



## Seasons Greetings to all our Members and Friends



Lovingly decorated antique merry-go-rounds, vintage arcade games and rock & roll dodgems provided all the fun of the fair when Carter's Steam Fair came to Battersea Park at the end of October. *(Photo by Stephen Burke)*

Wish your friends and neighbours a Happy Christmas and help spread the word about the Battersea Society

Most of us have a neighbour or friend who is always meaning to join the society and never quite gets round to it. With this newsletter you will have received two Christmas cards with showing Battersea Park in the snow. Thanks to Terry de Marsh for the photograph.

As well as seasonal greetings, each



card contains information about joining the Society. All we ask is that the card is sent or given to someone living in Battersea. If you think you can use extra cards then please send an email to [information@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:information@batterseasociety.org.uk)

With more members the Society will have an even stronger voice in helping change Battersea for the better

Don't forget to visit our website: [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk) for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events & planning matters

## From the Editor

I hate to come over all Scrooge at this time of year, but there is a lot to be grumpy about. Just a couple of years ago I was part of the campaign to protect Northcote Road from becoming just another clone high street.

Now the invasion of expensive chain boutiques continues and an upmarket chain patisserie is opening. Northcotisation is even spreading down St John's Road towards the Junction. Among the down to earth and perennially useful discount and charity shops an international 'skincare boutique' has opened.

### Dismay

The granting of planning approval to the power station development, though hardly surprising, fills me with dismay. I foresee yet more years of dilapidation and demolition, as our chairman points out on page 18.

But Christmas is coming and I am determined to look on the bright side (if not the *Brightside*). The

Northcote Road street market is flourishing and the market in Battersea High Street is improving, with a special Christmas market on 12 December.

### Debate

Streetbook, covered in our last issue, is catching on and its Battersea Forum is proving both useful (pet-sitting, plumbers) and a stage for debate. I joined an evening drinks session planned on the forum to set up a social group for local people. A photography club is starting. These are real-life, face-to-face groups, facilitated by the internet.

Also in the last issue we covered the New Horizons Centre, but failed to include the address, which is Guinness Trust, Cadogan Street, SW3. Two readers contacted me and one couple has already visited and greatly enjoyed the centre.

Other reasons to be cheerful? It was a spectacular autumn and the trees in the park were a joy. And I discovered a way to commemorate Remembrance Sunday without attending a religious service: the National Portrait Gallery lays on an



annual reading of First World War poetry. The poems were beautifully read by two actors, it was moving, and it was free.

Theatre is not free but much of it is inexpensive, hugely enjoyable and easy for us in Battersea to get to. See pages 10-11 for what's on this Christmas.

Well, I have managed to cheer myself up. So I feel able to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Jenny Sheridan  
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As I write this it is snowing outside, and so it really does feel like the season to be jolly and time once again for those endless lists of gift suggestions that the weekend papers love to inflict on us. My favourite so far this year is a set of three handkerchiefs decorated with tasteful (even tasty) Brussels sprouts motif (a snip at £15.50), probably the sort of present it is much better to give than to receive.

I seem to have passed the age where people ask me what I want for Christmas. Our six year old grandson would probably ask for his two front teeth, having reached the age when the tooth fairy comes calling. However he is mightily impressed with the current rate of exchange, at one shiny pound coin per tooth. It was 6d in my day.

### Mistake

But if I were asked what I wanted I would certainly do my best to avoid the mistake of a certain US Presi-

dent asked that same question at a news conference. He gave a cheery, off the cuff answer to such a harmless question, and thought no more of it until he read a couple of days later that while the British Prime Minister had hoped that Christmas would bring peace for all mankind,



## The Man on the Battersea sleigh

Mike Roden gets in the Yuletide mood

and the French President insisted that the finest gift he could receive would be an end to world poverty, American's leader had asked for a new set of golf clubs!

### Fiction

If I didn't have one already then my gift of choice would be an e-reader. Yes I must own up that I have become a convert to the Kindle set. As one who has an abiding passion for nineteenth century fiction – Austen, Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray – my holiday reading was until this year somewhat on the heavy side. Now I can have the entire works of those authors and many more besides in something which weighs little more than a very slim paperback book. That's seems like a sort of progress to me. Merry Christmas to you all.

**Thames Tunnel – blight or necessity?**

The mess and expense may be worthwhile, says Angela Roden

Apparently 39 million tonnes of sewage still flush into the Thames each year. To deal with this problem Thames Water has now outlined the final stage of a 10 year plan which has already cost them £1.3billion. This final stage will cost a further £3.6billion and require average bills (paid by all Thames Water customers – not just those in London itself) to rise by £1 a week by 2018.

the public exhibition held as part of the current consultation. Much as I would love to be able to swim in the Thames before I die rather than risk death by doing so, I am much more concerned that my regular use of the Thames Path is not disrupted by this massive engineering project.



**Massive project**

The scale of the project is almost as complex as Bazalgette’s original sewer, stretching as it does from Becton in the east to Acton in the west, and the work will go on for years. So is such chaos and disruption until 2020 really worth it just to stop the Thames mud ponging a bit at times?

I was holding on firmly to these initial prejudices when I attended

**Impressed**

We’ve only just been able to start again to beat the bounds of Battersea from Vauxhall Bridge to the mouth of the Wandle with the river in sight most of the way. It would be disastrous to lose it again, as we found recently when trying to walk the Greenwich peninsula, now off-limits to walkers as re-development

takes place.

But I have to say I was impressed with the way the overall project was explained by the exhibition. The explanation of why the work needs to be done and the engineering options that have been looked at for how to do it were all clearly laid out. The siting of the riverside worksites on the stretches where I knew the context did seem to have opted for the least worst solution in each case, and maintaining access to the Thames Path during the work was one of the factors that they have had to address.

**Have your say**

So it is probably worth the expense and might even provide some much needed jobs over the next 20 years into the bargain. Check out their website and decide for yourself.

*For further information and to register your comments before mid-December go to: [thamestunnelconsultation.co.uk](http://thamestunnelconsultation.co.uk)*

**Welcome to Battersea, Asda (again)**

Jenny Sheridan reports on a successful naming campaign

Where is Asda? Anyone local will reply “Lavender Hill” or “Clapham Junction”. But Clapham? No!

Yet less than two years after SW11tch Back to Battersea campaign persuaded the store to re-open as Asda Clapham Junction, Battersea, it reneged and returned to its highly misleading Clapham moniker.

**Streetbook**

The change was pointed out in September on [Streetbook’s](#) online Battersea forum by someone called Micky G who asked, “Am I the only one hacked off that Asda claims to be in Clapham (Lambeth)?” Eighty one posts followed to prove that he was certainly not the only one. And the posters didn’t just moan to

each other (as tends to happen in online forums): they wrote and emailed Asda (Councillor James Cousins sending some particularly punchy emails) and even the London Fire Brigade got involved. They explained to the store that their canopy sign was misleading and could lead to fire engines being misdirected. MP Jane Ellison was



Misleading information!

active behind the scenes.

**Online poll**

The Battersea Society weighed in with an online poll showing that 98% of respondents believed that Asda’s name should reflect its real location.

And, in November, Asda capitulated. Although they have not yet changed their signs, they have assured us that the name will change back to Asda Clapham Junction Battersea. The SW11tch Back to Battersea Campaign now have their sights set on *Specsavers* and *Waterstones* in St John’s Road, which both trade under the delusion that they are in Clapham.

## The Bolingbroke Hospital site –school or housing?

Jenny Sheridan looks at both sides of the debate

Will south Battersea soon sport a brand new secondary school? Or will St George's NHS Trust succeed in its planning application to build 50 luxury and affordable flats and a health centre on the Bolingbroke site? Or is it all just a game to establish the market rate – if a higher rate, St George's wins more money to allow it to attain foundation status and build new emergency facilities, if a lower market rate, Wandsworth Council gains a new school at a lower cost.

### Local support

As we reported last spring, there is much local support for the school proposal. However, according to the council's borough plan the site is appropriate for housing and community use. The current application fits that bill and the rule is that public land must be sold to the highest bidder. St George's points out that if they sell for housing development the trust will have more cash to improve care for trauma patients as well as providing space for GP surgeries at the Bolingbroke. What argument could the council use to turn St George's down?

Jon De Maria, a prime mover in the school campaign, is hopeful that the council will buy the site, using government money, and will also pay for the conversion costs. "The council has already said that they are putting £70 million pounds into building works at two existing schools, Burntwood and Southfields. Our costs will be miles below that." This seems surprising, given that the existing building is not a school but a hospital that has been largely unused for several years and is Grade 2 listed. But Mr De Maria is a quantity surveyor - "we're the forensic accountants of the construction world" and he says that minimal works would be needed, at least initially. The ambitious aim is to open partially with a one-form

intake in September 2012 and to go on to full opening in the 2013 autumn term. The campaigners and ARK, the education providers, are currently working on a business plan. Detailed design would start in spring 2011.

### Campaign

ARK, Absolute Return for Kids, is a charity that supports eight academies schools across the UK, six of them in London. It was established in 2004 to help break the cycle of under-achievement in schools and its first academy, Burlington Danes in Hammersmith, opened in 2006. The school campaign insists that it wants to be socially inclusive. But the Bolingbroke site sits in a wealthy enclave. People who can afford the high house prices and rents could simply move to the area and take up all the available places at the new school. To close the achievement gap and to avoid being the centre of a cluster of privilege, the campaigners will need to demonstrate how their admissions policy will deal with this issue. ARK's Lesley Smith says the school will follow local authority admissions and appeals procedures.

### Independent schools

Figures have been circulating locally suggesting that 75% of the children 'between the Commons' are educated in the private sector at secondary age. Not quite true, according to Mr De Maria, although he acknowledges that 31% - still a very high proportion - do go to independent schools. "Only 27% go to Wandsworth state secondaries because there just aren't enough places. Many have to go out of borough. We want our kids

to be able to walk to school with their mates from primary school, not to cross London with their parents in a Chelsea tractor."

### Application

What about the argument that middle class parents should send their children to existing local schools such as Chestnut Grove (Ofsted: 'outstanding') in Balham or Battersea Park School (Ofsted: 'good')? Mr De Maria says "The reality is that we don't have a local secondary. Thirteen primary schools are closer than Belleville is to Battersea Park School." The area between Clapham and Wandsworth Commons is served by four state primary schools: Alderbrook, Belleville, Highview and Honeywell, but there is no secondary school within a seven mile radius. St George's application is expected to go to the planning committee in December or January. Michael Gove, the education secretary, is in favour of free schools and has given the Bolingbroke school the green light. Wandsworth council is also keen to support the free school concept.

ARK has a new website [arkbolingbrokeacademy.org](http://arkbolingbrokeacademy.org) which appears to treat the school as a done deal.



Site awaiting a decision on its future

## They fought for King and Country

Mike Roden on a new book about two 'Pals' battalions

The last surviving British veteran of the Great War died last year, and it is probable that there is little more to be said about the overall history of the war. But there is still a deep interest in particular aspects of that war as it affected local communities.

Paul McCue tells how Kitchener's 1915 call for more volunteers – the 'Pals' battalions – to reinforce the beleaguered British army was greeted in South West London. He follows the fortunes of the Wandsworth and Battersea battalions to the end of war and beyond.

### Sources

The project was spurred by a 1994 visit by employees of Wandsworth Council to Villers-Plouich in France. It was there that Corporal Ted Foster (a council worker) won the Victoria Cross in 1917.

After a brief introduction, the author sensibly splits the story into two halves, focussing separately on the battalion mustered by each borough. This was a war in which meticulous records were kept, and the author makes full use of all the sources available to him, including an unpublished first-hand account

by a soldier who had served with the Wandsworth battalion.

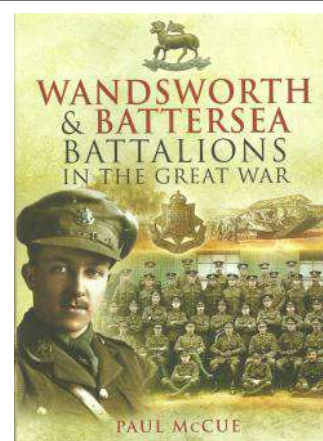
### Carnage

Both battalions served at Ypres, and on the Somme – though were spared the carnage of 1 July 1916 when nearly twenty thousand British soldiers died in one day.

The Wandsworth Pals had a tough time in 1918 when most of them were captured during the Germans' ferocious spring offensive. The Battersea battalion spent a brief time on the Italian front and then formed part of the army of occupation in Germany after the armistice.

There are some good illustrations, many of them from the author's own collection, and though this is probably not a book for the general reader, I would certainly recommend it for anyone wishing to get a deeper understanding of the day to day detail of the lives of those who fought (and often died) in the war they said would be over by Christmas.

There are of course many touching human moments in the telling of this story – not least when he quotes from the moving letters written to bereaved families by



young officers.

Private Albert Wheedon from Joubert Street was a drummer with the battalion's band, but served as a stretcher bearer under fire, where he died of head wounds. Lieutenant Sweetman from the RAMC wrote to his parents: "It was with the deepest grief this evening I learned of the death of your son..." and hoped that Albert's brother who was also a stretcher bearer "may be spared and brought back in safety to you when the war is over." That brother, Robert, was killed just three months later.

*Wandsworth and Battersea Battalions in the Great War* by Paul McCue .  
Pen and Sword Books 2010— £25

The annual literary quiz, held this year on 27 September, attracted the usual mildly rowdy crowd of book-lovers and wine drinkers, among them the Battersea All-stars, the team name the Society adopted for the night. Frustratingly, we lost by just three points, coming third to the Dilettantes, a reading group based at Balham Library, and Chalk, led by a literary agent. The winners scored 45 out of 56, we scored 42.

### Questions

The questions revolved around colour – Who wrote the story on which the film *The Red Shoes* was based? (answer: Hans Christian Anderson). What was the name of Billy Bunter's school? (Greyfriars).

### Team spirit

The Battersea All-stars were Monica Tross, Elaine Dunlap, Bob Barker, Steph Tickner and me. We agonized over the authors of detective novels – Ngaio Marsh or Dorothy L Sayers? – and poems – Keats or Shelley? And who was it who wrote *How Green was my Valley*? (Richard Llewellyn).

We may not have achieved our ambition of coming first or second, but we had a very enjoyable evening. Next year perhaps the crown will be ours!

## So near and yet so far

Jenny Sheridan reports on the SW11 literary quiz



Ngaio Marsh or Dorothy L Sayers?

## Being a Wandsworth councillor

Jenny Sheridan hears from two newcomers to the council.

What's it like being a Wandsworth councillor? In the summer 2010 edition of *Battersea Matters* we interviewed two new councillors, Jenny Browne (Northcote, Conservative) and Simon Hogg (Latchmere, Labour). I asked them how the reality lived up to their expectations.

Jenny (below) is "really enjoying being a councillor. It's quite a lot of work – I spent 20 hours on it this week. It's possible for us in Northcote because I only do a few occasional photographic jobs, Peter (Dawson) is retired and Martin (Johnson) is a full-time councillor. Every three weeks we each walk around parts of our ward, noting anything we see like empty shops or houses, rubbish being dumped and so on, and look at developments."



### Problems

What can a councillor do when she sees something problematic? "Well, for example if there's a mattress that has been dumped in a front garden, I'll find out who to speak to in the council and ask them to find out who the landlord is and get them to remove it. Last week I chased a rubbish cart down the road because they were dropping a lot of stuff and it was blowing about. The dustman said it

would be picked up by the cleaner who came after them. It's such a waste of the council's money.

"The other morning I stood with some residents in Broomwood Road for an hour monitoring the traffic. They're concerned that it's too fast and dangerous. Casework is largely about things like trees, traffic, the siting of bus stops, potholes in the road."

Jenny is on two main committees, Environment, Culture and Safety, and General Purposes, focusing on staffing and finance. As part of her work on the former she is on a working group on CCTV cameras. "I am concerned not to see them abused as a way of making money from drivers, when they park to drop people off at the station for example." She is also on the passenger transport liaison group and a group called Cultural Wandsworth. As a governor of Belleville Primary School she has been involved in "quite hairy" meetings about the proposed extension on Forthbridge Road.

### Libraries

Libraries are currently a thorny issue. "There have been lots of meetings. We fought tooth and nail for Northcote Library. I hate the idea of losing a community resource but we are under great pressure to save money. Getting rid of garden rubbish is also an issue round here. My interests are in grass roots issues rather than the big borough-wide things.

"Altogether it is great fun – meeting people from other walks of life, having a role in the community, going to things like the poppy day service in Battersea Park and meeting the soldiers and the schoolchildren. There are so many interesting people."



### Privilege

Simon Hogg (above) is also enjoying his new role. "Being a councillor is a great privilege and actually very good fun. I've met a huge number of new friends, been exposed to absorbing new ideas and got to know Battersea like never before. The job takes up as much of your time as you let it: my wife's expecting our first child at Christmas, so ask me how it's going in the new year!

"It's varied and sometimes complex, but it is definitely a job that anyone can do. I had no thought of being a councillor a few years ago, but I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in politics and community service.

"There is a side that is quite extroverted: knocking on doors collecting signatures, giving speeches, community events. But mostly it is quite solitary. There's a lot of reading: some weeks 900 pages of council documents come through my door."

### Housing

As a Latchmere councillor, Simon's casework differs from Jenny's, much of it focusing on housing. "I'm trying to help a couple who are living with their two children in a one bedroom flat in the Winstanley Estate. It's worth learning how the pieces of the system fit together in order to help people like them.

continued on page 7

**Being a Wandsworth councillor (continued from page 6)**

“Technology helps greatly. Much of the correspondence can be dealt with by email and the council documents are all available on the web. This weekend I was on an estate and snapped a picture on my phone of paint peeling off and emailed it directly to a council officer for repair.”

**Debates**

Simon thinks that the council should broadcast all its meetings live on the internet. “Several councils already do this with, for

instance, planning application meetings, so residents can stay in touch with debates and decisions without going to the Town Hall. It is quite shocking when you look at the public gallery in a full council meeting and discover that there are only two or three people there.

“Most of the councillors are very pleasant, committed people. A few Tories occasionally indulge in social snobbery. When a friend of mine made a mistake in a meeting a Tory committee chair asked her, “Did you go to a state school?”

Simon is Labour speaker on planning and transportation. “It gives me the chance to keep track of large schemes, such as the power station and Nine Elms. I would always read documents from the Battersea Society and enjoyed an afternoon at the home of David Lewis, co-chair of your planning committee, discussing developments at Nine Elms. I’m keen to hear from other Battersea Society members about planning and transport ideas. You can get in touch at [shogg@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:shogg@wandsworth.gov.uk)

**Maureen Larkin wins council award**

Recognition for stalwart Society member

Maureen Larkin, our membership secretary, has been presented with a Civic Award for her long-running service and involvement in the local community

Every year, Wandsworth Council holds a Civic Awards ceremony to “recognise the achievements of people who make a significant contribution to the life of the borough” and this year, on 10 November, Maureen Larkin was one of just four people to receive the accolade. Only a handful of people knew beforehand that she had won, so it came as a great surprise to her on the night.

**Key organiser**

Maureen was nominated by Cllr Tony Belton, leader of the Labour opposition at the Council. Reading from the nomination, the Mayor of Wandsworth, Cllr Piers McCausland (pictured with Maureen), mentioned that she was one of the founders of the Poyntz Road Triangle Association, formed in the mid-1970s when the houses in the area were under threat of demolition and redevelopment. Maureen was one of the key organisers of a

round of petitions, council meetings and fund-raising events, including a street party for the Queen’s Silver Jubilee in 1978.

**Street party**

The street party proved so popular that it became an annual event, held in conjunction with Neighbourhood Watch - Maureen is still heavily involved.

As well as being a trustee and membership secretary of the Battersea Society, she organises our visits, keeps the accounts on a

day-to-day basis and helps out at fund-raising events.

**Campaigner**

The Mayor went on to tell the gathering that Maureen is also a regular campaigner and letter-writer for issues affecting residents and their immediate environment, and is top of the list when neighbours want advice, or sometimes just a friendly ear.

Congratulations from all of us at the Battersea Society. For more on Maureen, see *Battersea Matters* Spring 2009.



## Before our very eyes!

Terry Barber reports on the magic of the 'House of 10,000 Secrets'

Hidden behind the door of a converted warehouse near Euston station is the headquarters of the Magic Circle, where magicians from across the world come together to share their secrets. It's also an Aladdin's cave of magical memorabilia with a wealth of vintage posters and playbills on the walls.

Our visit started with a warm welcome from veteran member Henry Lewis, who gave us a brief history of the 105-year-old society while we made a whole lot of coffee and biscuits disappear.

### Deception

Suitably fuelled, we were handed over to museum curator Lionel Russell, who showed us around the many tricks, costumes, photos and props and told us some fascinating stories about them.

I was particularly taken with the one about Chung Ling Soo, a Chinese conjuror who wowed audiences in the early 1900s by landing live fish from among them with a fishing rod and catching bullets in his teeth. His act ended abruptly during a performance in

London in 1918: after the gun was fired as usual, Chung clutched his chest and cried out in perfect English (the first anyone had heard him utter) "I've been shot... close the curtains!" He was rushed to hospital where, sweating profusely, his make-up melted to reveal he wasn't Chinese at all, and he died the following day.

It turned out that his personal life was as full of deception as his stage act. Chung was, in fact, an American vaudeville artist named William Robinson and also a bigamist: he had abandoned his first wife and child in the US, subsequently married his assistant, Dot, and at the time of his death had yet another mistress and family living in Barnes.

### Sleight of hand

Next we went upstairs, where we were treated to a close-up demonstration of prestidigitation – before our very eyes! Peter Scarlet won us over with his fast patter and sleight of hand and answered our questions. Though he wasn't giving away any trade secrets, he did

reveal that far from being a buffoon, Tommy Cooper (pictured) was a competent magician; we were able to see his trademark fez and stage props. Other displays here are dedicated to such famous acts as David Nixon, Robert Harbin, Houdini and Saveen, whose Daisy May dummy is also in the collection.

### Mind-reading

Ever upward, we climbed the stairs to the delightful little theatre at the top of the building, where Henry Lewis, our meeter and greeter at the beginning of the tour, treated us to a display of mind-reading with the aid of volunteers from the audience. Amusingly, one proved to be inscrutable – either through being mathematically challenged or forgetful. This was not one of our members, I hasten to add – *they* were magic!



There's also magic in the air at the Pump House in Battersea Park. A piece of paper moves of its own accord, spaces are distorted, trickery and illusion abound. The Magic Show displays some of the ways in which artists, as well as professional magicians, manipulate our perceptions. It is a fascinating show in one of the borough's finest spaces.

### Budget cuts

The management of the gallery has undergone some changes as a result of Wandsworth's budget cuts and it now comes under the arts team. Two members of staff were made redundant. When the Magic Show ends the gallery will close for

## Abacadabra – it's the Pump House, but not quite as we know it

Jenny Sheridan enjoys the show

renovation, re-opening in April 2011. The arts team are taking the opportunity to re-think the work they will show in future, helped by responses to a questionnaire currently available at the venue.

### Changes

Some changes are already evident. One of the windows has been unblocked on the first floor, giving additional views of the park and introducing more light. The big doors at the front have been opened up and there are sandwich boards inviting the public in. Laura

Eldret, in charge of audience development, has already noticed an increase in attendance. "It would be great to get opinions from Battersea Society members regarding the gallery," she says, "I hope they will call in, see the show and give us their thoughts via the questionnaire."

**Magic Show**  
(until 19 December)  
Weds, Thurs, Sun 11am- 5pm  
Fri, Sat 11am – 4pm



## Messing about in boats

Angela Roden spends a day on the river with London's watermen

I've been in love with the romance of the working boats on the river since coming to Battersea. I always stop to watch the skill with which the tugs swing their skeins of rubbish barges into position to moor them mid river opposite St Mary's church, on their way to and from the Smugglers' Way tip.

It's always been a dream to be out there with them, experiencing life on the river at first hand. So I decided to ask the bosses at Cory Environmental to fix it for me – and they did!

### Steady progress

That's why on a chill November morning Mike and I arrived at the Charlton barge works to board the *Redoubt*, one of five new tugs brought into service in the last few months. The first job was to pick up two barges full of empty yellow rubbish containers moored in the roads (definition: "a partly sheltered area of water near a shore in which vessels may ride at anchor"). Then we set off upriver.

First the long leftward sweep round the Dome's peninsula and then another curve to the right round Canary Wharf. Learning on the way that every corner is a point and every bend is a reach.

As we moved sedately on our way, shooting the central arch of London's bridges in turn, the crew of five (captain, mate, engineer and two lightermen) got on with their tasks with quiet familiarity and complete disregard for rank. They'd all had the same 5 year apprenticeship to gain their Boatmasters' Licence, so apart from the engineer were all qualified to do all the jobs.

Soon we were abreast of Battersea Park, with a flurry of activity as Geoff, John and Nick moored one of our two barges to the public buoys, all that remains for now of the old Battersea Park jetty. With the endless jumping from tug to barge and back the men can some-

times end up overboard. Their safety harness opens as soon as it senses water – but fortunately we didn't get to see it demonstrated.

### Family links

All the crew had family links with the river: 32 year old Bert's Dad, Grandad, and great grandfather had all been watermen – with a gap at great-great-grandfather who'd lost his life when his rowing boat was run over by a steam collier.

Now owned by a consortium of private equity infrastructure inves-



The power station disappears in the distance behind two fully loaded barges towed by *Redoubt*

tors, Cory began life in 1896 transporting coal and hay into London and realising that the empty barges could carry rubbish for disposal on the marshlands of Kent and Essex. The River Thames is the busiest inland waterway in the United Kingdom, and helps keep over 100,000 lorry movements a year off London's congested roads.

### Royal occasion

In their time both John and Nick had been winners of the annual Doggett's Coat and Badge race, first rowed on the river in 1721. For the full story see [tinyurl.com/2998kmt](http://tinyurl.com/2998kmt). They were also both proud to be among the 24 Royal Watermen, members of the Watermen's Livery Company who act as footmen to royal carriages on state occasions. When the shout went up mid-

morning: "Westminster Abbey – 29<sup>th</sup> April!" to get the quick-as-a-flash response: "Know what we'll be doing that day then!", it was a thrill to realise that I was actually meeting people who would be getting up close and personal with Wills and Kate on their big day!

Now with just one barge, we headed past our home territory of St Mary's church en route to Smugglers Way. When the tide is with you there's only enough room for one barge to get under Battersea Bridge. After more careful positioning of tug and barge to get it dropped in exactly the right place. away we went with a full barge, heading back to base three hours after we'd set off.

### Slack water

The two hour trip back down river with two full barges in tow gave me a chance to continue my crash course as a trainee mariner. I learned about 'working your slack tides', sticking close to the shore on the inside curve of a bend to find the quieter slack water rather than fight the tidal pull further out. In the old days all the boats would have done this, changing position according to the tide. Now the rules require all traffic to stick to the right – the boats have beacons so their position can be tracked and noted – no scope for cutting corners these days.

It was about 3.30pm when we got our load back to Charlton and moored it up, ready to go downriver the next day. The trip had given me a fascinating insight into the work of these lightermen, reading the river in all its moods so expertly day after day and all certain they were doing the best job in the world.

And I for one can't fault their conclusion.

Many thanks to all the staff of Cory Environmental who fixed it for Angela, especially the crew of the *Redoubt*

**The play's the thing (especially at Christmas)**

Jenny Sheridan offers a round-up of seasonal shows

There is no need to visit the West End to experience excellent theatre. Many of us, I would guess, consider a trip to the National Theatre a normal and life-enhancing part of our regular London life. It's just a few minutes from Waterloo and thus from Clapham Junction. Even when there is no Travelex season, it is a bargain place to see world-class theatre.

But the National is not the only theatre within easy reach. Here we offer a round-up of some of the Christmas shows on offer without venturing into central London and without breaking the bank. And most have a café or restaurant as well – check when you book.

**BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE**

Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction  
Buses 156, 345, G1.

30 Nov – 21 Dec *Tea dancing*. "put on your dancing shoes and step back into an age of elegance in the Grand Hall". £3.50.

8 Dec – 8 Jan *The Animals and Children took to the Streets*. "A wickedly twisted tale of inner city paranoia, synchronizing live music, performance and story-telling with stunning films and animation." £12 - £16.

4 – 31 Dec *The Great Escape*. Based on Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*, this is "an interactive adventure where children become detectives, searching the building to discover tiny clues to the small people who live under the floorboards". Suitable for children aged 6-11. Children £8, adults £12. [bac.org.uk](http://bac.org.uk) 020 7223 2223.

**THEATRE 503**

corner of Battersea Park Road and Latchmere Road, above the Latchmere pub. Buses 49, 319, 345. 1-18 Dec *The Wind in the Willows*. The epic adventures of Toad, Mole,

Ratty and Badger, complete with music and dance. Early evenings and matinees. £8-12.

14 – 22 Dec *Playlist Christmas*. Brief new plays inspired by a carol or yuletide classic tune. Each lasts no longer than the song that inspired it. £8-12.

[theatre503.com](http://theatre503.com) 020 7978 7040

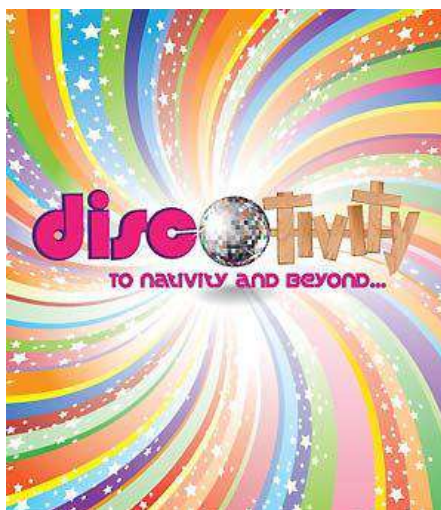
**ROYAL COURT**

Sloane Square, SW3. Buses 319, 49,19,137

1 Dec-15 Jan *Get Santa* by Anthony Neilson. "A magical musical show with a very dim elf, a family-changing machine and a teddy bear with an evil masterplan."

Suitable for children 7+.

Adults £12-18, children £8-12.50. [royalcourttheatre.com](http://royalcourttheatre.com) 020 7565 5000



**LANDOR THEATRE**

70, Landor Road, Clapham  
3 minutes from Clapham North, or 345 from Clapham Junction towards Peckham

8 Dec-8 Jan *DiscoTivity* (pictured) "Use it Up, Wear it Out, as Mary and Joseph and their mouthy donkey, Tiffany Turner, groove to disco classics as they boogie on down the dusty road to a stable in a Bethlehem .. Forget lowing cattle as

we put the funk in the manger in Boogie Holy Land!"

Adults £20 Concessions £15 [landortheatre.co.uk](http://landortheatre.co.uk) 020 7737 7276

**TARA ARTS**

356 Garrett Lane, SW18. Opposite Earlsfield Station. Bus 77

14-18 Dec *Cinderella* "The ever-popular pantomime tale told in true Bollywood style with catchy songs and hip-swinging Indian dance." £7.50.

[www.tara-arts.com](http://www.tara-arts.com) 020 8333 4457

**MENIER CHOCOLATE FACTORY**

53 Southwark Street, SE1. Waterloo Station then bus 381 or RV1.

13 Nov-13 Feb *The Invisible Man* Based on the HG Wells novel, "this charming story combines tongue in cheek humour with jaw-dropping special effects and ingenious illusions." £33.50.

Suitable for children 8+.

[menierchocolatefactory.com](http://menierchocolatefactory.com) 020 7907 7060

**UNION THEATRE**

204 Union Street, SE1. Bus 344 or Southwark tube (Jubilee line) or ten minutes walk from Waterloo Station.

14 Dec-15 Jan *On the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* A musical based on the 1932 screwball comedy film. Music by Cy Coleman (Sweet Charity). £16.50, concs £13.50.

[uniontheatre.biz](http://uniontheatre.biz) 020 7261 9876

**ORANGE TREE THEATRE**

1 Clarence Street, Richmond. Two minutes walk from Richmond Station.

15 Dec-5 Feb *Once Bitten* A farce set in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Paris, featuring "a lawyer, some missing jewellery, mistresses and a disgruntled cook". £13-20.

[orangetreetheatre.co.uk](http://orangetreetheatre.co.uk) 020 8940 3633

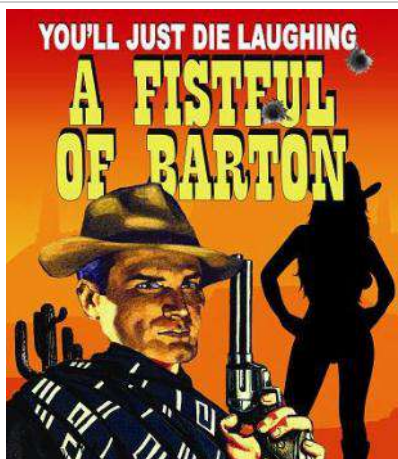
**Christmas Shows (continued from previous page)**

**RICHMOND THEATRE,**  
Richmond Green. Five minutes walk from Richmond station.

10 Dec-15 Jan *Sleeping Beauty*.  
“The perfect panto, with song and dance and spectacular sets. Starring Anita Dobson as the wicked fairy.”  
£20-27.  
[ambassadortickets.com](http://ambassadortickets.com) 0870 060 6651

**ROSE THEATRE**  
Kingston High Street. Ten minutes walk from Kingston station.

7-30 Dec *David Wood’s Storytime*. Storytelling combined with magic, music and audience participation. For younger children



(4+). 10.30 am. £7.

27 Nov-2 Jan *The Three Musketeers*  
“A new musical telling a gripping tale of courage and reckless hope;

an energetic and physical production.” Suitable for children 10+. £17-33. Concs.  
[rosetheatrekingston.org](http://rosetheatrekingston.org) 0871 231 1552

**WAREHOUSE THEATRE**  
Dingwall Road/George Street, Croydon. One minute from East Croydon Station.

10 Dec-20 Feb *A Fistful of Barton* (pictured ) “Dick Barton’s back – in a Wild West musical. A fistful of fun, a surfeit of suspense and a mule-train of toe-tapping tunes.”  
£12-17.  
[warehousetheatre.co.uk](http://warehousetheatre.co.uk)  
020 8680 4060

Earlier this year, we conducted a survey of our members. The results showed some welcome support for the work of the executive and committee members and a reminder that we need to work harder to recruit new members across the whole of Battersea and a rather wider age-range.

**Good response**

Seventy members responded, a healthy response for a postal survey. Forty-six women replied, twenty men and four decided to keep their gender to themselves. This probably reflects the general split of membership, as does the age range, with most replies coming from those over 65. This was particularly marked among the men who replied, those from women were more balanced with twenty-six younger than sixty-five. Most members join to keep in touch with local issues. They like the events we run and the way in which we keep members in touch – particularly true of *Battersea Matters* and the email newsletter. Planning and the environment were rated the two most important issues the society is involved with,

followed by transport and open spaces.

**Key Events**

It was good to find that the two key events of our calendar, the summer party and the AGM were the most often attended with the talks a close third. We had some helpful suggestions for new events which we will consider for the future.

How can members help the Society grow? Most of the members replying heard about the Society by word of mouth, so do please help by letting people know we exist.

**Volunteers wanted**

We asked if members could take on a more active role and have already had help from some – thank you. And a special plea to the eleven people who said, yes they would like to be more involved; but didn't actually give their contact details.

Maureen Larkin has contacted all those who did give this information, so if you volunteered but you haven't heard from Maureen, please email her at :  
[membership@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@batterseasociety.org.uk)

**Willing helpers – where are you?**

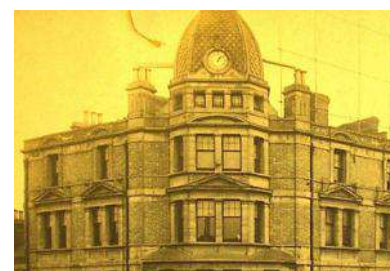
Monica Tross gives the results of a survey of Society members

**Arding and Hobbs blazes 1909**

*“Most of the ground floor shop windows on Lavender Hill were ablaze..... a man was hanging out over the windowsill shouting for help. The floor behind him had gone.”*

A harrowing first-person account of the fire that gutted Arding & Hobbs in December 1909 appears in the Autumn 2010 edition of the *Wandsworth Historian*. It also includes an article about Jesse Rust, the manufacturer of the mosaic floors in Battersea Arts Centre.

For information on buying a copy contact Neil Robson  
[ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk)



## Wandsworth in Bloom 2010



Congratulations to Mr Marshall Nicholls of Sisters Avenue, who won Best Front Garden in the Wandsworth in Bloom competition. Although it was judged in July, when this picture was taken, the garden was still colourful in late October – a real test of gardening skill.

## Cleaning up the Thames foreshore

Local MP and Society members get their boots muddy in a good cause



Left to right: Battersea MP Jane Ellison, with Judith Ressler from Thames 21, and Battersea Society members Sally and Gerald Orman and David Chapman help with recent foreshore clean-up near St Mary's Church.

## Christmas Hint

Young out-of-town relatives to stay over Christmas? Wondering how to amuse them without spending a fortune? Battersea Society trustee Sara Milne recommends the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace on Boxing Day.

The band plays Christmas tunes, including pop, and the mounted police sometimes unbend enough to lift a child onto their horse. And it's free!



## Stunning fish

Valerie Selby, Wandsworth's chief officer for biodiversity, explains how she knows our fish are healthy

If you were walking near the lake on Wandsworth Common at the end of September you may have noticed some men scooping large fish out of the water. The men were from Mid Kent Fisheries who work with us in the Parks Service to manage the fish in our fishing lakes (in this case the fishing basin at the southern end of the three joined lakes on the Common).

- damage habitat by reducing the number of plants
- increase fish stress through competition for food and space



### Health

We aim to carry out a fish survey every three years to check on sizes and numbers of fish and crucially to check on their health and well being.

If there were too many fish this could:

- help the spread of disease by creating more chances for a pathogen to find and infect a new host
- reduce water quality by lowering oxygen levels and increasing the levels of toxins and suspended solids within the water

To survey the fish, a seine net (weighted at the bottom) was positioned in front of the island to act as a stop net. The lake area behind the island was then electrofished and the caught fish were removed, weighed, counted and then retained in oxygenated tanks for the duration of the survey. Electrofishing uses electricity to stun fish before they are caught. It is a common scientific survey method used to sample fish populations.

### Natural state

When performed correctly, it results in no permanent harm to fish, which return to their natural state in as little as two minutes after being stunned. At the end of the exercise, all fish were returned to the lake. What did we find? The total weight of carp caught was 541lb. There are some large fish in there – the carp ranged in size from 12lb to 28lb; the latter is the weight of a two year old child.. The total weight of silver fish such as roach and perch is now estimated at 850lb. This means that the lake is at its maximum stocking level.

In other words it cannot take any more fish but can adequately cope with those that are there. All the fish we saw and caught appeared to be in good condition, so no work is required to remove any fish at present.

### Fishing in lake

If you wish to fish at the Wandsworth Common lake or the lakes in Battersea Park or Tooting Common, please contact the Parks Office at Battersea Park on 020 8871 7530 or visit our website <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/>

## Chestnut soup

This easy soup will make a warming lunch or a first course for supper. You can use tinned chestnut puree or whizz some vacuum-packed ones in the food processor.



As with all my recipes, there is no need to be too exact about weights and measures.

250g/8oz chestnut puree (unsweetened)  
 2 medium onions  
 2 rashers bacon  
 530ml/1pt good stock  
 3tbs Greek yogurt  
 1tbs double cream (if you have it)  
 25g/1oz grilled almonds or hazelnuts

Chop the onions finely, remove

the rind from the bacon and cut the rashers into matchsticks.

Put the puree, chopped onions, bacon and stock in a saucepan and simmer for 15 minutes. Chop the nuts.

Take the pan off the heat, add seasoning and taste, adjusting if necessary.

Whisk the yogurt into the soup and return to the heat, stirring. Don't let it boil or the yogurt may separate.

Serve with a dollop of cream and the nuts.

## Battersea Kitchen

A winter warming recipe from Jenny Sheridan

## Planning Matters

Monica Tross outlines the planning committee's latest work and asks for input and feedback

### Battersea Power Station

The Council approved the planning application on 11 November. What can I say that hasn't already been said? In the Society's lengthy responses to the quantities of the application material, in the thoughtful inputs from members of the Battersea Power Station Community Group and the splendidly polemical inputs from recent blogs – see Tony Tuck's article on page 18 for these. I don't doubt there will be more to say on this development in the future, but for the moment – on to other things.

### The onward march of Sainsbury's Local?

Sainsbury's is an excellent supermarket chain and many of us enjoy shopping with them. They have ambitious plans for their Nine Elms store, a useful long-hours Local at Clapham Junction Station and a large store in Garratt Lane. But they have upset many living in and around St John's Hill Grove by their re-application to site a new Sainsbury's Local alongside a thriving local shop and within one of the few truly neighbourhood shopping parades still left in Battersea. I rather lost count on the website but this application seems to have led to around 500 individual objections and petitions from over 530. As before, we too objected to this inappropriate development within a local

shopping environment which would be to the detriment of the character of a conservation area. (check it out at the planning page on Wandsworth's website [www.wandsworth.gov.uk](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk) It's planning application 2010/3998) Is agreement to this new application "a foregone conclusion" as someone was overheard saying at a recent meeting? We certainly hope not. The best outcome would be for Sainsbury's to show they do have respect for conservation areas and neighbourhood opinion and to withdraw this latest application once and for all.

### Feedback welcomed

At a recent Battersea Society meeting I sat in front of three gentlemen discussing the planning matters report in the autumn edition of *Battersea Matters* on the demolition of the Beechmore Road job centre. 'Graceful neo-Georgian building – not in my book' was their conclusion. If you disagree with anything, want to draw our attention to a planning application we should take a look at (or even applaud something we've worked on) then do please let us know.

### Thames Tunnel

Thames Water makes a compelling case for the need for tideway improvements and we do not plan to object. We will be calling for more detailed plans to be published at the next consultation

stage so that we can judge the effect on residents during construction and the legacy left when construction is complete. (see [www.thameswater.co.uk/londontidewayimprovements](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/londontidewayimprovements) for details of the current consultation phase). See also the article on page 3

### Other Planning Applications

While major developments take up a great deal of the planning committee's time, as does scrutiny of the Council's Core Strategy, we try not to ignore equally important smaller applications where they might have an adverse effect on the character of Battersea and its streetscapes. In many cases, such as terraces and basements, these seem to be accepted as allowable and we leave it to neighbours to object to the detail of individual applications. We look at many applications which appear acceptable or within the planning legislation and object formally to relatively few. Recent objections have included to substantial alterations to 2 Bridge Lane and to 7 William Blake House (applications 2010/4036 and 4193) and to plans for a development on an unused playground in Wycliffe Road (2010/3846). This last is on the edge of the Shaftesbury Estate and the design does not, in our view, sufficiently respect this location.

Comments or queries? Contact us at [planning@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@batterseasociety.org.uk)

## Royal visit makes it a purrfect day at the new cattery

The £5million cattery extension to the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home was opened on 27 October by the Duchess of Cornwall, shown holding Lucy.

Her Royal Highness said: "I am delighted to open the new cattery and the cats must be purring with pleasure in their new home. The

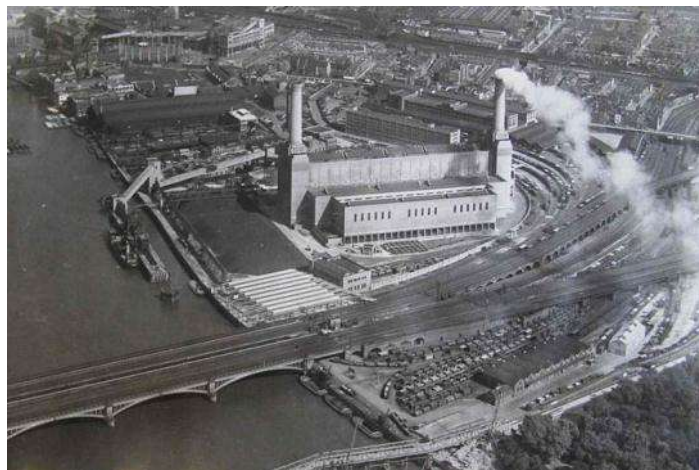
cattery is incredible, and it looks so impressive."

The cattery can house up to 150 cats and kittens and has been designed to give them all a window to look out of. In 2009 the Home rehomed over 2,000 cats.



## Were there truly Nine Elms?

David Evans reports on a talk by Professor Andrew Saint, editor of the *Survey of London*



An early picture of Battersea Power station with just two of the iconic chimneys. (Photograph courtesy of Survey of London).

The Survey of London was founded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the intention of recording and preserving all of London's fine buildings. CRR Ashbee, its architect founder, intended the task to take ten years. Over a century later, 75% still remains to be done. Battersea has been chosen for volumes 49 and 50 of the Survey, partly to address an acknowledged bias in favour of boroughs north of the Thames. These are due to be published in 2013, when they will also be available free of charge online.

### Then and now

Using a split screen technique of "then and now" paintings and photographs of the same site, the development of Battersea was explained. The Survey, now part of English Heritage, has been helped considerably by EH's acquisition from Aerofilms of aerial photographs from the 1940/50s.

The building of the London-Southampton Railway created a north-south divide, with industry and artisanal dwellings in the north, and better dwellings between the Commons in the south. The London

terminus of the railway was an attractive building at Nine Elms and in 1963 a proposal was made to turn it into a railway museum. Unfortunately British Rail turned this down and York won the prize.

### Legend

A longstanding legend has it that Nine Elms was named for trees planted in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century but Professor Saint debunked this with an 1800 painting, noticeably devoid of elms or any other trees. Apparently a local worthy did plant elms in his front garden in 1840.

Further along the river Victorian disquiet was fanned by the uncontrolled "low" entertainment around the riverside taverns, especially the infamous Red House. The answer to this debauchery and to the lack of public open space for healthy recreation was to clear the area and create Battersea Park. The original scheme for a park surrounded by sylvan villas in the style of Regent's Park did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, the mansion block developments, the variety of gardens, sculptures and the Peace Pagoda make for a park in complete contrast to Clapham

Common's football pitches and Wandsworth Common's semi-wild areas.

### Housing estates

Battersea had many purpose-built Board Schools which were significant in size and style, and provided an atmosphere of fierce discipline. Many of these fine buildings have recently been converted into multi-unit 'loft-style' dwellings.

Although they were controversial in the 1960s, dogged by Poulson-type misdeeds, the housing estates built then were of innovative and distinctive design, avoiding the 'tower blocks for all' policy which was followed elsewhere to replace overcrowded slums. Provision of suitable artisanal housing was a recurring theme in Battersea's governance. Some owners of houses with front gardens decided to move downmarket, by converting the ground floor into a shop and removing the front garden to provide a wider pavement (Battersea Rise) or building a shop in the front garden (Northcote Road).

A fire in 1910 at Arding and Hobbs, in which eight shop assistants died in their bedrooms on the top floor, militated against any redevelopment of St Johns Road into department store size shops. Professor Saint had nicely brought us back to another division caused by the railway: shops to the south, none in the north. This entertaining and informative presentation provoked a number of questions which were mainly nostalgic for the 'good old days' of community living.

All volumes of *The Survey of London* are freely available online at [tinyurl.com/2fmeko2](http://tinyurl.com/2fmeko2)

## Sixteen flats in one grand house

Jenny Sheridan explores the past and present of The Shrubbery

Clapham Common Northside has several splendid mansions, including the lovely Georgian house now occupied by Trinity Hospice. But one of the grandest is the Grade 2 listed The Shrubbery, just off Northside, on the corner of Laverder Gardens. Built in the reign of George III, it is a fine neo-classical building with an interesting history. The house is now divided into 16 flats, and the gardens appear curiously truncated for such a large house. When it was built, in 1796, the house was smaller but the grounds were much more extensive, reaching all the way from Clapham Common down to Laverder Hill.

### Respectable

The Shrubbery was built for alderman George Scholey, who later became Lord Mayor of London. His respectable exterior ("remarkable for the neatness of his person and often appeared well mounted on the Clapham Road" according to *The Times*) hides a delightfully Victorian mystery.

After his death at the age of 81, he left £10,000 to a thirteen-year-old girl named Georgiana "in compliment to the alderman", the daughter of a widow who kept a hotel in

Brighton. The widow (I picture her with eyes modestly downcast but twirling a pretty ankle) also received an annuity.

Its next owner, another wealthy City alderman, employed a local builder to add wings to the north, east and west sides. The north extension had what must have been wonderful views over the fields down to the river and beyond, to Chelsea and even Hampstead.

This was the Shrubbery's grandest period. The 100 foot long drawing room boasted three fireplaces, there were eight reception rooms, four WCs and a bathroom. Apart from the Humphrey family who owned the house (John, his wife Anna and their six children), there were eight servants, including a wet nurse. Well into the mid nineteenth century, wealthy people employed poor women to breast-feed their babies.

### Extravagant

After the Humphreys the Shrubbery was inhabited by the Spartalis. Marie Spartali, one of the daughters of the house, was both a well-considered Pre-Raphaelite painter and a famous beauty who sat for Burne-Jones and Whistler. During this period extravagant garden

parties were held at the house. When the Spartalis left the glory days ended. The grounds were sold to developers to build housing and the Shrubbery, with a comparatively small plot of land, to the Vicar of Battersea for use as a girls' school. In 1895 the church of St Barnabas was built between the Shrubbery and the Common and the house was used as a parish hall and accommodation for clergy until the Second World War, when it became an air raid post.

After the War it was used variously as a Scouts' den and a carpentry workshop and it fell gradually into disrepair. In 1985 the parish hall trustees sold it for redevelopment into flats, using the money raised to improve the church and build a new community hall (now much used by toddlers' and Pilates groups).

### Magnificent

In its present incarnation (below left) the house is still grand. There is a magnificent hall, where the residents occasionally hold a ball. Ground floor rooms are spacious with tall ceilings and fine proportions. Flats at the back have huge living rooms carved out of Alderman Humphrey's drawing room, with bedrooms below in the erstwhile kitchens.

On the top floor, up the servants' narrow curving stair, there are still the bells that summoned the maids to the proprietor's rooms downstairs. It's not hard to imagine them cursing under their breath as they stumbled down in the early morning to fetch hot water or coal for the master and mistress, long before the blessed advent of central heating.



I am indebted to Peter Burton and *The Wandsworth Historian* no 87, Spring 2009 for much of this history. Also to Chris Morgan-Locke.



## The break-up of the NHS?

Mike Squires of Keep our NHS Public criticises the government's radical plans for the health service

The Government's white paper proposes that groups or consortia of GPs take on the role of commissioners of health services from Primary Care Trusts, which will be abolished by 2013. The proposed changes have been opposed by several major health organisations. The British Medical Association is equivocal, and the Royal College of General Practitioners has called for the time frame for reforms to be extended. It warns that GPs may be swamped by paperwork, taking their time from patient care and opening the door to the private sector. In a survey many members believed the changes could even lead to the break-up of the NHS.

### Nightmare

As well as looking after patients, a task for which they have been trained, GPs will have to become accountants, with responsibility for budgets, buying services from other providers, including the private sector, invoicing for services rendered, payment for services provided, and so on. It is a nightmare, and no GP will have the time to do it while remaining a practising doctor. Instead GPs will employ consultancies or staff to do the commissioning for them, using money that could be better spent on patients. These could be PCT commissioners who have been made redundant or even private companies. So much for the government's desire to get rid of bureaucracy in the NHS!

The government is leaving it to doctors to decide on the size of consortia. Doctors' leaders disagree about the best size, with some stating that they need a list size of at least 500,000 patients to survive financially. In Wandsworth, GPs have voted to become a borough-wide consortium. Wandsworth's

population is 286,600. There has been no consultation with patients despite the White Paper proudly proclaiming that patients "will be at the heart of everything".

### Lottery

As well as commissioning services, the new Wandsworth consortium will also determine what drugs and other services are to be made available. These may differ from those available in neighbouring boroughs, leading to a postcode lottery. If a drug or service – say counselling – is not available in Lambeth but is in Wandsworth a patient will have the right to transfer from a Lambeth GP to a Wandsworth one. This will complicate the planning of services and will add to paperwork.

An unanswered question is what will happen to PCT debts. This is of particular concern to Battersea residents. Wandsworth PCT recently contracted Care UK, a private company, to run a walk-in clinic at Clapham Junction, in preference to local GPs. This type of 'Darzi' clinic aims to relieve pressure on A&E departments and to allow patients who are not registered with a GP to be seen by a doctor or nurse. They also cater for those who find it difficult to attend a surgery during working hours.

### Spiralling costs

A number of such clinics have opened throughout the country in the past year or so. Already some have begun to close because of spiralling costs, and in others the contracts are being re-negotiated. Dr Nigel Watson of the General Practitioners Council says: 'It's highly likely that PCTs and the new consortia will wish to renegotiate or even terminate some of the Darzi contracts, because they weren't

wanted, they weren't needed and don't provide value for money.'

So what will happen to the Clapham Junction walk-in centre is anybody's guess.

### Concern

Another cause for concern in Battersea is St John's Therapy Centre on St John's Hill. This was built on behalf of Wandsworth PCT (now NHS Wandsworth) by a consortium of private companies. The arrangement is similar to that of the Private Finance Initiative, whereby the NHS pays an annual lease, often over 30 years, to companies which build and manage the NHS facility. In the case of the Therapy Centre, it cost £7 million to build and over the 25 years of the contract is expected to cost close to £40 million in total. The current annual repayment is £1,300,000. In the first three years of the contract the repayments have increased by a third. What they will be in twenty years time? Who will be responsible for this spiralling debt once NHS Wandsworth disappears?

### Diminishing resources

If the government's proposals become law GPs in Battersea, like everywhere else, will have to arbitrate over who gets diminishing healthcare resources. Together with their colleagues in Wandsworth, they may be saddled with a debt that was not of their making. A debt that came about as a consequence of past and present governments' over-reliance on the private sector.

How much longer will it take us to learn that public doesn't always mean bad, and private doesn't always mean good?

[www.keepournhspublic.com](http://www.keepournhspublic.com)  
[www.nhscampaign.org](http://www.nhscampaign.org)

## A strange old Battersea ritual

Tony Tuck laughs and cries at the tragi-comedy of the power station

In mid-November those with a sense of nostalgia and a reverence for ritual were treated to that curious five yearly custom in which the current owners of the Battersea Power Station site, whoever they happen to be at the time, inundate the Planning Committee of Wandsworth Council with mounds of fictional literature and apply for a new outline planning consent.

### Profit

The myth by now is well known. It all started decades ago, when the public asset of the power station was sold for around £1 million. At the last transfer of ownership it fetched £400 million. With the newly refreshed outline planning consent the current owners will doubtless seek to top-slice a healthy profit. Over the decades the site has provided a series of fairy tale scenarios, none of which has ever really appeared likely to move from chrysalis to fully fledged creature.

We members of the audience are left to watch in impotence the sad deterioration of a landmark building, while our neighbours down the Thames can rejoice that their power station, now the Tate Modern, is the most visited visitor attraction in London.

The special feature this November was that permission has now been solemnly given to demolish the four chimneys so that they can be 'renovated' and re-erected within

seven years. My advice is that, if you wish to see them, go now. Once removed they are as likely to be reinstated as a real flying pig, notwithstanding the humorous input of the Pink Floyd. Go on, watch it again ([tinyurl.com/yf7rugl](http://tinyurl.com/yf7rugl))

Other current features are permis-



sion to demolish the Victorian pumping station, remove the decaying wharf cranes for renovation within the main building (the mind boggles) and, as a special treat, permission to develop a slither of land on the north west river front. So most of the actions the council has sanctioned involve solely demolition.

### Mythical

Of that other mythical beast that emerges from its lair every five years, the Northern Line underground link, there was no visible trace this time

The Battersea Society has covered the events over time on our website ([tinyurl.com/2cdmp9g](http://tinyurl.com/2cdmp9g)) and readers with a keen sense of drama will surely enjoy reading the review of the planning committee's proceedings by 'BabyLonDon' which can be found at the Spectacle Blog ([tinyurl.com/253sbuk](http://tinyurl.com/253sbuk))

Janes London blog rather spoils the ritual fun by suggesting that we cut to the chase, demolish the thing and have done with it. Shame on you for lacking a sense of ritual and tradition! ([tinyurl.com/28572pz](http://tinyurl.com/28572pz)).

It is a curious parable for our times that many iconic bodies and places fall into the hands of developers, only to find that the development primarily means enhancing sundry bank accounts.

### Pass the parcel

Whether it be a premier league football club, Centre Point, Cadburys, or our defunct local power station, the merry-go-round continues like a macabre dance of death. Rather like the children's game Pass the Parcel, we wait to see when the music stops who is left to unravel the parcel before this half decade's planning committee.

So book your tickets now for the grand 2015 planning show. No chimneys then, no pumping station, certainly no Northern Line extension. Who can guess who will be the owners then and what the parcel for that year's committee will contain? Answers on the back of a postage stamp please.

## The Battersea Society

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Registered charity no.1103560

**Championing creativity**

Jenny Sheridan celebrates Artists Open House

On two October weekends, local artists and craftspeople threw open their studios, front rooms, sheds and gardens to the public. In Battersea, a total of 22 artists showed in 13 venues. Wandsworth Artists Open House is run by the council’s arts team. Justine Kenyon, the arts development officer, sees it as “an excellent opportunity for artists to gain valuable feedback as well as making sales. And it is a great way for visitors to interact with local artists and to discover something new in an informal and unintimidating setting.”

**Terrific response**

Ilana Richardson is an established artist, whose work (below) sells world-wide, though many of her clients live quite close to her home on the borders of Battersea and Balham. She says, “I started my open studio weekends in the early 80’s. I wasn’t aware of anyone else who did an Open Studio in their home. I just leafleted the roads around me and the response was terrific. These days many artists open their studios and neighbourhoods now have their

local art trails.

“Having sold my paintings at galleries for many years, I really value selling direct to the public. I enjoy meeting visitors and buyers in my home over a drink, talking about my work and getting feedback. I also like saving the hefty gallery commission and passing the benefit to buyers. Occasionally I am asked if I have had any bad experiences letting strangers into my home. The truth is that the only bad experiences I have had were with galleries, never with individual buyers or unruly visitors.

“The central theme of my work is light and strong shadows, expressed though paintings of places I travel to. Most of them are around the Mediterranean but also Central America, India and the USA. At my Open Studio I show original paintings, limited edition prints, posters and greetings cards.”

**Original prints**

Unlike Ilana, 2010 was Louise Gillard’s first year of participating in the Wandsworth Artists’ Open House. Many of her original prints and acrylic or oil paintings portray

scenes in south Battersea, near her home. She says, “Having only just started painting and printmaking again after a 15 year hiatus I had wrongly assumed the AOH was for ‘serious’ and ‘experienced’ artists, not me.

“I convinced a local ceramicist to exhibit with me and, registration form duly submitted, we were committed to putting on a show in five months time. There followed weeks of brochure production, email marketing, website updating, mail-outs, door drops, social media updates and posters placed at busy junctions around the Northcote area.”

**Community connections**

“So it was disappointing that, on opening the doors at 11 am on the first Saturday, we were not mown down by hordes of visitors. In fact, the first two visitors came, looked around for precisely three minutes, and left. It was not encouraging.

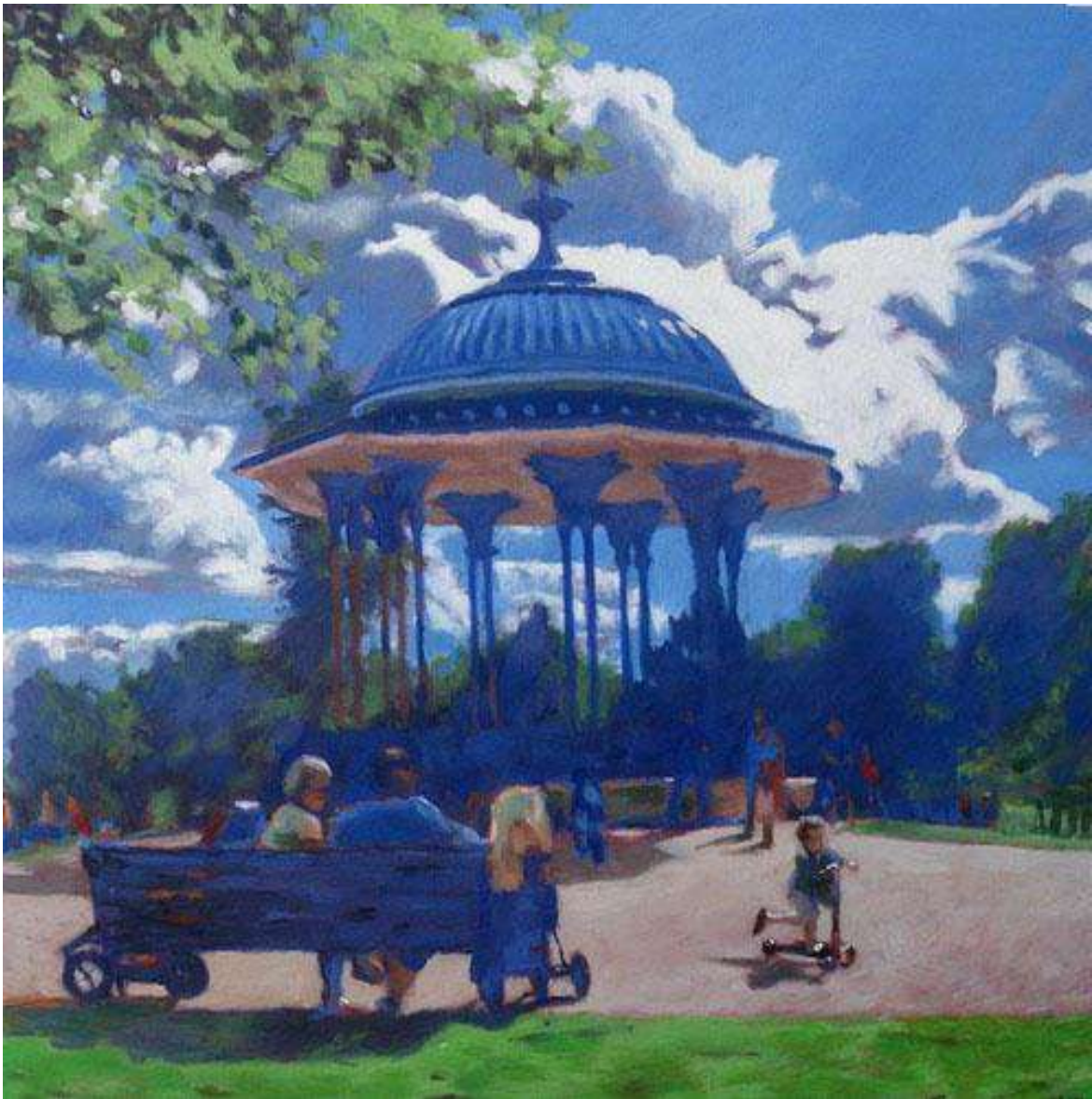
“However, as the days passed and the weather improved, a steady stream of people built to something like a crescendo on the second Sunday. I recognised many visitors from my street or my children’s school. For me, making connections with the local community was the most rewarding aspect of the weekends. There was plenty of lively debate on the value and impact of the AOH and how we could champion creativity further in the local area.”

Visitors were pleasantly surprised by the variety of art on offer, from paintings to sculpture, ceramics to jewellery. Many people bought something for themselves or as a gift, enjoying spending their money on something unique, created locally.

“It took me a full week to wind down from the two weekends, but I do hope to participate again.”



continued overleaf



**Wandsworth Artists Open House (continued from page 19)**

Across the borough total sales from the event amounted to over £105,000, with almost 1200 items sold. Visitors comments included; “A brilliant way to meet artists”; “I love the variety of the work and sometimes seeing other people’s gardens”; “I don’t feel obliged to buy, good that there is no pressure”.

**Partnership**

Justine Kenyon comments that the arts team, working in partnership with a very effective steering group of local artists, manages all aspects

of the project including publicity, marketing and evaluation. She says, “We are particularly keen to extend the reach of the project in Battersea and we’re looking for more artists to sign up to take part next year. Interested artists should contact me on 020 8871 7037 or through [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/arts](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/arts)”

*The painting of the Clapham Common bandstand is by Louise Gillard*

**A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**  
**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January**

**Twelfth Night Supper and Quiz**

at **Galapagos Restaurant**  
Battersea High Street  
3 course menu for £15

To book tickets contact  
Maureen Larkin 020 7228 4873  
[membership@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@batterseasociety.org.uk)

