulbs are blooming. It's a busy time of year for everyone with daily tasks and watering. And then it stopped. Suddenly, with little warning.

Lockdown restrictions meant that all client sessions and any gardening activity by therapists or the Thrive team ended on 20 March. The glasshouse was emptied and all the plants were put out into the growing-on areas and other parts of the Herb Garden in the hope that they would

at least get some water when it rained. The gates of the Herb Garden were locked, and all gardening and watering ended in all four gardens. But nature continues, the seasons are unstoppable, as are spring showers.

Although this year, there weren't many spring showers – London had its hottest April for six years. After several sunny weeks, on 7 May, with a key to the gate padlock and my Thrive ID, I went back into the Herb Garden as a volunteer waterer, a role I shared with one other person. What had been a cared-for herb and vegetable garden had turned into a nature reserve. Most of the vegetables had bolted (shot upwards) and started flowering, poppies – albeit beautiful in colour and stature – had taken over most of the garden and everything was parched and dry. More than half of the plants taken out of the glasshouse hadn't made it. The weeks of heat and no water had turned them into brown dried-up leaves. But we watered them

anyway. After a couple of weeks, if there wasn't one green shoot or leaf, we had to discard them and focus on anything that was living or just living. We have been watering every week since then, sometimes daily.

On the plus side, the Herb Garden had become a wildlife haven during lockdown. Fox cubs were frolicking in the sand storage pits and around the garden, the squirrels were having a field day and had found most of the spring bulbs and birds were busy nesting and foraging for food. For me, it was a real eye-opener to see what the flowers of some vegetables looked like. Normally we harvest them before they get to the flowering stage. Chicory has a stunning pale blue flower, I discovered.

The Old English Garden, which was locked to everyone for just over a month, seems to have fared slightly better. Just as lockdown started, I spotted a heron one morning by the fountain enjoying the peace and quiet and checking out the fish in the pond. The roses have been in full bloom and hollyhocks are flourishing, giving it a real country cottage feel.

At the beginning of August, Thrive started the slow process of getting back to business in the park. A small handful of therapists and volunteers have returned for a few days a week. The top priorities are setting up safe systems and procedures to ensure that tools and equipment can be used safely. In the coming weeks and months, client sessions will re-start and Thrive can get back to what it does best – helping those with mental health issues or disabilities through the power of gardening.

[www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)

*Sara Milne is a Battersea Society trustee and a horticultural therapist*



A heron poses by the pond

## The power of music

Alex Baker celebrates a community choir going virtual

In the weeks going into lockdown, Battersea Power Station Community Choir was still meeting physically but members were feeling more and more anxious about what was going to happen. BPS Community Choir is four years old; we have around 60 active members and most of these will attest to the fact that Thursday choir sessions are an important part of their weekly routine. Choir members were clear that they wanted to keep meeting while they could.

Lockdown came and the Power Station's choir team knew that we needed to do everything we could to keep our choir family together. Without missing a week, we therefore went straight onto virtual platform Zoom. It took a while to get some of our members logged on and comfortable with the technology and we had no idea how well online choir sessions would work. We planned our first session to include our usual stretches and warm up exercises, some singing and a 'Desert Island Discs' slot where three choir members reflected on their week in lockdown and chose a song.

### Fun

The first session went without a hitch; Zoom had its constraints but our members really appreciated the opportunity to see each other's faces, do some stretching, singing (even if on mute!), as well as have a bit of fun and this became our regular weekly routine.

Back in 2016, our choir did its first performance after just eight rehearsals. We have always embraced the opportunity to perform so the thought of not having performances to work towards in lockdown was an issue. Our choir was used to being kept on its toes with new material and opportunities on a regular basis. We therefore quite quickly turned our attention towards

ways we could create the same sort of performance virtually.

We decided to work with a song that our choir already knew inside out. Labi Siffre's, 'Something Inside So Strong' ticked that box – we'd



### SingalongaSting

learnt it off by heart previously. With no means to meet, the only way we could make this work was if every choir member recorded themselves at home singing the song. Our most timid singers have always had the comfort of everyone singing along together, but suddenly this blanket was taken away. When we talked the choir through how this could work, we had no idea how many of our members would be brave enough to actually do it. Luckily, we have steely and brave members and over 50 of them plugged in their earphones so they could hear the backing track, pressed record on their phone camera and then sent the recording to the team.

Thanks to the ongoing financial support of Battersea Power Station, the choir is able to work with brilliant music professionals. Working alongside our fantastic choir director, Sam Evans, Dan Swana, the choir's producer and accompanist, is a genius when it comes to mixing sounds. He set to work bringing together all 50 odd individual audio files and mixing them into one unified sound. At the same time, Thomas Rosser, our video producer, worked with the footage to pull that

together so that you could see all our members performing, synced to the audio track – no mean feat! In a short space of time we were able to release the song on a Thursday evening as the choir's tribute to all the hard work and sacrifices made by NHS staff and carers fighting COVID-19 on the frontline.

Once we'd released this, other opportunities came our way. Esther from Battersea youth club Providence House got in touch and asked us if we'd like to work with them on a rendition of 'We'll Meet Again' with Providence House young people as a VE Day tribute, which was great fun and very poignant. At this point BPS

Community Choir also welcomed a new member, local Battersea Power Station resident, world-renowned musician and multiple Grammy Award winning artist, Sting. Sting was sent our rendition of 'Something Inside So Strong' and said he'd like to collaborate with us. He suggested that there was a song from his musical *The Last Ship* that we might like to sing with him.

### Cranes

In May, choir members joined their usual Zoom session and were astounded when Sting joined them on the call. He played the song 'Hymn' through on his guitar and spoke about the significance of his musical, telling the story of the struggles of the shipyard in his home town of Tyneside. He told members that living at the Power Station with its cranes, reminded him of his childhood living right next to the shipyard. Finally, he invited our members to record the song with him.

'Hymn' was a very choral piece and not the sort of number that is in our choir's regular repertoire, but our members were delighted to turn their voices to it. Many of the initial anxieties of sitting at home recording themselves had dissipated so, after various rehearsals, they submitted



their recordings, which again Dan and Thomas had the heroic job of producing into one coherent piece. Then in June, the choir were joined on Zoom once again by Sting, as well as by the cast of *The Last Ship*, to sing through the song together. It took until July for us to be able to release our work with Sting to the world – suffice to say it is something that we are extremely proud of.

One thing is for sure, Battersea Power Station Community Choir in

lockdown has never been dull! We've had an incredible term, which has brought so many new challenges but also amazing opportunities. We are incredibly proud of how our choir members have supported each other through lockdown; this is down to the amazing group of people they are. We are likely to be back on Zoom when our new term starts in September, which isn't ideal, but we will continue and seek out a new set of virtual opportunities. And as soon

as we can be back together again performing to you live, we will be!

You can see the Battersea Power Station Community Choir's virtual performances at [youtube.com/batterseapowerstation](https://youtube.com/batterseapowerstation)  
To join the choir or for more details, please email [choir@batterseapowerstation.co.uk](mailto:choir@batterseapowerstation.co.uk)

Alex Baker is director of communities at Battersea Power Station

---

## **inside looking out: a creative flowering on the Doddington Estate**

A new book grew out of lockdown for poet Hilaire and her artist neighbour

'A lovely project to come out of lockdown' – one of many positive responses I've had to the booklet *indoors looking out* that the artist Stephen Graham and I recently published. The booklet features 28 short poems by me, written in a new script devised by Stephen and complemented by his illustrations and abstract designs.

At the start of lockdown, the idea of publishing a booklet was far from my mind. As Chair of the Doddington and Rollo Community Roof Garden committee, I had to inform our visitors that the garden would be closed to the public for the foreseeable future.

Stephen, like me a long-standing resident of the Doddington Estate, has been a regular visitor to the garden for several years and I've got to know him well. He designed a beautiful pamphlet for the garden, including photos, sketches and handwritten text. He has created posters and signs for the garden, earning him the informal position of the garden's artist-in-residence.

### **Exhibited**

Stephen has also exhibited at Putney Library, Westminster Central Reference Library, and at shows organised by Sound Minds, and Art and Soul. I really like the mixture of styles in Stephen's artwork, and have bought a couple of his pieces.

Stephen has a mental health disability and asked me to mention

this as part of the context of our collaboration. Due to his condition, he finds digital communication problematic, and consequently is very low-tech. It's important to emphasise that no one should be judged, and I applaud Stephen's openness.

The garden is an important place for Stephen – a safe and inspiring place, where he can enjoy being outdoors, sketching, taking photos, and helping in the garden without any pressure. As lockdown loomed, I was worried about how the garden's closure would affect him. I suggested that I could try to write a poem every day, which I would text to him to see if this inspired a visual response. Thus began our creative exchange.

Knowing how quickly Stephen works, I was anxious at first about what I had committed myself to. Could I really write a poem a day? The day before lockdown I wrote the first one, a haiku. This short Japanese form – in English, traditionally written as three lines of five, seven, and five syllables – felt manageable. Haiku usually contains a reference to nature or the season, and I found myself writing about what I could see from my window, or sometimes how the outside came into my writing space, e.g. 'slatted sunlight patterns desk'. Within a week I had written eight poems.

I'd extended my poetic repertoire to include tanka, another Japanese form similar to haiku, made up of five lines. The condensed nature of these



forms seemed to suit the constrained situation we were living through. I hadn't yet seen what Stephen had made from my texts. We arranged a socially distanced assignation in Doddington Square. Stephen deposited a stiff-backed envelope by a bollard and walked away with a nod. Like a seasoned spy, I coolly collected the envelope and headed home. When I examined the contents, I was excited to see my words transcribed and enhanced by Stephen's art.

By the end of April, we felt we had enough pieces to make an attractive A5 booklet. Stephen contacted PowerPrint on Lavender Hill, whom he has worked with on many occasions, for a quote. I wrote the front and back cover text, and selected and ordered the pieces to include. In early June we took delivery of several boxes of *indoors looking out* – a red-letter day! Since then, it's been heart-warming and humbling to see how our work has chimed with people.

*indoors looking out* costs £5. Stephen's proceeds will go to UNHCR for Syrian refugees. I'm donating £1 from every sale to Refuge. Copies are available from Stephen on 07955 400682, or me: [hilaireinlondon.wordpress.com/shop/](https://hilaireinlondon.wordpress.com/shop/) Clapham Books, an independent bookshop, also has copies for sale.

---

# We're all in the same storm, but we're not all in the same boat

Foodbank use has doubled, says Sarah Chapman

The UK entered the coronavirus pandemic with 14.5 million people already living in poverty, including 8.1 million people in working families and 4.6 million children. Locally across Wandsworth, 36 per cent of our children were growing up in poverty, even before the pandemic hit. As early as April, analysis by The Resolution Foundation found that three quarters of UK households had reported falls in income due to the impact of coronavirus.

At Wandsworth Foodbank, we're witnessing first-hand the increased financial hardship faced by local residents, with many more families really struggling to pay for rent and basic essentials like food.

We've seen the need for our food bank more than double, and we're delivering more than 1,000 food parcels a month. Thankfully, we've also seen an increase in local people giving to us, driven by a shared sense of compassion and justice, for which we are so grateful.

We've spoken to local people who had faced empty shelves at the supermarkets and been unable to afford the more expensive products that were left. One mum, who'd never had to use the food bank before, cried as she said she'd had to spend her whole month's food budget in one shopping outing. Her usual 50p bags of pasta had all gone and only £1.75 packets were left. The day we delivered their emergency food parcel was her daughter's first birthday.

## **Precarious**

We've supported households whose already precarious work suddenly stopped, with no cushion of furlough or redundancy: a lone parent working as a cleaner in people's homes; a family where mum had just given birth when dad's zero-hours job became zero hours permanently.

We've heard from people who've started giving to the food bank for the first time, driven by their previously unknown fear in lockdown of not being able to provide enough food for their family. For many of us it was a valuable insight into what people



forced to use food banks feel. Will I have enough? How am I going to feed my children?

At Wandsworth Foodbank, coronavirus meant we completely changed the way we operated within the space of one week in late March. Instead of daily sessions at five churches across the borough, where people could collect food and sit down with us, we switched entirely to home delivery and e-referrals from our 200-plus referral agencies.

The government deemed food bank teams 'key workers', and our wonderful volunteers stepped up to the challenge of huge need, phoning local people referred to us and delivering emergency food to homes across the borough. Our Foodbank advisers moved to providing phone advice; helping people maximise their income as much as possible, including applying for benefits and crisis grants to try to help them stay afloat.

We know that food banks are no substitute for the dignity and efficiency of being able to buy your own food and essentials. It's not right that anyone should have to use a food bank. But just when we need it most, government policy has whittled down the lifeline of our social security system, and frozen and capped it at levels that mean 'income not covering the cost of essentials' is the most common reason local people are referred to us. It's unacceptable that everyone applying for Universal Credit faces the stark choice of a five-week wait for first payment, or taking

on Universal Credit debt that will shrink their payment even further in the months ahead.

Digital exclusion, whether through lack of finances to keep connected (mobile data or broadband) or lack of digital skills, is a big issue for many people we support. It can be a real barrier to accessing Universal Credit online journals to ensure payments continue, and grants like Wandsworth Council's Discretionary Social Fund can only be applied for online. The closure of libraries and job centres, whose free public computers many people rely on, made matters worse for local people who have the skills but not the finances to get online.

## **Capped**

We welcome the recognition by central government that many people are facing severe hardship. A temporary £20 a week boost to Universal Credit is a step in the right direction, although it can mean families' benefits are capped for the first time – leaving people even worse off. Sadly the weekly increase doesn't apply to disabled or unwell people who receive Employment Support Allowance – an unnecessary injustice.

The government has also given coronavirus hardship grants to local authorities, to protect local residents from hardship and to ensure households have food and basic essentials. Since April, Wandsworth Council has received £2.3million for this purpose alone, with the latest government guidance advising councils to provide vouchers and cash grants so people can buy food and non-food essentials.

It's vital that this £2.3 million reaches the pockets of local people, as they were intended. If it does, it has the power to help transform the lives of many residents who have been pulled into hardship – reducing food bank need and helping families keep afloat until the storm passes.

*Sarah Chapman is a trustee of Wandsworth Foodbank.*

*[www.wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk/donate-help](http://www.wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk/donate-help)*

*[www.bankuet.co.uk](http://www.bankuet.co.uk)*



## The odd pair

Janice Morphet looks at the South London lives and work of Eric Hobsbawm and Alan Sillitoe

Eric Hobsbawm and Alan Sillitoe are both well-known authors although writing in different genres – history and fiction. For six years, between 1965 and 1971, their families shared a house that they had divided into two at 97 Larkhall Rise.

Both had an interest in Russia and Sillitoe visited a number of times in the early 1960s though he denounced the regime's human rights practices in an address to the Writers' Congress in 1968.

Alan Sillitoe (1928 – 2010, *inset far right*) was born in Nottingham. In 1958 he published *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* which was filmed in 1960 starring Albert Finney. His second novel *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* was published in 1959 and was made into a film with Tom Courtney in 1961. Sillitoe had been in the RAF after the war and then had been in hospital with TB for two years. When discharged, he was given a weekly pension which allowed him to travel, between 1952 and 1958, in France and Majorca, where he knew Robert Graves. He was already writing fiction and poetry as he travelled and Graves, on reading his work, advised him to write about what he knew. He put together short pieces about his early life that contributed to his successful novels.

### Adopted

Eric Hobsbawm (1917 – 2012, *inset above*) was born in Egypt in an Anglo-Viennese family and grew up speaking English as his first language. By 1931, both his parents had died and he and sister were adopted by their aunt. The whole family moved to London from Berlin after 1933. Hobsbawm was not a refugee but a British national as his father was from the East End. Once in London, he attended St Marylebone Grammar School, before going to King's

College Cambridge, where he joined the Communist Party. He became a lecturer at Birkbeck College in 1947. It is unclear how Sillitoe and Hobsbawm met and decided to move into the house that they had divided in Larkhall Rise but they

were both involved in left-wing politics. When at Birkbeck, Hobsbawm lived at 5 Wilberforce House, Clapham North Side, where one of his neighbours was Fritz Lustig, father of former BBC journalist Robin Lustig. After his first marriage broke down, Hobsbawm moved to Cambridge and then to Gordon Mansions near Birkbeck. When he married again, he sought a larger family home for his family, now with two children born in 1963 and 1964. In 1965 he moved to Larkhall Rise with Alan Sillitoe and his wife and young son, after getting exiled Austrian architect Max Neuberger to subdivide it for them.

### Galt toys

As Hobsbawm's biographer Richard Evans comments, their neighbours in Larkhall Rise found Sillitoe's lifestyle difficult to comprehend because he did not go to work each day. Hobsbawm's wife made a play room in the lower ground floor for the children and she said that 'people would stand outside my playroom and it was all books and Galt toys and very middle class and once a lady said "what is this, a school?" She wouldn't believe that anybody would have all these wooden toys just for her kids and it was bound to be a school'. (2019:411). These domestic arrangements lasted until 1971 when the Hobsbawms moved to Hampstead and the Sillitoes to Notting Hill.

So what were both writers busy with while they shared this house? Hobsbawm wrote *Bandits* and *Captain Swing*, both published in

1969. *Bandits* was about organized crime, albeit not in London, and has some thematic similarity with a book that Alan Sillitoe wrote in the same period. Sillitoe published three books, *A Tree on Fire* (1967), about a Jewish woman living in a commune

whose partner went to fight in Algeria, *Travels in Nihilon*, (1971) and *A Start in Life*, (1970), which has recently been re-published by the *London Review of Books*. This is a picaresque novel of a young Nottingham estate agent who moves to London and enters a life of organized crime.

One reader describes as being like the *Canterbury Tales*, with a variety of characters sharing their life stories as they converge of London. The novel is credited as being the basis of the ITV series *Budgie*, written by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall and televised from 1971 with Adam Faith in the leading rôle. Both the book and the TV series were more Soho than South London. We can only speculate on the conversations that Sillitoe and Hobsbawm may have had about the behaviour of criminals...

### Answers to questions on p12

1. The oldest unchanged bus route is the 24 to Hampstead, and the fare in 1912 when it started was 1d
2. The G in G1 stands for St Georges Hospital
3. The C3 passes the Finborough Theatre
4. The pub mentioned by HG Wells is The Green Man
5. Oxford Street follows part of the Via Tribonantia to Colchester



## The Grand Clapham Junction, past, present. Future?

A grand building which hosted the greats is fighting for its future, says Carol Rahn.

In the old days, by which I mean before coronavirus, if you were near Clapham Junction on a Saturday night, you couldn't help but notice the queues for the Grand. Those waiting, even in the dead of winter, were seemingly warmed by nothing more than their enthusiasm! You'd likely have been unaware of how manager and local resident Ally Wolf had brought the Grand back to its roots: 'We were founded by one of the kings of Music Hall, Dan Leno, with the ambition of providing a stage and a venue for performers and locals of the Battersea area'. It opened in 1900 as the New Grand Palace of Varieties. Charlie Chaplin was among the luminaries making an appearance and one of its managers went on to build the Palladium.

### Laurel and Hardy

'As cinema became all the rage in the 1930s we moved with the times and a projector room was installed so we could add movies to our repertoire. We never forgot our variety roots, and often included performances before and after the films', says Ally. Rechristened Essoldo Cinema, this is where Morecambe & Wise first performed their own material and the film of then little-known Laurel and Hardy had its premier.

From 1963 to 1978 the building was a bingo hall, but it then lay empty and decaying until 1991, when it was restored and resurrected as a live music venue. This saw world famous acts like The Kinks, George Clinton,

Nick Cave and Public Enemy perform, as well as The Verve, Suede and Manic Street Preachers.

The musical pedigree wasn't matched by commercial success and only its Grade II listed status and vigorous local opposition saved what was now called the Clapham Grand from redevelopment proposals ranging from a petrol station to a Wetherspoon's pub. A more congenial project to resurrect the building as a theatre never attracted enough funding. A new owner brought the Grand into the clubbing era, still with some gigs by groups on the brink of fame, including Oasis and Muse. Now as then, Ally says, 'We're the place to catch a great act before it becomes really, really popular.'

And now, or at least pre-coronavirus, all these threads of the Grand's past were alive and well in the Grand's present, as shown in Ally's recital of the typical weekly schedule. The Grand was enjoying 'ridiculously busy weekends,' open for clubbing from 10pm to 3am on Friday and Saturday nights. This pulled in groups with something to celebrate, usually more women than men, most of them in their mid-20s to 30s and drawn largely from the area defined by the South West suburban trains from Clapham Junction.

Friday evenings from 6pm to 10pm, bingo was back, now called Bongos Bingo which Ally describes as 'loud; drunk, a little bit rude – a little like an old fashioned variety show, but with bingo'. Brash and rude seemed to

have a universal appeal, with some of the younger set bringing their parents, who in turn brought their parents.

Saturdays started as a mid-day brunch party, on-trend pre-coronavirus for those who want an excuse for a bit of excess but find that late nights no longer suit them. Like a wedding, this sort of brunch started with everyone sitting down to eat and ended with the tables pushed aside and everyone dancing.

### Comedy

Cinema was also back, between brunch and club scene on most Saturday evenings. Now the filming was part of a themed-evening that might include music, cocktails, fancy dress and plenty of singing and dancing. There were sports screenings, often for big events taking place many time zones away (boxing in Las Vegas; football in Australia). Touring acts chose to perform here as did international touring bands that might not be famous here but could be guaranteed to draw a crowd from their expat community. The old projection room on the fifth floor, with up-to-date AV kit, became a mini-venue for karaoke, films or comedy shows.

The Grand became a trusted venue for London's LGBTQ community – host of the official Pride in London after-party; location of choice for RuPaul Drag Race and other drag shows. It's a popular location for charity boxing matches, including the annual match between the Met Police



and London Fire Brigade, in one of the few buildings that can put an audience all around the ring. During the otherwise quiet weekdays it has served as a set location: two series of the Taskmaster television show; Bollywood film scenes; adverts for Google and House of Fraser were all filmed here.

So the strands of the Grand's past – variety, music, bingo, cinema – resurfaced in the Grand's present. Night life isn't always welcomed by either residents or local government. Ally admits, 'There are issues; I would be lying if I said there wasn't: you put people in a space, heighten their emotions and give them alcohol –

you're creating a situation that could potentially cause you problems. You have to manage that.' He adds that he wants the Grand to be 'a place where younger people can go out and socialise, but ultimately we're a space for everyone and we want to be welcoming for everyone.'

### Exotic

These days, of course, the Grand is very, very quiet. Its future, like that of all cultural and entertainment venues, is at risk. While dependent on government decisions, Ally isn't just waiting around. There is an active fundraising campaign:

[www.crowdfunder.co.uk/savethegrand](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/savethegrand)

At the end of July, the Grand became the first test venue for a socially-distanced live performance.

Ally is keen on the Grand's heritage – if you have photos or memories to contribute, please send them to the email address he set up for this: [thegrandmemories@gmail.com](mailto:thegrandmemories@gmail.com). And the Grand is hoping to be part of this autumn's London Open House – a special chance for all of us to see the past and the present inside this building that the Survey of London describes as 'unrestrainedly exotic'.

## Fruit for free

Grow apples? Drink your own cider! Richard Konig describes a community fruit-picking project

Abundance Southfields was set up in 2012 to reduce food waste and promote biodiversity. It has expanded and is signing up fruit tree owners and volunteer pickers across Wandsworth.

From July to October every year hundreds of fruit trees around Wandsworth deliver beautiful, organic apples, pears, quinces, plums, figs and more to those residents fortunate enough to have trees in their garden. This bounty frequently arrives in a short seasonal burst that is unmanageable for tree owners and excess fruit soon starts crashing onto lawns, sheds and pavements. Birds, squirrels, foxes, slugs and wasps make good use of a small proportion of these but the majority heads to compost heaps or, worse, rubbish bins. The Abundance project aims to put the excess fruit to good use and ensure that as many of these trees as possible are retained.

### Sign up

Tree owners and people who would like to pick fruit sign up to the project through the website. Tree owners just need to email when they need help and someone will come along with picking poles and bags to help harvest. The picking poles extend to 5m in order to reach those tasty fruit that generally remain out of reach. The project currently has over 100

residents from all over the borough who want to help pick and share this lovely fruit. Depending on the size of the task, one or two pickers who live relatively close by are contacted and the picking is arranged at a time to suit everyone.

### Processing

It is up to the tree owner as to how much of the fruit is harvested and taken away. Quite often they have run out of enthusiasm for consuming more apples, have given away as many as they can to family and friends and are tired of clearing away windfalls by the time that they get in touch with Abundance. In that case all the ripe fruit is picked and taken. Other times the owner may just need help picking some fruit that is hard for them to reach and they keep most of it. People are also free to simply borrow the picking poles or the juicing equipment and take care of the picking and processing themselves if they are so inclined.

At the height of the season – particularly with apples – there is generally far more fruit than the home bakers and jam makers need. With 50 – 100kg of fruit of wildly unpredictable variety and quality coming in every couple of days, the best way of putting the excess to use is to juice it and make cider and cider vinegar. That way even the bruised windfalls

Pressing apple pulp for juice or cider



get put to use. Previous years' sales of cider and vinegar have funded the purchase of an electric fruit crusher and a couple of manual fruit presses. Small 25 litre batches are made with a record kept of where the fruit came from so that those who provided it can get their hands on cider or vinegar from their own tree!

2020 is going to be a relatively low profile year for the project. Social distancing mean that we will not be handing out free local fruit at tube stations this year. Previously that was an incredibly good way of distributing the best quality fruit whilst also promoting the project. Hopefully that activity can be repeated and expanded in the future. There will also probably not be any food festivals or other opportunities to promote the project and sell products this year. We will be producing a lot more apple cider vinegar instead of cider because vinegar takes longer to make and lasts a lot longer. It will be in good shape to sell in 2021.

Abundance started in Southfields and has now expanded into Tooting and Earlsfield. We haven't yet had any invitations to pick in Battersea – so over to you! We would also be happy to pick on allotments. [www.abundancesouthfields.com](http://www.abundancesouthfields.com)



## Lockdown street concerts

Cellist Hannah Chadwick-Jones (aged 12) reports on her family's musical lockdown

getting to know our neighbours, many of whom were missing their relatives and feeling lonely. After the concerts

to play the parts of Papageno and Papagena, a bird catcher and his future bride, as well as designing a special flyer for the occasion and drawing chalk pictures outside our front door. Toy birds were employed to decorate our new 'concert hall'.

For the Grand Finale, the last of eight consecutive concerts, we were joined by an amazing group of local instrumentalists who were inspired by our previous concerts. With the help of some of our neighbours, we found five flautists, two clarinetists, a cellist and a harpist. Our Mum spent hours arranging *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* and thanks to the hard work of everyone involved, we were able to put it together at the last minute.

### Busking

On 12 July our trio held a busking event to raise money for South London Youth Orchestra, which is a very important part of our lives

and which has sadly had to cancel many of their courses due to the pandemic. Intended to be on the Northcote Road, we had to change our plans at the very last minute and ended up outside our house again. We were disappointed, but we succeeded in raising over £500.

Together with our friends Inez, Isabell and Shiuli our next pop-up concert was on 23 August. We aimed to create a fun, community event introducing people to all kinds of music, from Bach to Bernstein.

I really appreciated the opportunity to play in this socially distanced street orchestra and I had no idea that we lived near so many wonderful young musicians! This just goes to show, even if they shut the concert halls and cancel our orchestra courses, no virus can stop us from making music.

Clearly none of this would have been possible without the invaluable support of our neighbours.



people would mill about, talking and socialising, at a cautious distance. For most, it was the highlight of their week and we enjoyed sharing the videos with family and friends.

### Flyers

There were many challenges that we had to overcome in order for us to produce the concerts week after week. We carefully planned where we were going to sit, which stands, instruments and stools we would use. Music stands were troublesome; these precarious pieces of metal are a musician's nightmare.

We were constantly battling with the wind. The best solution, we found, was multiple clothes pegs. Some elements were out of our control. We endured helicopters and barking dogs, while the audience dodged cars and mopeds. Luckily, the weather was on our side. My sister and I had lots of fun designing flyers, drawing illustrations as well as the slightly tedious process of trying to get our old printer to work. It was worth every second.

We worked hard to arrange and rehearse a whole array of music from Boccherini to Disney songs. I particularly enjoyed playing Mendelssohn's *Song Without Words*, one of the most beautiful pieces of the cello repertoire. My sister was delighted to perform Monti's famous *Czardàs*, its fast and exhilarating nature suiting her down to the ground. One of my favourite experiences was performing music from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*. We enjoyed adorning ourselves with feathers

**B**efore lockdown, we were a busy family, living in a leafy street between the Commons. Our house has always been full of music; my Mum is a pianist and my sister, Alice, aged 10, plays the violin. I'm Hannah, I'm 12, and I play the cello. We have always loved the way music brings people together and enriches their lives. Between us, we take part in a multitude of orchestras and frequently enjoy the opportunity to perform with family and friends. Our Dad, a hospital manager, is our biggest fan, and our cat, Bena, tolerates the music, usually while hiding in the camellia pot.

### Trio

As soon as lockdown was announced, everything was cancelled. Our calendars were turned into blank, whitewashed walls. Classical musicians and orchestras everywhere were suffering and so were their audiences. With nothing to do we decided to set up our family trio. What did we have to lose? A cellist, violinist and pianist (and roadie) all living in the same house. We thought the weekly NHS clap would be the perfect opportunity, though we did take time to prepare our neighbours as we didn't want to perform to an empty street. One of our neighbours later said to us, 'We thought, oh no, this is going to be "screech screech", but actually it was beautiful!'

Soon we began to receive 'fan mail'. The most wonderful letters came from all over the road, which opened us up to so many new friends, who, it turned out, shared our love of the arts. But there weren't just letters. We were given chocolates, flowers and best of all, homemade crêpes! What we loved most was