

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SPRING 2020



Battersea through your eyes

Duncan Parish introduces the Battersea Society's photography competition

What does Battersea mean to you? To celebrate the Society's 55th birthday, that is what we will be asking our members, our friends and those who live and work here as we launch our first ever photo competition, on the theme My Battersea.

The competition is open to all, whether you have honed your eye for years setting up those perfect Instagram shots, or you just like to take photos on your phone. A simple snap could put you in with a chance to win our top prize of £500 and see your work feature in our spring exhibition hosted by the Royal College of Art.

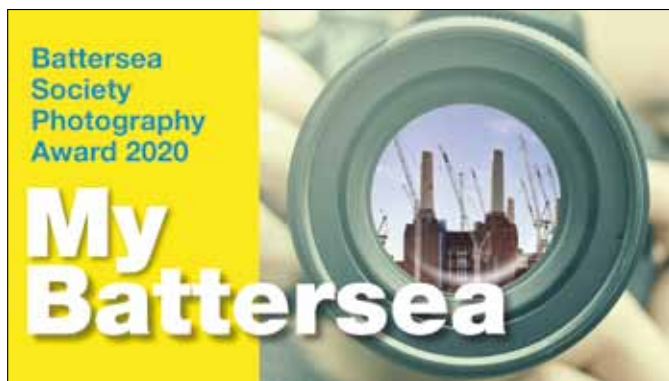
Why a photo competition?

First, we wanted something that was accessible to all. Fact: more photos are taken every two minutes than over the whole of the nineteenth century. It is estimated that over 1.2 trillion photos were taken in 2017. And over 1.8 billion photos are uploaded on Facebook, Instagram and other sites every single day.

Today most people both young and old carry a smartphone around with them. We hope that means as many people as possible will take the chance to enter.

Second, we want to explore what Battersea means to those who live and work here.

Running the Society's social media pages over the last year I've noticed that Battersea means many different things to different people. Some Facebook groups revel in our rich heritage, still visible in our streetscape



today; others enjoy Battersea as a thriving modern borough with new and vibrant architecture. For many the appeal is in our diverse communities and the huge range of cultural events on offer; while others love the freedom and calm of our open spaces.

And not everything in Battersea is positive, we understand that. Whatever your Battersea is we would like to see it.

They say a picture paints a thousand words and we hope that seeing people's photos will give us a sense of what the borough really feels like to those who live and work here. By understanding more about your Battersea we can better shape the Society's work as we head towards our 60th birthday.

Third, we hope it will help everyone see a bit of Battersea they might not have looked at before. The American photographer, Elliott Erwitt, said, 'to me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place'. Far be it for us to call Battersea an ordinary place, but we do believe that even those of us who have lived here all our lives can find something new in even familiar places if we just look hard enough.

How can you enter?

The competition is open now and will run until 20 April. Entries can be made via the Society's website at batterseasociety.org.uk/mybattersea.

Entries should comprise a single digital image and be taken in or have some connection to Battersea. Full terms and conditions are available on the website.

Prizes will be awarded in three categories: Age 10 and under (£100), 11 to 17 (£150) and 18 and over (£250) with a further prize of £250 for the overall winner.

Finalists will receive a framed print of their photo to keep and winners will also receive a year's membership of the Battersea Society.

The Society's chair, Jenny Sheridan, will be joined on the judging panel by Hermione Wiltshire, artist and senior tutor in photography at the Royal College of Art and Alan Burles, photographer, long time Battersea resident and winner of the 2018 Leica Street Photography International Award.

We are also hugely grateful to the Royal College of Art who have agreed to exhibit the finalists in each category at their Dyson Gallery on Battersea Bridge Road.

The overall winner of the competition will be announced at the opening of our 'My Battersea' exhibition which will be open to the public from 21 to 24 May with a private view for Battersea Society members on the 20th.

The competition is open to members and the general public alike, so do please encourage your friends, family and colleagues to take part. We would love to give the judges a real challenge!

Duncan Parish is a trustee of the Battersea Society



Don't forget to visit our website:

batterseasociety.org.uk

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

From the editor



Twenty years ago, Northcote Road had a small but still solid remnant of its flourishing street market.

The street was known for its variety of food and other independent shops. A decade later, many of the Italian and other delis had closed but several independent shops remained. Now the street market is a shadow of its

former self with, among a few street food stalls, just one remaining fruit and vegetable stall. And now one of the last independent specialist shops has closed.

Expertise

The Northcote Music Shop ended its life not, as in previous times, because of a rent increase or high business rates, but because of the internet. Shoppers would come in, make use of the owner's expertise (he is a professional musician), take photos of the instruments they intended to buy, and then calmly inform the owner that they were going to buy them on

Amazon, where they were cheaper.

It was no longer possible to run the business at a loss. The shop has closed. No more keyboards to hire or saxophone reeds to buy, no more quarter-size guitars for budding musicians or repairs for violinists. No more in-depth advice on the best instrument to suit an enthusiastic child. There's another boarded up space on the high street.

Amazon pays £1.2 million tax in the UK on £2,400 million revenue.

Jenny Sheridan
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Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden looks back to a simpler world, and forward to who knows what...

'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin....'

This well-known phrase first turned up at 1.45pm on 16 January 1950 at the beginning of the first appearance of *Listen with Mother* on the BBC Light Programme. It was apparently an ad-lib by the presenter and story-reader Julia Lang.

The sharp-eyed among you will have noticed that it's just over seventy years since the programme aimed at 'Mothers and children at home' had its first outing.

Wireless

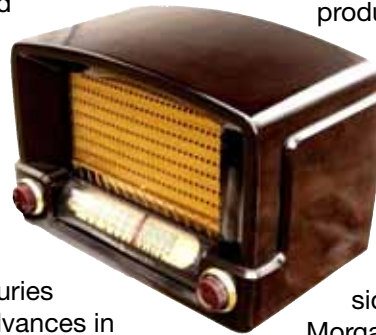
The memory conjures up an idealised black and white image of children listening rapt in front of the wireless, mother busy in the kitchen, and the man of the house out at work. At its peak, it pulled in over a million listeners, me among them. But my daughters never listened to it, and I'm sure my grandchildren wouldn't abandon their screens for it. By the seventies a BBC survey found that half the audience consisted of long distance lorry drivers. Clearly the show's days were numbered, and it was axed in 1982.

So why, you ask yourselves, am I telling you all this? This year on a few days the roof of the school opposite our flat has been white with frost. When I ventured out it was odd to

see my breath visible in the air. As a kid I often used to walk to school pretending to blow out smoke from one of those sweet cigarettes with the red tipped end you could buy in those days.

One of the regular *Listen with Mother* songs was *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* with the last line of each verse – 'On a cold and frosty morning'. As I walked briskly along I found myself singing it in my head. As the earth heats up how much longer will we have frosty mornings, I wonder?

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries there were great advances in science and engineering. Hopefully we won't return to the days of the Great Stink with the Thames an open sewer. Joseph Bazalgette's massive sewer improvements held the tide back (so to speak) for a very long time, and now the Tideway Tunnel project aims to cope with London's increasing output of sewage. Four giant tunnel-boring machines have already completed almost 9km of the projected 25km of tunnels – and are close to completing the stretch from Battersea to Fulham. The machines



are all named after women from history who lived or worked near Tideway's construction sites, and Rachel is working tirelessly under our stretch of the river. If you know who the original Rachel was, please let me know.

Anyway, it demonstrates that things can get better, and while efforts to avoid the worst effects of climate change are lacklustre, governments and individuals are starting to wake up and take some action.

As a household we try to do our bit by only travelling on public transport, recycling everything we can, and (mindful of the methane produced every time a cow burps) reducing our meat consumption. Commerce has leapt on that bandwagon, bringing us Gregg's sausage roll, and that burger oozing with beetroot blood (both of which had the excellent side effect of upsetting Piers Morgan). By themselves they're no solution of course, but we must suppose that every little helps.

I ought to point out that the earliest recorded use of that phrase predates Tesco's slogan by around 400 years. I don't know if my mum knew that but her version was 'Every little helps, as the little boy said as he...' To avoid causing offence, I'll merely state that the child was standing by the sea at the time.

And hopefully having avoided cheapening the tone, I'll bid you goodbye for now. Mind how you go.

Planning Matters: Why do we bother?

Monica Tross grinds her teeth

I find it hard not to feel a mix of despondency and anger at the news that Wandsworth's planning committee has approved plans for the Winstanley scheme. This increases the density from around 900 to 2550 units of which a mere 35% are 'affordable'.

We have been reviewing and commenting on plans for this development for at least the past six years, first sending comments to the Council in 2014, at which time we had been told that the scheme would retain at least the current proportion of affordable and full social rented accommodation ie 42% (WBC committee paper No 12-679 November 2012).

In February 2018 we wrote of our disappointment that the Council hadn't been able to negotiate an affordable percentage above 35% especially as there was already talk of an increased height for some blocks. Our final letter, in February 2019, again fruitless, expressed major reservations about the design, the size of the development, the amount of affordable housing and the fact that the Council had recently rejected a proposal to increase the amount of affordable housing by 290 units.

Strangely this development is one which the developer is going into knowing that the figures show that no profit will be made. Or in other words, it 'lacks viability'. We have seen this with other developments although, as in other cases, the developer is keen to assure us that they are prepared to take the hit and supply some affordable housing. Or as they put it: 'Notwithstanding the results of the viability modelling, the Applicant is willing to proceed at these levels of affordable housing on the basis that the deficit is taken into account within any future review mechanism'. We think this means 'given that we won't be making any money out of this don't come back to us in the future to ask for more than the minimum number of affordable housing because unless costs lower

substantially the project will continue to lack viability.' You do have to wonder at the business competence of companies who undertake building projects which won't make a profit for their shareholders!

NINE ELMS

Mixed news here. The bad news is that the same committee approved yet higher density on the South London Mail Centre site (2019/2250) and a proposal for an office building the design of which both we and the Design Review Panel found lacking (2019/2293). You can see our letters in full on our website. I suppose the better news for us is that the decisions have been taken, so at least this year we won't have to pore through masses of documentation. On a happier note, we were welcomed to a (muddy) site visit of the R&F development at the eastern end of Nine Elms and were somewhat more hopeful about the mix of open space and buildings on this site, which contains the entrance to the Linear Park alongside a large hotel complex on the corner of Wandsworth Road. And in relation to daylight, we are told that R&F Properties intend to use a very high-quality glass specification to the lower floors of the development to maximise the amount of daylight.

Battersea Power Station is amending the design of the long block to the west of the Frank Gehry building to separate a section for office use at the southern end. This seems fine to us and we will not be commenting (2019/5606).

CHATFIELD AND YELVERTON ROADS

Not much to be happy about here either. Plans for a new building in Chatfield Road for The Collective are in, 2019/5484 and we and many neighbours are not happy with the



impact this would have. By the time you read this our letter will be on our website. The planning committee deferred a decision on the application for a tall building in Yelverton Road, 2019/2295 which was proposed for approval. This was not because of the exterior design but rather the interior. The Council's policies call for developments to be designed to a high quality and to contribute positively to local spatial character and it appears that most if not all of what is applied for meets these criteria, in the view of planning officers and councillors.

THERE IS SOME GOOD NEWS

We have consistently objected to applications for 'telephone boxes' which are really large advertising hoardings. In the past these have been exempt from the planning process as 'permitted development' and applicants have appealed against a refusal. Westminster Council has led the way in contending that exemption only applied to structures with the sole purpose of providing a payphone, so that where the structure was dual purpose there was no exemption. This has become accepted by Planning Inspectors (and will be ratified in future government legislation) so the scourge of unwanted advertisements on the footway in Lavender Hill and elsewhere has been fended off. *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*

Age matters

Michael Jubb looks at the 2019 election results in Battersea and its neighbours

The 2019 General Election gave the Conservative Party its biggest majority for over 30 years. But Battersea and its neighbouring constituencies did not reflect the national result. In Battersea, Marsha de Cordova doubled the majority for Labour, while in Tooting Rosena Allin-Khan retained her seat, and in Putney Fleur Anderson registered Labour's only gain of the Election. This was part of a wider pattern across the 73 seats in London, which now has 49 Labour MPs, a quarter of its total for the whole UK; while the Conservatives have 21 MPs, and the Lib Dems three. Why did London produce such a distinctive result?

One of the most striking findings about the Election was the difference in voting behaviour between younger and older people. In the 1970s, more than a quarter of 18 – 24 year-olds voted Conservative, and just over 40% of 65 year-olds did so. But in 2019, only 19% of 18 – 24 year-olds voted Conservative, while 62% of over-65s did so, with the proportions almost exactly reversed for those in the two age-groups voting Labour. This three-to-one difference in voting behaviour is unprecedented.

Striking

What are the reasons for this growing division between younger and older voters? Is there a generation born in the decades either side of the Second World War that is especially likely to vote Conservative; or do individuals become more likely to vote Conservative as they get older? It's probably a combination of the two. But one of the most striking of the pollsters' findings in 2019 is that the age when individuals became more likely to vote Conservative than Labour fell to 39. In the 1970s it was around 56.

This age divide is likely to become more marked as the proportion of over-65s in the UK continues to grow. It has risen from 19% of the voting-age population in 1970 to 23% now; and is expected to rise to 27% by 2030, and 29% by

2040. But the proportion varies in different parts of the country; and the variations are growing. Much of London and of other large cities have high proportions of young people, while parts of the south coast, the east coast and Wales, for example, have higher proportions of over-65s. In 1961, these older people represented 16% of the voting-age population in Battersea, not far below the average of 19% for the whole UK. But as we shall see, Battersea and its neighbouring constituencies have become younger as other constituencies have grown older.

Voting behaviour

Both age and geographical differences are made even sharper when it comes to voting behaviour. First, not everyone is on the electoral register. It is estimated that the registers are around 85% complete across Great Britain (76% in London; and probably 81% in Battersea). But registration varies by age: 94% of over-65s but only 68% of 20 – 24 year-olds are on the electoral register. Second, pollsters estimate that while under half of 25 – 34 year-olds turn out to vote, over three-quarters of over-65s do so. Research by Age UK suggests that as a result, in an increasing number of constituencies, over-65s represent over half of those who actually vote.

So how did age affect the results of the 2019 Election at constituency level? I used the Office of National Statistics' estimates to calculate the proportion of different age groups in the voting-age population for each of the 573 constituencies in England and Wales. The first thing to note is that Battersea has the highest proportion (47.8%) of 25 – 39 year-olds in the country, nearly twice the national average, and more than three times the proportion in seats such as

Inset: Marsha de Cordova, Battersea's recently re-elected MP



Arundel, North Norfolk or Totnes. If we look at proportions of over-65s, Battersea comes 558th out of the 573 constituencies with 10.3%; Tooting 549th with 11.6%; and Putney 533rd, with 13.9%. The range across all constituencies is remarkable, from 7.7% (Poplar and Limehouse) to 41.4% (Christchurch). One of the

most striking things about these rank orders is the concentration of Labour MPs in younger-age constituencies. Of the 100 constituencies with the lowest proportion of over-65s, the first 64 all have Labour MPs, with the single exception of Brighton Pavilion, held by Caroline Lucas for the Greens. Altogether, there are 88 Labour MPs, 9 Conservatives, and one each for the Greens and the Lib Dems in those 100 seats. And the 100 seats with the highest proportions of over-65s show an even more marked pattern. No fewer than 94 of them are held by Conservative MPs, with three each for Labour and Plaid Cymru.

I am not suggesting that age is the only lens through which to see the results of the General Election; social class, sex, race and variances in local social and economic conditions all clearly influence the results. But divergences in electoral behaviour by age – and just as significant, the growing differences in the age profile of voters in constituencies across the UK, and the associated variations in election results – are clearly going to be an important part of the electoral landscape for many years to come. Age does matter, and how we change our voting behaviour as we grow older is something political parties ignore at their peril.

It's not all doom and gloom

What has happened in the last ten years? Monica Tross looks back at past *Battersea Matters*

Back in the Spring of 2010 we raised a concern about the preservation of Brian Barnes' splendid mural in Dagnall Street. The old Haberdashers' Arms in Culvert Road was to be redeveloped as flats and there was no mention of the mural in the application material. We alerted Wandsworth Council to the need to preserve it and they set its retention as a condition for their approval of the application. Ten years later it can still be seen in Dagnall Street just round the corner from Culvert Road on the back wall of the building. Brian's mural work is thriving with a recent commission for Carey Gardens, featured in our Summer 2018 issue and to be seen at 189 Carey Gardens on a bend of Condell Road SW8 off Stewarts Road. Here's a reminder of them both (check out the website version later on to see them in glorious colour).

Non-selective

Bolingbroke Academy is another success story. In Spring 2010 we reported on calls for a new secondary school on the site of the Bolingbroke Hospital. The new non-selective Ark Academy school opened in 2012, at first with just one year group with another added each year until it reached the final goal in 2018 of 800 pupils covering all year groups including a Sixth Form. The current mix of pupils is narrowly skewed towards boys at 55% of the total.

That first group of Year 7s

took their A levels last year and outperformed the national average in every subject. Perhaps it isn't too surprising that 100% of Bolingbroke students were awarded an A* to C pass in French but they performed better than the average across the whole range of subjects. Many have gone on to universities across the country and I was pleased to hear that degree choices cover a wide range from Architecture to Veterinary Science by way of Physics. Check out their website for more news,

(arkbolingbrokeacademy.org) You'll be too late for their performance of 'We Will Rock You' but I'm sure there will be more shows open to the public.

Back then we also worried about the wonderful tiles in the hospital, which showed many well-known nursery rhymes. They were made by Simpson & Carter and were installed around the new children's ward when it opened in 1927. Good news here too, they are safely installed in the library at Bolingbroke Academy – see the illustration.

Buses, trains – and even boats of the duck variety – have featured over the years. Was the move to combine the merging of the 170 and 239 routes such a good idea? Views were mixed back in 2009 and concerns about the capacity and

frequency of the 170 have rumbled on over the years. These remain very much a concern as the developers of the many new buildings in Lombard and York Roads cite the high public transport access available to their residents in support of their dense proposals.

Stylish

The 19 has featured too. Who would have thought that *Vogue* had once designated the 19 bus route 'one of the 14 most stylish locations in Britain'! In 2009 we reported that the Heatherwick update of the old Routemaster was being tried out on the 19 route – and now we learn that these buses are going to be front opening only because fare evasion is too high. But at least the 19 is still running

Not all the news from the past is as happy. I could write about our continued efforts to encourage improvements at Clapham Junction station and, on the roads, the problems at the junction of Battersea Church Road and Battersea Bridge Road. But enough of that, there is a Clapham Junction BID in place (see Michael Jubb's article, *Battersea Matters* Summer 2019) and we have set up friendly links with the station manager – and convinced him that his station is indeed Clapham Junction, not Clapham.

Inset: One of the nursery rhyme tile panels in the library at Bolingbroke Academy
Below: Brian Barnes and his colourful murals



What's in a name?

Tony Belton investigates the naming of estates, roads and individual buildings in North Battersea

Most of north Battersea was developed by private speculators in the second half of the nineteenth century or by local authorities in the late twentieth century and the names reflect their history and their interests.

Tooting-born Cyril Flower, ennobled in 1892 as The Baron Battersea of Battersea in the County of London and of Overstrand in the County of Norfolk, was probably the richest and most important of the private developers.

Flower made much of his money as a young man in Australia before returning to Britain to marry a Rothschild daughter. He was a Liberal MP representing first Brecon and then Luton, but with little record of ever going to either. He bought the area south of the newly developed Battersea Park and developed the mansion blocks, including Overstrand, named after his summer retreat in Norfolk. Other blocks were named after his own name, Cyril, and a close friend and fellow Liberal MP, Edward Primrose, Lord Rosebery. At the time of the mansion development the Prince of Wales was the main focus of the British court. The other mansion block name on Prince of Wales Drive was York Mansions, derived perhaps from Battersea's role in earlier times as the London home of the Archbishop of York.

Afghan war

At the other end of the scale Edna, Ursula and Octavia Streets, in the area known as the Three Sisters Conservation Area, are named after the developer's three daughters, according to local tradition, although the massively authoritative Survey of London states rather more prosaically that they were the names of his two (consecutive) wives and his mother. Meanwhile, only half a mile away, the late nineteenth century development of Kandahar, Nepalul, Afghan, Cabul and Khyber Roads clearly reflects the battles and events of the Second Anglo-Afghan War of 1878 – 80. The modern Zulu Mews, built in 2009 – 10 maintains the tradition.

A few years later the local authority,



Battersea Borough Council, became a major developer with the start in 1903 of the Latchmere Estate. The spine of the estate was named Burns Road after John Burns, the dominant councillor and in 1906 the first so-called working-class member of the Cabinet. The workerist-dominated council (the Labour Party was not formally established until 1906 and Burns like many of his colleagues was a member of the Liberal Party) proceeded to name Matthews Street after a close political ally of Burns and Odger Street after an active member of the Chartist's half a century earlier. Two other appropriate but abstract names were Freedom and Reform Streets, but the most startling street name is undoubtedly Joubert Street. Piet Joubert was a famous and respected Boer general during the contemporaneous Boer War. It was a bit like naming a new road in London in the 1940s Rommel Street after the much-respected German general. The name was a very striking statement of the anti-imperialist sentiment on the left here.

Perhaps an even more evident statement both of historical connections and of political inclination can be seen in the post-war London County Council built Wilberforce Estate, named after the famous Battersea resident and anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce. The blocks on that estate, in Maysoule Road, are all named after major figures in the anti-slavery campaign, from Prime Minister William Pitt

and his redoubtable opponent Charles James Fox, to Wilberforce's right-hand man Thomas Clarkson and his successor as leader of the abolitionists Thomas Buxton.

And so on to the 1960s where again the naming of estate blocks reflects both events of the time and significant local figures. So, alongside Gagarin Court, named after the first Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, stands Shepherd Court, named after the first American into space (though it should be noted that whilst Yuri went into orbit, John was merely shot into space for a few hundred miles). Other blocks are named after the Tory council leader Thomas Sendall, the powerful Labour leader and housing boss Sid(ney) Sporle and numerous councillors such as Shaw Court, Carmichael and Clark Lawrence Courts.

Raptors

Later in the twentieth century the move to the privatisation of council estates led to a new trend. For example Jay Court, named after Douglas Jay, Battersea MP (1946–83) and one-time President of the Board of Trade, now has the rather unoriginal and boring moniker of Park South. A more interesting example of private sector naming can be seen in the Falcons Estate, where the new consistent ornithological raptor names of Hawk, Harrier, Peregrine, Osprey, Eagle, Kite and Kestrel Houses replace the varied names of the old Livingstone Estate: Sampson, Webster, Burne Jones, Bancroft, Irving, Lush and Bridgfield Courts.

There are so many more stories to tell about naming. Why and who decided to call an estate after a county – Somerset – and name every block in it after a west country village? Many of us know who Charlotte Despard was but who or what were Inkster, Lucas, Beattie, Bonsor and a hundred others.

So, what's in a name? It may be a personal history, childhood memory or a local event – it can be fascinating to find out.

Tony Belton is Labour councillor for Latchmere ward.

Murders in the Mansions

Janice Morphet reveals where the bodies are buried

Two queens of the golden age of crime fiction, Dorothy L Sayers and Agatha Christie both set novels in the mansion blocks on Prince of Wales Drive. Christie had lived there for a short while with her first husband Archie when they returned from their round the world tour to promote the British Empire Exhibition in 1922. However, Dorothy L Sayers located part of the plot of her first Peter Wimsey novel, *Whose Body?* there first.

Sayers did not live in Battersea but after she came down from Oxford she had a range of jobs and was not clear about what she wanted to do. One of these posts was teaching at Clapham High School in Nightingale Lane. When she first moved to London in 1920 she lived at 36 St George's Square, Pimlico, and was doing translating work. While in Pimlico, influenced by the work of Sexton Blake, she started to write about Peter Wimsey. *Whose Body?* was published in 1923, by which time she was copywriting, living in a small flat with a baby and was short of money. The creation of Lord Peter Wimsey, she said, gave her the opportunity to spend money and live in a grander style in her imagination.

Pince-nez

The plot starts with a dead body wearing nothing but a pince-nez being found in the bath of an architect, Throgmorton, who is working on Wimsey's mother's church. Throgmorton lives in 59 Queen Caroline Mansions in Battersea opposite the Battersea

General Hospital. This was opened in 1903 at 33 Prince of Wales Drive by anti-vivisectionists, a stand that later made it difficult to attract funding. It dropped its objections to animal testing in 1935, finally closing in 1972 and being demolished in 1974.

Coal holes

The location of the bathroom in the flat is clearly set out and proves central to the plot, 'the flat was the top one of the building and situated about the middle of the block. The bathroom window looked out upon the backyards of the flats which were occupied by various small outbuildings, coal-holes, garages and the like. Beyond these were the back gardens of a parallel line of houses.

On the right rose the extensive edifice of St Luke's Hospital Battersea... that was led by Sir Julian Freke, a distinguished neurologist, famous for his daily dissections of cadavers. As the plot plays out, the action moves away from Queen Caroline's Mansions but returns for the solution of the crime, in which the body in the bath is an important element of the wider net of family intrigue.

Agatha Christie's *One Two Buckle My Shoe*, a Hercule Poirot novel, was published in 1940 as part of the Collins Crime Club series. Each chapter takes a line from the rhyme as its heading and it is not until 'Seven, Eight, Lay Them Straight' that the body of woman is discovered at 45 King Leopold Mansions, Battersea Park. Inspector Japp of Scotland Yard summons Poirot to view the body, 'a quarter of an hour later a taxi deposited Poirot outside King

Leopold Mansions. It was a big block of mansion flats looking out over Battersea Park. Number 45 was on the second floor'. Here the body is found in a metal chest in a lumber room. It had been there for a month with the face battered to an unrecognizable shape. Unlike *Whose Body?*, this is not the first murder but it provides an essential clue to the solution, as the woman is wearing a buckled shoe.

Unlike Sayers, this was Christie's twenty-third Poirot novel, with the first *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* being published in 1920. It was memorable for being the last appearance of Inspector Japp.

Christie used the nursery rhyme chapter device in other books including *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955) and *And Then There Were None* (1939), both for the Collins Crime Club series. *One Two...* was a book which dealt with overtly political issues including fascism and the left. It has always been regarded as one of her darkest works.

Mystery

Both Sayers and Christie went on to write many more books in which Lord Peter Wimsey and Poirot featured. Both of these novels have recently become available in a serialized form on BBC Radio 4 Extra while Poirot episodes are available on ITV 3. Why did Sayers and Christie both dispose of their bodies in the mansions on Prince of Wales Drive? That is another mystery....



Inset left: Agatha Christie
Inset right: Dorothy L Sayers



Great Bus Journeys of the World No 26

Mike Roden takes the number 13 from Victoria to North Finchley



Early January, waiting at a crowded bus stop on Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria Station. The Scots have a word for the kind of weather that's hanging over London. It's dreich: oppressively damp, cold, dreary and misty. Thankfully the number 13 bus rolls up straight away, and I install myself on the upper deck. Soon we're heading past Jagger's magnificent Artillery Memorial and round Hyde Park Corner.

The statue of Achilles watches us as the bus turns up Park Lane. Unveiled on the seventh anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, this was commissioned by 'the Ladies of England', in honour of the Duke of Wellington. The fig leaf arrived soon afterwards to calm public outrage at the naked statue.

Luxury

Park Lane – once a simple country road – eventually became one of the most fashionable roads in London. Notable early residents included the 1st Duke of Westminster, the Dukes of Somerset and Disraeli. Many of their houses are now the site of luxury hotels, like the Earl of Dorchester's place we're passing now. The Dorchester is one of the world's most prestigious and expensive hotels. It opened on 18 April 1931, and it still retains its 1930 Art Deco style despite extensive modernisation. It's currently owned by the Sultan of Brunei.

Over to our right is the Animals in War Memorial designed by David Backhouse which was unveiled by Princess Anne in November 2004, on the 90th anniversary of the start of World War 1.

We're near the place where the Tyburn gallows hosted public executions for four hundred years until 1793. You can't miss Marble



Arch of course. In 1827 John Nash's intention was that this would be the state entrance to Buckingham Palace. It's never seemed completely at ease here since it arrived in 1851.

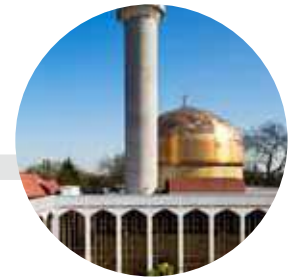
Passing Marble Arch Station the bus stops on Oxford Street outside Primark. When the store arrived here in April 2007, shoppers fought to be the first inside after false rumours of a sale. It is much quieter today. The bus turns left up Orchard Street alongside Selfridge's Food Hall and we're soon on Baker Street. The Wallace Collection isn't far from here, just turn right along Robert Adam Street to find it.

I wonder how many Prêt à Manger customers notice the blue plaque on the wall above the shop reminding them that William Pitt the Younger lived in the building from 1803 – 4. Just after we've crossed the busy Marylebone Road, there's another plaque outside the door of Chiltern Court telling the world that Eric Coates lived there for nine years from 1930. He was of course the man who gave us the stirring Dambusters March and the soporific By the Sleepy Lagoon which has introduced Desert Island Discs since 1942.

221B

The highlight of many a tourist's visit to Baker Street appears on our left as we near Regents Park. Since 1990 this once unassuming Georgian town house has been the privately-run Sherlock Holmes Museum. In homage to the stories and by permission of Westminster council it bears the number 221B although it lies between numbers 237 and 241. It'll cost you £15 to take a look inside.

The bus forges onward onto Park Road alongside Regents Park. Like most of the other royal parks this



was part of the vast area of land appropriated by Henry VIII. John Nash – friend of the Prince Regent – was largely responsible for the layout and design of the park, pretty much as we know it today. The great British public wasn't allowed access until 1835, and then only for two days a week.

Dome

We pass the London Business School, founded in 1964.

Further along Park Road is the London Central Mosque with its prominent golden dome. It was completed in 1977. The main hall can accommodate over 5,000 worshippers.

And now begins the long journey along Finchley Road. We're at the posh end here in St John's Wood. In the thirteenth century the area was farmland belonging to St John's Priory in Clerkenwell. During the Reformation the land was sold off to wealthy noblemen.

Lord's Cricket Ground is named after its founder, Thomas Lord. Originally situated just north of Marylebone Road the ground moved here in its permanent home in 1814. Among a great many claims to fame it is also the home of the world's oldest sporting museum.

Now we see St John's Wood Station which opened in 1939. A plaque on a nearby wall proclaims (a little unspecifically) that the poet Thomas Hood (1799 – 1845) 'lived and died here'. One of his best known poems 'The Song of the Shirt' appeared in Punch in 1843, and depicts the downtrodden drudgery of the life of a seamstress.

Swiss Cottage may take its name from an inn which in 1804 was built on the site of a former tollgate

Left to right: The Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane; William Pitt the Younger; the London Central Mosque, Park Road; Sigmund Freud; artsdepot, Finchley



keeper's cottage in the style of a Swiss chalet. The bus stops just beyond the underground station of the same name. We're on the edge of South Hampstead, with the Central College of Speech and Drama very close by. This was founded by Elsie Fogerty in 1906. Nearby is the Hampstead Theatre, known for its commissioning of new work.

Finchley Road underground station is only a few minutes walk from the house where Sigmund Freud and his daughter came when they escaped from the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. He spent the last year of his life here. Anna remained there until her death in 1982. She bequeathed the house to become a memorial to her father and it opened as a museum in 1986. The Freuds were permitted to bring all their belongs when they left Austria and at the heart of the museum is Freud's study and his famous couch.

The home of Camden Arts Centre which we pass soon afterwards was originally Hampstead Central Library which opened in 1897 but was replaced by a modern building elsewhere in Swiss Cottage. The Arts Centre took over in 1965 and became a community art college and gallery.

Uyghurs

We're heading up Childs Hill towards Golders Green. I'd been reading very recently about the detention by the Chinese government of a million Muslims in the north west of the country. Most of these are from the Turkic speaking community of Uyghur people in Xiang province. There are only around 200 Uyghurs living in Britain so it's something of a surprise to see Etles Uyghur restaurant here in South Finchley. The owners of this recently opened venue are Mukaddes

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



Yadikar and her husband Ablikim Rahman who have lived for many years in this country and already have a restaurant in Walthamstow. The menu covers a range of traditional Uyghur dishes, notably 'big plate chicken' — prepared with fresh hand-pulled noodles, chicken pieces, vegetables and a rich, aromatic gravy. If that's made your mouth water, you know how to get there.

After another ten minutes or so of looking out at nothing but small shops, houses and flats I spot a solid looking war memorial with a four-faced clock tower on top. This was dedicated in 1923 and tells me we're now in Golders Green. I last came this way on the 328 bus from Worlds End in Chelsea, when Golders Green underground station was journey's end for me. This time I carry on along the seemingly endless Finchley Road.

Like most of the towns on the fringes of north London this is essentially a late Victorian suburban development. The large Jewish community took root here after Hitler's rise to power, and by the 1950s the Jewish population had more than doubled. Hoop Lane to the right leads down to Golders Green Crematorium – the long list of famous cremations includes Kingsley Amis, Joyce Grenfell, Irene Handl, Doris Lessing, Peter Sellers and Eric Coates whose blue plaque we saw earlier.

A few minutes later we're in the area known as Temple Fortune. The name probably derives from the Knights Templar who owned land in the area. The arrival of Finchley Road resulted in the usual 19th century development of the area. Since the early twentieth century this has been used as a shopping area by those living in the nearby Hampstead Garden suburb.

We're soon crossing the busy North Circular, and passing over the Dollis Valley Greenwalk, a 10 mile long footpath which mainly follows Dollis Brook and is designed to act as a link between the Capital Ring and the London Loop.

At Allandale Road the bus stops near College Farm. Originally called Sheephouse Farm this was purchased by Express Dairies and run as a model dairy farm. Since then it has had a rather chequered career. Things started to go downhill in January 1898 when the head cowman was shot dead. Despite the arrival of Chief Inspector Harry Moore from Scotland Yard, his investigation here was no more successful than his attempts to track down Jack the Ripper, and Thomas Webb's murder remains unsolved. Over the years much of the land was sold off and the farm became a visitor centre. This had to close in 2001 because of the foot and mouth outbreak and has never re-opened.

Onwards we go along the never-ending Finchley Road, into Church End and past Finchley Central Station. Victoria Park is a popular local amenity with ornamental gardens, playgrounds and a café. Opened in 1902 it was created on the site of Colby's Farm where Charles Dickens was staying when he wrote part of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

After another ten minutes passing through a mainly residential area, shops begin to appear and the bus arrives at North Finchley Bus station and journey's end. A short walk takes me to the artsdepot (the name looks odd but that's the way they like to write it!). This opened in 2004 and among other things incorporates two theatres and drama, dance and art studios, along with a café and bar. The place is full of enthusiastic and rather noisy dance students, but the excellent coffee and a muffin restore me to life, and I stroll briskly downhill to West Finchley station and thence via the Northern Line to Euston, and onwards to Victoria and home on the 170. And just in case you're wondering the weather was still as dreich as ever.

*london.eater.com/
2018/2/22/17039556/etles-london-
first-authentic-uyghur-restaurant*

Value added volunteering

Do you want to help a child to read? Jenny Sheridan finds out how

Why do people work for free? What do they get out of doing something for nothing? In other words, why volunteer? Over the next few issues of *Battersea Matters*, we'll look at these issues and at some of the areas where volunteers get involved.

People may decide to do some work on a voluntary basis when they are students, in paid work or after they retire. There are benefits at every stage. For students, it's a good way of developing new skills, it looks good on a CV and is a positive factor in job interviews.

For working people it's a chance to do something different from the day job, and may prove less stressful. It could point the way to a change of career as well as a way to connect with one's local community.

After retirement, with more time to pick and choose one's occupations, involvement with a charity, hospital or school can enable someone either to pick up new skills or to develop those used in employment. It offers new challenges and can also revive the experience of working in a team and a sense of identity which retired people sometimes say they miss.

At any stage of life, finding the right volunteer role should result in feeling valued and the sense that one is making a difference, whether to one individual, an organisation or to society more broadly. And it can be very enjoyable. Many people become serial volunteers. In this article I will look at some opportunities for work with children, especially around reading, such a vital life skill.

Low literacy

Twenty five percent of children leave primary school unable to read adequately. Later in life, low levels of literacy characterise pupils excluded from school and people in young offenders units and prison. There are a number of charities working with schools to improve children's reading, among them locally Coram

Beanstalk and Bookmark.

Beanstalk started in 1973, joining the Coram group of charities in 2019. It trains volunteer reader helpers to work with children aged 3-13 to improve their reading skills and confidence and help them to enjoy books. The volunteer engages with pupils on a one-to-one basis over a whole school year, usually the same two or three children each week.

With early years children (nursery age 3 – 4) each session is 20 minutes long, with primary school pupils they are 30 minutes, in both cases twice a week. This is a large time commitment but Beanstalk feels that the consistency is important for the child to build up trust and confidence.

Training consists of a day based around children's potential difficulties with reading and how best to help in a way that is fun as well as purposeful.

Battersea Society trustee Carol Rahn is in her fifth year of volunteering with Beanstalk. At Christchurch Primary School she has worked with children in years 2, 3 and 4 (ages six to eight) often working with the same children throughout the year. 'It's a major commitment, taking a chunk of time out of two afternoons a week, but I enjoy spending time with children,' she says. 'And the school is friendly and sociable. The teacher I work with is very supportive and available, though teachers are incredibly busy. 'Our objective is to help children to

A Beanstalk volunteer at Clerkenwell Primary School



enjoy reading. There's good evidence that if they do then they will do better in other subjects too. You have to work out how to do this. One of the kids I'm working with likes doing voices so we're reading a play, each taking different parts. Another can read aloud well but has difficulties with comprehension, so that's what I'm working on.

'I don't always see progress but sometimes it's very clear, especially when the kid has English as a second language. And there is a real value for a child in having one-to-one time with an adult whose whole attention is just on them.'

Beanstalk is also launching a series of workshops for parents, grandparents or others who would like to learn how to help children read. The next Creating Readers workshop in London is on 6 March.

Training

Bookmark is a new charity, set up in early 2018 and currently working in 11 schools in Wandsworth including Chesterton and Allfarthing. The charity offers schools a six-week programme of two half-hour sessions per week. The programme is aimed at pupils in years 1 – 3.

Following a three-hour training session (which can be completed online) the volunteer arranges their sessions with the school using an app on their mobile phone. He or she works with the child for half an hour twice a week. The programme can be extended from six weeks to 12 or more if the teacher feels the child needs more support.

Many Bookmark volunteers take on the role while they are working, as the six hour programme fits with the Employer Supported Volunteering

programme. One third are students while others may work from home or be retired. Bookmark prides itself on the flexibility of their scheme for volunteers.

Helping children with reading doesn't only happen in schools. The Kathleen Low Settlement runs four homework clubs each week for children from refugee families, mostly from Eritrea, Somalia and Afghanistan. Two of the

clubs are for GCSE students and two are for younger children. Volunteers have one-to-one time with children and listen to them read, help with their English and play games. Nadine Ballantyne, the club manager, says that the children crave adult attention: '90 percent of them don't have an adult who can read or listen to them or spend much focused attention on them. It makes a lot of difference. And it's good for the kids to meet people from different backgrounds. The volunteers enjoy the strong

relationships they make with the children'

Volunteers attend one club each week for three hours, choosing the day that suits them. They are asked to attend for at least a school term.

The homework clubs take place at the Settlement in Battersea High Street. There is also a mentoring scheme in which a volunteer will work with a child in their home for an hour each week to support their school work.

All of these charities would

welcome more local volunteers. Colette Morris, headteacher of Christchurch School, says, 'Having local people who love learning coming into school tells pupils all learning is important. It is a great benefit to the pupils.'

www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk

www.bookmarkreading.org

www.klsettlement.org.uk

Neighbourly summer fun on your doorstep

Vicky Shepherd offer some tips for organising a successful street party

Little India has started celebrating our local community, businesses and residents with an annual street party. We would like to share some tips for organising your own Street Party

We start thinking and planning for the event about twelve weeks before the date. We found the guidelines on Wandsworth Council's website very helpful. You need to apply at least six weeks before you'd like to close your road. Streetworks@wandsworth.gov.uk should then be in touch to confirm whether you can go ahead, with a checklist to help ensure that all runs smoothly up to the big day. We chose the shortest street in Little India to hold the party in and contacted all the eight streets; we distributed about 300 invitations.

It's important to have a small, committed bunch of representative residents to form a committee. We went round knocking on doors to gauge interest and raise awareness. We are keen that everyone feels welcome, encouraging a nominal £2 per person charity donation in return for advance invites/



raffle tickets (more are available on the day). This helped us to obtain the correct insurance cover, and to provide the right number of chairs, tables, teas, coffees, games etc. The committee is central to our success, organising everything beforehand, and set-up/clear-up on the day. That includes transporting most of the tables etc by hand, though a neighbour helped with his van for the bulkier items.

Local businesses and shops were crucial to our success. We dropped into local cafes and shops asking if and how they would like to be involved. John D Wood & Co estate agents kindly covered many of our costs, including the council road closure fee and signs, invitations and events insurance. Other shops and restaurants provided a generous selection of raffle prizes and/or donations to support our drink, cake, face-painting and sunscreen stands.

Community organisations such as the Battersea Society and Big Local SW11 set up games and stalls to raise awareness of their work. Local churches loaned us their chairs, tables, hot water urn, bunting and children's games. Connect4 and Giant Jenga were popular though many children just enjoyed running around in a safe, traffic-free street.

We chose a mid-afternoon street

closure slot and encouraged a local community Bake-off. To minimise waste, we encouraged residents to bring their own mugs and plates with their freshly baked goodies and choice of drink. These supplemented donated food and drink, and were enjoyed at the church's tables, adorned with bright flower pot raffle prizes donated by the Battersea

Flower Station. Leftover food, drink and sunscreen

were donated to the churches and to Haven Lodge, a sheltered retirement home.

The committee organized entertainment for children and adults.

Emergencies permitting, Battersea fire station provides

informative, educational fun for all ages. We highly recommend letting them know as soon as your date is set. Alongside local entertainers and face-painters, a good sound system and DJ maintain the atmosphere.

Charity

All of the generous support that we received enabled us to donate just over £1,000 to the Fire Fighters Charity and Battersea Summer Scheme. This was mainly achieved through the £2 raffle tickets, a donations jar on the cake table and a few fun games like guessing the number of sweets in a jar. A bonus for a fun afternoon enjoying neighbourly company on our doorsteps!



All the fun of the Circus

Sarah Banham gives an update on progress at the Power Station

Battersea Power Station is at the heart of one of central London's largest new developments. The vast 42-acre site will be transformed into a community of homes, shops, cafés, restaurants, offices, fitness and wellness facilities and over 19 acres of public space. It will be a sixth town centre for the borough of Wandsworth.

Circus West Village is already a thriving new neighbourhood, with over 1,000 residents who enjoy its stunning views across the river and its backdrop of one of London's most iconic landmarks.

Ice skating

Last summer we celebrated a milestone in the Power Station's restoration. The historic Grade II* listed 133-metre-long Coaling Jetty was opened to the public for the first time in history. During August a summer garden offered a line-up of live music, morning Pilates and yoga sessions, family activities and food and drink pop-ups. Since then, the Jetty has hosted several events including the Winter Village over Christmas with free ice skating for our local schools.

We also launched a weekly market in 2019, offering fresh produce, street food, arts and crafts and live music every weekend. The River Walk Market will re-open in early March.

Last year several restaurants and entertainment venues opened, including Birdies, an immersive crazy golf experience and cocktail bar, boutique cinema Archlight and the new Turbine Theatre.

The restoration of the Power Station itself continues at great pace, with roofing now complete on both Switch Houses East and West as well as the Boiler House. Opening in late 2021, Battersea Power Station will house over 250 new homes, 100 shops, restaurants and cafés, a 2,000-person capacity events venue and a lift in one of the chimneys offering 360 degree panoramic views of London's skyline from a height of over 100m. New office space will



Crowds enjoy the street scene at Circus West Village

include the home of Apple's new London campus. The installation of the facades is transforming both the Gehry and Foster + Partners buildings.

Battersea Power Station has a full time communities team engaging with local people and organisations. They know the area well as they are all local residents themselves. The team delivers projects such as the community choir working in partnership with local community groups.

Additionally, there are lots of opportunities for local residents and community groups to meet with the Power Station team and ask questions about the development, via the quarterly Community Forum and the bi-monthly Build Battersea Neighbourhood Group meeting, both of which have been ongoing for over seven years.

Since 2017 the team has taken to the road, setting up our stall at job fairs, festivals and libraries across Wandsworth to tell people about job opportunities, the new town centre and the benefits it will bring across the borough.

Children

Today's children are of course the future visitors, residents and workforce of the new town centre. There are 3,000 new jobs associated with the construction, and over the next ten years the project will create

17,000 long term jobs. There is a huge opportunity to inspire local children and young people and encourage them to work hard and to aspire to great things.

Statistics show that five interactions with an employer through a student's school life can make a big impact on what a young person decides to do post-education. So our education programme starts with Wandsworth pupils as young as 7 years old and runs throughout their primary and secondary school life.

Free school visits are offered to all Wandsworth schools. The workshops have a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) focus. Students are invited to explore the past, present and future of Battersea Power Station and learn how Battersea Power Station used to produce electricity for London.

The team also attends career fairs organised by schools and colleges and offers work experience placements for older students. So far 313 students from Wandsworth and Lambeth have taken part in work experience placements on the project.

www.batterseapowerstation.co.uk or email: info@batterseapowerstation.co.uk

Sarah Banham is head of communities & sustainability for Battersea Power Station Development Company



Battersea Town Hall (now BAC) Battersea Library and the Baptist church, Northcote Road

Battersea's Wrenaissance

Keith Garner explores Edward Mountford's buildings

Among the architectural splendours of late-Victorian Battersea are four buildings designed by the architect Edward Mountford: the Baptist Church in Northcote Road, Battersea District Library and Battersea Town Hall on Lavender Hill, and the former Battersea Polytechnic in Battersea Park Road.

The Survey of London describes Mountford as 'the architect of Battersea's earliest manifestations of civic pride'. I knew very little about him, and how he came to build four significant buildings in the same area of London within the space of a few years. However from a gleaning of various references, listed at the end, I can summarise his career and involvement in Battersea as follows.

Competition

Mountford was born in Shipston-on-Stour in 1855 and educated in the west country. He established a practice in Worcestershire in 1881. His early works were modest and a lack of employment in the 1880s apparently left him free to enter architectural competitions, with a major success in winning the Sheffield Town Hall competition in 1890.

His first building in Battersea was Northcote Road's Baptist church of 1887-9, built in red brick in a round arched style, with a corner tower. The tower had a pyramidal roof, which was removed in 1974 when a falling slate hurt a passer-by. It remains a distinctive local landmark punctuating the streetscape of Northcote Road midway along its length.

Mountford's subsequent burst of activity in Battersea in the following years seems to have arisen through a combination of his recent experience of working in the area and his skill in entering and winning architectural

competitions. Significant also was a marked increase in building activity locally following the establishment of the Battersea Vestry in 1888, as a more dynamic successor to the Wandsworth District Board of Works.

In 1888 Mountford won the competition to design Battersea Central Library and it was completed in 1890. He amended his competition entry to include the octagonal turret, presumably to increase its prominence looking up Lavender Hill. It is described by Pevsner & Cherry as: 'still entirely in the domestic Pont-Street-Dutch tradition', a reference to the Queen Ann Revival of the 1870s.

Grand Hall

Mountford also won the invited competition for the new town hall 1891. The municipal offices and council chamber were at the front facing Lavender Hill. The idea of a separate entrance for the Grand Hall at the side apparently went down well with the competition assessors. The octagonal entrance lobby to the Grand Hall cleverly links the front and back parts, with the Lower Hall tucked underneath.

Stylistically, 'eclectic' is probably the word. Seen from Lavender Hill it has the feeling of a Germanic town hall. However the attached pairs of columns and curved pediments on the Lavender Hill front are indicative of Mountford's more full-on baroque, to be seen for example in his Central Criminal Courts (Old Bailey) of 1900 - 06. It is red brick and Bath stone.

Mountford collaborated with the young sculptor Paul Montford, who carved the reliefs in the three pediments and in the spandrel panels of the central window on the Lavender Hill facade. These celebrate Battersea's progressive government, for example the east pediment with the young borough supported by labour and progress. It was opened by Lord Rosebery November 1893. Meanwhile in lowland Battersea, Mountford entered and won

the invited competition for the construction of Battersea Polytechnic on a large site facing Battersea Park Road. It was the first London polytechnic to be purpose built. Its design and construction ran approximately in parallel with Battersea Town Hall and it is similarly eclectic in style and also built of brick and Bath stone. There are windows reminiscent of Wren on the first and second floors, and Flemish and Jacobean gables above. Sculpture in the gables by Paul Montford represent the disciplines taught there. It was opened in 1894.

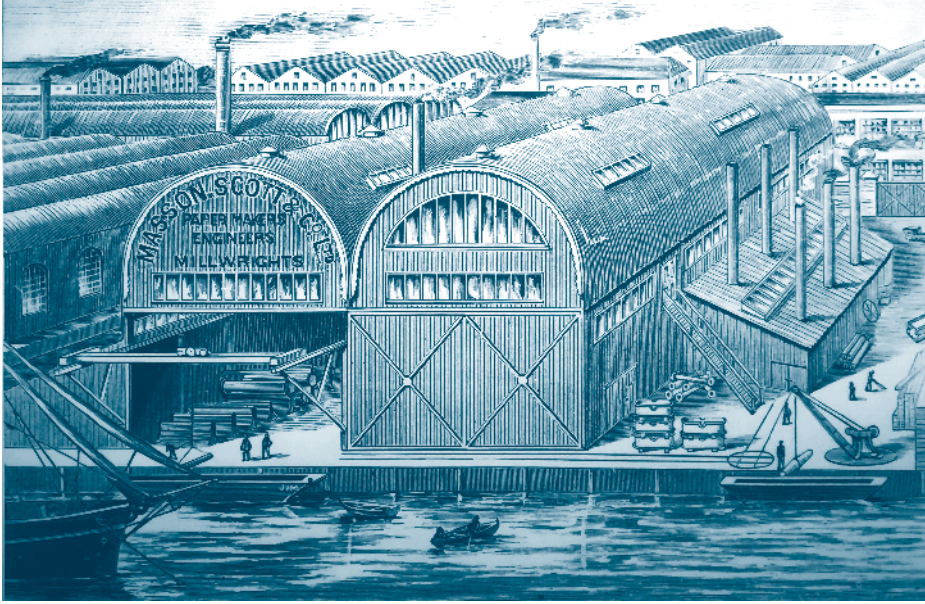
The single storey library adjoining on the west side was added in 1909-10, designed by Mountford's principal assistant F Dare Clapham. According to the Survey of London, 'it shifts Mountford's idiom into a purer Wrenaissance style'. F Dare Clapham inherited Mountford's practice following his death in 1908.

Mountford designed two Anglican churches in Wandsworth: St Andrew, Garratt Lane in 1889 - 90, and St Michael, Granville Road, Southfields in 1896 - 97. He and his wife built a house at Munstead, near Godalming in 1901 where their neighbour Gertrude Jekyll advised them on the design of their garden.

All four of Mountford's Battersea buildings remain: the Baptist church and Central Library in their original uses, the town hall transformed into Battersea Arts Centre. Battersea Polytechnic became Surrey University, moving out in 1968, with Westminster College moving in. It was eventually converted into residences as the Kingsway Square housing development in 2006 - 08.

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Patrick Loobey: Battersea Past,
Alastair Service: Edwardian Architecture
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Masson, Scott & Co paper mill, in 'New Wandsworth'

Upriver! A little bit of Battersea in the heart of Docklands

Sue Demont explores our riverside history

How many readers have visited the Museum of Docklands? I went specifically to see the recent 'Secret Rivers' exhibition but ended up exploring the fascinating permanent collection, which more than merits its own visit, with the added bonus of some Battersea-related items.

The 'Secret Rivers' exhibition proved to be quite slight but not without interest. Of local note was the 1849 Cholera Map showing the locations of those areas of London most afflicted by this deadly waterborne disease. These included the eastern bank of Battersea's Heathwall river – at this stage more of an open sewer – below Wandsworth Road, Albert Terrace being shown as the epicentre of the problem. There were also some stylised but informative maps showing the expansion of industry along Battersea's waterfront, and charting the courses of the Falcon Brook and the River Effra (there was an intriguing video of the local campaign to uncover the latter).

Paper-making

The Museum has a vast collection of artefacts and reconstructions and explains them well. One item that caught my eye was an illustration of the paper-making machinery mill of Messrs Masson, Scott & Co. Ltd.

It was dated 1893 and the location was given as 'New Wandsworth' but the waterfront looked distinctly Battersea-esque, prompting some follow-up research. I discovered that the firm had been established in 1877 in Summerstown but by 1888 was being described as 'Paper makers and Engineers of Battersea' with the address York Place. Apparently the 'New Wandsworth' moniker was briefly given to the area between the short-lived station of that name (next to Chivalry Road) and the river, and the Masson works would have been situated west of York Place, just inside the historic borough of Wandsworth – which explains why the firm doesn't feature in the industrial histories of Battersea.

Candles

I next spotted an advert for Creek Rice Mills of Battersea, producing rice flour, rice cones (google them!) and rice meal. These mills dated from the late 18th century and were situated next to Battersea Creek, where they managed to resist the encroachment of Price's Candle Factory (founded in the 1830s) for more than half a century before finally succumbing to the larger firm's requirement for new candle moulding and packing rooms. It's interesting to speculate as to why this particular advert features, but its citation reminds the visitor of the commercial importance of 'upriver' as well as Docklands.

On a different but related note, there is a major display on the dockworkers themselves, charting their struggles for fairer pay and conditions both in the early 20th century – Battersea's John Burns

gets more than one mention – and in the 1970s, following the introduction of Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act. Older readers may remember the Pentonville Five, when five dockers' shop stewards were jailed for refusing to obey a court order to cease picketing a container depot in Newham in 1972. The TUC called a general strike and within a week the men were released. The Battersea connection? There is a photo of three of the Five leaving court and standing alongside them is another docker, one Ted Hodges of Nine Elms. I have been unable to trace him, but it was interesting to see a Battersea docker standing shoulder to shoulder with the Docklands-based leaders of the dispute, emphasising how the river served to connect its various communities.

The final item to catch my eye was a railway and tube map of 1946, produced under plans for post-war reconstruction begun three years earlier. The intriguingly named Ministry of War Transport had drawn up detailed plans to improve connectivity between north west to south east London. The central section of one such route would have linked Battersea by tube to the then fully operational Surrey Docks via Victoria, Blackfriars and Wapping. This of course never materialised and by the time the Northern Line extension finally opens it will have taken more than 75 years to connect Battersea to the London Underground.

Aside from these Battersea vignettes there is a wealth of worthwhile material in this museum, not least the section on the Second World War including some dramatic newsreel footage. Also worth perusing is the story of the decline and demise of London's docks from the 1960s onwards and the still unfolding story of their redevelopment and reinvention, told from the point of view of both developers and the local communities.

The Museum of Docklands is a ten-minute walk from Canary Wharf tube (Jubilee Line), it's free, and it has a decent café. It's well worth the journey.

Sue Demont is chair of the Battersea Society's Heritage Committee

SIR WALTER ST JOHN: 17TH TO 21ST CENTURY LEGACY

Following on from Sally Sellars' article on Walter and Johanna St John (*BM* Summer 2019), readers may be interested to know that their legacy lives on.

The Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity (SWSJ) is based in Battersea and, while its grants are available to individuals and organisations across Wandsworth and Lambeth, it has a preference for those

in Battersea – understandably in view of the founders' love for the area.

SWSJ offers grants of up to £1,500 to local community organisations for educational purposes. It also awards grants to individual students for registration fees, travel and books in some circumstances.

For information, see www.swsjcharity.org.uk or email [Susan Perry manager@swsjcharity.org.uk](mailto:Susan.Perry.manager@swsjcharity.org.uk)



With water make rivers, with rice make armies: Cambodian proverb

Did you know that the population of Wandsworth is approximately four times the size of Londinium in AD120? Or that almost as many people in the borough cycle to work as drive (but more go by bus)? These and a pile of other intriguing statistics were unveiled in *Of All the People in All the World*, a pop-up installation in the former Royal Mail depot in Nine Elms in January.

Using 6.7 tons of rice, each grain representing an individual person, the

show illustrates statistics in curious, startling and sometimes witty ways. The two piles of rice showing the size of the staff and volunteers of Battersea Dogs and Cats' Home are accompanied by a rather larger one of the population of Barking (and yes, they could have used Catford).

Next to the mound representing the children rescued from Nazi Germany by the Kindertransport is a solitary grain: Alf Dubs.

BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS

- **THURSDAY 12 MARCH**
Vanishing Act: the underground rivers of Battersea and Nine Elms. Talk by archivist and author Jon Newman at Dimson Lodge 6.30 for 7pm, £5 donation on the door
- **THURSDAY 19 MARCH**
Battersea Society AGM, followed by a talk by Michelle Walker, Strategic Lead for Culture, Nine Elms, and Danielle Rose, Arts & Events Manager, Nine Elms, on the area's current and future arts and culture programme St Mary's Church 6.30 for 7pm
- **TUESDAY 24 MARCH**
Visit and tour of Dr Johnson's House near Fleet Street 11.30am, £10 in advance
- **THURSDAY 2 APRIL**
Visit and tour of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at UCL in Bloomsbury 2pm, £5 in advance
- **SUNDAY 19 APRIL**
The Heathwall: Battersea's Buried River. Walk with Jon Newman following its course 2.30pm, £5 on arrival
- **SUNDAY 26 APRIL**
Spring lunch at Gazette, Plantation Wharf 12.30, Three courses, £25 in advance
- **SUNDAY 10 MAY**
Battersea's waterfront industries. Walk with Jeanne Rathbone along the riverside. 2.30pm, £5 on arrival
- **WEDNESDAY 13 MAY**
Billingsgate Roman House and Baths. Private tour. 10.30am, £15 in advance
- **WEDNESDAY 20 MAY**
My Battersea Photography Award Exhibition. Members' private view. Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art, 10am – 1pm, free
- **TUESDAY 26 MAY**
The Lavender Hill Houses; four 18th Century houses and their notable Victorian occupants. Talk by Jeanne Rathbone. Battersea Library 6.30 – 8pm, free

Opening the window on Nine Elms

Betsy Blatchley on how an Advent Calendar helped bring communities together

I've always loved opening a door each day on a traditional Advent Calendar so, inspired by similar community projects in Brighton and Greenwich, I decided that we in Nine Elms could do something similar. And so the Nine Elms Arts Ministry launched the first ever Nine Elms Advent Calendar. It opened with a theatrical flourish on Sunday 1 December at the Turbine Theatre under the arches at Battersea Power Station. Around 100 people were entertained by *The Cat in the Hat*, and the cast of the musical *High Fidelity* led the mulled wine sipping crowd in Christmas songs.

Then a beautiful 'Bleak Midwinter' scene was revealed across the whole front of the theatre, with falling 'snow', a reading of the original poem by Christina Rossetti and a quiz with prizes. From then on pubs, restaurants, cafes, schools, marketing suites, community centres, gyms, estate agents, cinemas and churches across Nine Elms presented a new Christmas Carol themed 'Window' each night. Each had a free festive opening event, concluding on Christmas Eve at St George's Church on the Patmore Estate, with a beautiful rainbow-coloured window, created entirely with paper and light, inviting the crowd, in the words of another popular carol, to *Come and Behold Him*.

Well over 2,000 people attended the opening events and it was really encouraging to see residents from all



St George's Church, and Betsy Blatchley meets The Cat in a Hat



different parts of the area sharing in some Christmas cheer and getting to know each other. The 25 windows were illuminated each evening until 5 January so that people could walk the whole trail, enjoying a wide range of themes, from classic carols like *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* to modern Christmas songs such as *Fairy-tale of New York* and *Driving Home for Christmas*. As well as providing a fun way to walk off Christmas dinner, the Calendar aimed to encourage people to explore parts of Nine Elms that they hadn't visited before.

Inspiring

The creativity involved in the windows was inspiring. Approaches ranged from windows designed by schools to a 3D one in a black cab and others created by nationally acclaimed artists. Some projects brought together different parts of the

community and many were designed by local artists, some of whom are part of Nine Elms Arts Ministry. The Ministry's focus is around arts, spirituality and social justice, so we wanted to ensure that, whilst being a fun, thoughtful and community building project, the calendar also had a social justice element. So the Calendar also provided opportunities to support two great charities who work to end food poverty – Wandsworth Foodbank and Action against Hunger.

In all over 50 organisations were involved in some way with the Advent Calendar, many as window hosts, some as sponsors or financial supporters and others by offering practical support. Garton Jones Real Estate was our main sponsor, while other key supporters included Battersea Power Station, New Covent Garden Market, St Modwen, Galliard Homes, Nine Elms on the South Bank, Wandsworth Council and Battersea Fields Parish.

There already seems a strong desire for the Nine Elms Advent Calendar to become an annual event, so watch out for more news and get in touch to find out about getting involved. Watch a short film about the Advent Calendar made by Battersea-based Chocolate Films (www.nineelmsartsministry.org). Follow us on Instagram and Facebook @nineelmsartsministry. Rev Betsy Blatchley is Pioneer Minister for the Arts in Nine Elms. The project is funded by Southwark Diocese.



Mounds of rice illustrate vital statistics with grain represents a human being. The pop-up exhibition *Of All the People in All the World in Nine Elms* was the work of the theatre group Stan's Café. See page 15