

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society SUMMER 2020



Not for me, not for you, but for us

Empty streets show the truth of Battersea's motto



Clockwise from centre: Children's rainbow messages decorate The Grand; Clapham Junction station; Battersea Rise; supermarket shelves in late March; York Road. Photos: Michael Jubb, Duncan Parish, Jenny Sheridan



Don't forget to visit our website:

www.batterseasociety.org.uk

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

From the editor



I realise I am lucky, immensely so. I have a garden, I live in a house and I have no immediate fears for my income.

No-one I know has died or been hospitalised due to coronavirus. None of these are true for many people in Battersea. As I write, over 180 people have died of Covid-19 in Wandsworth. And thousands of others live in small flats with no outside space and have insecure jobs or the fear of losing their income.

So please bear with me if I focus on the good things that have arisen out of this period. One is the quiet: I'm no longer woken at 4.30am with the first of a stream of planes. There is very little traffic, so one can often walk down the middle of side roads. Crossing even main roads is swifter and safer. The air is noticeably cleaner.

Most importantly, there is a new spirit of neighbourliness and community, as evidenced so clearly by many of the articles in this issue. And when the sun shines neighbours

sit on doorsteps or stand by gates or on adjoining balconies to chat. There's more time and peace to talk if you bump (distantly) into a friend when taking your hour's exercise.

For me, there is the enjoyment of shopping in the Oldies' Happy Hour in an almost empty supermarket and the pleasure at finding that the corner shop may have less choice but is often better stocked. And there is the consolation of knowing that as one's hair grows ever shaggier and one's roots show more and more, at least there will be few people to notice!

Time saved

If you are working from home you no longer have to face the horrors of the rush hour Northern Line or Clapham Junction train. The time saved can be used for a run or walk in the park, a glass of wine – or of course more work.

Spring has been more beautiful than ever, it seems. In streets and gardens blossom and flowers appeared early and stayed late. The traffic-free air has been scented by choysya and wisteria.

On Wandsworth Common people are active in appropriately distanced ways, playing catch, football or Frisbee; kids climb trees and balance

on the big fallen trunk. Families stop to admire the ducklings; a greylag goose takes seeds delicately from a girl's outstretched hand. Children play on the pavements, families cycle together in the safer streets. After all this is over, wouldn't it be good to have a car-free day once a month?

When all this is over I hope we will maintain the sense of gratitude we feel not only to health and care staff but to the street cleaners, the dustmen, the shop workers, the delivery and postpeople. We are all interdependent – 'no man is an island', as John Donne wrote when seriously ill in 1623.

And when all this is over, I shall be thrilled to return to the theatres, galleries, concerts and museums I love, not to mention the hairdresser and the pub. But I'll miss the quiet and the birdsong, and that transgressive thrill of walking down the middle of the road.

The great majority of members will receive this issue of *Battersea Matters* not in print but via a link to our website. Do let me know what you think of this experience.

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

Battersea Society news

Sadly, due to the Coronavirus situation, we have had to postpone the My Battersea photographic competition. We hope to be running it with renewed vigour in spring 2021.

We had to cancel our AGM in March, though we have thanked our retiring trustees, Monica Tross and Harvey Heath, and welcomed John Oughton.

At our trustees' meeting on 20 April (held by Zoom) we agreed to give donations of £500 each to two local Battersea charities working in the Coronavirus context. One is the Coronavirus Angels (see page 5), the other the Big Local SW11 Covid-19 Fund, which gives grants to projects supporting local people.

Unfortunately we have put all of our Battersea Society events on hold until September. We hope to publish

a revised programme of walks, talks and visits in the next issue of *Battersea Matters*. This will take into account government and social distance guidelines.

The Man on the Battersea Bus writes: Usually Jenny and I share this page but since this time we both have so much to say, and as this issue is any case online we decided that my piece would be made available in my blog.

Just go to batterseabus.co.uk/life-in-lockdown and you'll find me. In the meantime, mind how you go.



Rainbow nation: a Battersea resident's uplifting display

Surviving and thriving in the lockdown

Aaron Barbour describes how Katherine Low Settlement is addressing loneliness and isolation

The worst of times can bring out the best in humanity and our teams at Katherine Low are demonstrating this. Over the last few weeks, we've been responding, adapting and refocusing our work to meet the needs of local people during this Covid-19 crisis.

On 17 March we suspended our face-to-face services, sent staff and volunteers home and closed our community centre. It was a sad and unsettling time. But we had a contingency plan and we've been working hard ever since to put it into place.

We've adapted our community services to support all our members over the telephone and online. For example, we're supporting our most vulnerable elders with over 100 daily calls; delivering ESOL (English) classes to 100 students with a combination of Zoom, WhatsApp and Google G-Suite; supporting our Somali Women's Group via WhatsApp late on a Friday night once their children have gone to bed; and we're hosting a new weekly online Corona Homework Club for 47 refugee young people.

Volunteers

Alongside our own services we have been actively involved in the wider coordination across Battersea and Wandsworth. We've helped set up Battersea Coronavirus Angels. As of 27 April the Angels had recruited 375 volunteers and supported more than 230 vulnerable local residents with picking up shopping and prescriptions, topping up pre-payment utility cards, dog walking and providing a friendly listening ear. We've worked with our partners in the Big Local SW11 Alliance to establish a £100,000 Battersea Covid-19 Community Fund (thanks to the Battersea Society for your generous donation too). And we're working closely with local charity partners and Wandsworth Council departments to coordinate a strategic and practical response across the borough in terms of food distribution, addressing financial hardship and ensuring



The Lunch Club at Katherine Low in happier times

local people get the emotional and wellbeing support they need.

One group that has found the lockdown particularly challenging has been older people. Many of them were lonely and isolated before the lockdown, which is why we work with them. But this has been amplified during the Covid-19 crisis. Poor mental health is significantly increasing, with issues such as anxiety, depression and self-harm. This in turn is exacerbating their existing physical health conditions eg heart, COPD and cancer as well as the effects of poverty and loneliness.

Our priority over the coming months is to reduce the impact of the lockdown on local older people by tackling these issues, and improving their wellbeing.

We currently support 320 local elderly Wandsworth residents, and plan to do so for as long as the lockdown lasts and beyond. This number is increasing each week as new elders contact us for help. Our experienced Elders Team has identified, classified and prioritised the type of support each of our elderly members needs (friendship calls/psycho-emotional support/advice and guidance/advocacy and casework/shopping & medicine/financial support/healthcare support); and the frequency of support (daily/twice/once per week contact). We are currently making 117 telephone/Skype/Zoom calls each day to the most vulnerable (666

calls and 51 referrals were made in the first four weeks of lockdown). Others are receiving a call, email or letter every other day, once a week etc. depending on what they need. We're calling this new service 'KLS Fone Friends' and it provides:

- *Emotional support*
This is crucial during this time as many are scared, lonely, anxious and stressed.

- *Practical support*

We're trying to keep to the KLS routine that so many of our elders enjoy, so we're offering our exercise programme over the phone, via YouTube and sending exercise sheets through the post.

We're posting arts & crafts packs and hope to exhibit their creations in a local gallery after the lockdown. We're working with local food groups like Kambala Cares and Waste Not Want Not to provide hot meals. We're working closely with Battersea Coronavirus Angel volunteers to pick up shopping or prescriptions. Other ideas we're progressing include: needlepoint tutorials, virtual meals, singing and reminiscence games.

- *Advice and casework support*
We are addressing specific issues that elders are facing by advocating on their behalf or connecting them with the Wandsworth Community Hub, Social Services, Age UK Wandsworth, Citizens Advice etc. for changes in their care packages and financial issues, for example.

Dedicated

Through working in partnership with the Battersea Coronavirus Angels and others eg Big Local SW11, Age UK, the Council etc, we have recognised the need for a new Befriending Service. We have trained up a dedicated volunteer team with the Angels and are now matching people. This could provide support to hundreds of local residents each week. We will scale up as the service rolls out, and monitor, ►

◀ evaluate and refine this new service over the coming weeks and months. What does the future hold? We're continuing to listen and work closely with our members to provide the services they want now and in the future. We're anticipating that there could be several phases of easing and tightening the lockdown over the coming months and possibly years. We are looking to see what role

technology will play in our future work. Only about 10% of our elders use new technology such as Skype/Zoom, online banking, shopping online etc. As well as considering how to safely reopen our face-to-face services under social distancing conditions we will look at teaching older people to become more proficient in IT.

Contact KLS on 020 7223 2845 and

info@klsettlement.org.uk if you need support and help.

To keep up to date KLS please visit: www.klsettlement.org.uk/blog

If you would like to make a donation and support our work in Battersea: www.klsettlement.org.uk/donate

Aaron Barbour is Director of local charity Katherine Low Settlement,

Here to help

Melanie Hampton outlines the council's rôle



The Coronavirus pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge for everyone – individuals,

families, businesses and of course to our community in Battersea.

I am very proud of the way Wandsworth Council and all its staff have risen to the challenge and faced this situation head on, giving our residents and particularly the borough's most vulnerable, the support and help they need.

Right from the start Wandsworth was one of the first councils to set up a Community Hub, making sure there was a direct and uncomplicated way for residents to contact us if they had any concerns, questions or difficulties. Over the last few weeks the Hub has taken hundreds of calls from residents, many of whom are elderly or vulnerable. We have been able to help them, often through securing food deliveries, and we will continue to do so.

Services closed

As cabinet member for adult social care and health, I want to ensure that we are managing services across these areas the best way we can, especially given the conditions we are now having to work under. Almost all day services for people with care needs have closed, but staff are maintaining contact with them online, and many are delivering food and helping with shopping and collecting medicine.

Throughout the voluntary sector there has been a massive effort to deal with this crisis right across the borough and I want to thank all the various organisations and volunteers that have rallied to help out.

The council has distributed an emergency £100,000 response fund to get money quickly to organisations that are on the ground now helping vulnerable people through the crisis. Awards have been given to those organisations we believe are best placed to support vulnerable people and which can have an immediate positive impact.

I would also like to highlight the support being offered by Wandsworth Carers' Centre, which is commissioned by the council to help our carers. This support is more important than ever. The centre has more than 4,600 unpaid carers on its books and can help them with things like providing letters to enable access to early shopping hours, as well as online health and wellbeing sessions.

Wandsworth Council is also doing everything it can to help businesses across the borough as well as the self-employed.

It has already distributed more than £42m in grants to over 2,600 local businesses and we continue to receive claims from companies dealing with the impact of the coronavirus. A scheme has also been set up to provide free accountancy advice for self-employed people who needed to submit tax returns in order to access government aid.

We are also working with local arts organisations and cultural groups to help them both financially and in terms of networking and finding new audiences online.

From what is a terrible situation for everyone, there are still so many inspiring and positive stories

coming out of this crisis. A scheme worth highlighting has been set up to support local families who are struggling to stay digitally connected. It is vitally important that no child in Wandsworth is left behind during the crisis so the Council is supporting schemes to help children and families who are struggling while the schools are closed.

Laptops

Digital poverty affects the ability of some families to continue their children's education from home, so thanks to a partnership with Battersea Power Station we are distributing £10,000 of emergency top-up phone vouchers to local families. We're also encouraging businesses or residents to donate unwanted laptops or tablets to keep Wandsworth families connected to schools and one another at this time. Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to all our staff and many in the community working on the front line throughout this crisis. To all the teachers, refuse collectors, carers, social workers and others providing essential services for our residents, everyone across Wandsworth is eternally grateful.

This is an awful situation for all of us but it is wonderful to see our strong sense of community shining through. This council will continue to do everything it can for the people of this borough.

If you need help or assistance please contact the Wandsworth Community Hub on 020 8871 6555

If you are a carer needing assistance Call the Wandsworth Carers' Centre on 020 8877 1200

Melanie Hampton is Conservative councillor for St Mary's Park ward

Help where it's needed

Canon Simon Butler describes the work of the Coronavirus Angels

The idea for Coronavirus Angels came to me in the middle of the night shortly before lockdown. Serving the neighbourhood around St Mary's Battersea is in the DNA of our church and we have very strong partnerships with other churches, especially Sacred Heart Battersea, and our link with the Katherine Low Settlement (KLS) has been there since it opened almost 100 years ago. These long-standing links meant we were well placed to assemble a Covid-19 response quickly and efficiently. It was great when the Battersea Society came on board, along with the local Mutual Aid Group.

Quick

Being quick off the mark meant that we could leaflet the majority of St Mary's Park Ward before lockdown and, even after the restrictions were put in place, the Council, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and other charities heard about us. We have recruited a team of nearly 375 volunteers in a month and have taken almost 250 referrals from people who are being shielded or are self-isolating.

Initially, requests for help came into our phone line (07394 856557) asking for very practical things. The majority are still asking for shopping to be done and errands run. We are always happy to take on the simplest of tasks in this way. For example, one of the local pharmacies asked us to deliver prescriptions to people twice a day. We now have a rota to do that.

It soon became clear that, for some of the most vulnerable people, access to money was difficult. Thanks to the fundraising ability of KLS, we have swiftly raised about £15,000 for local responses to the pandemic. This means that we can make one-off grants to provide for essential items while people wait for benefit applications to be processed or have an emergency need. We also issue vouchers for Wandsworth Foodbank, who are now delivering their parcels, and we have a great link with the Dons Local Action Group,



the charitable arm of AFC Wimbledon, who deliver food parcels at great speed, reducing pressure on the very busy Foodbank.

Conversation

As the reality of lockdown has begun to take an emotional and psychological toll, we have realised that we can also provide support through befriending. We have about 25 people who have done some initial training to be telephone befrienders, and we are reaching out to a significant number of people whom we have helped practically and who we think could do with some friendly contact through a regular phone call. For some, especially the isolated or unwell, this is a vital lifeline; for others, perhaps in a small flat with just their children to care for and home-school, the chance for some adult conversation is greatly appreciated.

Brief stories indicate the range of work we are doing. Abdul is an isolated young man with a history of self-harm. A Coronavirus Angel rings him every few days to chat, sometimes about this-and-that, but sometimes about his struggles. Another Angel has shopped for him.

Maria is a mum whose husband – the only breadwinner – was in hospital with Coronavirus. Cash was very tight. We did an emergency shop and provided access to other local support. Patrick is a frightened man with a life-threatening medical condition; we have provided him with a telephone befriender, offered to help him with a care package and provided some funds for him to have some decent food in the house. Paul was 93 this week – although his family could not get to see him, an Angel bought a birthday gift for him on behalf of them, and another Angel baked him a birthday cake. A third Angel delivered it to his house.

We would like to thank the Battersea Society for its generous gift of £500 to our work. Coronavirus Angels will be around in one form or another as long as the pandemic persists. We welcome all referrals and offers of help.

Canon Simon Butler is vicar of St Mary's Battersea and the founder of the Coronavirus Angels.

A community coming together

Leila Younes describes Battersea Mutual Aid

The Covid-19 pandemic is much more than a public health crisis. People have been forced to change their routines drastically and to give up their social networks to ensure public safety. Recognising that Covid-19 was going to become a major crisis, we launched Battersea Covid-19 Mutual Aid (BMA) on Facebook on 12 March. The aim of BMA is to help set up self-organised neighbourhoods that can respond to community needs as and when they arise. It's about neighbours coming together in an act of solidarity to support and look after each other in times of crisis and also to ensure we hold those in authority to account.

Poverty

BMA now has over 2000 members with 1000 active volunteers spread across 70 localised neighbourhoods in Battersea. Early anecdotal evidence suggests that the population most at risk are elderly people living on their own with no immediate family unit to support them, those living in poverty, including single mothers, and individuals with serious underlying conditions and disabilities.

Our way of working is through a variety of communication avenues such as Facebook and Whatsapp. We have done extensive door-to-door leafleting providing both landline and mobile contact numbers, in order to organise and to reach out to people in need. We set up seven local hotline numbers and email addresses based on wards. For example if you live on Prince of Wales Drive, then you are in Queenstown ward and you should have received a leaflet with a local hotline and email address. Once you get in touch, one of the group's coordinators will respond and set you up with your local volunteers to help (see diagram above). You will probably receive a phone call/response from a volunteer who lives on your street or very nearby.



So far most requests have been about helping with weekly shopping, picking up prescriptions, rubbish collection, emotional support, and issues with Wandsworth council.

However issues of loneliness and alienation were apparent in the voices and concerns of the residents who got in touch. There is a sense of mental trauma and anxiety faced by almost everyone we spoke to. But older people (aged over 60) are soaking up the majority of the social distancing and lockdown's emotional and physical stress, amplified by the fear of getting infected.

Social isolation has created an unprecedented surge in the use of internet, social media and online services to stay in touch, work, study, and obtain deliveries and other services. We observed significant inequalities in broadband access especially among those who are most vulnerable. Many have to make a choice between providing essential food or accessing the internet. We don't know how many people in Battersea have no access to broadband but the majority of our callers don't use it, either for financial reasons or lack of knowledge. They are thus even more cut off from society and from key public health information during the lockdown. We also received requests from parents about community educational support for their children. Many have

no access to online school resources, so students from low-income households are not able to continue their learning.

I believe that the devastating impact of covid19 in our communities is due to existing inequalities. We need to ensure that we end all forms of inequalities beyond the response to Covid-19.

To get in touch

Main email address:
batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Northcote:
0808 169 5721, 07595 915931
nc.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Queenstown:
0808 164 5750, 07493 593062
qt.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Latchmere:
0808 169 2528, 07595 908040
lm.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

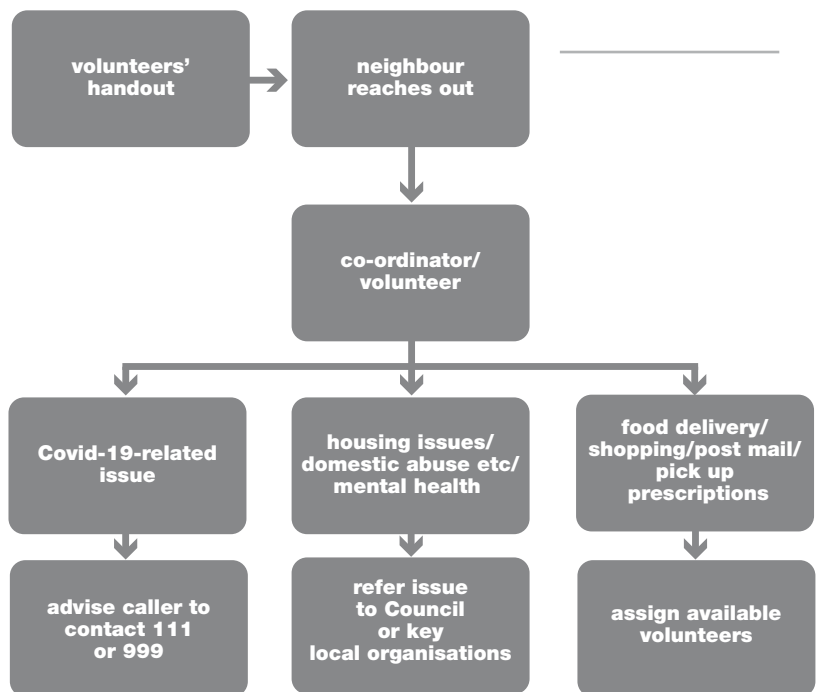
St Mary's Park:
07394 856557
angels@stmarysbattersea.org.uk

Fairfield:
0808 281 2467, 07595 911820
ff.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Shaftesbury:
07595 905677.
sb.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Balham:
bh.batterseamutualaid@gmail.com

Leila Younes is a public health professional, currently awaiting deployment with Medecins Sans Frontières.



Our amazing Clapham Junction

Roz Lloyd-Williams outlines the creativity of local shops and businesses

The Covid-19 outbreak is unlike anything we have ever experienced and we are still coming to terms with the reality of the evolving pandemic. What we do know is that the coming weeks and months will continue to be unbelievably challenging for our local businesses, particularly cafés, restaurants, bars, shops and entertainment venues, all of which provide an exceptional service throughout the year.

The not-for-profit Clapham Junction Business Improvement District (BID) Ltd was formed in late spring last year. We support over 420 businesses across the Clapham Junction area, delivering strategies and innovative projects to improve the trading environment for businesses, the shopping experience for residents and visitors, and promoting tourism in the area. As the pandemic unfolded, we quickly refocused our core strategies to ensure we were doing everything in our power to support our amazing businesses. We continue to champion all those which remain open or are trading online, reminding everyone in our community, and beyond, why Clapham Junction is so special.

In addition to vital marketing support, we have been working hard to communicate all the relevant business support, with advice links and online Q&A seminars to help businesses navigate their way through lockdown. Regular interactions with the police have also been vital to advise on safety and security for staff and premises.

Quite rapidly, we started to witness the determination and resilience displayed by many of our local smaller businesses, as they adapted to new ways of trading. These included rescheduling events, developing new takeaway and delivery services, diversification into mini supermarkets as well as new initiatives such as online classes, click and collect and the sale of vouchers.

In addition, businesses' amazing generosity during such challenging

times has been uplifting. Café Parisienne, Made in Italy, Buona Sera, Opa Opa, BrewDog, Banana Tree, Rosa's Thai, Edward James Hair and The London Cycle Workshop are some of the businesses offering discounts or free services to NHS staff as a 'thank you' to our key workers. Our supermarkets, banks and chemists are also stepping up to support the NHS and local charities during lockdown.

Spare rooms

In turn, we have heard of remarkable stories from businesses on how the local community have helped them, by paying numerous trips to their shops, paying-it-forward services, buying restaurant tokens and a year's worth of haircuts in advance! Others in the community have kindly offered their spare rooms to house business staff, so they don't need to travel. The Pay It Forward scheme – the Mayor's new voucher scheme to help business – can be visited at www.london.gov.uk/pay-it-forward.

An impressive number of restaurants soon adapted to bring their delicious offerings to local doorsteps through new takeaway and delivery services. There's everything from Italian and Greek cuisine to Thai, Indian, fish & chips and hearty pies, with drink delivery services from shops and bars such as Humble Grape, Philglas & Swiggot, Vagabond Wines, BrewDog and Four Thieves.

Abacus Ark is a day nursery on St John's Hill. While it opens its doors to care for key workers' children, owner



Anthony Ioannou has launched a nutritious range of frozen ready meals for children and families, called Free Range Kids. Customers can order

through the Clapham Junction page on the website ShopAppy.com – a new initiative launched by The Junction BID in conjunction with ShopAppy which provides a local online marketplace platform for the area, with delivery within a two-mile radius of Clapham Junction Station.

Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) is utilising the surge in demand for online content to showcase their historic venue on BBC iPlayer – do watch the brilliant BBC documentary *The Way Out*. The Grand and Northcote Road's Killik & Co have supported the NHS with a beautiful display of rainbow paintings in their windows, created by pupils from local junior schools.

Working on new initiatives to help our business community throughout and post lockdown, the BID is launching a new B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) app over the next few weeks. These will give greater visibility to local businesses and help boost employee, residential and visitor engagement.

Support

We're working closely with myvirtualneighbourhood.com, NappyValley.com, and nextdoor.co.uk to showcase local businesses and have received great support from local press like Riverside Radio, London News Online and SW Londoner.

The next few months will be critical for our local businesses. We ask Battersea residents, wherever possible, to show their solidarity. The small independents underpin the economy and infrastructure of our area; they give the Junction its distinct identity, rich character and individuality. They support our local employment, community and charitable institutions. We urge you to continue to support them after lockdown ends - we would sorely miss them if they were to disappear. Keep shopping local!

www.visitclaphamjunction.com

Our blog gives a list of working businesses.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Roz Lloyd-Williams is executive director of The Junction BID.

Trustees under lockdown

How have the Battersea Society's executive members been spending their time?

Ian Beardall/treasurer



In some ways lockdown has made little difference as I work from home but it is frustrating not being able to get out so much.

I have made a start on getting through the backlog of unread books, and I have begun the immense task of decluttering. Amazing what you keep just in case, but never actually need.

Contact with old friends has been made on a much more regular basis. During this lockdown many of us have realised that communication is very easy with modern technology.

The most difficult thing is the converse of the above in that physical contact with friends and family has been impossible, especially with elderly family members.

With some sort of restrictions likely for the foreseeable future, it's now time to consider how else life will change day to day, and how to make something of that.

Sue Demont/secretary, chair heritage committee



Like many of you my partner and I are self-isolating for the duration, one of us having a pre-existing medical condition.

How to fill the time?

Gardening, reading and cooking can only provide so much diversion. So as Zoom dates have become the new normal, a group of us have started to discuss an agreed theme each week; the latest being the highly topical matter of whether and where to redirect our charitable donations.

This threw up all sorts of questions: big or small/ global, national or local/ mental or physical health/ children or the elderly? How important is it to sustain the arts and culture/ protect open spaces/ continue to

support animal welfare? How relevant right now are the RNL/ Amnesty International/ the National Trust/ RSPB? Does it matter if the Victorian Society folds when people are dying because of increased domestic abuse?? The debate continues!

Clare Graham/open spaces committee



During lockdown I'm enjoying spending my precious daily hour of exercise with my newly-adopted greyhound Tiger, out exploring

both familiar and unfamiliar corners of Battersea. I'm Chair of Battersea Society's Open Spaces committee, and he makes an excellent unofficial research assistant; we've also just completed a survey of 600+ empty tree pits in smaller local parks for Enable, on behalf of the Wandsworth Tree Wardens. The results will feed into the Council's pledge to plant more trees within its new Environment and Sustainability Strategy.

Back home even with greyhound company I miss seeing my friends, but I've been remastering the old art of chatting on the phone, and the new one of meeting virtually on Zoom – handy for Battersea WI's online coffee and film groups, as well as for BSoc business. I'm also reading, gardening, playing online chess and reviving my rusty drawing skills thanks to David's Hockney's daily drawing challenge.

Michael Jubb/planning committee



I've been a home-based consultant for the past four years, but I decided to retire on reaching my 70th birthday earlier this year. So

I'm used to working at home, but I'd been looking forward to watching more cricket, and long walks in the countryside, or in parts of London I don't know so well, Pevsner in hand.

I have been spending lots of time in the garden and the allotment, enjoying the sun, but worrying about lack of rain (after last winter!). Bike trips have revealed how the City and West End are much emptier even

than here in Battersea. Like many others, I've got used to using Zoom, Skype etc to keep in touch. My house is tidier than usual, and planning applications, work for the Clapham Junction Business Improvement District, and helping a colleague whose business has been decimated have all kept me busy. Not too much time for improving novels, but I have finished Hilary Mantel's *The Mirror and the Light*.

Sue Marshall/open spaces committee



Because of the time available I have learnt some new skills. I now know how to use Facetime, Zoom, stream a film onto

the TV, and two online bridge platforms. The latter have been a nightmare!

I am lucky to have outside space and my small garden has been a source of great pleasure but now there are no weeds so I am left with sweeping the astro-turf lawn, watering, and waiting for plants to bloom. It does look better than ever before so that is a plus.

However I am most pleased about the ambient atmosphere, the lovely spring weather and being able to go out for an early morning walk. The air is cleaner and fresher with far less pollution. The birdsong is beautiful and much more audible. The neighbours are helpful and caring and a closer community has grown up.

What will happen when the lockdown ends? I am hoping for a positive change towards a cleaner, quieter, more equal society.

Sara Milne/chair, events committee



Having worked from home for over a decade, lockdown hasn't made much difference to my daily working life, apart from spending

huge amounts of time on virtual meetings and calls. Which is something that has spilled over into my personal life, as staying connected with friends and family is paramount and WhatsApp and Zoom make that possible - and for free!

I have come to really appreciate my morning dog walks in Battersea Park. The slowing down of the pace of life has meant that I can now spend a little more time enjoying the peace and quiet of the early morning. I finish my walk by dropping into the local newsagent to pick up a newspaper, which I read with a cup of tea before my day gets going - it's a new routine and one that I think I will keep.

Another new routine is being a coordinator for the Coronavirus Angels scheme that links local volunteers with vulnerable people to help with shopping, prescription pick-ups and befriending. It's an amazing project that has shown me how important it is to give a helping hand when needed.

John Oughton/new trustee



My first month as a trustee. I have met some of my fellow trustees, but only virtually, on Zoom. I'm looking forward to meeting for real.

My 'to do' list of home tasks is going badly. That pile of books put aside for a rainy day lies unread. I'm a voracious reader of the news, old style in a newspaper, but you can have too much of that right now.

There's better progress on 'tidying up' those stray bottles of wine: you know, the special ones you save for a big occasion. Better to drink them now before they get old and tired! My daily walks remind me that Battersea is blessed with wonderful open spaces and, in glorious sunny April, also with a magnificent display of blossom along tree-lined streets. That, and reconnecting with friends one never quite finds time to call normally, are real morale boosters now.

Duncan Parish/planning committee



The majority of my days are taken up on video conferences while working from home and after four weeks everything has

settled into a familiar 'office' routine. After work, my husband and I continue to see family and friends virtually and have enjoyed drinks, dinners and quizzes. Virtual dinners work particularly well - you can all cook what you like, there's less washing up and you don't need an Uber to get home at the end of the evening!

I've got to know more of Battersea while in isolation. We have met more of our neighbours, and, having signed up to the Coronavirus Angels' scheme, we have been helping with chores for those self-isolating locally. On our daily exercise we have also managed to explore a lot more of the local area; I have run and walked down many streets I've never been down before.

Carol Rahn/heritage committee, community group



Please - no more links to online culture; I'm drowning. True, I did use YouTube on my TV for the first time to watch the

excellent Royal Court production of Cyprus Avenue. At first, I was busier than ever, checking in with friends and family around the world, and helping my local RSPCA branch (of which I'm also a trustee) through the initial turbulent days. My greatest concern remains the economic impact of this crisis.

Now, still mostly successful in avoiding dreaded household tasks, I could do with a few deadlines and am looking for new ways to volunteer. I take advantage of the get-out-of-jail card to cycle and take long walks on newly-quiet streets. The tranquillity of little traffic and few cars; effervescent, ever-present birdsong - these are the silver lining

Jenny Sheridan/chair, editor, community group



It's easiest to list the things I haven't done: learnt a sonnet by heart, decluttered my filing cabinets, visited any of the art galleries

offering virtual tours, daily or even weekly yoga, tidied my desk. And, sadly, I haven't been able to visit my brother in America as planned.

I have been remarkably busy, though sometimes it's hard to think what I have actually done in a day. Phoning friends and my brother is a priority and it has been good to have time for lengthy chats. I've enjoyed virtual drinks with friends and weekly French conversation sessions thanks to Zoom.

My garden has been a joy. I've worn holes in the knees of my jeans from weeding and have enjoyed the self-seeded forget-me-nots and Welsh poppies.

And the Battersea Society continues. I have (nervously) chaired my first Zoom meeting. And at present I'm busy with *Battersea Matters*.

Battersea residents show appreciation for essential workers



Great Bus Journeys of the World No 27:

Mike Roden takes a virtual bus trip from the West End to the East End on the number 15



Note: I had already planned that this route should be next on the list. Not wishing to ignore government advice and use public transport I decided to see how the journey could be taken virtually, using Google Street View to take me along the exact bus route. This is the result.

When the Routemaster was removed from service, TfL started two daily 'heritage' services using the old buses. The no 9 initially ran between Aldwych and the Royal Albert Hall, though just before it was axed in 2014 the route was heavily reduced. The 15 has continued to run between Trafalgar Square and Tower Hill though last year the service using Routemaster buses was cut to weekends only. But this route goes well beyond its heritage boundaries and continues through Stepney and Poplar all the way to Blackwall.

We start on the edge of Trafalgar Square looking towards Charing Cross station. The ornate cross in the forecourt is a restored Victorian copy of the last of twelve monuments which mark the journey back to London of the body of Queen Eleanor of Castile from where she died in Lincoln in 1290.

We set off along the Strand and into theatreland. Since 1806 the Adelphi has been rebuilt several times. The theatre was once famous for lurid melodrama and there's a touch of *grand guignol* in its history. The actor William Terriss was stabbed to death in December 1897 whilst coming in through the stage door. Unsurprisingly he's rumoured to haunt the place, though he'll be rather a lonely ghost at the moment. Like every theatre as I write (May 2020) the Adelphi is closed.

The Savoy Theatre was once the site of the palace built in the 1240s

by Peter of Savoy, uncle of Henry III. Richard D'Oyly Carte opened the theatre to showcase the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. The profits from these satiric operas provided the finance for the Savoy, London's first luxury hotel, whose entrance is next door.

Simpsons-in-the-Strand is a near neighbour. In *Psmith in the City*, P G Wodehouse noted that this restaurant offered two great advantages: 'namely, that you need not dress, and, secondly, that you paid your half-crown, and were then at liberty to eat till you were helpless, if you felt so disposed, without extra charge.'

It's true that Simpsons still offers the traditional English food which they've been serving since 1850. But a glance at their 'Bill of Fare' tells me that half a crown would be unlikely to cover the cost of even a toothpick.

Village

We pass the Lyceum Theatre which was heading for its twenty-first anniversary of showing *The Lion King* when it was forced to close, and begin a short detour along Aldwych. Once the site of a village called Lundenwic (London trading town) it was eventually abandoned and became known as Ealdwic (old trading town). By 1211 its name was recorded as Aldewich.

Leaving Aldwych, the road loops past St Clement Danes. This Wren church was severely damaged during the blitz. After restoration in 1958 it was adopted as the central church of the RAF.

The Royal Courts of Justice dominates the Strand here. One of the last great Victorian Gothic buildings, it was opened by Queen Victoria in 1882. Passing the winged dragon memorial at Temple Bar we

join Fleet Street and enter the City of London. Wren's arched gateway was moved from here in 1878 to ease traffic congestion. It's now in Paternoster Square by St Paul's.

Atmospheric

The lane to the right leads down to Temple Church and the Inner and Middle Temple Inns of court. If you're in search of peace and quiet take a stroll through this complex of atmospheric quadrangles and buildings.

The black and white fronted building was built as a tavern in 1610, survived the great fire of 1666 and today is known – for reasons which are obscure – as Prince Henry's Room. It now belongs to the City of London and is rarely open to the public.

St Dunstan-in-the-West is famous for its chiming clock, with figures of two giants, perhaps representing Gog and Magog, striking the bells with their clubs. The church shares its building with the Romanian Orthodox community. The chapel to the left of the main altar is closed off by a beautiful altar screen – an iconostasis – which came from a monastery in Bucharest.

Next door is a reminder of the area's newspaper heyday, the London outpost of D C Thomson, Dundee publishers. In the seventies and eighties I was a prolific supplier of short stories to some of their magazines. Even more excitingly it's also the site of the shop belonging to the murderous barber Sweeney Todd whose victims were baked into meat pies by his sidekick Mrs Lovett. The entrance was accessed from Hen and Chicken Court which is still there.

Across the road is El Vino's where hard-bitten journalists enjoyed their

Left to right: the Eleanor Cross, Charing Cross; Simpsons in the Strand; the Daily Express Building, Fleet Street; the stairs in the Monument; Whitechapel Art Gallery



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



legendary liquid lunches. Women journalists could not drink at the bar until 1982. Nearby is another Fleet Street favourite Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese. The hacks have long gone and now these places are filled with tourists vainly seeking atmosphere. Approaching Ludgate circus we pass the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express* buildings. The latter is an art deco gem which opened in 1932.

The Old Bell stands on the site of an earlier tavern – the Swan – where in 1500 Wynkyn de Worde ran Fleet Street's first printing workshop. The current pub was built by Sir Christopher Wren for the benefit of his masons working on nearby St Bride's church.

St Paul's

We approach St Paul's. Wren's masterpiece was completed in 1712 replacing the cathedral destroyed in the Great Fire. The architect himself was the first person to be buried here. The bus now heads down Cannon Street. The name apparently is a corruption of its original name Candelwrichstrete (Candlemakers Street).

Leaving Mansion House and Monument tube stations behind, we move onto Eastcheap. 'Cheap' is broadly an Old English word for market, with the prefix 'East' distinguishing it from Westcheap, which today is known as Cheapside.

The bus passes the end of Pudding Lane where the Great Fire started. The Monument itself is not far away. Built between 1671 and 1677 to commemorate the fire it is 202 feet high and has 311 steps. Apparently it shouldn't take more than six or seven minutes to climb if you're fit...

On Great Tower Street, we pass Mincing Lane now. This became the

world's leading centre for tea and spice trading after 1799 when the British East India Company took over all trading ports from the Dutch East India company.

Alight here for the Tower of London. Look elsewhere for the history of this venerable fortress. I can't resist one small snippet, though. Many famous and notorious people were imprisoned here, but among the last to be locked up in 1952 were the Kray brothers for the heinous crime of dodging National Service!

After passing Tower Gateway DLR station we arrive at Whitechapel High Street. A few hundred yards further along is the Whitechapel Art Gallery founded in 1901 to bring art into east London. In 1939 Picasso's *Guernica* had its first and only British showing; and in 1958 Jackson Pollock's first major show was staged here. No time for a visit though as the route leads onto Commercial Road.

This was constructed in 1802 – 6 to link the City directly to docklands. By the 1830s it was almost entirely lined with houses. The majority of these were destroyed or badly damaged during the Blitz. Post-war slum clearance, and the building of modern housing means that most of the rest of this journey we pass through one set of fifties or sixties developments mixed with older buildings, and small shops and take-aways followed by another. It's hard to tell them apart.

So it's something of a relief to find the George Tavern, on a site which may have hosted an inn for many centuries. Under its former name of the Halfway House it is mentioned by Chaucer, Pepys and Dickens. Dating from around 1824 the current building was grade II listed in 1973. Around the same time a nightclub, Stepneys,

famous for its illuminated dance floor was added in a building at the back. Since 2002 the venue has been owned and operated by artist Pauline Forster.

Nearby Albert Gardens was laid out in the early nineteenth century, and survives remarkably largely intact. Fronted by Commercial Road it's bordered on the other three sides by three-storey houses from the 1840s. The land was purchased by the LCC in 1899 to prevent development and became a public park in 1906.

The road crosses the Regents Canal as it heads for the end of its 8 mile journey to the Limehouse Basin. This opened in 1820 and was used by seagoing vessels and lighters to offload cargoes to canal barges, and later in the century was vital for supplying coal to the numerous gasworks which had sprung up in London and beyond.

We're heading into Poplar now via East India Dock Road. The name derives from the Black Poplar trees which flourished once in the then prevailing marshy conditions. This is very much a residential area with flats and houses from the sixties onwards, and not much high rise building in evidence.

Bomb

In the Poplar Recreation ground there's a memorial to the eighteen children killed at Upper North Street School in an air-raid during the first world war. On 13 June 1917 a bomb went through the roof and two floors before exploding in the infants' classroom on the ground-floor. Sixteen of the children who died were aged four to six years old. Altogether 104 people died in the East End that day, in the first fixed-wing aircraft raid over London.

Poplar Baths was saved thanks to the efforts of a community campaign which in 2014 persuaded Tower Hamlets Council to work with a developer to restore and reopen the grade II listed building which had been derelict since the 1990s.

Passing the shopping area of Poplar High Street the bus arrives at journey's end at Blackwall DLR station. One day I'll take the journey again – this time on a real rather than virtual bus. At least it's very quick to get home!

Want to sort your rags in Battersea Park? Don't!

Michael Jubb looks into the complexities of public and private spaces

Among many other things, the Coronavirus crisis has highlighted the distinction between public and private spaces; and after weeks of being told to stay in our own homes, many of us have been itching to get out and about, wherever we want to go.

The large areas of public land in Battersea – parks, commons and playgrounds, and perhaps even more important its streets and footpaths – are crucial to our daily lives in normal times, and to our sense of what Battersea is.

Gated

We can usually see a clear distinction between public and private spaces, in the form of walls, fences, hedges, doors, gates and so on that are all around us and mark barriers to access. Recent decades have seen the creation of new restrictions on access for the public in the form of 'gated communities' – as at the Falcons estate near Clapham Junction or Morgans Walk by Battersea Bridge – and access controls to the common areas of blocks of flats on both public and privately owned estates. Most of us also recognise the necessary restrictions of access to the buildings



has been the disposal of large amounts of public land. One estimate is that the sales amount in total to 8 – 10% of all the land in Britain. What impact has that had on what we think of as public spaces?

Commons

Even what we think of as quintessentially public spaces may have all kinds

of restrictions on access: whereas Clapham and Wandsworth Commons have no fences or gates, Battersea Park and other smaller parks such as Heathbrook are fenced and closed at night. The Coronavirus crisis saw some parks in London closed completely for a period; and even in normal times, free access to parts of both commons and parks may be restricted temporarily for fairs and festivals, or in some cases permanently (as with the British Genius and the Go Ape sites in Battersea Park) for a range of commercial services. Conversely, there's a long history of privately-owned spaces being made freely accessible, with the 'right to roam' being significantly extended in rural areas by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

But over the past couple of years, increasing concerns have been raised about the 'privatisation of public

and other spaces needed for the operations of the local council and other public bodies such as the NHS, TfL and so on; in some cases public access to publicly-owned buildings may not be allowed at all.

So the distinctions between ownership and access, and between what's public and what's private, have become increasingly complex. For the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas and his followers, the metaphorical public sphere is open to everyone, whereas the private sphere (like our homes and offices) is only open to those who have permission to enter it. But the privatisations that began in the 1980s, the development of public-private partnerships, and the outsourcing of previously public services to private contractors have all made the distinctions more difficult to draw. Across Greater London it is estimated that 25% of land is publicly-owned, even though a feature of the past four decades

above: Battersea Park gates, below: Granary Square: public or private?



spaces', particularly associated with large-scale regeneration projects in London. The key concerns are about how 'privately-owned public spaces' – such as Granary Square behind King's Cross, the area around City Hall, Paternoster Square in the City, or the 'linear park' to be created at Nine Elms – are managed, and the restrictions on public use enforced by private security companies. There are many smaller spaces of this kind too, such as the Shop Stop shopping centre that most of us use to enter Clapham Junction station.

In response to such concerns, Sadiq Khan has promised in the draft London Plan to develop a Public London Charter setting out the rights and responsibilities for users, owners and managers of public spaces, whoever they may be. The idea is that the only rules and restrictions on public access and behaviour should be those considered essential for safe management of the space; and that this requirement should be secured through legal agreements or formal conditions attached to planning approvals.

Confused

A recent review of ten public spaces created since 2000, commissioned in order to help develop the Charter, looked at how they are managed by local authorities, private developers, charities and community groups. It found that while some people welcome the evidence of security – CCTV, 24 hour security guards and so on – many are also confused as to

whether they are in a public or private space: as one person put it, 'I feel safe but unsafe at the same time; it feels like I've done something wrong'.

The list of what is allowed and not allowed is often long: eating, drinking, smoking, having a nap, begging, taking photographs. How many of us stop to read the lengthy – but partial – list of prohibited acts on the Corporation of London's notice boards when we visit places such as Epping Forest or the many other open spaces the Corporation manages around London? Many restrictions are made informally by landowners and not publicly stated at all, with much left to the discretion of ill-trained security guards. Last autumn I was refused entry to the gardens at the Royal Hospital Chelsea because I was wearing a small People's Vote badge; even after I'd offered to remove it!

This lack of transparency is particularly problematic when we often do not know who owns or manages the spaces we are using. When you walk along the South Bank you move through spaces owned by a bewildering array of owners, with no sign that you are moving from one to the other. And public bodies are often as bad as private ones when it comes to rules or restrictions. Did you know that among the 47 byelaws covering the use of Battersea Park you are forbidden to 'sort rags, bones, refuse or matter of like or mend any chair'; or, without the Council's permission, to 'play or make sounds on any musical or other instrument

including any gramophone or radio apparatus or ... sing any sacred or secular song'?

It is restrictions of this kind that make the Mayor's promise of a Charter so important. It will take a long time to review and amend all the needless restrictions and byelaws of the past. New developments often open up public spaces in areas of land to which the public had no effective access in the past, as with the 'linear park' at Nine Elms; and that should be welcomed. But we need to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of both owners and users are based on clear sets of principles, with any rules or restrictions based on the need to avoid real nuisance and harm.

Charter

Owners' rights and responsibilities should be set out in formal conditions when new planning consents are granted; and where any specific restrictions on users are needed, they should be subject to proper public consultation. Professor Matthew Carmona of UCL has been working with Wandsworth Council and the various developers at Nine Elms on a charter for the management and use of the new linear park; but there has been no public announcement about that work, or about what any charter might contain. Discussion and engagement with the local community, followed by full public consultation, are urgently needed.

A rainbow breaks out on the Breadstall, Northcote Road



What's in a name? Part Two

Tony Belton ventures further south

Some street, estate, block and house names have an obvious source. Geographically based names include East Hill and Riverside, of which there are several in Battersea, as in Riverside Light and Riverside Quay. But no north or south, except when associated with another feature, as in Clapham Common Northside.

There are names relating to the time of construction, such as those I mentioned in the last edition, like the 'Little India' names of Nepaul, Candahar, Cabul and Afghan Roads, which date the estate to the Second Afghan War (1878 – 80) or Joubert Street named after the Boer War (1899 – 1902) General Piet Joubert. However, surely the most common are named after the rich and/or powerful.

Sinjun's

In Battersea the richest and the most powerful, the Barons of Battersea, were the St John and Spencer families. The third Sir Walter St John (1622 – 1708) founded the school named after him in 1700. Often known colloquially as Sinjun's, the Battersea High Street school closed in 1986. The Sinjuns name, however, lives on as the name of a charitable educational trust fund and of various Battersea sports clubs spawned by its pupils.

The more formal St John's name, however, crops up all over Battersea, from the modern high street of St John's Road, to St John's Hill and St John's Hill Grove, and the new St John's Medical Centre, which stands on the site of the old St John's Hospital.

I hear you protest, 'But, there are St John's Roads and hospitals all over the country' and so there are. However, Sir Walter St John was succeeded by his grandson Henry St John, who in 1716 became the first Viscount Bolingbroke and it is my contention that the use of this new family name is no coincidence. And, of course, in Battersea Bolingbroke pops up all over the place, as in the Grove, the Walk, the Academy, the gourmet pub/restaurant and the medical centre.



In 1757 the second Viscount Bolingbroke married Lady Diana Spencer [sic]. He spent his life breeding racehorses, gambling and womanising before divorcing Diana and, in 1763, selling the title and the baronetcy of Battersea to the Spencer family.

So, of course, the Spencer name is almost as significant in Battersea as both St John and Bolingbroke. There is the road and the park and there used to be a Spencer Park School. So it is historically apt that George Windsor, grandson of the 20th century Lady Diana Spencer, goes to Thomas's School, on the very site of the old Sir Walter St John's School. (Note, if you know Spencer Park, the road but not the park, I recommend looking it up in Google Maps and Google Earth for a sight of the largest private open space in Battersea).

Turning from the aristocratic leaders of the past to the more democratic leaders of the twentieth century, on Bolingbroke Grove, we find Stephen Sanders Court, on the corner of Salcott Road. This modest Council block built in the immediate post-war period was named after William Stephen Sanders (1871 – 1941), a giant in early Labour history. He started as the organising genius behind John Burns MP's political career, and by 1913 he had become General Secretary of the Fabian Society, a post he held until 1920, when he got a job with the International Labour Office of the League of Nations. In 1929 Sanders became the Labour MP for Battersea North, losing his seat in 1931, but he regained it in 1935 only to resign it, probably for health reasons, in 1940.

A little further down Bolingbroke

Grove on the corner of Thurleigh Road is the very similar Lane Court, named after Jimmy Lane, who was the Labour Mayor of Battersea in 1950 – 51. He was so proud of that fact, that, when

Battersea was merged into Wandsworth and lost its separate identity, he founded the Battersea Society, the forerunner of the current society.

The loss of the name Battersea, when merged into the modern Wandsworth Council, was a heavy blow not just to Labour councillors but also to Harry Sendall, the Tory leader on Battersea Borough Council. Indeed, Sendall admitted to committing political suicide when, in 1964, he announced his resignation from the North Battersea Conservative Association, and therefore of the Tory whip on the Council, in protest over the Borough's name. I like to think that it was for that reason that his main adversary, Labour leader Sid Sporle, insisted that a 10-story block in the new Winstanley Estate be named Sendall Court.

Ploughman

The neighbouring Shaw and Clark Lawrence Courts were named after Labour's Fred Shaw and the Conservatives' Nora Clark Lawrence, both of whom were known as 'characters'. Both had been Battersea councillors before the 1964/5 abolition and Wandsworth councillors after that. As an orphan at the time of World War 1, Fred had a choice of the mines or the farms; sensibly he chose a Devon farm, where he became, he claimed, an expert ploughman. Later he worked at Battersea's Morgan Crucible factory, where he eventually became a shop steward, before becoming a Labour councillor and a warden at St Mary's Church.

Nora Clark-Lawrence was less than five feet (1.52M) tall, smoked cigarettes with a cigarette holder at least six inches long and walked down Northcote Road accompanied by three or maybe four dachshunds. She also had the most amazing baritone voice that used to rumble around the Council chamber. It's good that characters are not forgotten.

Tony Belton is Labour councillor for Latchmere ward.

MPs and councillors past: where are they now?

Monica Tross takes another trip down Memory Lane

Back in summer 2010 *Battersea Matters* announced the election of Battersea's second woman MP, honoured Martin Linton who left after 13 years as an MP, and interviewed two of the twenty-one councillors elected for Battersea that year. Much has changed since then, with only seven of those 21 councillors still serving Battersea and Jane Ellison replaced with another woman MP in 2016. So what have they been up to since then and why did those councillors stand down?

In some cases it was because they moved away. Alex Raubitschek moved from Prince of Wales Drive to Harrogate, pursuing his Yorkshire roots and Jenny Browne from Northcote moved just across the river to Hammersmith. In Nicola Nardelli's case it was due to the Brexit vote which left her disenchanted with the Conservative Party and Wendy Speck and Stuart Thom decided it was time to move on.

The Battersea constituency has a history of alternating between Labour and Conservative MPs so it was perhaps not surprising that, having succeeded Labour's Martin Linton (who succeeded Tory John Bowis), Conservative Jane Ellison was then succeeded by Marsha de Cordova in 2016.

Raising funds

After a short period back at the Treasury as an advisor to the then Chancellor Philip Hammond, Jane joined the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Geneva in 2017. Since then, lockdown permitting, she and her husband (who still works in London) split their weekends between Geneva and Balham. In her current role as Executive Director for External Relations and Governance most of her day job is working with WHO's partners, donors and member states. She still occasionally speaks for WHO on female genital mutilation (FGM) and other health issues. She is currently heavily involved in WHO's work on tackling the coronavirus, particularly in raising funds to support its work in developing countries.



Cllr Wendy Speck with Maasai warriors at Chesterton School

In his interview with us Martin Linton spoke of his involvement with Palestine and his organisation travel2palestine.org. This has now taken over 40 visits to Palestine and Israel with more than 500 people, including MPs of all parties; and delegations from all over the country (including a couple from Battersea). He has edited a newsletter, *Palestine Briefing*, to keep MPs up to date on what is happening out there. He is on the board of the UK branch of Palestine's biggest humanitarian charity, the Welfare Association. Martin still lives in Battersea (and is still a member of the Battersea Society, as is Jane) and remains concerned with Battersea now and in the future, including a hope that one day the station at Battersea High Street will be reinstated.

Jenny Browne had worked for the Conservative Party for four years before deciding she could make a bigger commitment to Battersea and stood for election in 2010. She found her time serving Northcote constituents a fulfilling and rewarding one but decided not to stand again when she knew she would be moving away.

Alex Raubitschek is now a councillor in Harrogate and on the board of their local convention centre (currently a Nightingale hospital). His job involves work in support of ex-forces personnel and ex-offenders. His former colleague, Nicola Nardelli, chose as her Mayoral charity the Forward Trust, based in Vauxhall, and she is still involved with

fundraising for their work helping the rehabilitation of prisoners.

As with all I have contacted, Nicola Nardelli found her eight years serving Queenstown constituents hugely rewarding – she tells me she learned a great deal and enjoyed working with councillors of both parties and with council officers whom she found 'engaged and well informed' (something which echoes with my own experience). She spent a year as Deputy Mayor in her first term and spent 'a very special and humbling' year as Mayor during her second term. She still lives in Battersea.

Travelling

Both Wendy Speck and Stuart Thom decided that the time had come to stand down, in Wendy's case after eight years including one as Deputy Mayor. She is enjoying travelling more, particularly to the States where her daughter and grandsons live in Texas and including to Argentina to see the eclipse. Like all of us, her planned trips are now on hold. She is still involved in Battersea as chair of the Sir Walter St. John Educational Trust and on the committee of the Big Local SW11.

Stuart was a councillor from 2006 to 2018 representing Fairfield. During that time he was chair of Housing and served on the Transport and Environmental committees. He was twice Mayor. Like others, he continues to live in Battersea and to be a member of our Society. And like all I have talked to, he enjoyed his time as a councillor and found it a privilege to serve.

While I hardly think councillors are a misunderstood group, this article shows the enthusiasm and commitment our Members of Parliament and councillors brought to Battersea, from whatever party.

Planning Matters is taking a short sabbatical, as there is nothing that can't wait till the next edition. If something urgent crops up, we will send a Planning Update email.



Arts in the time of Corona

Elizabeth Lynch explores local culture in isolation

Wandsworth has an amazing offer for residents and visitors to our borough - theatre, art, music, dance, cinema, libraries, museums, archives, community centres, and it's home to several higher education institutions. There's something for everyone, for every age, from world class venues to hidden local gems, almost every day of the week all year round, right on your doorstep.

But now the Corona virus has changed everything for all of us. Venues are closed, we can't gather to enjoy performances and workshops, exhibitions and conversations, libraries and courses. 29 members of What Next? Wandsworth met online to catch up on how our arts organisations and freelancers have responded to the crisis. We talked about the impact on our businesses, working both online and offline and how we might capture the lived experiences and memorabilia of this extraordinary moment in our history.

Crisis

Many organisations have had to furlough most of their staff. Whilst some reported rent reductions and suspensions, Chocolate Films still have to pay full rent to their landlords, as do Action Space (with the exception of the wonderful Cockpit Studios who gave a good discount). This seems particularly harsh, as rent is often the largest outgoing for small businesses. Venues such as BAC and Omnibus Theatre are facing a critical financial situation and seeking emergency funds. This is a national crisis for our theatres and is being taken up at national government level.

Theatre 503 are encouraging their furloughed staff to volunteer with other arts sector organisations through an informal match-making process of reciprocal skills-sharing, such as production management with Unicorn Theatre. This fresh and pragmatic approach to professional development could be replicated not only within the arts but also with organisations in other sectors, to share skills, expertise and insights. Many organisations are sharing

interesting digital content, films of past productions, workshops and discussions, online courses and reading groups. Theatre 503 is working with writers via online platforms. Group 64 is delivering their youth members' theatre workshops and monologue performances online. Putney Arts is also offering play readings online for their members. Great online offers can be found on websites for Battersea Arts Centre, Omnibus Theatre and Tara Arts.

Wandsworth Arts Team are producing an eclectic mix for Wandsworth Arts Fringe. WAF artists have been spending lockdown developing a new artistic programme to enjoy from the comfort of your sofa. Follow #WAFinYourLivingRoom for links to livestreams and recordings of theatre, online murder mystery games, visual arts and creative storytelling.

Online platforms bring in new audiences, but of course not everyone has easy access to phones, i-pads and laptops and some people don't want to go online to enjoy the arts. Our local arts organisations are thinking about work that can happen on the street, on community notice boards, at bus stops, on balconies, in shopping centres. Physical distancing will be part of our lives for months to come so we want to maintain meaningful connection with audiences, participants and communities. Local arts organisations which can survive and thrive in our new world are those which are agile, responsive and open to collaborating and co-creating with others.

In case any readers can help, it's worth mentioning here Wandsworth Council and Battersea Power Station's campaign Power to Connect. powertocconnect.co.uk seeks to address digital poverty and to support local families and patients at St George's Hospital who are struggling to stay connected during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Action Space, (who fortunately are able to pay all their freelancers until July) are using a variety of ways to

Taking part in a Chocolate Films Workshop

maintain connect with their vulnerable learning disabled artists at home, using phone calls and postal services. The team has a huge concern about the impact this long period of isolation will have on these artists, after as well as during, lockdown. Poor mental health and how the arts might support people during lockdown and its aftermath is one of the foremost topics in What Next chapters across the UK.

The arts can have a key role in helping individuals and families have fun together, to learn, to entertain each other and stimulating or relaxing us when we feel bored, alone or anxious.

A good example of this in action is #HopeinNineElms. The project is a partnership between Nine Elms Ministry and Chocolate Films, supported by Wandsworth Council through the Nine Elms Team. During May everyone from the youngest children to professional artists are invited to create a 'Square of Hope' – a short written message of hope for the community, creatively decorated in any medium. The squares can be shared in windows and on social media – and displayed around Nine Elms in the future. To find out more follow @nineelmsartsministry on Instagram or Facebook.

Archive

Finally at our meeting we talked about capturing lived experiences and memorabilia of this extraordinary moment in our local history. Emma Anthony, the archivist at Wandsworth Libraries is doing this. Contributors can collect Government instructions, leaflets and local authority communications, local newspaper cuttings. You could also create diaries or accounts (written or audio) sharing experiences of your lockdown. Or you could make a scrapbook, perhaps using a mixture of lockdown diaries from people in the household and collected material.

If you are interested email Emma: Heritage@gll.org ▶

Join us at our What Next Wandsworth fortnightly online meetings.
Follow us on Twitter
[@WNVandsworth](#) or join us on Facebook.

What Next? Wandsworth is an open voluntary group for people who want to champion the contribution arts and culture make in our community. For more information visit

www.whatnextculture.co.uk

*Elizabeth Lynch MBE
Freelance arts consultant and local resident, co-ordinator of What Next Wandsworth*

... and then came Coronavirus

Steve Pinto outlines the difficulties and opportunities facing local businesses



Business is the mainstay of modern society and the current crisis will be a defining moment for our leaders, for how businesses evolve, how people adapt and how governments change to support a new culture and new ways of working and living. The immediate reaction of businesses, following the Kubler-Ross Change Curve model, is that of Shock, Denial, Frustration, Depression, Experimentation, Decision and finally Integration. To shorten this to four stages, businesses first look at Survival, then try to Stabilise where they can, followed by developing a Recovery plan and on to Growth.

The current crisis will produce many rapid growth success stories and survivors but also many liquidations. Through no fault of their own, some successful businesses that have traded for many years will not get past the survival stage. For these owners and their employees change will be the greatest. We must do all that we can to support our pioneering entrepreneurs, phoenix like, to rise and build again – it is in their DNA and it is in our human nature to help too.

Social wage

An observation – seismic change was coming anyway. Developments in Artificial Intelligence, Block-Chain and many other technologies mean we were soon going to be faced with new ways of working and living and finding things to do with much more spare time. It was predicted there would be much less call for large offices, more remote working and co-working and a social wage for people who did not have sufficient work but needed more activities to pursue in their increased leisure time. In its natural course, people and businesses would have adapted naturally over time but through this

pandemic, change has been forced upon us. I think we can all see these predictions coming true. A saving grace is that we are all in this together. Globally, we have started to appreciate our creativity and our innate tribal instinct to be part of a community. In Wandsworth and in Battersea, this community is thriving.

Corporations

With the decline of manufacturing in the UK over the decades, Wandsworth borough transformed itself into a hive of small businesses, serving not just the residents of its rapidly growing population but also providing services across London and way beyond. With over 20,000 businesses in the borough, it has one of the largest communities of small businesses of any equivalent area in the UK. Home to the new and iconic Battersea Power Station development, this area of London has extended the South Bank along the Thames, into an exciting new area to live, work and visit. Home also to the American Embassy and New Covent Garden Market, this area has been attracting large corporations and will soon be a European HQ site for Apple, the world's first trillion-dollar company. All situated just a stone's throw from the heart of London, one of the finest capital cities in the world.

Will this all change because of the pandemic? Yes – but only a little: fundamentally this is a strong community with a great heartbeat and a great connection hub at Clapham Junction. Whatever changes, Battersea will grow stronger, attract more businesses and create more opportunities. The big question is, what part do you want to play in this rebirth. How you act now in business or as an individual will define the way people see you in the future and also how you develop

personally.

Now is a time for giving, helping and creating, a chance to make your mark in history so that future generations will tell stories about what you did as a community to mend a devastated world.

The Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce recently carried out a survey of businesses. The response suggests that Wandsworth and Battersea businesses are resilient and optimistic. Of the 65 responses we have received, key responses were :

Do you believe your business will survive under current restraints until 1st June 2020?

34.4% said Yes, 26.5% said possibly, 20.3% said Don't know. 6.3% said Other (these were mainly don't knows) and only 12.5% said they would not survive till June 2020.

How optimistic are you that your business will survive long term?

33.8% said, Very Optimistic. 30.8% don't know, 10.8% said Other (again, these were mainly don't knows) and 24.6% were not optimistic at all.

Wandsworth Chamber continues to act for businesses, asking for faster support action from our Council and Government. We urge MPs and councillors to attend our weekly online Wandsworth Coronavirus Business Forums, to listen, engage and inspire our businesses. These forums are held on a Wednesday morning at 11am.

We are here to help businesses, working toward a brighter future with good health and happiness in abundance.

*Details are on the events page of our website at wandsworthchamber.org
Steve Pinto is CEO of Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce*

What is biodiversity and why does it matter?

Experiencing and recording wildlife is useful as well as enjoyable, says Valerie Selby

The dictionary (or Wikipedia) definition of biodiversity is 'the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms and all its interactions'. If that sounds bewilderingly broad, that's because it is. The term was coined in 1985 as a contraction of 'biological diversity'. It matters vitally not only in itself, but also because it provides a range of services to us; from habitats that help reduce flooding by absorbing and storing water, through to individual species that we enjoy watching, through to landscapes and places that enhance our feeling of wellbeing when we see or visit them.

Without biodiversity we could not exist. It provides four essential services, known as ecosystem services:

- Provisioning: such as the production of food and water
- Regulating: such as the control of climate and disease
- Supporting: such as nutrient cycles and oxygen production
- Cultural: such as well-being and recreational benefits.

The borough of Wandsworth is home to 24 different habitats and over 2,769 different species. The habitats range from nationally important heathland on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath through to the internationally renowned River Thames; from lakes on housing estates to woodlands and grasslands on the commons; and of course, our own gardens. The species also vary from common garden birds to Red Data Book bees; breeding groups of grey herons to individual roosting bats; and a range of managed species such as fish and plants.

How do we know that all these things are in the borough and where they are? We work with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) the capital's environmental records centre that mobilises, curates and shares data on the city's wildlife. GiGL operates on behalf

of a wide partnership of organizations, including many voluntary groups which record species for their own enjoyment. Each biodiversity record needs to have a date, a place, a person who saw it and the thing (animal/plant/fungi) that was seen. Currently over 80,404 such biological records have been gathered for the borough. This information has been gathered by both professional, commissioned surveys and by wonderful volunteers. It enables us to understand what we have and where it is and makes it possible for us to deduce which management approaches work best to benefit biodiversity.

Policy

With this up-to-date information it is our task in the Enable biodiversity team to protect and enhance wildlife, and the places in which it lives and feeds, in many different ways. As well as developing protection and enhancement plans for habitats or species, we are involved in policy making, planning and development, and land management.

The current Covid-19 situation has demonstrated just how many people value the ability to get outside and be part of nature, with increased numbers of people walking, running or cycling through green spaces. Personally, I have found it invaluable to be able to walk in nature, watching spring evolve around me. And whilst we shouldn't complain about the sunshine, as I write this article I can't wait for the street tree outside my

house to burst into leaf and provide some shade and cooling for my improvised desk location.

There are many ways that interested individuals such as Battersea Society members can help us to help biodiversity, and you don't need any specialist knowledge. Keep a note of what you see from your balcony, in your garden or when you visit a local greenspace. Submit these records to GiGL via their online portal <https://www.gigl.org.uk/submit-records/>. These records are added to the centralised system and if you agree to the data sharing agreement your records of the animal, plant or fungi will be shared with us in a manageable way. They can, in due course, be used to influence what we do and where and how we do it. For example if you submit a record of a bat or a swift that you know lives in the eaves of your house, if a nearby development proposal is received we will ensure that any developer has to take account of them in their proposals – which allows the overall population of such species to remain stable.

There are many online resources to support your discovery of biodiversity, including the Natural History Museum's pages on urban wildlife <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/urban-wildlife.html>

We have a few suggestions of what you can do in and around your home to make space for wildlife on our webpages here: <https://enablelc.org/parks/biodiversity/>. Later this year we hope to make substantial additions to this information, so do keep popping back to visit.

If you want to make suggestions of the kind of information you'd like us to make available or you have a specific question about biodiversity in Wandsworth drop us a line at biodiversity@enablelc.org Valerie Selby is parks development and biodiversity manager, Enable LC.



A rare Night Heron on Wandsworth Common

The Battersea Society: your opinions!

Jenny Sheridan reveals the results of the recent membership survey

'We're glad you're there' sums up the majority of responses to the membership survey we carried out in late February, before the Coronavirus took hold. We were pleased with the response rate of 30% and also that the Battersea Society is seen as an important part of the community and is valued by its members. We were also pleased that our members came up with ways in which we can improve; we will be studying these over the next weeks and months.

People joined the Society mainly through word of mouth - so do please mention us to friends, once you are able to meet them again. The main reason for joining was to keep in touch with local issues, followed by wanting to support the Society and to feel part of the community.

Classic films

We asked about the events we arrange. Talks and meetings on local issues were the most popular. Perhaps surprisingly, few people said they brought a friend to one of these, something we would like to encourage. Many have never attended the summer party (now cancelled, sadly) or our film showings at the Royal College of Art, which is a shame as it's a great venue and it has been fun to see classic films with Battersea settings.

Involvement in planning was seen as our most important activity. More members than in the previous survey in 2016 cited heritage and local history as important. There seems to be a bit of a boom in interest in local history generally. It's a great shame that the borough's excellent Heritage Festival has had to be cancelled, but I am sure next year's will be even bigger and better. Our work on open spaces is also highly valued.

This magazine came out well, I'm happy to say. 'It's about the only thing that keeps me informed about anything going on in Battersea' and 'always beautifully presented, interesting and informative' were two of the comments. The bus journey

and planning matters came in for a lot of praise. Respondents would like more articles on environmental issues such as climate change and air pollution and we hope to bring those to you.

Mike Roden's email newsletter Battersea Update was also appreciated. Comments on the website were complimentary, and it is more used than in the past, though some thought it needed updating.

Given that a majority of the respondents are over 60, it is encouraging that a sizeable minority are using social media. Few however follow the Society on Twitter or Instagram. If you don't already follow us, please do.

Useful

We asked what the Society does well and what it means to its members. The responses were heart-warming: 'Appeals to the introvert and extrovert equally', 'being a member makes me feel very much a part of Battersea's history and future'. Members liked the fact that we 'encourage a sense of shared community' and helped them 'learn about the place that is my home now, and its residents'. One person saw us as 'the most important local organisation'. We are 'a fund of useful information on local issues and how to get involved.' People look to us to 'hold the Council to account' and to inform and engage on the

local impact of national or London-wide issues.

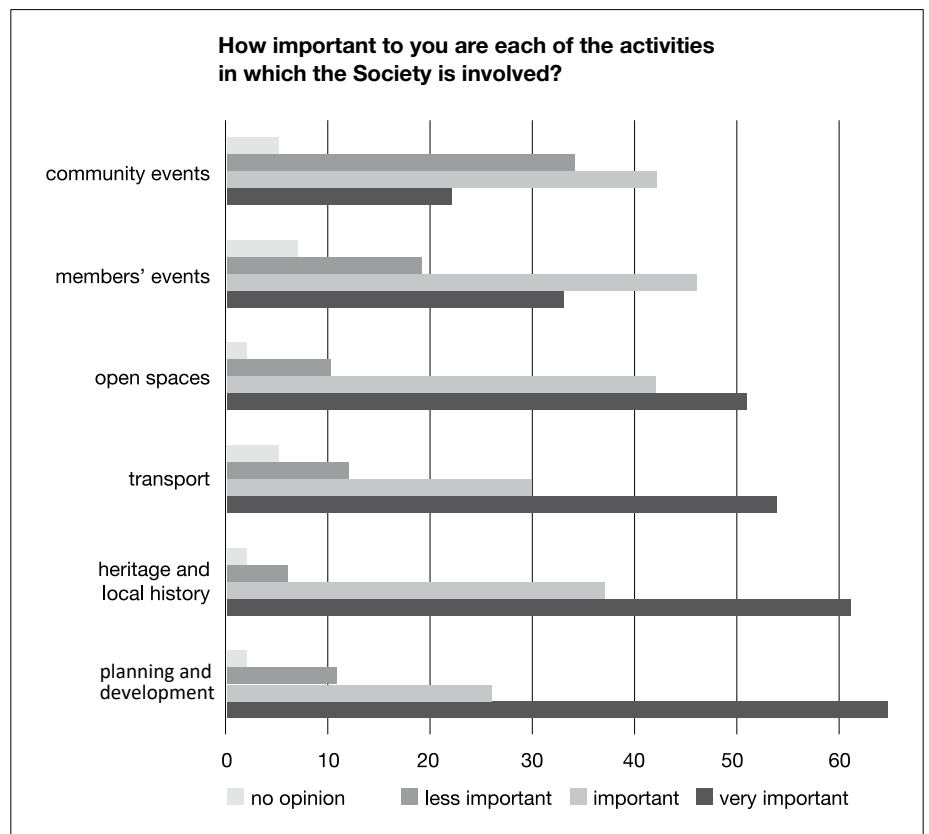
We also asked about what we could do better. About half the respondents had suggestions here. The main issue raised was that we should try to attract residents from a wider range of age, socio-economic and ethnic diversity. We should also do more to promote our activities and meetings more widely.

What respondents didn't know is the narrow geographic spread of our membership. We have very few members west of Battersea Arts Centre or east of Clapham Junction. Increasing our membership in these areas could also address diversity issues.

A couple of responses indicated that the Executive Committee could be more visible and more welcoming, particularly to new members, and we will try hard to do this when we are able to start getting together again. Until that happy day, I would like to thank all the members who took part in the survey very much. It was an extremely useful exercise. If you were one of the 75 who said you would be happy to help further, we will be in touch, though it may take us a while.

The survey was mainly constructed and analysed by Susan Holder with support from Carol Rahn. Thanks to them both.

The winner of the book token is Julia Williams.



Running a pub: it's not all beer and skittles

Dave Law bemoans the lot of the local

Being a publican obviously suits a certain type of person. I love it: all walks of life, with all sorts of stories and experiences to share. The secret to a well-run pub in my opinion is that the bricklayer has to be able to talk with the barrister and the councillor to the carpenter, without fear and in comfort. The environment should be a leveller. I really see the job as a facilitator, someone that provides the ambiance and setting for people to do just that, and as a result, I've learnt more from my customers than I ever did at school.

However, Covid lockdown has changed all that. The pub almost seems sad at the loss of the heaving masses on a Friday night. It seems eerie and odd to be able to walk downstairs from my home into the bar without having to consider what I'm wearing, not having to greet everybody or get involved behind the bar.

Furloughed

The uncertainty is the killer. So much contradiction and confusion in the early days as to what we were permitted to do. At first I considered door to door deliveries but was then warned that it may threaten the availability of the government grant and invalidate our insurance. The insurance of course blankly refused to pay out. We still had all the bills to pay; water, gas, electric, pest control, BT not to mention our wonderful staff. We have furloughed all our permanent staff and topped up the long-service ones to 100%. We were very glad to receive the £25,000 Government grant.

The biggest worry though is what comes next. I'm coming up to my

25th year in the Eagle and after four years seeking to enact our rights under statutory regulation we are going to go Free of Tie (FOT), in the last 22 months before the lease ends, and is unlikely to be renewed.

I should explain that we are a tied pub. This means that we have to pay a market rent to the landlord while also having to buy all our beer products from the same landlord or pubco, at whatever price they see fit. The price of beer in tied pubs has risen 51% over the retail price index (RPI) this decade, whereas FOT increases have been below RPI. This is why so many pubs are closing.

Before Covid, trade had been exceptional and we were looking forward to boosting our £200 per week wage to a reasonable and liveable wage for the next 22 months, and possibly even save enough money for a fight over the lease renewal. That is now a distant beery dream. Our pubco still wants the rent. Which may sound reasonable at first, but our rent is assessed unlike any other sector. It is based on our annual turnover for the forthcoming five years. Obviously we now don't have any turnover, and little in the tank. This is the issue with tied pubs: the pubco takes approximately 80% to 90% of a tenant's operating profit, not to mention the added profit they make as middle man for the beer.

My pubco is Ei Group, formerly Enterprise Inns, whose revenue last year was £724 million, with an underlying profit of £118 million. Why is that relevant? Well, last year they only paid £10 million in taxes. Now



that they have been bought by a group financed in the Cayman Islands, I suspect that will become even less. Many tax haven-based pubcos are seeking support and concessions from the government.

Burden

With all this in mind, is it right that the weakest in the chain should be burdened by a rent debt that is currently racking up, while we are unable to trade? Ei have made approximately £1.6 million from us in the last 15 years, on just one pub! Last year they made around £105,000. A rent break for three months would only see them lose 11% of that income. Is that too much to ask?

They are even obliged under the lease to insure for loss of rent, and that is why we became involved in a campaign called #NoPubNoRent. But while it has caught the imagination of the *Daily Mail*, the *Guardian* and the *Times*, it has seemingly fallen on deaf ears where pubcos and politicians are concerned.

Let's hope they wake up, or a sizeable chunk of our national pub heritage will disappear after lockdown!

Dave Law is landlord of the Eagle Alehouse in Chatham Road.