

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SPRING 2016



What's springing up?

We scout around Battersea for new views



Swathes of daffodils in the Winter Garden, Battersea Park, just one new chimney at Battersea Power Station, a new farmers' market on Saturdays at Shaftesbury Park School. Photos by Jenny Sheridan and Suzanne Perkins



Don't forget to visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk
for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

From the editor



Election fever is upon us! We've already had quite enough of the US presidential election (November) and maybe even of the vitally important EU referendum (23 June), and we're revving up for the Mayor/GLA election (5 May). But closer to home there is another exciting opportunity to cast our ballots: on 10 March the Battersea Society will, for the first time in living memory, hold an election of trustees, such is members' enthusiasm to support and promote our society.

Unsurprisingly, Wandsworth Council has agreed to the continuation of Formula E racing in Battersea Park, in the teeth of much local opposition and of strongly

argued evidence from our own planning committee (see page 5 for a summary of their remarkable workload). Many residents may feel cynical about responding to such consultation exercises. However we may want to make an exception for an important one, on lowering the speed limit on most roads to 20mph. According to Wandsworth Living Streets this would result in fewer and less serious accidents, safer cycling and better air quality. Enforcement would be the issue. To take part, go to the Council's website and type '20 mph' into the search box.

Our cover celebrates spring in Battersea. What a strange winter we have had. There were daffodils at Christmas and in January I saw primroses in the Bolingbroke Grove graveyard. Fortunately the cold weather since then has not killed them off and as I write, on a sunny February day, they remain a joy.

Unlike the glass facades hemming in the power station from the railway line to Victoria. They bring to mind the Pete Seeger song 'Little boxes made of ticky-tacky'. And see page 7 for a view that the present crazy property splurge may soon be on its way out.

If you have a little time to spare, sit in front of your laptop and type in '1000 Londoners'. Made by Chocolate Films (page 4), these are three-minute films with attached print interviews, of Londoners in all their quirkiness and originality. They include Battersea Society member Jeanne Rathbone along with several people who rate Battersea Power Station as their favourite London building – probably before those little boxes were built.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM on 10 March, ready to cast your votes.

Jenny Sheridan

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Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden Looks at Life, takes a river trip, and ponders tall buildings through the ages

I recently saw a *Look at Life* film (remember those ten minute epics?) about a 1959 trip on the Thames from Westminster to Greenwich. There were changes galore of course on the shore, especially in docklands but otherwise what stood out most, apart from the total absence of skyscrapers was how grimy everywhere looked. The Clean Air Act put paid to that, but children have a natural tendency to get grubby and it didn't worry us at the time, although mothers pegging out their washing on the line took a very different view. So your own good old days may not have been so good for someone else.

Anyway, we had a chance to see the modern shoreline for ourselves a few days ago when we took a trip to Greenwich by boat, a very relaxed way to travel. Our initial destination was the Samuel Pepys exhibition at the Greenwich Maritime Museum, which had an excellent animation about the Great Fire of London. Pepys buried his wine and a parmesan cheese to protect them from the flames. His house was spared but we don't know the fate of the wine and

cheese.

Cultural pursuits dispensed with, we went for some warming sustenance at Goddard's Pie and Mash Shop which has been serving hungry residents of Greenwich since 1890, though they have moved location recently. If the thought of pie, mash and liquor brings back nostalgic recollections you don't have to go too far, as there's an excellent establishment on Lavender Hill.

Many of you will have been to the Society's gala showing of *Alfie* from 1966. In one fleeting scene Michael Caine turns away from St Mary's Church and you get a glimpse of the tower blocks of the Somerset estate under construction. Those buildings were doubtless seen as being too high, but now look very modest compared to the 28 storey building set to rise inexorably alongside the Cremorne Railway bridge. The compulsion to build higher is not a new one of course. In ancient Mesopotamia (just a little before my time) the builders of ziggurats



became ever more ambitious and each time these structures were rebuilt they increased in width and height. I like to think that the Planning Committee of the time would have complained to the Ur of the

Chaldees council about the excessive number of zigs or zags. Of course, Mesopotamian civilisation collapsed, and no doubt eventually so will ours.

Quiz

More cheerfully, towards the end of last year a crack team of eight Battersea Society members took part in a quiz at the Banqueting House. We went under the name of 'The Lavender Hill Mob' and under Rubens's magnificent ceiling we battled with appalling acoustics, not helped by some of us having less than perfect hearing, and the sometimes imperfect memories that maturity brings. Nonetheless we came 12th out of a field of thirty teams, most of whom were blessed with youth, excellent hearing and perfect memories. And we shall return this year and who knows...? On that energising thought, I shall leave you. As always, mind how you go.

What's it like to be a refugee?

Does Wandsworth welcome refugees?
Jenny Sheridan tries to find out

The migrant and refugee crisis is constantly in the news. The size of the problem seems overwhelming. But in fact last year around 29,000 people applied for asylum in the UK, around 40% of whom will be allowed to stay here. That's about 12,000 across the whole country. Focusing down on Wandsworth the numbers are much smaller. The largest well-established refugee community locally is Somali; more recently Eritreans and Afghans have arrived.

I wanted to find out what it is like to be an asylum-seeker or refugee in Wandsworth.

Health needs

First of all, it is important to remember that the (up to) 20,000 Syrian people that the Government has promised to accept over the next five years from refugee camps in the Middle East will, when they arrive, have a different experience from most. Their claims for asylum will have been processed in the camps: they will already be recognised as refugees. They will be allocated housing (with benefits funded by the EU) and support for a year. Some will be families with significant health needs. Few of these families have arrived so far.

The rest of this article will focus on the majority of people who claim asylum here.

'Once you apply for asylum the process can take anything from three months to several years,' says Andrew Lawton, head of resettlement at the Refugee Council. 'During that time you have to live on a subsistence grant of about £36 a week. If you have nowhere to stay you will be housed somewhere where there is cheap housing. You're not allowed to work, and last year the government stopped funding English language classes for asylum-seekers, though some are run by voluntary organisations.'

Since Wandsworth is obviously not a place for cheap housing, most of the refugees in the borough arrived after their claim was settled. Hearing that you have been granted refugee status should be a happy moment, but in fact it can lead to the most

stressful period of all. 'It's cruel,' says Andrew. 'You have just 28 days before you have to leave your Home Office-sponsored accommodation, and lose your grant. In that space of time you are expected to open a bank account (which you need to find a job or to have any payments made such as Job-Seeker's Allowance), find somewhere you can afford to live and find work or benefits. It's impossible.' Refugees are not prioritised for housing by hard-pressed local authorities so generally have to try to find privately rented accommodation. Housing benefit landlords are not well-known for the excellence of their accommodation. 'How can you find a flat in London without money for a deposit and a month's rent in advance?' says Andrew. 'Ideally we'll find someone with a room to rent who is prepared to agree to a let without a deposit, with references from ourselves. Housing benefit is paid at local market rates so they shouldn't be out of pocket.' Citizens UK also works closely with landlords.

Without housing, there are few options apart from a night shelter or the streets. The largest number of people using night shelters are refugees and asylum seekers, although they are a tiny proportion of the population. We have all seen people sitting miserably on a square of cardboard begging for money for a hostel bed; some of these have escaped from war or persecution, only to face destitution here.

Minors

Lucy Rix co-ordinates the Love to Learn project at Katherine Low Settlement in Battersea High Street. 'We work with young people from newly arrived communities. One of the worst things we see is when boys from Afghanistan are sent back there once they reach the age of 17, as the majority of unaccompanied minors are. They come from impoverished backgrounds and their families have made huge sacrifices to send them alone on the terrifying journey to the



A long road ahead for those fleeing wars
Photo: Katie Barlow

UK. Their one aim is to settle here and work to send money home. When they are threatened with removal many become quite desperate.' Love to Learn supports children with their homework and helps parents to engage with a completely different education system.

Lack of English language skills is one of the main barriers to work and to social integration. KLS also offers ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Lucy points out that some new arrivals are not literate in their own language – most schools in Somalia were closed during the war. This makes it even more difficult to learn a foreign language.

Other organisations in the borough that support refugees and asylum-seekers include CARAS, based in Tooting, and South London Refugee Association in Mitcham and Balham. Like Love to Learn, these welcome volunteers to help with their work.

It is Syrian refugees awaiting resettlement who have been most on our screens and our minds. In 2015, Wandsworth Council leader Ravi Govindia said the council was 'awaiting government guidance about how UK support will be co-ordinated.' Meanwhile Kingston Council has pledged to take 50 Syrian families and is actively searching for landlords prepared to let a property to them.

STOP PRESS

Saturday 26 March sees the birth of a new organisation: Wandsworth Welcomes Refugees. Launch at BAC from 4.50 – 5.30pm. Email wandsworthwelcomesrefugees@gmail.com

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

www.love-to-learn.org.uk

www.caras.org.uk

www.asylumwelcome.org.uk

www.citizensuk.org

Filming Nine Elms, past and present

As the area changes, Laura Kloss describes how the memories and heritage are kept alive

Over the last year at Chocolate Films, based in Queenstown Road, we have been working with local residents and young people to uncover some true stories from Battersea and Nine Elms spanning from the 1950s up to the present day.

We have been working in the area for over 12 years and couldn't help but be aware of the rapid and dynamic changes taking place in Nine Elms. We particularly noticed it whilst in the production of our online film series called 1000londoners.com, which is a portrait of London shown through 1000 three-minute films about individual residents in the city. This acted as an impetus to devise a large scale film-making and heritage project with the community to record the wealth of hidden stories in the area. The over-arching aim was to find out more about the history of the area through the medium of documentary film.

Early on in the development of the project we discovered a film called *The Optimists of Nine Elms*, directed by Anthony Simmons in 1973 and partly filmed on location in Battersea. The film inspired us to devise the project *Nine Elms Past and Present*. This enabled us to work with young people to discover more about the people in the area. We secured support from the Young Roots Heritage Lottery Fund, which aims to encourage young people to get involved in local heritage.

We worked closely with 30 young people aged between 15 and 25, who were instrumental in conceiving the project, building the project website, curating an exhibition in February 2016 at the StudioRCA in Nine Elms and the production of four new short films about Nine Elms residents.

Documentary

The young people were trained in workshops by professional filmmakers from Chocolate Films to enable them to record oral histories and produce documentary films. One of the participants, Mia Assante loved the project, saying, '*Nine Elms Past and Present* has enabled me to



Filming for 1000 Londoners

learn new film skills and enhance my camera skills. I also really enjoyed meeting new people and working as a team'. Through the workshops, special events and oral history recording days, the young people have found some fascinating stories from local residents in Wandsworth and Lambeth.

Swimming

The project showcases unique histories such as the story behind Brian Barnes' mural *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* on the old Morgan's Crucible factory wall which was famously – or infamously – pulled down. Another story is Rita Kelly's, who fondly remembers working at Battersea Power Station, and Jim and Kate, who remember swimming in the Thames as children. We have also uncovered never previously seen photos of Battersea Power Station from 1983 just after it was decommissioned. The photos were taken by Frank Elston on a rare tour of the building.

The oral history section is broken into themes on the website: Community, Culture, Industry, Politics and Activism, Transport, and Leisure, all of which were recorded at an oral history day at Battersea Arts Centre

in June 2015. It captures memories such as the black soot from Battersea Power Station, the Battersea 'stink' from Garton's Glucose Factory, using the old public baths, Battersea Park Pleasure Gardens, the old steam trains at Nine Elms depot, as well as the cinder lorries that passed out of the Power Station.

The new film series also features memories from Jeanne Rathbone, humanist celebrant, comedienne and local campaigner (and Battersea Society member), Guyanese elderly resident Ted Murray, and acclaimed local writer, poet Gabriel Gbadamosi, author of the novel *Vauxhall*, who recalls climbing over the old factory walls as a child.

We hope that this project will be a legacy for the people of Nine Elms and will become a new archive for the area. We have learnt so much about the history of the area and have inspired younger generations to be involved in social histories that are important to our culture. We continue to look for stories and ask people to contribute their memories on the website so that the project can continue to grow.

www.nineelmspastandpresent.com
www.1000londoners.com

Planning Matters: A month in the life of the Planning Committee

Monica Tross outlines some of the committee's workload

Back to work on 4 January. In the following month members of the committee commented on 18 applications; attended six exhibitions or meetings about planned or current developments; sent in two substantial responses to consultations; were in contact with a number of members and non-members on conservation area and Crossrail 2 issues; took part in the Wandsworth Design Awards panel; set up a team to work on heritage recording for Battersea and sent round a planning update (with Mike Roden's help) to alert members to exhibitions in January and February.

18 APPLICATIONS

As usual, the majority of our comments were about smaller domestic applications in conservation areas (twelve of the eighteen). We are always pleased to hear from members about these as local knowledge is helpful in understanding the full implications of the proposals, particularly to those neighbours backing on to the garden of the applicant's house. These are important but relatively quick to process. The really time-consuming letters are those concerning major applications with screeds of paperwork to trawl through.

This month we responded at length about Battersea Power Station's Cringle Dock and Western Riverside Waste Authority application (2015/6357). Following this we went to a meeting with the project team at the Power Station who showed us the significant design changes made following various adverse comments on the original, including our own. These mean that while the building will still, in Wandsworth Council's view, cause some harm to the setting of the Power Station, this is less than substantial and will be outweighed by the public benefit of the scheme. We are inclined to agree.

Our chair, Liz Walton, spent hours setting out our very reasonable response to the Formula E application (2015/7363) – as ever to no avail. It is likely to be approved at the next

Planning Applications Committee in spite of over 500 objections, many of which were very well reasoned.

We also commented on proposals for the development of the Royal Academy of Dance building in Battersea Square once they have moved to the Homebase site in York Road (2015/7275). Here a member helped us better understand the impact of the scheme on its immediate neighbours. We do not object to the scheme overall but are unhappy both with the addition of an extra storey to the original building – and to the proposed treatment of that addition. Letters concerning major developments are on our website – see Planning Applications.

3 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

At our instigation TfL held an exhibition of their proposals for the Vauxhall Bus Station at York Gardens Library. While these are better than we had feared we continue to fight for the retention of a bus station which provides the same ease of interchange as the current one.

Crossrail 2, although some way off, will have an impact not least in the Westbridge Road area and we sent a very detailed response to

December's consultation. There are plans to develop the former Walters Department Store in Falcon Road – now a Tesco Local – and we had a helpful meeting with the team on this. Our response to all these are on our website – see Planning Consultations.

HERITAGE ASSETS

The Battersea Society, along with other amenity societies in the borough, has been invited by Wandsworth Council to update and expand the current list of approximately 500 listed heritage assets. In addition to buildings, this can include parks and gardens as well as street furniture such as postboxes, sculptures, fountains and 'ghost' advertisements on walls.

Listing provides greater visibility to these assets in the planning process and helps to preserve our heritage in the built environment. To nominate an asset, or for further information, please contact Carol Rahn via planning@batterseasociety.org.uk. We aim to complete nominations by the end of March.

For all other planning and transport matters: planning@batterseasociety.org.uk. We do like to hear from you.

National News and Sunday Evening Telegram: ghostly advertising off Lavender Hill
Photo: Suzanne Perkins



On the Waterfront: Battersea's lost industries

Stinking and smoking: Sue Demont unveils our dynamic but dangerous industrial past

Strolling past the pristine glass fronted behemoths of Battersea's riverside today it's hard to imagine that as recently as 1960, a children's author could describe this selfsame scene as follows. 'Large black cranes leaned out over the river from time to time, but the crates and boxes they usually grovelled for were now battened down in the barges and boats moored alongside the wharves. It was growing colder, mistier and darker every moment, and all the river workers had gone home to their tea.' (Jo Hatcher, *The Gasworks Alley Gang*)

Apart from a few rotting piers and the odd waterbus, no tangible evidence of this scene remains, yet for more than a thousand years the Thames defined the course of economic and industrial development in Battersea, even after the coming of the railways in the 1830s. Seven water mills were recorded in the Domesday Book; inhabitants of the medieval parish of Battersea depended on fishing for a living; and from the late 16th century the river's fertile loam

soil flood plain provided an ideal location for market gardening. Well before the Industrial Revolution, both raw materials and locally manufactured products were being transported up and downstream from Battersea wharves in barges and lighters, themselves often built in the local boat yards. Thames, Wandle and Falcon river water supplied the motive power for mills and steam engines, and subsequently enabled the establishment of numerous industries which relied on water-intensive industrial processes.

Windmills

Although in 1820 the artist George Cumberland was still able to paint a largely rural Thames-side landscape, depicting acres of market garden interrupted only by windmills, by then this was but part of the picture. Wandsworth's Huguenot community had long ago established a string of mills, dye works and breweries around the mouth of the Wandle. Further east on the Nine Elms riverfront were lime kilns, whiting houses, and from as early as 1670 the first of several refineries, opened by John Smyth for the refining of 'very grate quantities yearly' of sugar from Barbados. Tidal meadows and osier

beds (producing willow for basket weaving and mat making) were increasingly interspersed with timber docks, which owed their development to house building for 'Battersea New Town' in the 1790s. Incidentally, the arrival of the latter probably contributed to another local industry – the successful if smelly 'Dung Wharf,' where night soil and coal ashes were transported for conversion into fertilisers for the still extant market gardens producing the famous 'Battersea Bundles' of asparagus.

Next, and smellier still, came the chemical industries for which Battersea was deemed a perfect site: beside the Thames, with cheap land and close to the city of London yet sufficiently remote not to cause a nuisance to its better heeled inhabitants. The first factory to manufacture sulphuric acid (known as 'oil of vitriol' and used in the manufacture of synthetic soda for the metal, dye and linen industries) was established by Kingscote & Walker at York House in the 1750s, followed twenty years later by Joseph Fry's (of chocolate fame) soap and alkali business which subsequently also expanded to include sulphuric acid. The 19th century saw the arrival of Grimwade, May and Pickett, who

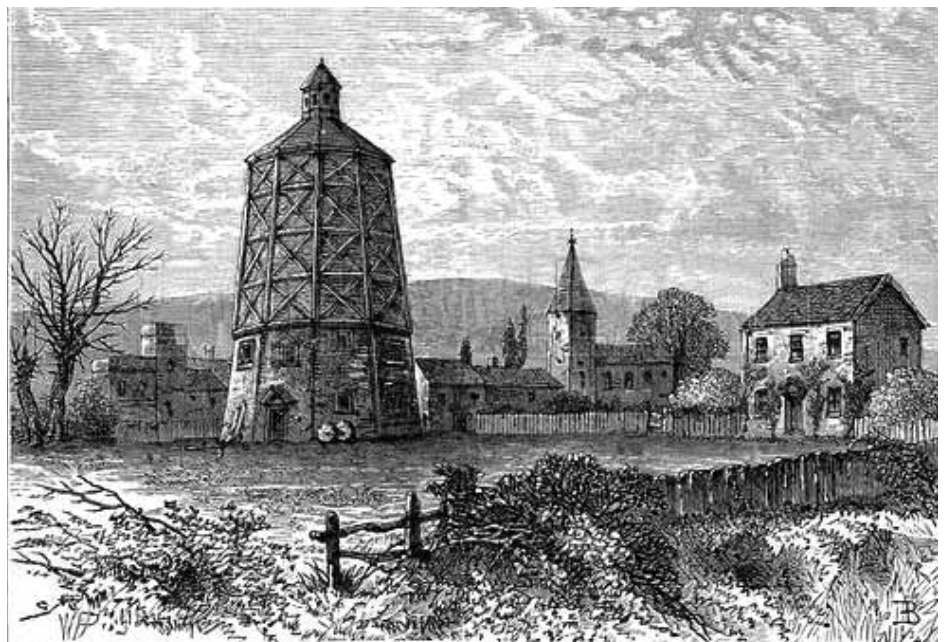
Battersea Society events

- **Sunday 24 April Spring lunch at Delila Restaurant**
- **Thursday 17 May 7pm Talk Pamela Hansford Johnson**
- **Thursday 26 May Tour of Apothecaries Hall**
- **Thursday June 9 7pm Talk Charlotte Despard**
- **Saturday 11 June 2pm Historical tour Battersea Park**
- **Wednesday 15 June Tour of Apsley House**
- **Thursday 14 July Annual Summer Party**

Details from events@
batterseasociety.org.uk

Wendy 020 7223 5999 or Sara
07467 947885

Old Battersea Mill in 1800 from a contemporary drawing



as May & Baker of Garden Wharf became the biggest and best known of the multitude of Battersea's chemical firms, and the aptly named Thomas Whiffen, whose chemical works were sited on Lombard Road. 'By the 1840s industry smoked and stank all along the river' wrote one commentator.



'Progressive'

Two of Battersea's most famous riverside firms were the Morgan Crucible Company, which was founded in 1856 as The Plumbago Syndicate Limited, and Price's Patent Candle Company. By the late 19th century these two firms employed over 2000 workers between them and occupied riverside sites of over eleven acres each. Morgan's began by producing graphite crucibles (used in thermochemistry), later diversifying into the production of carbon brushes, while Price's pioneered the manufacture of oil-based candles. Both firms were known for being 'progressive' employers who offered their workforce religious instruction, education and sporting facilities. In the case of Price's this included a swimming pool for factory boys using the warm water generated through its manufacturing processes; the firms also introduced profit sharing and pension schemes.

But there was a darker side to the life of a manual worker. It

Workers at Morgan Crucible Company

was stated that you could identify some of Battersea's workers by their skin colour (white = flourmill; black=graphite ie Morgans; yellow=shell manufacture). Battersea Arts Centre's digital archive includes a poignant memorial to one Thomas Griffin, who was fatally scalded trying to rescue his workmate following an explosion at one of the sugar refineries in 1899, in the light of which a three week strike at Gartons' Glucose Works for better wages and conditions in 1913 was perhaps understandable.

A historian's observation that due to its rapid industrial development Battersea was 'beginning to grow with breakneck speed' is borne out by its startling population statistics; 6,600 in 1841, 107,000 in 1881 – a population drawn in by the ever more extensive range of employment prospects. Candles, cement, chemicals and crucibles; soap, starch and sugar; brewing and building;

and less alliteratively, the flour, oil paint, turpentine and vinegar industries and the public utilities of gas, water and electricity, had transformed the waterfront skyline in a few decades, presenting a striking and distinctive image of Battersea to Thames travellers and Chelsea residents .

Even in the 1960s the largest firms and utilities were still in place; but since then the decline has been rapid, and none has survived in situ into the 21st century. Albert Bridge Flourmills, the Nine Elms Brewery and the Gas Works closed in the 1970s, whilst Morgan's (still trading as Morgan Advanced Materials) moved to south Wales; Price's and Gartons both closed in the 1980s, as did Battersea Power Station; Rank Hovis Flourmills clung on until 1992. In the same period the decline and closure of London's dockyards was paralleled by the disappearance of Battersea's waterborne industries.

Real estate

How ironic that these riverfront industries, reliant as they were on the efforts and compliance of the labouring poor, often in atrocious conditions, should have been replaced by some of the most expensive real estate in Europe. All that is left is the odd walkway or apartment block name to evoke their industrial past.

FAULTY TOWERS?

Is London's property boom about to go bust? According to two articles, in the *Sunday Times* 31.1.16 and the *Evening Standard* 3.2.16 this is due to overdevelopment at Nine Elms and around Battersea Power Station. A glut of supply of high-end flats and lessening demand may lead to a collapse in prices and resulting flight from the area. Oliver Shah in the *Sunday Times* comments that the situation has been made worse by a lack of co-ordination by Wandsworth Council. He quotes a developer as saying, 'Whereas the regeneration of Kings Cross was

carefully thought through, Nine Elms was a jumble of different schemes.' Another builder says the new towers are 'packed in, cheek by jowl – I question how much they will be worth in a few years.'

In 2015, 41,000 units were being built in London priced at over £1 million. The previous year only 3,000 homes were sold for these prices. Is this sustainable?

The Battersea Society's planning committee wouldn't dream of saying 'We told you so.' But back in 2008 they produced *The future for Nine Elms: an outline planning brief*. They stated that what was needed was 'an overall strategy that enables planning decisions to be taken in a



co-ordinated way and to maximum benefit.' The paper outlined the need for jobs, affordable and mixed housing, allowance made for the effects of climate change and a sense of place at ground level, especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

There is little sign that the council heeded our views.

Great Bus Journeys of the World No 16

Mike Roden enjoys being a tourist in his own town on the RV1 from Waterloo



Having exhausted the routes which touch on Battersea, I decided to embark on some voyages of discovery by bus through different parts of London, highlighting some lesser known bits and pieces of history on the way. All the new routes will be easily accessible from Battersea.

The RV1 has been operating since April 2002 between Covent Garden and Tower Gateway station. It serves many streets that previously were not served by buses. At the time the *Daily Telegraph* dubbed it one of the 'best routes for sightseeing on a shoestring'.

I'd opted today to let the train take the strain, and came into Waterloo that way. The bus actually starts at Catherine Street in Covent Garden, heading to Aldwych then across Waterloo Bridge. I've missed out that bit, and started on York Road.

Anyway, the bus arrives and three other passengers come aboard with me. We're soon turning past Jubilee Gardens with the London Eye behind it. We're in that quiet period where the city's not over-run with tourists and the queue for a ride in one of the pods is very small.

Hungerford Bridge

We pass under the Hungerford Bridge, opened in 1845. It was originally a suspension footbridge designed by I K Brunel crossing the river between the South Bank and Hungerford Market. In 1859 it was bought by the South Eastern Railway Company to extend their line into the new Charing Cross station. The new bridge, designed by Sir John Hawkshaw and opened in 1864 had

walkways added on each side though the upstream one was removed when the line was widened.

The remaining footbridge was very narrow, and became dilapidated and dangerous – it was the scene of a murder in 1999 – and in 2002 it was replaced by two 13ft wide footbridges, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's reign.

Grade 1 status

Before 1951 this was an area of industrial buildings and railway sidings which formed the principal site of the Festival of Britain. The only building to remain was the early nineteenth century shot tower, built to make lead shot by dropping molten lead from a height. During the Festival, it housed a large radio telescope and transmitter. It was eventually demolished to make way for the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Most of the other structures like the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon have also gone. But the Royal Festival Hall remains and we're behind it now. It was the first post-war building to be granted Grade I status in 1981.

We're now heading along Belvedere Road towards Waterloo Bridge. The first bridge on the site opened in 1817 and despite needing regular reinforcement was not finally replaced until the 1940s with a new design by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. It's often described as the 'ladies' bridge' because of the large female work force which was involved in its wartime construction

After the bridge the road changes its name to Upper Ground. The oldest thoroughfare in this part of Southwark, it is the descendant of the

path which from the Norman period ran along the inside of the embanking river wall; and it still retains the twists and turns of a country lane. In quick succession here you can see BFI Southbank, the National Theatre complex and the London studios of ITV, the home of many popular daytime and entertainment shows.

Next to the studios is Gabriel's Wharf, almost deserted at 11am on a January morning, but in high summer its shops, bars and restaurants are a magnet for tourists. It's hard to pin down the history of this wharf area further back than its life as a collection of old garages.

Traffic starts to slow down along Broadwall. If you want to visit the Oxo Tower, which is behind us, you'll need to get off at the next stop. Originally a power station serving the Royal Mail it was acquired in the 1920s by Liebig (makers of Oxo cubes) for use as a cold store. The company overrode a ban on illuminated advertising signs, by giving the tower four sets of vertically aligned windows which just happened to spell out the word OXO. In the 1990s the tower was refurbished to include a restaurant, craft shops and exhibition space and is now a popular visitor destination.

Facebook pub

Turning into Stamford Street a sign welcomes us to Borough & Bankside and we pass the Thirsty Bear which bills itself as the first Facebook pub. Customers can pour their own pints from table-side taps, text for waiter service and use the iPads provided to order food or update their social network profile. Sounds like fun.

Traffic now slows to a crawl and

Sights to see: Hungerford Bridge; the Royal Festival Hall (shown when first built); the Oxo Tower; the Hop Exchange; The Shard; City Hall



the bus joins a queue of construction vehicles and enters what feels like a massive building site. Number 1 Blackfriars – one of the largest developments on this stretch of the Southbank – is now well advanced. Its 50 storey tower will contain 274 flats, from studios starting at £1.15m to penthouse suites expected to fetch up to £23m. The sellers are targeting potential buyers in Russia, China and the Gulf. Affordable housing it ain't!

Museum

On Southwark Street we pass the Kirkaldy Testing Museum. David Kirkaldy's Testing and Experimenting Works opened in 1874 setting international standards in testing materials. Preserved here is Kirkaldy's unique Universal Testing Machine – a huge hydraulic powered machine in full working order. At the moment the museum is only open on the first Sunday of the month between 10am and 4pm and on the third Sunday for guided tours at 11am and 2pm. It's one of those surprises that even a busy street can spring on you in London.

The Shard looms ever closer as the bus ambles past numerous new residential and office developments with 'retail opportunities' on the ground floor. Another little known building here is the Grade II listed Hop Exchange. Opening in 1867 it served as the brewing industry's centre for hop trading. A glass roof allowed business on the trading floor of the Great Hall to be conducted under natural light. A fire in 1920 led to the top two storeys being removed, and the building is now used for offices and as an events venue.

After passing Borough Market and Southwark Cathedral (attractions for another time) we head past London Bridge station on Tooley Street. On the left is Hays Galleria, now a mecca for small shops and restaurants but formerly known as Hays Wharf, once one of the chief delivery points for ships bringing tea to the Pool of London. At one time so much imported food passed through here that it was nicknamed 'the Larder of London'.

Despite incorporating fireproofing technology Hay's Wharf was destroyed in the great fire of Tooley Street of 1861. This started in a jute consignment stored nearby and was London's biggest fire since the Great Fire. It raged for two weeks and killed, among others, the superintendent of the London Fire Engine Establishment, James Braidwood, when a warehouse exploded. The fire was the catalyst for the founding of the London Fire Brigade in 1866.

Deftware

If you want to visit City Hall – home of the Greater London Authority – you can get off at the next stop, and walk across Potters' Field, opened in 1982 and re-landscaped in 2007. A potters' field is a burial ground for paupers on land previously used to dig clay and thus of no agricultural use. In the seventeenth century Delftware was produced in this area by Dutch refugees, and the existence of a small disused burial ground was recorded in the nineteenth century. Whether this was actually a potters' field is open to speculation, but that's what the park is called.

Very soon we turn onto Tower Bridge

road, and cross the historic bridge. I 'alight' at the next stop and walk down to the Tower of London. My visit there is another story.

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Virtuous circles: good food and good works

Carol Rahn discovers the London Cooking Project and its pop-up suppers

A former ice factory on the Ethelburga estate has been transformed into the London Cooking Project. This aims to create a virtuous circle of food-related enterprise that will in turn support food-related opportunities for young people and the local community. Started in mid-2015, all of this revolves around four kitchen stations and a dining area housed in the building.

Four resident chefs run their catering businesses from London Cooking Project; they also hold their distinctive supper clubs there, or run cooking classes, such as the current 'Making Ice Cream at Home' by Richard Makin, founder of ice cream sandwich company Blu Top. Available for hire, the venue hosts a steady stream of supper clubs, fundraisers, and similar events. Thanks to all of this, there is an exciting calendar of innovative dining in prospect over the coming weeks. You can pick from classic cuisine to 'Colombian fusion' or the newest pop-up – Filipino. These are proving popular.

According to manager Emma Bebb, 'Since we've opened, I don't think we've had a spare ticket for a supper club'. The first seating for the Filipino dinner has already sold out. Emma describes what they are doing as different to what restaurants offer and different to what anyone else in the area is doing. Londoners are always ready for something new.

Reducing waste

London Cooking Project lets founder Dickie Bielenberg contribute to causes that have long held his attention: the positive link between good food and good health, especially among children; reducing waste in the food chain; and helping kids who struggle in school to discover an environment where they can flourish.

As he puts it, 'Surplus food is a

really big deal; children and food is a really big deal; opportunities for older children to get into catering is a really big deal.' London Cooking Project helps fledgling food-related businesses get off the ground. In turn, the money that London Cooking Project earns from rents and venue hire makes it possible to support and partner with three or four carefully chosen food-related charities.

Kids

The Mini Cooking Club is a natural partner for project. A registered charity, the Mini Cooking Club has shown it can ignite children's interest in food and turn that into a demonstrable increase in confidence. With additional support from Wandsworth Council, they are now midway through a free Cooking with



Kids Saturday programme at London Cooking Project.

London Cooking Project is also partnering with Brixton People's Kitchen to turn food that would otherwise go to waste into meals—and company – for those who might otherwise go without either. Since late January, Brixton People's Kitchen has offered a free dinner every Tuesday evening at London Cooking Project. The raw ingredients – all perfectly edible but about to be pulled from the shelves – are sourced from local shops and markets. The chef and staff for the evening are volunteers.

Sustainable 'field to fork' food supply and distribution constitutes

the most basic virtuous circle in the food world. Engaging children with food creates virtuous circles of health, well-being and even self-esteem and employment. For Bielenberg, a further virtuous cycle emerges from profit-making businesses dedicated to generating the money to support charitable endeavour. He sees this as the future of community work: let charities be the expert in what they do, partnering with a business whose objective is to provide the money.

London Cooking Project is still young, but already looking to the future. One project beginning to take shape is turning little patches of scrubland into garden space cultivated by school kids. Once again the model will be to partner with a local school or community organisation with the skills to run the programme. Ultimately, Emma says,

'We would love to fund some sort of scholarship scheme for kids from the local area,' who would start in a programme at London Cooking Project and go on to a professional cookery school. 'That won't happen overnight, but we have goals.'

Supper club

In the meantime, Battersea Society readers, book your ticket for a supper club. The details can be found on the London Cooking Project website at www.londoncookingproject.com.

On offer are winter feasts from Oliver Rowe, formerly at Moro, and resident chef/caterers Anson & Curtis and Amba Chefs, as well as pop-up Luzon Filipino Restaurant and Ferdie's Food Lab social banquet. Two delicious fund-raisers complete the picture – Juma Kitchen's Iraqi menu for the Amar Foundation, (who provide health and educational services for displaced people in the Middle East), and tapas by Nomad in aid of London Kitchen Project itself.

Join the virtuous circle: come to a supper club; eat something delicious; do something for the community.

www.londoncookingproject.com

Boxing, politics and Bertrand Russell

Tony Belton gives an overview of the role of the Town Hall

Battersea Arts Centre was, as Battersea Society members will know, previously our own town hall. The building was opened in 1897 as the Vestry Town Hall – Battersea Borough Council was not created until 1900. It was built alongside the magnificent Shakespeare Theatre, which was completed in 1893. The pictures show them as they would have looked from the south side of Lavender Hill, until the theatre's demolition in 1956.

Both demonstrate a grandeur and municipal pride very foreign to modern buildings with a similar purpose – no cost saving here, or at least not at the expense of style and appearance.

The theatre was designed by W G Sprague and had a magnificent 1,200 seat auditorium. Amongst the stars said to have performed there were the legendary Ellen Terry, Lily Langtry and Sarah Bernhardt. It was badly hit in a bombing raid on 7 September, 1940, when the Town Hall was also damaged.

The Town Hall was, of course, the administrative and political centre of the vestry and then of the borough until the creation of Wandsworth Council in 1964.

Armistice

The significance of this role is well illustrated by a story from Ernie Perry (Battersea South's Labour MP, 1964 – 69). He recalled that at the age of eight he was called out of class at school with all the other kids to walk to the Town Hall, where at 11 am that day he heard the Mayor announce the signing of the Armistice at the end of the war. It was, of course, 11 November 1918.

This was long before TV and effectively before the radio – in essence the Mayor was a Town Cryer and the Town Hall balcony was his stage.

Talking of mayors it was just five years previously in 1913, that John Archer, a Liverpoolian of Bajan ancestry, was elected by 31-30 votes as the first black mayor of a major authority in the UK.

Many significant political events



Battersea Town Hall and (left), the Shakespeare Theatre



were associated with the Town Hall. For example, John Burns, who became the first truly working class member of the Cabinet in 1906 and was famous for his oratory, often spoke at public meetings and election rallies there. It was also, of course, home to those myriad political debates that make up the life of every society, such as the decision in 1903 to build Britain's first directly constructed council estate, the Latchmere estate.

During World War II the Town Hall became an air raid precautions centre, a site for rationing control and for the distribution of gas masks and ration books. The lower hall was used as an air raid shelter.

And in a pre-TV world, with less ready access to commercial entertainment, the Town Hall had a much wider role than simply politics. As early as 1898 tickets were on sale at one shilling for a lecture by Sir Frederick Bridge on Shakespeare and Music and 10 years later *A Winter's Tale* was staged. Ladies in the audience were 'kindly requested to remove their hats for the general comfort and convenience'.

Works by Beethoven, Vaughan Williams and Tchaikovsky and readings from Shakespeare were featured at concert evenings and on 6 March 1927 Bertrand Russell starred as the guest lecturer presenting a talk on 'Why I Am Not a Christian'. But the Town Hall was not just for 'improving' entertainment. There

were also old time music hall shows and tea dances, while boxing played an important role in the schedule. Battersea had a long tradition of boxing and for many years bouts

were promoted at the Town Hall.

In 1997, to mark the centenary of the Town Hall's opening, the Mayor of Wandsworth, Battersea's Councillor Martin Johnson, called a meeting of all living Battersea councillors. I was one

of the 30 or 40 current and ex-Battersea councillors there to discuss the motion 'that Battersea should declare unilateral independence from Wandsworth Council' – Battersea as a borough in its own right had been abolished by Government on 31 March 1965.

We had a rousing debate, with most of those present contributing including an elderly Liberal councillor who

told me that at the age of 99 she was just six months younger than the Town Hall itself. The motion was passed overwhelmingly but unfortunately no one seemed to notice. Of rather greater significance, in the fire of 13 March 2015, we lost the Grand Hall and its beautiful sprung dance-floor and magnificent ceiling.

Grand

Battersea Town Hall is one of many in London which have a place in the community and which are grand and inspiring buildings in their own right. Chelsea, Fulham, Stratford and Deptford spring to mind – along with Battersea Town Hall, since 1970, all Grade II listed buildings. If we lose them we will lose a part of our history and our communal memories; but they cannot all be museums, though quite a few seem to be becoming wedding locations.

Fortunately for Battersea, the Arts Centre, opened in the 1970s, has now established its presence here and, following the fire, we can be certain that a new hall will rise phoenix-like from the ashes. Even if a new Borough of Battersea is unlikely to follow suit.

Tony Belton is a councillor for Latchmere ward

By bike or by bus, the museum is on the move

The collection will thrive in and out of the old town hall, says museum director Sue Walker

Last year, Jenny Sheridan visited me at Wandsworth Museum in its former home on West Hill to talk about the Museum's closure and proposed partnership with Battersea Arts Centre (*BM* spring 2015). Now, just over a year later, the BAC Moving Museum is about to launch. It's an incredibly exciting moment – and appropriate: my early investigations as newly-appointed director revealed the restless nature of Wandsworth Museum, in all its incarnations. So the name Moving Museum seemed entirely apt. There will of course be a strapline to emphasise the importance of the Wandsworth connection.

Slipper baths

The story of the first museum in the area begins in 1906 when a new public museum occupied the first floor of a building on the corner of Plough Lane and Benham Street, with a gymnasium, a recreation room and slipper baths below. The museum was closed by the end of WWI. Later, a Battersea Museum and Gallery appeared, opening in 1927 in the old reference room at Battersea District Library on Lavender Hill, but towards the end of the Second World War the room became a designated fuel rationing office, never to recover its former role.

In 1986, after a forty-year intermission, a new museum opened at the Court House in Garratt Lane, only to close again in 2005. It re-opened at West Hill as an independent museum funded by the Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, with a five-year lease on the former West Hill Library building owned by Wandsworth Borough Council. The lease ended in 2015 and the building is now let to a day nursery. The museum collection remains in storage in the building's basement.

This sporadic and complex history suggests a determined drive to preserve the past and to hold material evidence of human experience and history. We're all museums on the move, travelling with our eclectic memories and experience, our

precious families and friends and, last but not least, our treasured possessions. For a variety of reasons, sometimes we need a guardian or custodian to protect what is important to us. In April, Battersea Arts Centre will become just that – the collection's new custodian – when a twenty-year loan agreement is made with the Council to transfer the lease on its collection from the Museum Company to BAC.

The collection will be accessible by appointment to anyone wishing to view items and we will also be arranging display and study sessions at BAC. We also intend to develop the borough's interesting collection of paintings over the next few years.

As our communities evolve at tremendous pace, knowing about our past will help us build our future on solid foundations. Battersea Arts Centre's mission is to take creative risks to inspire people to shape the future. BAC Moving Museum's strategy is to commemorate processes of change, encourage reflective and active 21st century citizenship and create a sense of place. This means taking the collection out around the borough so that the museum becomes part of our common experience, not something that just happens at one particular site.

Bus

The BAC Moving Museum will encourage the discovery of our rich social and political heritage, reaching out to the five town centres or 'villages' across the borough – Balham, Putney, Tooting, Wandsworth and Clapham Junction and further afield in Earlsfield, Roehampton and Nine Elms. We are currently

considering both bicycles and a bus as a way of increasing access to the collection in schools, community centres, libraries and hospitals all over the borough.

Sheep

Recently we finalised a creative new schools programme inspired by artists working together with teachers and their pupils. It's a seminal moment when the best of BAC and Wandsworth Museum blend to create a new hybrid for children in Wandsworth. We hope it will lead the field in testing out new ways of working with history in the classroom.

Sheepscares is our first unofficial BAC Moving Museum project and public adventure. The

focus on sheep is a nod to the symbolism of Easter as well as to Battersea's radical history, with reference to the enclosure of common land, grazing rights and perhaps raising questions about following and leading.

It is aimed at children and families and will appear in libraries across the borough during March, culminating in a day of family fun at Battersea Arts Centre on 9 April. Sound artist Dan Scott will create the sounds of our natural landscapes, past and present, with projection, recording and interactive art installation. We will be joined on the day by some very special guests, sheep from Vauxhall City Farm, who will grace the foyer at Battersea Town Hall, as well as the BAC Beat Boxers. If you miss the day you can catch up on the project's background on 1 June as part of the Wandsworth Heritage Festival. Dan Scott and historian Dorian Gerhold will be in discussion as part of BAC's Town Hall Talks series.

We're very excited about our new museum, and hope you will be too. As you may already know, there are already several heritage events at BAC, including Creative Museums,

A woolly Easter at BAC?



run with Arts Council England, which supports six museums across England; Town Hall Talks, a series of free heritage talks held every last Wednesday of the month; the Living Radically programme of heritage work which focuses on the history

of Battersea Town Hall; and award-winning children's theatre including the shows *The Good Neighbour* and *Town Hall Cherubs*.

At the beginning of April, all heritage, archive and museum work will fall under the banner of BAC

Moving Museum. We look forward to stirring the emotions, and also inviting real debate about the nature of our past and our future. We will be exploring ways of sharing everything that belongs to Wandsworth.

The end of the affair – on Clapham Common

Janice Morphet explores the local area's influence on the works of Graham Greene

Before he was received into the Catholic church and married in 1927, Graham Greene spent about six months living as a lodger at Albert Palace Mansions, Lurline Gardens. He was born into a large brewing family in Berkhamsted where his father was head of the eponymous public school. Later, members of his family distinguished themselves in public service in leading the BBC and branches of the intelligence services. When Greene came to Battersea, he had just started work as a leader writer for *The Times* where his companion at the next desk was Douglas Jay, later Cabinet Minister and Labour MP for Battersea North 1946 – 1983.

Hanging

Greene had already started to write when he came to Battersea, but one of the first books that he published in 1934, *It's a Battlefield* is located here. The book is set in the mid-1920s, at about the time he was living in Lurline Gardens, amid concerns about a forthcoming General Strike and growth in membership of the Communist party. Grover, a young Communist, has been convicted of killing a policeman whom he thought was about to attack his wife at a demonstration and who is revealed later to have beaten his own wife. Although found guilty, the government is concerned about the potential public response to hanging Grover. The secretary of the Home Minister badgers the Assistant Commissioner of the Police to find a way of relieving him. Grover and his wife live in a basement in Battersea Park Road. Grover's brother approaches their flat and 'the cold railings of the polytechnic touched the back of his hands ... a notice on the railings said



'it is forbidden to throw stones at the polytechnic' ... his brother lived in a basement opposite the laurels and the railings of the polytechnic ... (he) looked down and saw beneath his feet the yellow glow of the kitchen' (pp 59 – 60).

Greene also used a description of the view from a block of flats on Albert Bridge Road in the *Ministry of Fear* (1943) 'The stairs were at the back of the flats looking towards Chelsea, and as you climbed above the second floor and your view lifted, the war came back into sight. Most of the church spires seemed to have been snapped off two-thirds up like sugar-sticks, and there was an appearance of slum clearance where there hadn't really been any slums.'

Greene left Battersea to move to Hampstead on his marriage. Later his wife found a house to rent facing Clapham Common at 14 Northside that is now marked by a blue plaque. Greene lived here between 1935 –

1940 when the house was bombed. Before this he had moved out his family and Greene also spent time in Bloomsbury where he had rented a space to write. Greene's daughter, Caroline Bourget, said of the house: '... my father evacuated us to his parents' home in Sussex in August 1939 when I was only 5 yrs old ... but I do remember the magnificent staircase. Some well-known writers and publishers visited the house such as John Betjeman and Evelyn Waugh. When I met them later, they recalled seeing me at the age of 3 or 4.'

Lover

Clapham Common is the location of Greene's novel the *End of the Affair*, published in 1951 but set from 1939 onwards. It opens with civil servant Henry Miles, who lives on North Side meeting his wife Sarah's lover, a writer Bendrix, who lives on the south side, crossing the Common one rainy evening. When Bendrix is with Sarah, the Northside house is bombed whilst they are making love and he nearly dies. He later finds that Sarah has made a promise to God that if he survives she will break off their affair although she does not tell him. Both husband and lover are jealous and suspect Sarah, employing private agents to follow her movements. They

find her visiting 16 Cedars Road, mistaking her quest for advice with visits to a lover. Clapham Common appears again when Sarah dies after catching cold fleeing across it.

By 1951, Greene had split from his wife and started his international travelling career, leaving Clapham and Battersea behind him.



Link Up

Isis Ellis introduces a new organisation that brings volunteers and local charities together



Volunteers use their professional skills to help charities

Would you like to:

- Engage with causes important to you in your community?
- Share your expertise and use professional skills you thought you had left at work?

Or is your charity looking for some professional help?

Link Up Battersea is a new initiative that brings together volunteers who have professional skills with local charities that need some help. Volunteers take on the role of 'volunteer consultant' and work on meaningful projects with flexible time commitments that suit them.

Pelin, one of our volunteers, had worked in HR and project management before she moved to the UK and started a family. After seven years away from the office, she was ready to go back to work, but lacked confidence and was looking for an opportunity to dip her toes back into the water. At the same time, the local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) needed skilled help to review their personnel policy documents and revise their employee handbook. Link Up Battersea brought Pelin and the CAB together, and helped to structure the project to fit both the needs of the CAB and Pelin's time commitment and skills. Pelin says,

'I feel more confident in my work related skills, and although I haven't used them for years, I now know that they are still relevant and valuable'. The great thing about Link Up is that

the projects are flexible, and are designed to fit in with your lifestyle.

Cathy has lived in Battersea for 30 years. She is semi-retired and working part-time for her husband's business. At the peak of her career, she worked full time in sales and marketing, travelling

'I have met some wonderful people along the way. I really feel we can make a difference'

extensively, before deciding to cut back and spend more time at home. She contacted Link Up because she wanted to contribute to the community and continue to use her skills. Those skills were immediately put to use in helping to set up and run Link Up. Cathy comments, 'I am so pleased to be involved with Link Up Battersea. As well as working with a fantastic committee on this worthy initiative, I have made connections in my community and met some wonderful people along the way. I really feel we can make a difference.'

Belen, on the other hand, was looking for something to fit in with her own routine, which involved taking her young children to nursery school. She volunteered to work on a project at the Katherine Low Settlement, a well-established local multi-purpose charity. KLS needed someone to

review their interior design and make recommendations on how to use the space more effectively. Belen had taken some interior design courses, and had the skills needed. Importantly for her, she was able to do it while her children were in nursery school, going in to KLS on Thursday mornings for two hours. Her completed project has made a difference to KLS, and Belen improved her skills and upped her confidence.

'It fulfilled both sides, it helped the community but also helped me put myself forward. It allowed me to apply my skills and realise I can do it'.

Belen is going to continue volunteering with Link Up, and already has a new project lined up.

So far, the charities have been very impressed with their Link Up volunteers, and the work of the volunteers has been helpful to the charities.

Of their Link Up project, the South West London Law Centre said 'This will help create a more sustainable charity and ensure that we continue to offer legal assistance to those that need it most'. They also said that they were 'Extremely impressed with the dedication and offerings of the committee in helping local charities'.

Link Up realises that people who are retired or semi-retired as well as those who are taking time off work have a wealth of talent and experience which could be put to good use in Battersea. We are also aware that many may lack confidence, or be daunted by the prospect of committing to a project. As Link Up is a local Battersea organisation, (a part of KLS), the team will support and encourage volunteers, making sure that the 'fit' is right, and that projects have a clear and agreed structure. This is a wonderful opportunity to use any skills that you have (design, project development, finance, photography, marketing, administration, public relations to name but a few) – they are valued and needed.

'I was respected and trusted to deliver, and I did it! I'm now ready to be challenged further' says one of the Link UP volunteers.

www.linkup-battersea.org or email linkupbattersea.org
Isis Ellis is a member of the Link Up team.

Leonard Holdsworth: obituary

Mike Roden pays tribute to a fellow member and friend

I'm very sad to report that Leonard Holdsworth, who with his wife Joan was a regular attender at the Society Summer Party and Spring Lunch, died early in January aged 73.

Although he was a long term resident of Chelsea and a member of the Chelsea Society, he had business interests in this area and joined the Battersea Society when he bumped into a group of members delivering leaflets on Parkgate Road in the 1990s.

He always claimed that Battersea Society parties were much more fun than the Chelsea version, and as a former magazine publisher frequently urged the Chelsea Society council to produce a newsletter of the quality of *Battersea Matters*. The self-proclaimed 'only socialist

in Chelsea' was often at odds with staid residents over his support for pubs and clubs which he felt brought life to the area. Most recently he became infuriated by what he saw as the snobbish self-interest of Chelsea residents opposed to a Crossrail station in King's Road, and rallied support for the project under the banner CRIST (Crossrail Informal Supporters Team).

He was a sociable, witty, friendly man with a tremendous sense of fun. Even his recent illness did not stop him enjoying life. Stairs had become difficult for him, but that did not prevent him climbing the five flights to our flat to join the celebrations for our wedding anniversary last November, and as always he was on



Leonard entertains his wife Joan (centre) and Angela Roden, April 2009

entertainingly top form. That was the last time I saw him. Usually Leonard and Joan's Hangover Party on New Year's Day was a highlight to look forward to but not this year as sadly he had been ill over Christmas.

Those of us who knew him will miss him greatly, and our condolences go out to Joan and sons Justin and Toby and five grandchildren.

The State We're In

Local people and organisations have inspired four new short plays about Battersea, says Tom Latter

At Theatre503 we are proud of our ambitious programming of new plays, and this April a pioneering theatre project will continue the trend. Four playwrights have been immersed in Battersea's community, finding some of London's untold stories.

Spending time with different organisations and people has proved inspirational for the playwrights. Providence House Youth Club has provided a range of activities for 5 to 25 year olds for over 50 years – including several generations of families who return again and again for the sense of community it fosters.

The local Leonard Cheshire Centre is a lively and inviting place for people who have physical disabilities. And the Katherine Low Settlement is an epicentre for dozens of charity projects which offer a vital service to families, older people and those newly arrived in the area. The work these three places do is amazing, and singing their praises is central to this production. There are enough stories there to fill Theatre503's stage for years.



As well as a celebration of the community, *The State We're In* will also address political issues. What does it mean to care in 2016? How is regeneration impacting the area? Battersea has a long history of diversity and welcoming new people; what effect does this have on daily

life? To explore difficult questions is a key aim of Theatre503's output, so we have also spent time with the police, in St George's Hospital in Tooting, with the neighbourhood watch, and at Wandsworth Foodbank to uncover what challenges these institutions face.

Most fascinating of all are the personal stories our writers have heard. They themselves come from very different backgrounds and are writing about the things which anger, excite or concern them. Christopher Hogg's insightful work explores issues of care and the NHS. Afsaneh Gray turns her sharp political gaze towards the area's youth and what their future might be. Jenny

Stark's tender writing re-interprets some of the stories she has been told by Battersea's residents. And Sherhan Lingham's perceptive play is inspired by the mix of cultures and communication within community support groups.

The four writers have come through open-to-all schemes run by the Literary Department at Theatre503, which accepts script submissions all year round, and looks to develop a wide range of writing talent.

Theatre503 also seeks to connect directly with the local community, for example, by offering tickets from just £2 to SW11 residents. It is our hope that *The State We're In* will not only be a fantastic show but also create new bonds between the theatre and the community which will last well beyond April. Making theatre about the local community only matters if the community is there to see it, so we hope you'll join us to witness the culmination of this exciting and important collaboration.

Tom Latter is Literary Co-ordinator, Theatre503

*The State We're In, Theatre503
503 Battersea Park Road, SW11 3BW
12 – 16 April 2016, 7.45pm
Tickets: www.theatre503.com
020 7978 7040*

A resounding gong or a clanging cymbal

Dame Evelyn Glennie wows St Luke's Music Society



In January, a packed audience at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, heard a thrilling performance by Dame Evelyn Glennie, the famous percussionist, with Philip Smith at the piano. *Prism Rhapsody*, *Waterphone Improvisation*, *Orologeria Aureola* and other highly unusual sounds took command of our senses.
Photos: Suzanne Perkins



Battersea Park as seen from space

Photos posted by astronaut Tim Peake clearly show the London parks' familiar shapes

