

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SUMMER 2019



Plastic – not so fantastic

Let's support the plastic free initiative says Jenny Sheridan



We all know we should be reducing our use of single-use plastic. It clogs our rivers, it poisons seabirds, fish and ocean mammals. It pollutes beaches from the South Pacific to Skegness. Since David Attenborough's documentary *Blue Planet* alerted us to its deadly effects the use of reusable water bottles and coffee cups has increased. Many firms are attempting to green their products and services. This article looks at how we can support local businesses which are trying to do their best to limit single-use plastic.

Surfers are certainly not a frequent sight on the Thames but Vanessa Strowger is Battersea's community leader for Plastic Free SW11, part of Surfers Against Sewage, a major marine conservation charity. Vanessa took on her volunteer role after kayaking in the river and observing

the amount of plastic rubbish, from cotton wool balls to plastic bottles, bobbing round her craft. Shocked, she decided she had to do something, and signed up to lead the plastic free initiative in Battersea

Mass unwrap

Somewhat daunted by the task ahead, Vanessa determined to start tackling the problem locally around Northcote Road near her home. Her first activity was a Mass Unwrap in the Co-Op, with the full support of the store's regional management. Battersea WI joined in enthusiastically and shoppers arriving at the store on 27 April were informed that they could remove the packaging on their purchases and leave it by the check-out. This resulted in over two shopping trolleys of plastic being collected for recycling by Co-Op staff. 'The main aim,' says Vanessa, 'is to

make people aware of the amount of plastic they are forced to buy and to encourage the supermarket to look at over-packaging.'

Supermarkets are not the only places to shop. Independent greengrocers often pack their fruit and vegetables in paper bags rather than plastic, for example Raynsford on Battersea High Street, Hoxton Fruit and Veg on Battersea Park Road and Lior's on Webbs Road.

There are two shops in Battersea that make a special point of being zero-waste or as near it as possible. The Source on Battersea Rise sells health food and dry goods such as rice, pasta and dried fruit in bulk. You take your own container (usually a jam jar in my case), they weigh it, you fill it and they charge you for the contents minus the weight of the jar. Or you can use one of their paper bags. They also sell glass jars and bottles. Hetu on St John's Hill is a vegan zero-waste shop which sells whole foods and household cleaning products in bulk. You bring your own container and buy just as much as you need, so reducing food as well as plastic waste. Both shops also sell sustainable items such as bamboo toothbrushes. Hetu has a small stock of organic fruit and vegetables.

Most street and farmers' markets also use paper rather than plastic bags. We have several within walking or bus distance. Examples are Bunny's stall in Northcote Road, The Fruit Man in St John's Road and Pimlico farmers' market in Orange Square.

Although plastic milk bottles can go in the recycling bin, glass is better environmentally. Bottles delivered by the milkman are cleaned, sterilised and re-used multiple times. Plastic ▶



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batterseasociety.org.uk

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

From the editor



Ah, summer! For those of us lucky enough to have a garden it's the best time of the year. It's busy, but

after all the weeding and watering and worrying (will the slugs spare at least one of my basil seedlings? How do I get rid of bindweed?) it's also possible sometimes just to sit and

enjoy the sunshine, perhaps with a glass of wine to hand.

There are a few drawbacks. Cats stretch out to form natural trip hazards on the paving, pub gardens can prove noisy and smoky, but generally sunshine improves our lives.

And for those who don't have a garden there are all our wonderful green spaces. In Battersea Park, Wandsworth Common or one of Wandsworth's many small parks, a sunny afternoon brings out people to have fun. And it's catching. Watching toddlers kicking a ball or teenagers hanging out with their bikes and their

cool attitudes, or groups of friends enjoying a picnic is a joy in itself.

And the fruit! Peaches, raspberries, apricots, perhaps rosy gooseberries from a generous friend's allotment – nothing needs to be done to them. They're delicious just as they are. Dipping one's nose into a bag (paper of course) of tomatoes is summer encapsulated.

As I write, the summer party is a few days away. I hope the weather will be glorious and I will see many of you there.

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Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden changes his name, remembers an unlikely radio star, and ponders the law of unintended consequences

I answered quite happily to the name Michael until I was around thirteen years old. At that point I decided I would prefer to be known as Mike – quicker to write and easier to spell. My parents never really got used to it, and my siblings still often slip back to the old form.

How much easier for kids today. Sensible parents cut out the middleman and go straight for the short version, and Sam, Tom, Ben or Jack, is what appears on their birth certificate. Even the royal family is not immune to this practice. Princess Diana thought Harry was good enough for her second son (can you really imagine him as a Harold?) and now Harry and Meghan's first born has been named Archie.

It'll no doubt soon turn up in the top ten of Britain's favourite boys' names, but to those of us of a certain age that name will always conjure up *Educating Archie*, a radio show which attracted up to 15 million listeners and had a children's fan club with around 250,000 members. Such a weird idea, a radio sitcom starring a wooden ventriloquist's dummy. A few of Archie's shows occasionally turn up on Radio 4 Extra. And Morecambe and Wise fans may now practise saying 'Gottle of geer!' without moving your lips.



I suppose – like *Autolycus in Winter's Tale* – I've always been 'a snapper up of unconsidered trifles'. Another way of putting it is that my mind is a treasure trove full of generally useless information. I once won a small bet that I couldn't name

the historical capital of Scotland by dragging out of my ragbag memory the first lines of a ballad called *Sir Patrick Spens* that I read at school about the same time as I was changing my name: 'The King sits in Dunfermline town/ Drinking the blood red wine'. It seemed a logical conclusion that the monarch was enjoying his drink in the comfort of a palace in his capital city. Which turned out to be the case. But what quirk of the brain enabled me to instantly remember that poem from so long ago and realise it contained the answer?

I suppose that this facility will start to deteriorate but I still keep relentlessly adding to my memory bank. Only recently I read somewhere that the modern plastic carrier bag was invented by Swedish engineer Sten Gustaf Thulin in the early 1960s. But it does bring me to a cautionary

tale. It goes without saying that Sten's lightweight and robust design was a boon to shoppers worldwide, but it also sparked the interest of the little-known Greek god who controls the law of unintended consequences. He grinned happily and rolling up his sleeves got down to business. And it came to pass that the world's landfill sites got clogged with discarded carriers and they helped swell the plastic pollution in our rivers and oceans killing off our wildlife in the process.

Carelessness

Naturally we tried to overcome this setback by banning free carrier bags in supermarkets and encouraging shoppers to spend 10p on a bag for life which they could re-use dozens of times. Up there on Olympus the god shook his head sadly and made sure that – true to form – the mortals down there simply treated their bags for life with the same carelessness as the flimsier ones. Except that the bags are made with much thicker plastic and contribute even more to the world's pollution. Ha, I hear you cry, obviously the answer is cotton tote bags. They're not a problem, surely? Perhaps I'll tell you all about them another day.

Enjoy the summer, and all being well I'll see you again in the autumn. And as ever, mind how you go.



Plastic waste retrieved from the river in Putney

◀ milk bottles are broken down into pellets to be made into other products. Each bottle you use is newly made from oil products.

Vanessa Strowger and the Plastic Free SW11 team are surveying cafes to assess their sustainability. Some qualify as 'outstanding' in reducing single-use plastic. In north Battersea, she cites Flour to the People on Battersea Park Road and Gails on Battersea Square. Further south there's Uncommon and Al Gusto, both on Northcote Road, and Tierra Verde on Webbs Road. All use paper straws, compostable or paper cups for take-away and wooden coffee stirrers.

Most cafes now offer refill points for anyone who wants to refill their water bottle and also offer a discount

to customers bringing their own cup. Both, as Vanessa points out, are simple ways to save money as well as saving the planet.

Wandsworth Council spends millions of pounds cleaning the streets of litter, including much plastic. Other organisations are keen to encourage volunteer litter-picking. The Friends of Wandsworth Common organise regular and enjoyable litter picks and Plastic Free SW11 is planning one for Battersea Park.

Cafes and shops that are seriously trying to reduce waste need our support.

Here is a list of them.

- Raynsford, 153 Battersea High Street**
- Hoxton Fruit & Veg, 575c Battersea Park Road**
- Lior's, 46 Webbs Road**
- The Source, 99 St John's Road**
- Hetu, 201 St John's Hill**
- Milk and More, www.milkandmore.co.uk**
- Flour to the People, 573 Battersea Park Road**
- Gail's, 31 Battersea Square**
- Uncommon, 184 Northcote Road**
- Al Gusto, 85 Northcote Road**
- Tierra Verde, 48 Webbs Road.**

To find out more about the campaign, or to get involved, contact Vanessa at plasticfreewandsworth@gmail.com

Artists Open House

Jenny Sheridan looks forward to October



Above left: Ken McCalla, Tooting, 2018. Left: Sue Derbyshire and Patrick Warren, Wandsworth, 2018. Photos: Eoin Carey

Hand-crafted jewellery, quirky ceramics, paintings, photography and more – that's what Wandsworth Artists Open House will be offering us in October.

At Open House you have the opportunity to meet artists and craftspeople in their homes or studios. I've found that chatting to him or her informally can often give interesting insights into the way they work or their choice of materials. It's a relaxed way to find out about art locally.

200 artists

Last year almost 200 artists opened their studios, in all parts of the borough. Putney and Tooting saw the most artists taking part, but Battersea and Nine Elms were also well represented.

The Royal College of Art's Dyson Gallery will be showcasing the work of five young (under 25) local artists, winners of an RCA bursary. And Putney School of Art will be offering free pottery, printing and drawing workshops, so we can all try our hand.

Saturday 5 – Sunday 6 October

Saturday 12 – Sunday 13 October

Times 11am – 6pm

August and after: For more information and a map of the participating studios, go to www.wandsworthart.com or Instagram @WandsworthArt. Or contact the Enable Arts Team on 020 3959 0020.

BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS

● THURSDAY 18 JULY

Summer Party in the grounds of St Mary's Church Battersea, 6.30 – 9pm, £10 includes a free drink and canapés

● MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

Day trip by coach to Eltham Palace and Gardens – a royal residence from 1305 and home to the Tudors, Elizabeth I and James I. 9.15am – 3pm, £37 payable in advance

● MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

Talk by Battersea Power Station resident artist Michael Warren at the Village Hall at Battersea Power Station, 6.30 for 7pm, £5 donation on the door

● THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

Talk by Dr Jan Marsh (curator of the Pre-Raphaelite Sisters exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, due to open in October 2019) on Pre-Raphaelites and Marie Spartali at St Mary's Church Battersea, 6.30 for 7pm, £5 donation on the door

● SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

Summer in the Square church fête in Battersea Square

● 10 OCTOBER Night at the Opera, a screening of the classic film *Carmen Jones* at the Royal College of Art, 6.30 for 7pm, £5 donation on the door

Home and away

Carol Rahn reviews the exhibition *Room to Breathe* at the Migration Museum

Quite possibly, you've never set foot on Lambeth High Street, which today is a backwater running parallel to the Albert Embankment between Black Prince Road and Lambeth Road. Untroubled by any shops, or much in the way of either vehicles or pedestrians, Lambeth High Street is home to the Migration Museum at the Workshop, up a flight of stairs in the London Fire Brigade engine workshop. The Migration Museum opened at this site in April 2017 and hosts exhibitions highlighting 'the movement of people to and from Britain across the ages and how this has shaped who we are – as individuals, as communities and as a nation.'

Stories

The current exhibition is *Room to Breathe*, which leads the visitor through a series of eight rooms, each showcasing stories that bring home a particular dimension of the migrant's experience. The exhibition bills itself as immersive, meaning that we are encouraged to open drawers, look through cupboards, take photographs and contribute our own stories and thoughts. In *Room to Begin*, a wall full of colourful disks imprinted 'I Migrated Here: Tell us your story';

'Someone in My Family Emigrated from Here: Tell us your story'; 'At Least One of My Grandparents Migrated Here: Tell Us Your Story' invites visitors to share their own stories. A room-filling cascade of what look like miniature suitcases invites you to make one of your own, writing inside the story of an act of kindness by a friend, a family member or even a stranger.

Food

There are few things as resonant of home and of a distinctive culture as food and the shelves in *Room to Eat* carry the ingredients and special cooking utensils linked to the food of different migrants. A massive album collects recipes and the table set for six becomes the screen for a film about migrants and food. All around the room are boards with photos, notes and recipes that tell these stories.

Room to Learn recounts the experiences of newly arrived children in British schools. There are storyboards about children like Carolina Caicedo, from Cali, Colombia who wrote, '(... when I was six years old) I started school at Sacred Heart in Battersea. I am amazed by how welcomed I was.

I instantly had two girls take me in and look after me, even though I couldn't speak English. I never felt alienated or scared. The school was really diverse and I loved it. It was a place that really celebrated diversity.' If you have time, there are also longer, recorded memories of early school experiences.

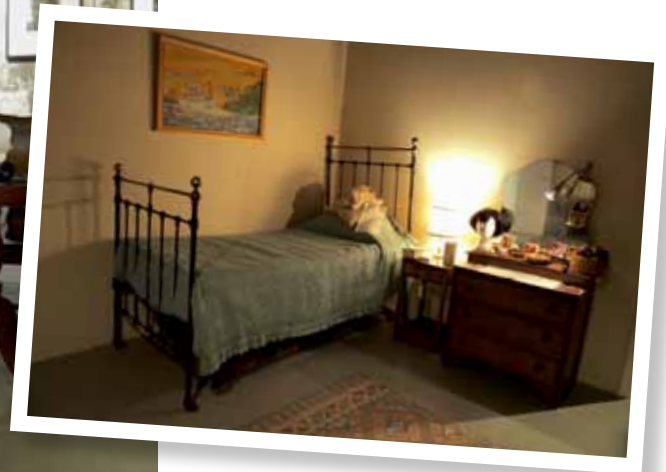
Businesses started by migrants, some of them set up several generations ago, are celebrated in *Room to Work* while *Room to Dream* recreates a bed-sit. In this room the photographs over the mantel come to life, each one a migrant's story captured on video.

The museum is open from noon, Thursday through Sunday and entry is free. *Room to Breathe* is on until the end of summer and after that by appointment through the website. It's a good place to visit when you're in a mood to rummage through the stories and listen to the recordings, being reminded of the broad and deep roots of migration in this country, and perhaps reflecting on your own migration story.

To visit the museum, take the 77 or 344 bus, or walk (12 minutes) from Vauxhall station.



Rooms for listening and reflecting on migration stories



Planning Matters: Battersea is not Clapham!

Monica Tross makes a point and studies a duck boat

CLAPHAM JUNCTION – THE HEART OF BATTERSEA

Sadly this is a message which has not got through to Marks and Spencer nor, consistently, to those in charge of electronic communications at Clapham Junction Station. We objected to elements of proposals to change the frontage of M&S in St. John's Road (2019/1313, now approved). Although not a planning matter, we noted that construction signage referred to the store as in Clapham. We can only hope that in time the message will get through to M&S and others.

We had a generally useful meeting with Paul Calvert, the new station manager for Network Rail at Clapham Junction and took the opportunity to remind him that his station is in Battersea. We reinforced our message by reminding him that Clapham is a station in the Yorkshire Dales, a great place to be but a long way from SWII.

We left him with a map (see illustration) showing that Battersea stretches from the Thames in the north to Nightingale Lane in the south, from the Vauxhall end of Nine Elms Lane in the east to the Wandsworth roundabout in the west.

MORE NEWS OF THE SLIPWAY AT ST. MARY'S

The planning application from Golden Tours is now with WBC and a number of our members have already written to object – 2019/2232. These include Councillor Rhodri Morgan, writing on behalf of the many residents who have contacted him about this. The information within the application is minimal with no traffic report or environmental impact study. A brief

noise impact study seems to suggest that because there is already traffic noise, there will be no impact.

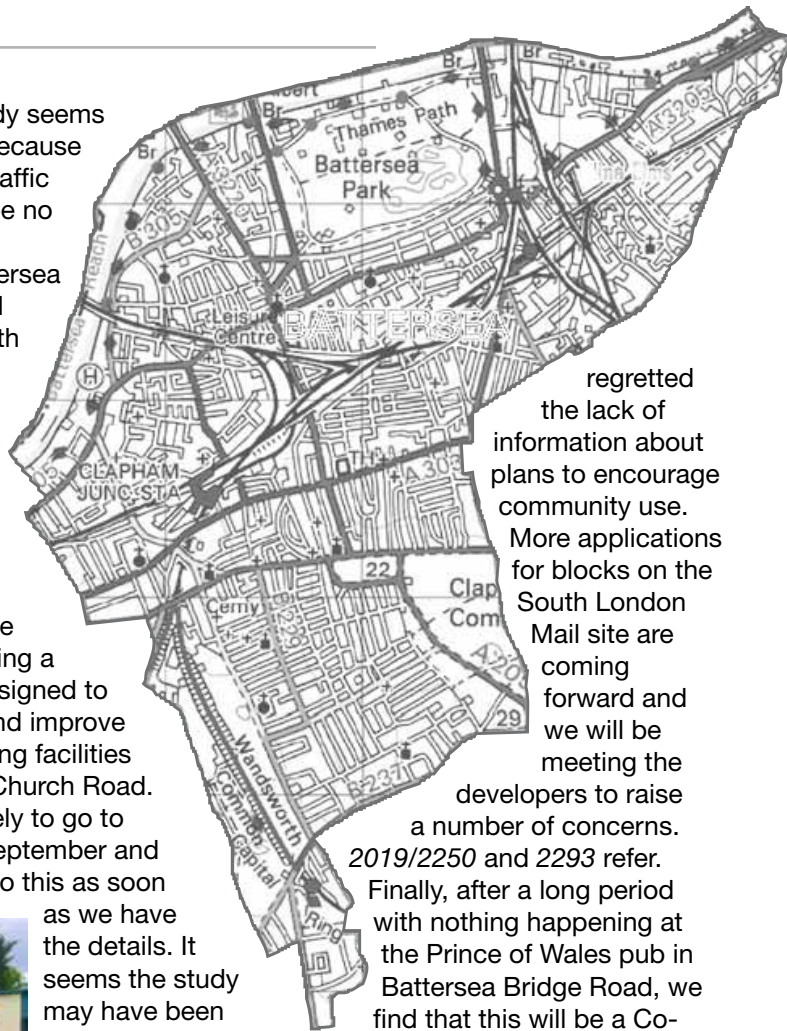
Traffic along Battersea Church Road and at the junction with Battersea Bridge Road remains a concern and we included this in our response to a recent WBC consultation. We'd like to think that as a result the council are planning a corridor study designed to reduce speeds and improve walking and cycling facilities along Battersea Church Road. Proposals are likely to go to consultation in September and we will alert you to this as soon

as we have the details. It seems the study may have been prompted not by us, but by the finding that along Battersea Church Road the impact of the introduction

of 20 mph restrictions has led to an increase in speed; from 23.6 mph eastbound to 24.3 and from 23.7 mph westbound to 24.7. It would be good if the study could also consider the current speed of some cyclists along the river walk – something also of concern to our members.

NORTHCOTE LIBRARY AND OTHER UPDATES

Predictably, proposals for Northcote Library and the replacement of Chatham Hall (2018/5833) were approved at the Planning Applications Committee on 26 June, the first with Councillor Guy Humphries in the chair. He has replaced Councillor Sweet who has been promoted to become cabinet member for Education and Children's Services. Designs for the sports hall on Harris Academy land facing Dagnall Street have been approved (2919/1431). We found them undistinguished and



regretted the lack of information about plans to encourage community use. More applications for blocks on the South London Mail site are coming forward and we will be meeting the developers to raise a number of concerns.

2019/2250 and 2293 refer.

Finally, after a long period with nothing happening at the Prince of Wales pub in Battersea Bridge Road, we find that this will be a Co-Op store. See applications 2019/1792 and 2293.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We always like to hear from our members (including pointing out mistakes) so do let us have any comments, on this article, on exhibitions, or on planning in general. planning@batterseasociety.org.uk will find us.



On 19 May 2019 the Battersea Society unveiled a plaque to the novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson at her former home, 53 Battersea Rise (now the site of the Farrago restaurant). Her biographer Wendy Pollard, daughter Lady Avebury and writer Zoe Fairbairns spoke about Johnson's innovative writing. (see *Battersea Matters* winter 2014) The event was taken up by a national magazine, featuring in the July issue of *The Oldie*.

The Junction BID steams in

Michael Jubb introduces a new initiative

Clapham Junction's Business Improvement District (BID) launched 'The Junction BID' in April, after businesses and institutions voted to implement it at the end of 2018. But even among those who have heard about the BID, many are asking, 'What is it? What does it do? What does it mean for residents and businesses?'

Let me explain. BIDs are partnerships created after a ballot of local businesses, which agree to invest collectively to improve their local trading environment. BIDs were introduced into the UK by the Local Government Act 2003. The first was created in Kingston in 2005, and there are now over 300 across the UK, with more than 50 in London. Some BIDs cover industrial areas and business parks; Garratt Business Park was Wandsworth's first, in 2009. But many have now launched in town centres, with a focus on improving the locality for the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors. 'Positively Putney' and 'Wandsworth Town', introduced in 2017, are the most recent local examples. The Junction BID now follows, for an initial five-year term.

Levy

The BID region covers the station itself, St John's Road, Northcote Road, St John's Hill, parts of Battersea Rise, Falcon Road (as far north as the railway bridge) and Lavender Hill (up to Battersea Arts Centre). In November 2018 a majority of businesses in the area agreed to pay an annual levy of 1.5% of their rateable value to fund the BID. Wandsworth Council is now collecting the levy money from all designated businesses. This will provide a yearly income of approximately £370,500 for the next five years, and the BID will also seek funds from other sources.

The BID and its funds are managed by a board of directors

drawn mainly from local businesses and organisations, including the Battersea Society. One of its first tasks was to appoint a BID manager, Roz Lloyd-Williams, who has lived in Battersea for over 20 years. She has a background in the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors, and has worked for Wandsworth Council previously as a marketing consultant. Her rôle, with the directors, is to ensure the BID makes a real difference in establishing Clapham Junction as an important shopping and visitor destination.

Lorinda Freint remains the council's town centre manager and will liaise between the council and the BID.

Digital presence

In initial discussions about the BID, marketing and promotion emerged as a key issue. Business representatives felt that Clapham Junction needed



to develop a distinct brand identity, with a strong digital presence at its heart, capitalising on the growing digital audiences. A new website, with comprehensive information on businesses and events, will promote the town centre, attracting more customers and encouraging residents and visitors to explore the area.

Training and support will be given to local businesses to help them develop their own online presence, with detailed feedback on marketing campaigns. The website will also facilitate the development of loyalty schemes and exclusive deals for Junction employees, encouraging them to use local shops and restaurants. And not least important, the BID will provide a new channel for businesses to engage with local residents and community groups, as well as exploiting the opportunities presented by the busy interchange of travellers at Clapham Junction station.

It was seen as important that the BID area should be seen as safe and welcoming. The BID will ring-fence funds for improved street cleaning, especially around the station. Street art, lighting and new planting will celebrate the area's distinctive features and heritage. These schemes echo similar proposals outlined by Camilla Ween to improve the spine of streets from St Mary's church on the river to the end of Northcote Road.

Other measures include greater collaboration with the police and other stakeholders to tackle issues including shop-lifting and anti-social behaviour, and to promote a safer environment for both day and night-time visitors and employees. A new Night-time Economy Forum of representatives from restaurants, bars and other institutions, will be established to discuss key issues with the Council, TfL and other agencies. And funds will be provided for a youth programme.

The BID will help to maximise the value of local events and festivals. It will provide sponsorship support for the Northcote Road (14 July) and St John's Hill (8 September) Festivals. It will organise a series of events to attract people during the Christmas season. It will also capitalise on other seasonal attractions in the wider area, and major London sporting fixtures which attract people to the interchange at Clapham Junction. It will also support proposals for new events to promote the town centre, tourism and commerce.

The future?

These are early days for the BID, and it will take a while before concrete results are evident to those of us who live and work around the Junction. The BID has until 2024, when a new ballot takes place, to gauge whether businesses are convinced by its achievements and agree to extend it for another five years. However, there's great enthusiasm and support from local businesses, and with some excellent festivals and entertainment to enjoy this summer, just on our doorstep, good times are ahead!

Michael Jubb is a trustee of the Battersea Society and represents the Society on the BID board.

Chess is a game for everyone

Vera Menchik died 75 years ago. Leon Watson on the women hoping to follow in a champion's footsteps

A little bit of local knowledge for you and, hopefully, an inspiring story. You may not be aware but here in Battersea we have a rich history in the game of chess. In fact, Battersea was the scene for a pivotal moment in the development of women's chess.

I am the secretary of the local chess club. At 134 years old Battersea Chess Club is one of the oldest continually-existing chess clubs in the country. It has produced several big names in the game, most notably Raymond Keene, who was only the second English player ever to be awarded the title of Grandmaster. Ray, who went on to organise world championships, lives on Clapham Common North and is *The Times* chess columnist.

England's number 2, Grandmaster David Howell, also plays for us. But what I really want to tell you about is the intriguing link we have to a real great of the game – Vera Menchik.

Menchik, as you may have realised, was female and you may not have heard of many female chess players.

Vera, as we shall call her, was special. In 1929, representing Russia, she became the first women's world champion and went on to hold the title for 17 years – a run that has never been surpassed.

I don't know a great deal about Vera, but she must have been quite some player and an exceptionally strong character to compete in what back then was considered to be exclusively a man's world. In 1943, in wartime London, a 37-year-old Vera played at Battersea Chess Club in a Surrey v Kent county match. The club was then based at The Railway Tavern on Battersea Rise (now the Hawkins Forge). As the best player in the room, Vera was naturally on the top board.

However, tragedy was to befall her. She was widowed shortly after her marriage. On 27 June 1944 she, her sister Olga, and their mother were all killed in a V1 flying bomb attack. Their home in Gauden Road, near Clapham North Station was destroyed.

Vera Menchik was cremated at

the Streatham Park Crematorium on 4 July 1944, along with her sister and mother. There ended the career of the greatest ever female chess player.

Why am I telling you about this unknown but distinguished chess player? Because 70 years on, with the help of the Battersea WI, we are doing our best to promote women's chess and to keep the memory of Vera Menchik alive.

Last year Battersea Chess Club got in touch with Battersea WI on Twitter when we saw they were forming.

Our initial contact was along the lines of 'Would you like to set up a WI chess club? If so, we can help'. To our surprise, the answer was positive.

A year later we have got it under way, and it is going very well. We met for the first time at Battersea Arts Centre one Friday afternoon and have continued to meet every fortnight since.

Rewarding

Chess is not easy to learn, but it is rewarding. I teach juniors and to get to the point where they can be considered competitive, they have to get through a 22-week long syllabus. That's a full academic year.

What I enjoy about it and am trying to impress on our group is that chess is a skill you can continue learning and improving for the rest of your life. At Battersea we have about 60 mostly local members, the youngest being seven and the oldest 92. The great thing about the 92-year-old, Peter, is that he only started playing three years ago!

He proves there's nothing to fear from chess, anyone can do it at any age.

As for our WI group, they are steaming ahead. Dr Clare Graham



Top: Vera Menchik playing a simul (several games at once)

Below: Battersea Chess Club more recently

has been the de facto leader of the group. She had some knowledge of the game but everyone else was a complete beginner. They're not now though - although they all seem to think they are. There are around six or seven in the group and we are making great strides.

My grand plan is to guide the group to the point where they can play each other, learn from each other and then strike out against experienced players in a league or tournament.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a Battersea WI team winning matches? Maybe we'll even find our next Vera Menchik.

Battersea Chess Club meets every Tuesday in the Battersea Labour Club in Falcon Road at 7.30pm. Everyone is welcome.

Great Bus Journeys of the World No 25

Mike Roden travels to Battersea Bridge from Finsbury Park on the 19



TfL's very welcome reprieve of the 19 bus led to several suggestions that my next bus journey should be a tribute to Battersea's favourite bus. Jenny Sheridan covered this route for the first Great Bus Journey in Autumn 2011 so to ring the changes I've decided to start at Finsbury Park. Just before 11am on a sunny May morning I emerge from the station after a quick trip on the Victoria Line. Near the bus stop stands Rowans Tenpin Bowling establishment. A century ago this was a cinema where 'disgraceful scenes' were reported to the police. Its time as a bowling alley is about to come to an end with plans to demolish it and open up access to the park behind and build a very tall tower block.

The bus heads off down Blackstock Road. This is the land of the quick eaterie: kebabs, falafel, curry, Turkish cuisine. Everywhere there are references to the local football club, there's the Arsenal Café across the road from City and Islington College, then Arsenal Fruit and Veg, Arsenal Barbers and Arsenal Food and Wine.

The stadium is no longer in this neck of the woods. Unable to expand in their Highbury location, in 2006 the club relocated to nearby Holloway. Blackstock Road becomes Highbury Park and we pass Conewood Road which leads down to the former site of Arsenal's stadium, now a luxury development called Highbury Square.

Here on the edge of Islington there's a different atmosphere, a prosperity summed up by the shop Ink & 84 which 'sells stories, dreams, drink & conviviality'. It's an independent bookshop which serves coffee in the day and craft beer, wine and artisan gin in the evenings.

The modernist Joan of Arc Catholic

Church was designed by Stanley Kerr Bate and opened for business in 1962 replacing a 'temporary church' which had occupied the site since 1920. It was the first church in the world to be named after St Joan who had been consecrated just two years earlier.

It's mainly residential round here. The large Anglican church – Christ Church Highbury – dating from 1848 stands next door to Highbury Fields which is Islington's largest open space and teeming with young families enjoying the sunshine.

At a T-junction the bus turns right onto St Paul's Road towards Highbury Corner. We crawl down Upper Street through Islington's eclectic mix of shops, bars and restaurants. To the left on Canonbury Square is the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art. It's the place to go to see art and sculpture dating from 1890 to the 1950s.

Protests

Nearby William Tyndale Primary school was at the centre of a row in the early 1970s. Parental protests over its 'radically progressive' education methods led ultimately to an increase in government authority over education at the expense of local authority control.

Almeida Street is of course the home of the Almeida Theatre which opened in 1980. In 1837 the building housed the Islington Literary and Scientific Society. The Salvation Army took up residence from 1890 until 1955. After that the building fell into disuse. In 1972 the campaign began to turn it into a theatre.

Further down Upper Street there's the King's Head pub. In 1970 a room at the back which had been used for boxing, then for pool was transformed into the first pub theatre in London

since Shakespeare's day.

Islington Green is a rare surviving patch of a large area of common land. The sun shines down on the statue of Sir Hugh Myddelton at one end. He was the driving force behind an ambitious project to bring clean water to London from the River Lea. The scheme cost Myddelton a fortune, although in 1612 he persuaded King James I to lend a financial hand. The so-called New River was officially opened in September 1613.

We're on Rosebery Avenue now passing the Lilian Baylis Studio and Sadlers Wells Theatre. In the late nineteen twenties it was Baylis (who had already restored the fortunes of the Old Vic) who took on the task of reviving the then derelict Sadlers Wells theatre. In 1931 it reopened with *Twelfth Night* starring John Gielgud as Malvolio and Ralph Richardson as Sir Toby Belch.

The Post Office's mail centre on Mount Pleasant is on the site of the Middlesex House of Correction which was built in 1794. With 1800 prisoners it was the largest British jail of its time. In 1887 (ten years after the prison closed) the Post Office adapted its former treadmill houses for use as a parcel depot, subsequently extending operations here to create the largest sorting office in Europe.

Gardens

The bus is now heading down Theobalds Road, alongside the walled gardens of Grays Inn. They're known as 'the Walks' and this is one of the largest privately owned gardens in London. The gardens are open to the public on weekday lunchtimes and are a great place to enjoy an alfresco lunch on a sunny day.

Sicilian Avenue is as empty as the

Left to right: Rowans Bowling Alley, Finsbury Park; The Almeida Theatre, Camden; statue of Sir Hugh Myddelton, Islington Green, the Bloomsbury Tavern, a striking window display in Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge



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

last time I passed on the 38 bus. By contrast the benches in Bloomsbury Square Garden are full of people enjoying the sunshine. This was one of the earliest London squares and in the seventeenth century was known as Southampton Square. The name Bloomsbury dates from 1201 when William de Blemond, a Norman landowner, acquired the land – thus Blemondisberi – the bury, or manor, of Blemond.

My attention is caught by the Bloomsbury Tavern, a striking corner pub. Legend has it that the Tavern was the last drinking spot for condemned criminals between Newgate Prison and Tyburn. In the interests of accuracy I should say that several other pubs make the same claim.

Dogleg

We then take a rather complicated dogleg off the main thoroughfare behind Tottenham Court station and reach Charing Cross Road via St Giles High Street and Denmark Street. As usual the going is slow here with a convoy of buses crossing the junction with Shaftesbury Avenue known as Cambridge Circus. This of course is the home of 'The Circus' John le Carré's fictionalised location of the British intelligence service.

We head down Shaftesbury Avenue. Since I've written several times about this area you must forgive me for sitting back until we pass Piccadilly Circus.

Like so many buildings along here St James Piccadilly was severely damaged by wartime bombing. In Graham Greene's 1943 novel *The Ministry of Fear* the main character takes a number 19 from Piccadilly to Battersea during the Blitz and reflects how the bombs have struck some areas and spared others. 'After the

ruins of St James one passed ... into peaceful country. Knightsbridge and Sloane Street were not at war but Chelsea was, and Battersea was in the front line'.

Jazz legends

Passing Green Park we turn onto Knightsbridge. The area is said to be named after a bridge across the River Westbourne (now culverted underground) which flows into the Thames. The Wellesley 'boutique' hotel occupies the site of the original entrance to Hyde Park Corner tube station, whose dark red tiles can be seen above the hotel entrance. Latterly it was home to Pizza on the Park which hosted performances by numerous jazz legends. It was demolished in 2010.

The wealth and ostentation of Knightsbridge is exemplified by the Ferrari showroom – magnificent but unattainable for most people. As a welcome change there used to be a row of rundown, shabby shops just before Sloane Street. No more. Everything behind the 1902 façade of this block has now been demolished, wiped away. The projected design for 55 – 91 Knightsbridge has shops and offices on ground and first floors with the upper floors containing fifteen large luxury apartments which will 'reflect the Edwardian heritage of the original building [with] intricate detailing and bespoke joinery'. Details on request ...

We turn past Harvey Nichols onto Sloane Street. Benjamin Harvey opened a shop in a terraced house on this site in 1831 and continued to expand the business into neighbouring properties. In 1850 when he died his wife went into partnership with James Nichols the husband of Harvey's niece. There are now a couple of dozen stores

in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

Every famous name in designer fashion has an outlet on this street but relief from the retail experience arrives as we pass the Danish Embassy, which is shared with the Embassy of Iceland. The building was designed by Danish architect Arne Jacobsen and opened in 1977.

The very large private garden square at Cadogan Place was developed by Henry Holland for Lord Cadogan at the end of the eighteenth century. Charles Dickens commented that 'Cadogan Place is the one slight bond that joins two great extremes; it is the connecting link between the aristocratic pavements of Belgrave Square, and the barbarism of Chelsea ...'

Chelsea is more colourful than barbaric today. The Chelsea in Bloom competition, in conjunction with the Flower Show which is taking place the week of my journey means that many of the shops are bedecked with ambitious floral creations.

Nostalgic

The displays continue as we travel along Kings Road. The restaurant on Duke of York's Square with its rooftop terrace has looked close to completion for a long time but it's not finished yet. The hoardings around the temporarily closed-down Curzon Cinema are covered with nostalgic photographs of Kings Road as it once was. The Cineworld on the edge of Old Church Street known to sixties teenagers as the Essoldo has gone too. On the plus side we've gained a pink-hued outpost of Peggy Porschen (see last issue).

Almost at journey's end we turn onto Beaufort Street towards the Embankment. Halfway down we pass Allen Hall, the seminary for the diocese of Westminster (which lets out its rooms during the summer). And then we cross the river and arrive at Battersea Bridge southside. It took me about 35 minutes to get to Finsbury Park by bus and tube. Returning home by bus has taken around 90 minutes. *Note: Much of the area of London covered by this route – particularly Kings Road, Sloane Street, Piccadilly, Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road has featured in several of the Great Bus Journeys and thus I have kept detail about those areas to a minimum.*

Tall for her height: Samantha Heath, 6 June 1960 – 28 March 2019

A tribute by Leonie Cooper and Harvey Heath

Samantha Heath, long-term member of the Battersea Society, died on 28 March this year. Samantha never reached five feet tall but she described herself as tall for her height. Small but significant, her impact on the environment immediately around her and for London was and is profound.

Samantha was one of the first London Assembly Members elected in 2000. She was deputy chair of the Assembly 2003 – 04 and also the first chair of the London Assembly Environment Committee 2000 – 04, pushing forward many strategies to deal with the pollution issues that London still grapples with today.

Samantha originally trained as a civil engineer at Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh, then as now an unusual choice for a woman. After graduation, she worked for 10 years for Robert McAlpine Ltd and lectured at Greenwich University from 1992. Alongside her university role she developed her political career and her involvement in environmental issues. She was elected as a Wandsworth Labour councillor in 1994 for Latchmere Ward and six years later was elected as one of 25 London Assembly Members, serving alongside Ken Livingstone, the first Mayor of London.

Low Emission Zone

Once elected as a London Assembly Member Samantha wasted no time in getting the Environment Committee and GLA staff focused on the urgent need to address climate change and to improve air quality. The Environment Committee produced reports calling for a Low Emission Zone, implemented some years later and now to be joined this year in 2019 by the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). Samantha worked hard on ensuring an energy strategy was developed that focused on renewable energy. She was instrumental in getting the London Energy Partnership off the ground, bringing together private, public and academic representatives. She became its first



chair when it was launched in 2004.

Samantha also chaired the London Sustainable Development Commission where she was the Mayor's representative on its Energy Taskforce. Here she pushed hard for the GLA to adopt a Carbon Emission Reduction Target. She succeeded in this, making London one of the first cities to adopt such a target.

Subsequently, Samantha became the chief executive of the London Sustainability Exchange, where she worked until 2018. LSX works with many local groups, particularly on air quality. Her expertise in air quality also led NICE, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, to recruit her to its air quality public health advisory committee.

Energetic

It was in her capacity at LSX that Samantha worked energetically with the Battersea Society. Her dynamism led quite a large group of our members to work on Citizen Science projects. This involved measuring heavy metals in the air by way of ghost wipes, nitrogen dioxide by diffusions tubes placed on lamp posts, particulate matter readings of fine particles and lichen

studies on garden walls. Needless to say the readings we produced were frightening, especially at Clapham Junction by the Falcon Road intersection. Subsequently the Mayor of London recognised Clapham Junction as a pollution hotspot and air monitoring equipment has been installed there.

Harvey Heath adds: As her father I have received many letters of condolence. What strikes me from them is how many people say that they were 'in awe' of Samantha. 'Tall for my height' is, I feel, a fitting epitaph.

Sara Linton adds this tribute to her friend

Samantha's many successes in life were down to the fact that she matched her ambition for change with her generosity, warmth and vitality. She set high standards for herself and expected the best of others. Her confidence was hugely refreshing and gave her an energy which was impossible to miss. But she also had inner steel that allowed her to aim high, take risks, to win and sometimes to lose.

Glamorous

Samantha lived her environmental and world values. Her glamorous outfits were gleaned through second-hand stores (her favourite being on Battersea Park Road) long before reuse, recycle and reduce were a mantra. She was vegetarian for most of her life and didn't even have a passport – let alone fly – for many years. For a (metaphorically-only) high flyer she was surprisingly happiest at home, in the Shaftesbury estate, with loved ones, gardening or hosting her many friends. And of course with her three ginger cats.

Samantha's attitude towards her life with terminal cancer was extraordinary. She determined to get every last ounce out of the experience of living on earth. Most people with secondary cancer would not dream of standing for council, but in 2018 Samantha threw everything she had at it, and very nearly won.

She continued to work until she physically no longer could.

Painting

When work was no longer possible, painting and drawing became a stronger passion, taking on commissions from friends for

portraits of pets, when she wasn't exploring her experience and emotions about her cancer and her life. She created an art book with poetry and paintings which was displayed at Tate Modern as part of an exhibition about living with cancer. I've always hated the pat phrase

'the good go young' but I have to say with Samantha it seems particularly apt. It seems to me most unjust that someone who lived so well and did such good should no longer be with us. I miss Samantha very much, and she will continue to be a role model for many – especially me – in death as in life.

Nine Elms, Battersea: past, present and future

Display boards highlight rich local history, says Sue Demont

It's hard for longstanding residents of Battersea to recognise the Nine Elms district today, such is the immensity of its redevelopment. Credit therefore goes to the Nine Elms Partnership for its introduction of brightly coloured display boards which are being used not just to showcase the present and inform about the future, but to highlight the rich and complex history of the area. And thanks to our indefatigable local historian, Jeanne Rathbone, the Battersea Society's Heritage Committee has become the go-to organisation for providing copy, meaning we can at the same time highlight the aims of the Society and publicise our forthcoming events.

Welfare

We started with Jeanne's own piece on politician and suffragette Charlotte Despard. This extraordinary woman managed to fit in the writing of ten novels during a lifetime of campaigning and helping the poor of Nine Elms. When she moved to Ireland to fight for independence, she bequeathed her former home in Currie Street to become a welfare centre for the poor and unemployed.

Charlotte's story evidently found favour with the Nine Elms team as two months later we were asked for another contribution. This was my turn and I chose to highlight the story of the forgotten Nine Elms Station, London's third ever railway terminus after Euston and London Bridge. Opened in 1838, this iconic building was designed by renowned architect Sir William Tite. Although it only lasted ten years as a passenger station (it was superseded by Waterloo) it found a new role as the 'Royal Station'. It was used regularly by Queen Victoria

All aboard for Nine Elms! - London's 'secret' station 1838-1963
By Battersea Society

Most people have heard of Waterloo Station, but did you know that London's third oldest railway terminus was situated right here at Nine Elms?



Why here?
Nine Elms was close to Central London and the Thames provided easy travel links. The London and Southampton Railway commissioned famous architect Sir William Tite to design a splendid neo-classical station.

Fit for a queen
One of the first passengers was none other than Queen Victoria! She travelled from Nine Elms to get to the Isle of Wight where her palace Osborne House was being built. Other illustrious passengers included the Duke of Wellington and later, the Italian general and 'father of modern Italy' Garibaldi.

They're off!
The railways opened up travel to the masses. Nine days after the station opened *The Times* reported a near-riot on Derby Day when 4000 would-be passengers found themselves stranded at Nine Elms!

A fine romance
One of the station's best kept secrets was the elopement of the poet Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett in 1846, who married in secret and then hid out for Nine Elms to catch the boat train to France. Elizabeth was disinherited by her father and the couple never returned to England.

Second coming
Once Waterloo opened in 1848, Nine Elms Station closed to ordinary passenger traffic. But the Royals wanted to keep their convenient route South! Nine Elms became known as the 'Royal Station' with a special waiting room to welcome visiting European monarchs.

The Mad Professor!
In the 1850s inventor Clemente Masserano became convinced that horses could be a cheaper and faster alternative to steam power. He devised the *Impulsoria*, a horse-powered treadmill to provide motive power for freight trains. His machine managed to pull 30 wagons up the Nine Elms Goods Yard incline at a speed of 7 m.p.h. Sadly, nobody ever placed an order!

Decline and fall
At its peak the railway works employed 2,500 men, but decline set in after the First World War. The locomotive and carriage works were relocated to Ealing and the area was heavily bombed in the Blitz. Amazingly, Nine Elms Station survived until 1963, when despite opposition from the poet John Betjeman, it was demolished. The railway yards were cleared for the building of New Covent Garden Market, and rail and river transport links were abandoned in favour of widening Nine Elms Lane.

About Battersea Society
The aims of the Society are to strengthen Battersea's sense of identity and community, stimulate interest in its geography, history, and architecture, and to promote excellence in new developments whilst conserving the best of the past. The Society organises talks, social events, walks and visits, and publishes a quarterly magazine, *Battersea Matters*. Join Battersea Society on 6 June for a multi-media presentation at the Royal College of Art called *Growing Up in Wartime Battersea*, part of the Windrush Heritage Festival. Find Battersea Society on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @batterseasoc or visit www.batterseasociety.org.uk

A panel describing the history of Nine Elms railway station

students, leading to the erection of a bronze statue in Battersea to the dog's memory. Clashes ensued between the students and the police to such an extent that the statue was secretly removed and melted down, though a replacement has now been established in Battersea Park.

There are three sets of boards;

and Prince Albert when travelling to the south coast to go to Osborne House, whilst continuing to operate as a goods station. In 1963, despite opposition from the likes of Sir John Betjeman, the station was closed and demolished.

Brown Dog

Then we were back to Jeanne who opted to highlight the 'Brown Dog Affair' following an excellent Battersea Society talk by Ian Mursell. This 'small brown mongrel' became a cause celebre when word got out of his vivisection by medical

the best sited is on the Thames towpath right opposite the American Embassy – an area with a high level of footfall from both Londoners and tourists. There is another board in the very busy area of Battersea Park Road opposite the Cats and Dogs Home; and a third adjoins Carey Gardens Estate. Do take a look if you're passing any of these and draw the attention of your friends and neighbours both to our material and to what's going on currently in Battersea's Nine Elms district.

Sue Demont
Chair, Heritage Committee

Yes, I remember Adlestrop

Janice Morphet introduces the author of a much loved poem

In his lifetime, Edward Thomas was well-known as a critic and essayist but now he is most frequently remembered as a poet who died in the battle of Arras in 1917. He was a friend of Robert Frost, the American poet, and his work was focused on the countryside. His best-known poem, *Adlestrop*, was written after a railway journey in 1914 and is seen to represent England at a time of peace shortly before war broke out.

Thomas grew up in Shelgate Road, off Northcote Road, and met his future wife, Helen, at her home at 6 Patten Road, by Wandsworth Common. We learn much about how they roamed both Clapham and Wandsworth Commons not from his work but from the books that Helen wrote after Edward's death. These are jointly published, together with some letters, as *Under Storm's Wing* (1987). Helen's father was an author and frequently his assistance was sought from those wishing to become writers. Edward, described by Helen as a strange boy, was one of these.

Shelgate Road

Philip Edward Thomas was the eldest of six sons and his father was a senior civil servant. Edward was born at what is now 14 Lansdowne Gardens in Stockwell after which his family moved to 61 Shelgate Road in Battersea. Both houses have blue plaques. After their marriage, Helen moved to stay with Edward's family at Shelgate Road for the birth of their first child.

The relationship between Edward and Helen was initially encouraged by Helen's father who asked Edward to take her on his long walks to Barnes and Merton. But as the friendship developed it was not welcomed by Helen's mother, who forbade them to communicate. However, they did exchange letters through one of his friends when Edward went to Oxford. Helen frequently

visited Edward's home and was welcomed by his mother. Helen went to work in Broadstairs to escape her mother's restrictions but returned, despite them. As Helen describes, 'Each evening Edward and I met on Wandsworth Common, where afar off I would recognize him by his long swinging stride'. They also



went to places like the National Gallery or Bookseller's Row behind the Strand after which 'sometimes we'd walk all the way home, along the Embankment and over Battersea Bridge, and home through Clapham Junction'. On Helen's twentieth birthday, they had a picnic and 'met in the horrid dark tunnel at Clapham Junction Station' from where they walked to the Common. After their picnic and a family dinner they walked back across Wandsworth Common to Clapham Junction again.

When Edward was in his last year at Oxford, Helen became pregnant and she and Edward married in Fulham. They kept their marriage and baby secret from their respective families at first. When Edward decided that they should be told, his mother was immediately accepting, treating Helen like a daughter, and she moved to Shelgate Road. Her own mother was less supportive and they appear to have become estranged. Helen helped Edward's mother in the house and she describes his homecoming from Oxford at Christmas time, 'At last I heard his cab drive up, and the bang of the street door and the murmur of voices for what seemed a long time, and then his steps on the

staircase ...' and they spent much of this holiday again walking on the Common every day. When the baby was born, Helen would take the pram to Wimbledon or Clapham Commons.

Trapped

From the outset of their marriage and son's birth, Edward was pulled away from his young family by his friends to the countryside. He went on long walks while Helen felt that she was trapped in suburbia. Edward's father wanted him to take the civil service exams but he refused. They moved out of his parents' home to a house 'he found, in a new street in what was obviously doomed to be a slum, a half-house of which the rent was seven and sixpence a week'. The family later moved to a house near Bearsted in Kent, where Edward had a separate study. This was to be the first of many moves that the family had – sometimes to the country, such as three years in Sevenoaks and at other times back to London. Edward had what might now be called depression and this constant moving was an attempt to make new starts. He appeared to spend less and less time at home and more time roaming the countryside, with Helen writing to him daily. As his moods became worse Helen describes their children avoiding him. Edward enlisted in the Artist's Rifles in 1915 of his own volition and after an internal struggle. While Edward hated the army, his darker periods left him.

War poet

Edward wanted to live by his writing and had some success once he met H W Nevinson, who was a campaigning journalist (and father of the artist Christopher). Nevinson gave Edward books to review for daily newspapers and he was commissioned to write a biography of Richard Jefferies, the Victorian nature writer. It was through Robert Frost's persuasion that Edward took to writing poetry; his contribution as a war poet was recognised by his inclusion in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Helen and Edward had three children but their lives never seemed to be as happy as they were in the times before their marriage, when they walked regularly on the commons.

Battersea's First Lady, the Life and Times of Caroline Ganley MP

Jean Davidson of the Wandsworth Historical Society reviews Sue Demont's new book

Long-time residents and incomers to Battersea will be aware of a hotbed of socialism surviving in its midst for well over a century. The movement's early successes were Britain's first working class member of the Cabinet, London's first black mayor and a first Asian communist member of parliament, who were all men. Thriving alongside was an expanding Co-operative Society opening many retail outlets in the borough. It had a female section, the Women's Co-operative Guild, which encouraged and trained its members to positively pursue engagement with other influential local organisations.

Principles

A rising star in this guild was Mrs Caroline Ganley, who had emerged from an impoverished background with strong views on active involvement in her adopted community from principles handed down from her mother and grandmother. She participated significantly in socialism and the suffrage movement before the Great War and this led to her elections as a director in the Co-operative Society from 1918, as a Labour councillor for Battersea Borough from 1919 and as a JP for Wandsworth Juvenile Court from 1921. Soon afterwards, she was successful in being elected to London County Council from 1925, where she served on the Education Committee.

When in her seventies, Caroline Ganley wrote a 200-page memoir which has provided the main material for this book. Its author has added supplementary details from her own research including an introductory outline of the development of the young Caroline and a closing attempt at revealing a more mature character from interviews with surviving family members and published biographical details. Throughout the book, the author's use of bold type identifies the short extracts of material from the memoir which are then developed into a chronological revelation of how much one determined woman can

pack into a long life.

The author has chosen to elaborate on a number of social elements that have vanished from our present environment such as pre-National Health Service maternity provision in the borough and the organisation behind a wide range of co-operative society outlets. Both of these were of major importance in Mrs Ganley's career. In her memoir, she indicates that as chairwoman of the Health Committee of Battersea Council in the early 1920s, she achieved her most satisfactory personal success by enabling the creation of the borough's first maternity hospital.

Mrs Ganley soon found that delivering political speeches in Battersea Park at weekends and supporting trade union activists did not deliver change quickly enough for the improvement of conditions for those worst off in society. However, she could achieve these ideals through her involvement in the London Co-operative Society, which ensured the regular supply of household necessities through customers' ownership of its own wholesale and retail outlets and, more importantly, the control of prices.

Food factories

Caroline visited dairy farms and food factories to widen her understanding of the supply chain and all directors had to rotate as chairman of each of its range of committees. This knowledge led to her participation in government enquiries in 1936 and 1940. Further appreciation of her widening expertise resulted in her appointment in 1942 as the first woman president of the London Co-operative Society and success from this organisation's support in her election as a Labour Member of Parliament in 1945.

Unfortunately there are a few thorns in the otherwise excellent text with unchallenged claims from



Mrs Ganley's memoirs that her public service duties were always voluntary. On her election in 1945 the annual salary of a member of parliament was £600 but she would gain substantially when this was raised to £1000 a year from 1946. She returned to Battersea Borough Council in 1953 giving twelve further years of service as a councillor. An earlier Local Government Act in 1948 had introduced provision for local council members to receive compensation for any financial loss as a result of their service.

Published by daffodil500. 72 pages. £5.99 per copy + £1.50 p&p within the UK. To order: Email suedemont57@gmail.com



Sue Demont and Jenny Sheridan on the colourful Battersea Society stall at Falcon Road Festival

Five weeks with no income

Jenny Sheridan explores food bank use in Wandsworth

Wandsworth is a wealthy borough. It is in the top three of London boroughs for economic activity and pay levels, on average, are high. So why would there be a need for a food bank here?

Wandsworth Food Bank gave out 5,770 emergency food supplies during the year 2018 –19, an 11% increase on the previous year. In exchange for a voucher from a referring agency, the Food Bank provides a bag or box containing sufficient food for about three days. Most of the referrals come from Wandsworth Council or voluntary organisations such as Citizens Advice. Charities working with asylum seekers and refugees also refer people, as do GPs and mental health services.

Struggle

People on low or unreliable incomes, whether from benefits or paid work or a combination of the two, sometimes simply don't have enough money to pay for essential costs. Sarah Chapman, Food Bank trustee and a regular volunteer, says, 'Changes to benefits is the most common reason for people to be referred to us. And the five week wait for the first payment of Universal Credit is an important factor. It means that a family can be left with no income at all for over a month – and sometimes there are delays and it can be even longer. People who normally struggle to get by on a low income simply can't cover that wait. When a bill comes in the struggle becomes a crisis.' Before Universal Credit was introduced the government expected people to wait a more manageable 10 – 14 days for the first benefit payment, for instance for Jobseekers Allowance.

The Food Bank has a specialist advisory service, provided by Citizens Advice. The adviser (universally known as 'the wonderful Sylvia') supports people with difficulties such as benefit issues and problem debt



Carefully sorted supplies at St Mark's, Battersea Rise

(being unable to repay debts or to pay household bills). Two-thirds of people using this service have a long-term health condition or are disabled. If you are already unwell, being unable to feed yourself and your family adequately must make life very hard indeed. The adviser supports people to make appeals against negative decisions on disability benefits. Almost 90 % of the appeals are successful, showing that the initial decision, causing a huge amount of distress and anxiety in addition to poverty, was faulty. As a result of benefits being correctly in place again, these people no longer need to use the Food Bank.

Wandsworth has an impressive record on unemployment – one of the lowest levels in London. But getting a job is not a guarantee of a decent income. Twenty percent of jobs in the borough are low-paid and housing costs are high. Some of the working-age people referred to the Food Bank are in low-paid work or insecure jobs that don't provide enough hours, or they may be on zero-hours contracts. Cleaners, school dinner supervisors and minicab drivers are some of those who may struggle with their bills.

More than a third of the food parcels are for children, especially of primary school age. In Latchmere ward, 40% of supplies were for children and in Queenstown it was 53%. Impoverished children may suffer from being bullied because they have poor hygiene (food supplies include toiletries) and may be unable to concentrate at school if they are hungry. Being unable to provide for their children can make parents seriously depressed.

Perhaps surprisingly, only four percent of food recipients are over 65. This is probably because pensions rise in line with inflation, while other benefits have been cut or frozen.

The Food Bank opened in 2013 and is based in St Mark's Church, Battersea Rise, with centres in Tooting, Putney, Southfields and on the Doddington Estate. 'When we started,' says Sarah Chapman, 'we hoped we'd be able to close in three years. But the need is still there. Although the number of people referred to us has very slightly reduced, they need help for longer or more frequently, suggesting that persistent poverty is increasing.'

Nutritious

Dan Frith, Food Bank manager, says that if readers would like to help, donations of cash or food are very welcome. 'You can leave food in the designated collection points in several local supermarkets. It's worth checking our website before you go to the shops as we try to update the list of what we need every week. We want each parcel to provide food that is nutritious as well as enjoyable.

'And if you'd like to do more to help our campaign to end poverty in Wandsworth and beyond, we're encouraging people to go to the Trussell Trust's website and join their 5 Weeks Too Long campaign. This aims to persuade the government to shorten or do away with the five week delay in delivering Universal Credit. That would really make a difference.'

*Based on a research report by the Wandsworth Foodbank.
To read more go to www.wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk*

The St Johns: a lasting legacy

Sally Sellers tells the story of Walter and Johanna St John, philanthropic lords of the manor in 17th century Battersea

Following the turbulence of the Civil War and regicide the second half of the seventeenth century was a period of high political drama and continuing change. Battersea was lucky that throughout it had as its Lord of the Manor Walter St John. In an article written for the South Western Star in 1978 Reg Prescott described him as 'a benevolent man, who played both sides in the political game, resided in the manor and lived a sufficiently long time to provide that continuity of local government necessary during such a period of history.'

Cousins

Walter and Johanna, cousins from different sides of the St John family, married in 1649 and made the Old Manor House at Battersea their main home when the family estates passed to Walter in 1656. These estates included Lydiard Tregoze in Wiltshire, but that was used primarily as a summer home. Battersea Manor House no longer exists but was sited close to St Mary's Church on the riverside. At this time the village of Battersea was not in London, but was an area of market gardening supplying vegetables, fruit and flowers to its markets.

This home was accessible to parliament where Walter served between 1656 and 1695 as MP for Wotton Bassett or Wiltshire. However, despite possibly entertaining the King, Charles II, at Battersea he was never a royal insider and he did not make a great mark on national politics. He did however concern himself greatly with local affairs in Battersea.

In his article Reg Prescott suggests 'For 50-odd years Sir Walter and his wife were the 'Lord and Lady Bountiful' of the village.' This title suggests a somewhat self-aggrandising motivation for their charitable work but this might not

be appropriate. The seventeenth century saw a shift in the approach to philanthropy; a move away from posthumous bequests, to the more activist and explicitly protestant tradition of direct charitable engagement during

life. This linked with the puritan desire for a 'reformation of manners' which would improve public life to avoid God's punishment.

Walter and Johanna St. John were a serious-minded couple and were strongly guided by Johanna's strict puritan beliefs.

Throughout their lives they demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of those in their parish. Prescott reports that if a collection at church for some charitable end was

insufficient, Walter would often give an extra 40 shillings after the service.

In 1675 he placed six cottages 'near the pound' at the disposal of the churchwardens of St Mary's Battersea for 'the very ancient, past labourer, bed-ridden and lame of the village.' These almshouses have long since disappeared but were thought to have been sited between Christ Church and Battersea Park Road.

Education

Yet the couple wanted to do more than distribute alms to the poor. The puritans advocated the encouragement of self-help and productive work, but this required education and training, something inaccessible to the poorest. In the 1660s Sir Walter founded a school in Battersea High Street, supporting it himself at a cost of around £20 a year. It was to take 20 poor boys of the parish of Battersea and teach them to read, write and cast accounts until

they left at the age of 15. Later in his life he recognised the need to ensure that the school would continue after his death and so, in 1700, set up an endowment. He bought 31 acres of land in Camberwell, at a cost of £570, the rents from which would maintain the school. The lands and schoolhouse were conveyed to twelve trustees who formed the Walter St John's School Trust, the basis of the educational charity that continues today.

Playing fields

Sir Walter's benevolence is known through the charity, the school and the playing fields bearing his name, but significant too was the life and work of his wife Johanna. Described at her burial as the '... pious prudent consort of Sir Walter St John', she had a strong influence on her husband and household. It is most likely that she provided the stimulus and support for his philanthropic work. In her own will, specifically written herself, there was a stipulation for the trustees of the school to apprentice one or more of its children.

Johanna skilfully managed two large households, and letters written to her steward at Lydiard Tregoze, Thomas Hardyman, survive. They show she kept a tight rein on affairs. In the seventeenth century the house at Lydiard overlooked formal gardens, where Johanna supervised the planting, and their Battersea home too had spacious gardens.

Johanna became well-known for her knowledge of plants and herbs and their healing qualities. Her correspondence reveals how she sent recipes gathered from her London acquaintances to be made up at Lydiard where she relied on a team of expert distillers and herb gatherers. She recorded all the poultices, purges and potions that she made to help her family, friends and local people. Some of the remedies came with a personal recommendation 'For a consumption cured my cos Fabian – muscadel a quart walnut water a pint the same of spirmint water a qtr of a pound of ▶



◀ loaf suger a piece of cinimon put all theses together into 2 grt Bottle shake it once a day for 8 days give a qtr of a pint morning and afternoon.'

Johanna's Booke dated 1680 is now held at the Wellcome Library, the repository of books, manuscripts

and archives recording the history of medicine.

Johanna died in 1704, four years before her husband, both in their Battersea home. Their attachment to it is poignantly seen in a further entry to her will 'I desire if Sir Walter St

John outlive me, his servants may be continued about him and that he may not be removed to Liddiard, London or any other place from Battersea where he has lived so long least it hasten his death'.



Flooded with light – but no moat

Carol Rahn visits the US Embassy

Members of the Battersea Society lucky enough to join the second and last tour of the US Embassy in late June found themselves in for a rare treat – their tour guide was the Philadelphia-based architect James Timberlake who has devoted much of the last decade to this building. Joined by members of the Design

Museum and the GLA Architects' Club, we were briefed by Timberlake on the history and key features of the building. Among them are the building's ecological credentials: the highest possible ratings whether by UK (BREEAM) or American (LEED) measures thanks to, for example, a roof covered with photovoltaic cells, collection and recycling of rainwater and use of ground heat. To maximise the interior sense of space and light, nowhere in the building is more than 15 metres from the glass walls, which in turn are shielded from the sun by those 'sails' (which are themselves designed to link to photovoltaic cells, see above left).

Timberlake led us through several areas of the building not normally



open to the public. Artwork includes a massive relief by Mark Bradford using the words of the US Constitution and another by Rachel Whiteread based on a flat-pack version of a standard American house.

A collection of hanging seals of the United States brightens the café area (adjacent to a

very inviting bar). Gardens 'wrap' the building, (left) beginning with the pond (Timberlake insists it's not a moat) and abundant planting at ground level and continuing upward with small gardens on several floors that spill out into structured outdoor space, each representing a different American ecosystem, for example the Midwestern Plains garden, the Southwest garden and the Pacific coast garden.

The Embassy is indeed a billion dollar project, of which \$440 million was for the building and \$660 for the land and associated costs in this infamously 'off' location, all of it paid for by the sale of the Grosvenor Square properties.



The 51st State Band and Gnomus the puppet created plenty of spectacle at Thessaly Road Happy Streets Festival on 13 July