

Battersea Matters

the newsletter of the Battersea Society AUTUMN 2016



Life's a gas: the Blue Man and the coal hopper

Sue Demont laments the gas holders' passing and celebrates the gas industry

Am I alone in feeling a pang each time I pass the void where Battersea's gasholders used to stand sentinel as you pull out of Battersea Park Station towards Victoria? Though hardly things of beauty, they made a familiar and reassuring landmark in the derelict area surrounding Battersea Power Station. Especially the big fat blue one, quite different from the others whose iron frames corresponded more to the typical image of a Victorian gasometer. I decided to find out more...

A fixation with gasholders might sound bizarre, so I'd better explain that not only did my father spend his entire career working for what we always knew as 'the Gas Board', but that part of my childhood was spent, literally, under the shadow of a small gasometer adjoining our rented (Gas Board) house (my mother was responsible for checking the pressure gauge daily to ensure that no-one got blown up). As children, we played with fluffy blue toys shaped like gas flames and enjoyed an esoteric board game called North Sea Gas; at university I learned to cook from the *Gas Kitchen Companion*, an unashamedly partisan but remarkably useful guide for 'new housewives and more experienced cooks' which I still use today. Maybe gas is in my DNA.

Demolished

First port of call on the demolition was our Society's planning committee, whose view was straightforwardly pragmatic. 'There does not appear to be any barrier to these (gasholders) being demolished. Our input to the planning application will focus on the need to mitigate the effects of



The Blue Man towered over Battersea

the work on neighbours and traffic' (*Battersea Matters*, Winter 2012.)

Not to be discouraged, I trawled further through the *BM* archive to find Susie Gray's article Battersea's Gasholders: the art of heritage (*Battersea Matters*, Winter 2013). Rather like my Gas Board cookbook, this was an article with a message, Susie being the Cultural Development Co-ordinator for the Nine Elms and Vauxhall Partnership. Nonetheless it was heartening to discover that the



historic and architectural features of the gasholders had been documented before demolition, an exhibition had been staged, and historic crests from the structures had been preserved.

It felt like there was more to uncover, and my research led me into unexpected territory. I learned that London was the first metropolis in Europe to be largely supplied by gas, its earliest works dating from 1814. Nine Elms was opened by the Gas, Light & Coke Company in 1833 and by 1850 thirteen separate gas companies operated in London. I unearthed a surprising geographical link between the location of gas works and south London's pleasure gardens, notably Vauxhall (closed 1859), which made extensive use of coal gas for its renowned illuminations and for the balloons in which visitors

continued on p3



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

From the editor



The man on the Battersea bus (below) has a particular dislike of shoppers who use their mobile

phone at the supermarket checkout. My own phone bugbear is people who gaze at or thumb their mobiles while walking along the pavement or even crossing the road. 'What's so urgent that it can't wait?' I feel like yelling at them. A sneaky look can sometimes reveal that they are simply engrossed in a game. It would be a strange (and even riskier) world if those of us who prefer old-fashioned pursuits started reading hardback novels or playing poker in the middle of the A3.

Recently an *Observer* columnist wrote about the language of gentrification – 'authentic' (a few poor people still struggle to live here), 'vibrant' (the bankers don't yet outnumber the original inhabitants), 'luxury' (a balcony overlooking the railway tracks between Vauxhall and Waterloo). Well, gentrification has started nibbling at St John's Road, just south of Clapham Junction. Across from TK Maxx, among the charity shops, a jamon and tapas bar has opened. Its window is piled with expensive, delicious-looking ham sandwiches. It is a branch of a bar in the Kings Road. For years Northcote Road has been the preserve of coffee bars and estate agents, while its continuation, St John's Road, is where I go to buy envelopes or second hand books or a roll of rubbish sacks. Is this the beginning of the end of my cheap shopping street? Hipsterisation may soon be added

to gentrification. Apple is to move most of its 1400 London staff from several different sites to Battersea Power Station, taking all six storeys of office space inside the former boiler house. Expect to see beards, waxed moustaches, cereal-themed cafes and a lot of artisan coffee houses. Let's hope that we will also see a more constructive approach to paying business taxes.

Battersea Park is where many of us go to relax and be among trees and greenery. On page 6 we review the Friends' new book and on page 10 you will find the bard of the park among her listeners. There are bikes and baskets in the photo, but not a beard or vintage frock to be seen.

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Man on the Battersea Bus

Mike Roden muses on smartphones, English history, and car parks

Does anyone remember Wink Martindale whose song *Deck of Cards* was a hit in 1959? It told the story of a US soldier earnestly explaining that his cards were his bible and his prayer book – 'when I look at the Ace it reminds me that there is but one God... the four reminds of the four evangelists....' Anyway you get the idea.

Well these days, I have something even more useful than a pack of cards.... When I look at my smartphone I see my camera and calculator – my diary and calendar. I can send emails, pay a bill, listen to music, or look up bus arrival times, and read the Bible if the mood takes me. Oh, almost forgot, I can make phone calls with it as well.

But I do get very irritated by those who use mobile phones at inappropriate times. Like those people who stand at the head of a very long supermarket queue and jabber away rather than concentrating on getting their stuff into a bag, and then take forever to find their card or their money so they can pay. And then they decide to start a cheery

conversation with the cashier. I feel like singing a chorus of 'Why are we waiting?'. But of course I never do.

The English you see – we're so restrained. Except of course at the Last Night of the Proms when this year there was a good number of European flags mixed in with the Union Jacks as everyone bellowed out *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory*. Only a country which hasn't been invaded since 1066 could show such confidence.

King of London

But we're also very good at forgetting our own history. In 1216, nobles in dispute with King John invited a French invasion force into Kent. The French leader, Louis, was proclaimed king in London, before being kicked out by the same barons, who switched sides after John died.



Henry I

Then in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution, William of Orange arrived with a flotilla of 463 ships, twice the size of the Spanish Armada. He and his wife Mary replaced James II. By invitation maybe, but a full scale and successful military invasion nevertheless.

My own faulty memory attributed bad King John's death to eating a surfeit of lampreys but in fact it was his grandfather Henry I who over-snacked on too many of these hosepipes with teeth and paid the price. Incidentally he was buried in Reading Abbey in 1135. The site is now under a built up part of the town. Plans are afoot to try and locate his grave, which might lead to another case of finding a king under a car park. Exciting times and another excuse to celebrate our history by waving flags of many nations – especially since it's likely that the only language Henry ever spoke was French.

Mind how you go, and I'll see you next time.

continued from page 1

ascended to enjoy panoramic views.

Other gas works opened in Battersea during the 19th century, but Nine Elms remained the dominant employer with over 800 workers during peak periods across its 20 acre site. The work was inevitably seasonal, and it was common for those laid off in the summer months to support themselves through hop picking. Special jetties, hydraulic cranes and 'coal hoppers' (see below) were constructed to land the huge tonnage of coal, which was shipped up the Thames from the north of England and Scotland.

The original gas holders were destroyed by fire about 1870 (with nine fatalities to remind us of the dangerous working conditions in Battersea's industries), and their replacements demonstrated impressive engineering skills. Designed by Robert Morton of the London Gas and Lighting Company, gasometers 4, 5 and 6 each contained a large tank at the bottom dug by the same company (John Aird & Son) who dismantled and rebuilt the Crystal Palace. Completed between 1872 and 1883, these became three of the four casualties of the 2015 demolition.

But what of the fourth – the big fat blue one? This was Gasholder no.7, built much later in 1932 and known as the Blue MAN after the German company which designed it – Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nurnburg. A cutting edge design, completed the year before Hitler came to power, by a firm which still exists today. The structure was noted for its relatively lightweight design and large capacity, and modern variants can be seen worldwide today; maybe this legacy makes the loss of a prototype less of an issue.

The coal gas industry declined as the North Sea and other fields for pipeline gas were opened up, and Nine Elms Gas Works closed in 1970. However the gas holders continued to be used for the storage of natural gas – and another structure survived too. It was at this point that I encountered a fellow connoisseur of Battersea's gas industry – the film maker Patrick Keiller, who in 1977 had started to 'collect' what he called 'found architecture' across London... 'structures with striking architectural



Coal hoppers created dramatic film locations

qualities that were ... not the result of conventional architectural activity... The most familiar of these buildings was the one I knew as the Nine Elms Coal Hopper'.

Pink

Described as being made of reinforced concrete, painted pink apart from its light green roof, by the 1970s the hopper was being squatted by a car breaker, who was sufficiently intrigued by the film maker's interest in his unsightly domain to allow him access to it. Keiller's efforts to save the Coal Hopper – including writing directly to Sir Ove Arup, who replied, alas negatively, in person – unfortunately failed, but it subsequently became the subject of his first exhibited film when he captured its demolition by ball and chain during the winter of 1979 – 80... 'projected onto an unplastered white-painted brick wall, so that it looked as if the film was knocking the wall down.'

Keiller went on to produce *The City of the Future* which explores urban landscapes in film between 1895-1905, and discovered that two 1897 Lumière films, *Bateau a vapeur sur la Tamise* and *Depart d'un bateau sur la Tamise*, were almost certainly filmed from Pimlico Pier looking across to Nine Elms Gas Works. In his words 'One of the gasometers is clearly visible, as is an earlier

coal hopper, a tall structure on the waterfront distinguished by a series of curved roofs, probably corrugated iron.' Somewhat wistfully, he noted that the architecturally comparable ruins of Beckton Gas Works in east London not only survived but were given an extended lease of life when transformed into a ruined Vietnamese city for Stanley Kubrick's 1987 film *Full Metal Jacket* – complete with coal hoppers. If only Sir Ove Arup had been convinced....

FOOTNOTE

Nine Elms Gas Works also inspired a different kind of artist; children's novelist Jo Hatcher took direct inspiration from the site for her two Gasworks Alley Gang books (1960 and 1961). The smell of the gasworks permeates the books. It's an unprepossessing setting for two lively well-told tales, very much rooted in their era and thereby providing an interesting insight into the life of working (and embryonic middle) class Battersea shortly before its post-industrial transformation. I have tried to track down the author (she is still alive but apparently very frail) to find out more about her Battersea connections. If any reader has any information, please get in touch with me via the editor.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WANDSWORTH

FACT OR FICTION?

Public Meeting

Tuesday 1 November 2016
At 7pm

York Gardens Library & Community Centre
SW11 2UG
(opposite Homebase York Rd SW11 3SJ)

Speakers

Lord Kerslake
Chair
Peabody

Councillor Paul Ellis
London Borough of Wandsworth
Cabinet Member for Housing

A Battersea Society event
for the community

The Battersea Society

Brexit means Brexit – means what for Wandsworth?

Three quarters of those who voted in Wandsworth voted to stay in the European Union. On 24 June, the day after the referendum, streets and cafes were full of locals discussing the outcome in horrified voices. People from the EU working or living in the borough expressed anxiety about their futures. London, like most great cities, has always been a city of immigrants.

Battersea MP Jane Ellison expressed her deep disappointment. She said, 'The Prime Minister has made clear that the UK should be seeking the closest possible economic relations with the EU, which

I welcome. As a Member of Parliament representing many people whose jobs are closely linked with Europe, I see very clearly that this must be a central element of future negotiations, and I have been in contact with key local businesses, to seek to reassure them on these points.'

The Council issued a statement signed by both parties, pointing out the high support locally for the Remain position and committing to ensure that the borough remains an area which welcomes diversity and mutual respect. The Council also vowed to increase its emphasis on ensuring future jobs and homes for local young people.

We hope to follow this important topic in future issues of *Battersea Matters*.

WHISKY AND HERBS

No peaty highland streams, no waving fields of barley, no kilned pipers, but back in the 1850s Battersea was home to a whisky distillery.

The history of the short-lived business is told in the autumn

2016 edition of the *Wandsworth Historian*. There is also a fascinating reminiscence of daily life in Battersea between the world wars: 'Penny a bunch of mint, Ma. Makes your mutton taste like lamb' was a street cry on Northcote

Road. The author was born in Middleton Road, Battersea (now Buckmaster Road) in 1918.

The WH can be obtained from the editor, Neil Robson.
ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk



Battersea loses Queenstown councillor Sally-Ann Ephson

Councillor Sally-Ann Ephson died in August. Elected to the council in May 2014, she represented Queenstown ward for Labour.

During her time at the town hall she served on several committees, including Education and Children's Services, Housing and Regeneration, Licensing and the Grants Sub-Committee.

Cllr Simon Hogg, Leader of the opposition said, 'Sally-Ann will be missed by her many friends. She was such a positive force for good and always spoke from her heart. She handled her chronic illness with grace and quiet courage and had a smile for everyone. Above all, she was a kind person.'

Leader of the council, Cllr Ravi Govindia, said, 'This is deeply sad news We have all admired her fortitude and bravery in coping with her illness while continuing to serve the interests of her constituents.'

London Mayor Sadiq Khan also paid tribute, saying, 'I will remember Sally-Ann fondly as a dear friend, determined campaigner and, above all, as someone who never stopped smiling.'

When she was interviewed for *Battersea Matters* (Autumn 2014), Cllr Ephson said her disability made it easier to get along with people. 'Being a councillor takes up all my thoughts,' she said.

Planning Matters: Are we making a difference?

Monica Tross outlines some of the committee's workload

I spoke too soon! In the last issue I was happy to report that the proposals for a 'contemporary take on a Georgian Town House' alongside the Prince of Wales in Battersea Bridge Road had been refused. Amazingly the site owners have appealed against this decision (2016/0608). We have written to the planning inspector to affirm our objection and just have to hope that good sense will prevail. A further application was made – and approved – for a structure at Bourne Valley Wharf (2016/2786). Thanks to Councillor Humphries this will be for three rather than the five years proposed. All the changes from office to residential at Coral Row, Ivory Square and Square Rigger Row were given the go ahead.

On this basis I am not holding my breath about the retention of the Vauxhall Bus Station! We'll know more in the next couple of months and we'll keep you informed.

PROTECTING PUBS AND SHOPPING PARADES

More happily, you may already have read the publicity about the welcome move by Wandsworth Council to protect 120 public houses from changes to supermarkets, estate agents or other financial services. 39 of these are within Battersea – including the Alchemist, Castle, Duke of Cambridge, Eagle Ale House, Masons Arms and the rather less traditional Bunga Bunga.

There has been less publicity about the fact that the Council is also introducing measures to protect local shops from changes from traditional retail operation to financial and professional services. These include parades within Northcote Road, Battersea Park Road and Battersea High Street. Full details can be found on the Council's website at www.Wandsworth.gov.uk/article4. Protection for both pubs and shopping parades will not come into force for a year due to the requirement to give adequate notice of the change of policy.



3 Culvert Road. We objected, among many others

CREMORNE BRIDGE

We supported the planning application for this footbridge from Imperial Wharf to Chelsea (2012/3860) but had been concerned that the cost involved might be at the expense of a good proportion of affordable housing in developments in Lombard and York Roads. We had a useful meeting with senior officers at Wandsworth Council in July and were reassured that the contribution will come from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is separate from the Section 106 funding which relates to the housing mix proposed.

At present work already done by the promoters of the bridge (One World Architects) is being 'back checked' by TfL. A report is due to go to Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CSCSC) soon.

BATTERSEA EXCHANGE AND PALMERSTON COURT

Work is progressing fast on the Battersea Exchange development between Battersea Park and Queenstown Road stations. Once completed this will provide pedestrian access between the stations, a new expanded St Mary's primary school, plus flats, offices, and an area of

cafes etc under the arches. In July we attended a ceremony marking the handover of the new primary school with greatly enhanced facilities for this lively local school.

We were consulted on proposals for the redevelopment of the nearby 1970s Palmerston Court block, next to the railway just south of Battersea Park Road. We, and other consultees, have major misgivings about the massive scale of the proposed scheme and its implications for traffic in this already congested area. Hopefully the developers are reconsidering their ideas in the light of the comments they received. See our comments on the planning consultation section of the Battersea Society's website.

NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

Sadly we had to write at length to object to plans for a proposed building at 3 Culvert Road with a height up to 14 storeys on a corner of the Harris Academy grounds in Battersea Park Road (2916/4188). Part of the justification given for this building, with a mainly glass façade, is that this area of Battersea Park Road 'suffers from a poor and incoherent streetscape and poor urban character'. The developers acknowledge that the building will reduce the 'very good levels of daylight' to the adjoining building, Merryfield Court, but this level is 'uncommon in an urban environment' so the 'retained levels of daylight [will be] commensurate with expected urban levels'. Another cause for concern is the application to demolish all but the façade of two adjoining buildings in Ursula Street, 2016/3061. Both these letters can be seen on our website.

On a happier note, Peabody has commissioned a very full report of the history of their site in St. John's Hill, (2016/4675), and we wrote to commend this.

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

Book review: Battersea Park

'I nearly missed my station' – Peter Warburton loved this new history of the park

This wonderful book is a detailed account of the history of Battersea Park. It starts in the early 19th century, when the area was made up of smallholdings and farm land, and goes right up to the present day. The author, Jennifer Ullman, is a former chief parks officer and was deeply involved in the park's restoration.

I am very fond of Battersea Park, where I go frequently to walk my dogs, so it was great to have the area and history brought to life. I love the way the book is set out and how the story is told. There is enough detail and a good thread, which like the paths in the park itself leads you through different zones. Ullman tells the story in a fascinating way and uses fascinating photos and old lithographs to illustrate the story. Although I already knew quite a bit about Battersea Park, the book contains many details of which I wasn't aware. Now as I walk through

the park I look for things she mentions.

My favourite parts are the chapters on the park sculptures, especially the history of 'brown dog'. I was also very interested in the restoration and how the park was saved and rejuvenated after the war.

Jennifer Ullman has done a wonderful job in conveying the park's many aspects and telling its history, bringing together so much information and keeping it all alive and engaging. Once I started reading I couldn't put it down – and on a few occasions nearly missed my train stop on the way to work!

I really enjoyed reading the book and studying the photos in detail and I would certainly recommend the book to all.

Peter Warburton is chair of the Battersea Society's open spaces committee.



Battersea Park,
Jennifer Ullman
Friends of
Battersea Park.
See *FOBP* website
for price and
information.

Where are the trees?

Let's help them thrive

Wandsworth Council plants hundreds of street trees across the borough every year.

In the 2015 – 16 winter planting season around 40 were planted in Battersea. Fourteen trees were planted in Northcote ward, 12 in Shaftesbury, four in Nightingale and three in St Mary Park. There were no new trees in Latchmere or Queenstown.

We hope to cover the decisions behind the positioning and type of trees planted in the next issue of *Battersea Matters*. In the meanwhile, here is a list for ardent tree-spotters.

Species include London plane, cherry, lime, pear, crab apple, rowan, oak, hazel, whitebeam, maple, hornbeam and birch.

NORTHCOTE WARD

15 & 27 Almeric Road
Opp 2 Belleville Road
102 Bennerley Road

3 Cobham Close

22 Gorst Road

48 & 55 Hillier Road

22 Lindore Road

11 Morella Road

Northcote Rd/Kelmescott

Northcote Rd/Hennessy's

Northcote Rd/Nando's

Northcote Rd/antique shop

NIGHTINGALE WARD

26 Althorp Rd

22 Heslop Rd

27 Tunley Rd

15 Wiseton Rd

ST MARY PARK WARD

29 Anhalt Rd

44 Inworth Street

7 Worfield Street

BALHAM WARD

22 & 25 Endlesham Rd
27 Gaskarth Rd
2 Wroughton Rd

SHAFTESBURY WARD

49 & 55 Beauchamp Rd

15, 57 & 61 Comyn Rd

39, 66 & 76 Eccles Rd

35 Meteor St

45 Mossbury Rd

43 & 37 Stormont Rd

FAIRFIELD WARD

20 Cologne Rd

51 Sudlow Road

44 Harbut Rd

55 & 59 Tonsley Hill



Wandsworth to go slower for safety

Robert Molteno celebrates the 20mph speed limit

On 5 July, Conservative and Labour Councillors decided unanimously that all local residential streets in the borough will have a speed limit of 20mph. This decision followed a consultation in which 3,382 residents responded, with three out of every five wanting to make the streets where we live safer, quieter, and less polluted.

The new borough-wide 20mph speed limit will be fully implemented round about spring 2017. The money – £725,000 – is already available in this year's Local Implementation Plan (LIP) which the Council has voted for transport. It will be spent on the necessary signage, including painting 20mph roundels on the carriageway.

There will be exceptions to the new speed limit. Unlike several other Inner London boroughs, Wandsworth has decided for the time being to retain a 30mph speed limit on 38 bigger roads. These so-called A and B roads include Lombard Road, Vicarage Crescent and Westbridge Road. Also Albert Bridge and Queenstown Roads on either side of Battersea Park. And

at Clapham Junction, Falcon Road and St John's Hill/Lavender Hill, as well as Bolingbroke Grove and Northcote Road – all of which will stay 30mph.



And TfL's Red Routes will also stay 30mph. These are the trunk roads running through the borough, including Battersea Rise and Clapham Common North Side, York Road and Battersea Park Road, and Battersea Bridge, Latchmere and Elspeth Roads.

Playing

Despite these exceptions, making all other streets 20mph could be the biggest single change on our streets in two generations. It will help transform them into public space that will be safer, less noisy and more attractive. It recognises that a diversity of people use our roads – commuters walking to catch buses and trains, people on foot shopping, cyclists, even children playing on quiet residential streets. Of course, changing the speed limit is only a first step in this transformation.

Compliance by motorists requires drivers to accept the logic of lower speeds in heavily populated urban environments. In addition to this change in attitude, enforcement will be necessary to cope with drivers who break the law and don't obey the new 20mph speed limit.

Wandsworth Living Streets is urging the Council to raise public awareness of the benefits of the lower speed limit and the reasons why compliance will benefit everyone, including drivers and their families.

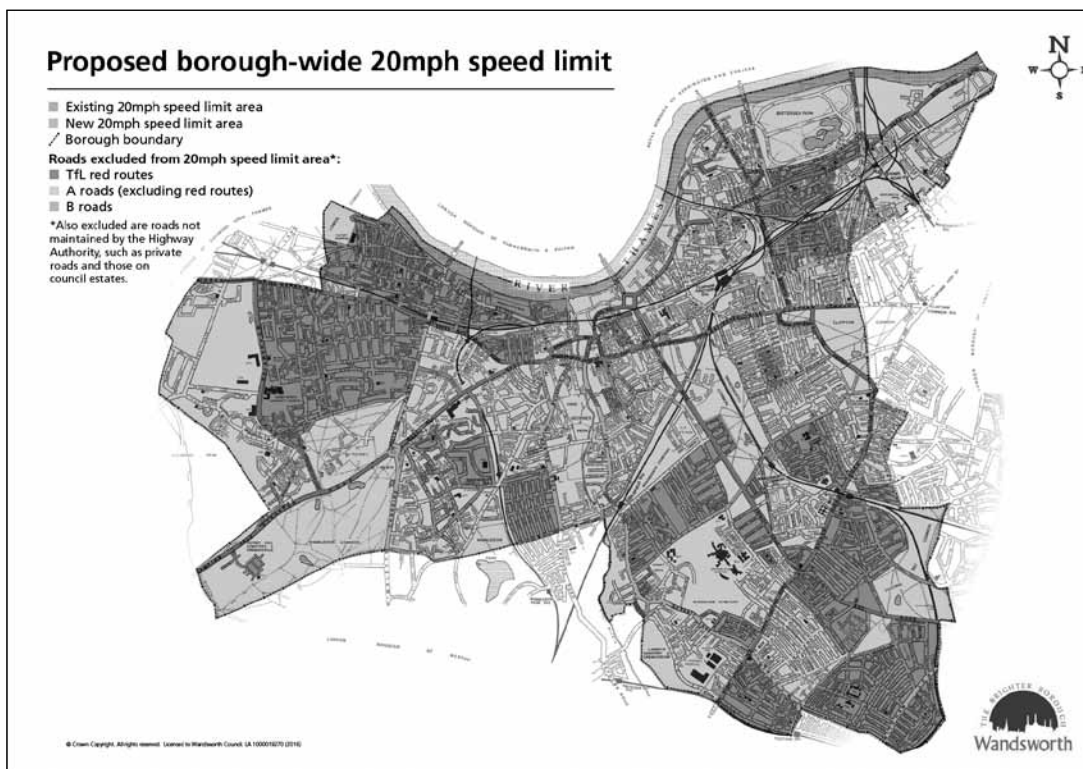
What's more, there is a strong case for some stretches of the A and B roads also to get a 20mph speed limit. Many of us live on them. Several Battersea schools are located on them, including St Anne's C of E, High View and St Mary's RC schools whose children have been singled out as suffering from particularly bad air quality. And these roads are where shops are concentrated. As a result, they have much higher numbers of pedestrians than purely residential streets. Little wonder that in recent years (2011 – 4) over half (53%) of those killed or seriously injured in road accidents have been on these

roads.

More will need to be done to make these roads, as well as Red Routes, safer, less polluted, and more attractive places.

But let us be in no doubt. Our borough has made a significant step forward to the benefit of us all. We have joined the rest of Inner London (the solitary exceptions now being Westminster, and Kensington & Chelsea) in transforming our public realm into a city we can be proud of.

*Robert Molteno
is secretary of
Wandsworth Living
Streets.*



Great Bus and Train Journeys of the World No 18

Mike Roden stays in London but takes a trip into the Kent countryside



This time I'm taking the slow train to Bromley South where I'll pick up the 146 bus to take me to Downe village, on the edge of the Kent countryside. And as an optional extra you could take a short walk to Down House, where Charles Darwin lived with his family from 1842 until his death in 1882. Here he wrote *Origin of Species* and conducted many botanical experiments. The house is both atmospheric and informative and well worth visiting.

Anyway it's a greyish, but warm summer day as I ride the trusty 170 to Victoria and head for platforms 1 – 8. You can get a fast train to Bromley taking just over 15 minutes, but it will whisk you through all the interesting places I'm talking about. The stopping train takes about 25 minutes.

We're riding the route of the London Chatham and Dover Railway which cut a swathe through south London and Kent. The coming of the railway changed for ever the nature of all the small towns and villages along the route.

Our first stop is Brixton. Over the years Brixton's image has gradually changed for the better, but there are side effects to this improvement. Last year more than 1,000 people took part in a 'reclaim Brixton' march protesting about the increasing gentrification of the area. The opening of new art galleries, delicatessens, bars, cafés and upmarket shops is starting an upward surge in property prices likely to drive out long-term residents and businesses.

There are three bronze sculptures on the station platforms. This work, *Platforms Piece* by Kevin Atherton, was erected in 1986 and the statues

are life casts of three people – two black, one white – who regularly commuted from Brixton

The next stop is Herne Hill which by the mid-nineteenth century had already lost much of its farmland and woodland to largely residential estates. The railways then created a demand for middle-class housing which was met by pulling down these upmarket estates and replacing them with rows of terraced streets.

Gallery

West Dulwich station is only a ten minute walk across the park from the Dulwich Picture Gallery which is always worth a visit.

Actor manager Edward Alleyn founded Dulwich College in 1619 and Sydenham Hill station stands in the grounds of the college. It was of course Alleyn's charitable foundation which bequeathed the paintings which form the permanent collection of the picture gallery.

Before our next stop we enter the Penge Tunnel (2141 yards long) which took the railway under the grounds of Crystal Palace (moved from Hyde Park after the Great Exhibition). The waste London clay extracted from the boring operation was used to manufacture bricks for the tunnel's lining.

Emerging from the tunnel we reach Penge East station. The town name derives from the Celtic word *Penceat* meaning 'head of the wood' – one of the few Celtic place names in London. In 957 King Eadwig granted the manor of Battersea to one of his faithful ministers, together with 'swine pasture' at Penge, which seems a long way to go to feed your pigs.

Anyway Penge remained a detached portion of Battersea parish for more than a thousand years until local government organisation in 1899 unfortunately moved it out of our hands and into Kent.

Kent House station gets its name from Kent House farm, supposedly the first house in Kent as you crossed the Surrey border. The house itself dated from at least 1240, and had many distinguished visitors over the centuries including Samuel Pepys and Thackeray. It was demolished in 1957, but the station name remains unchanged.

Beckenham Junction is both a railway station and a tram terminus. The settlement is referred to as Bacheham in the Domesday Book of 1086. Some years later David Bowie lived in Beckenham, during which time he developed his Ziggy Stardust creation while running the folk club at the Three Tuns every Sunday. The pub is now a branch of Zizzi.

On to Shortlands station. The medieval field pattern here consisted of sets of long and short fields, called Longelonds and Shortelonds, and the latter gave their name to a house built at the beginning of the 18th century which gave its name to the village. Shortlands House and its associated farmland was sold in 1863 allowing extensive suburban development to take place around the station.

Broom

The train draws into Bromley South station. This is where I get off. First recorded in a charter of 862 as *Bromleag* which means 'woodland clearing where broom grows', the town became an important coaching

Left to right: A statue on Brixton station; Edward Alleyn; David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust; Enid Blyton, the George and Dragon, Downe; Down House



stop, and the now defunct Royal Bell Hotel is referred to in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It expanded very rapidly with the arrival of the railway.

Literary connections include H G Wells, born here in 1866, Captain W E Johns, creator of Biggles, David Nobbs, creator of Reggie Perrin, and Enid Blyton, creator of the Famous Five.

I walk to the bus stop and look in vain for the Green Midget Café. According to Monty Python's Flying Circus every item on the menu there was composed of spam in varying degrees.

The 146 bus to Downe is every half hour and I have to wait for ten minutes before it arrives and sets off through Bromley's extensive and rather hilly suburbs. After a few minutes we're in the small town of Hayes. The main shopping area radiates out from the station. Higher up the hill, where the bus is going, is old Hayes,

Prime Ministers

A few features in the parish church of St Mary the Virgin date back to the thirteenth century but it was subject to heavy restorations by George Gilbert Scott and his son in the late Victorian period. It contains memorials to two Prime Ministers, Pitt the Elder and Younger who were residents of Hayes.

The bus is now driving along the edge of Hayes Common. For centuries this was a place where local people could graze cattle and collect firewood. In the 1860s the individual who was Lord of both Baston and West Wickham manors began to sell off plots of nearby West Wickham Common and it was feared that Hayes

Common would go the same way.

In 1868 a campaign of organized opposition began and a year later Hayes Common became the first common to be given legal protection against enclosure under the recently passed Metropolitan Commons Act.

Saxon

We're now coming into the village of Keston. The current church, much restored in Victorian times, dates from the thirteenth century but there's evidence of a Saxon church, and burials from the fourth century have been found near the church.

Leaving Keston we come down into Downe village. The bus will wait here for a few minutes then head back to Bromley. There are two pubs here: the George and Dragon appropriately has Nigel Farage – who was born in the village – as a regular customer. The Queen's Head dates from the late sixteenth century. The name commemorates a visit to the village by Queen Elizabeth to attend the baptism of the daughter of her Knight Marshall who lived in the Manor House. There seems to be no actual evidence of such a momentous occasion but you can't keep a good story down. However, Charles Darwin and his wife Emma did stay here on the night before they moved to their new home in Down House.

The most notable feature of St Mary's Church is the ancient yew tree in the churchyard which may possibly predate the eleventh century chapel which originally stood here. The current building has of course been much restored and expanded since the thirteenth century. Some of Charles Darwin's children are buried

here – though Darwin himself has a tomb in Westminster Abbey.

The Darwins moved here because they felt the cleaner air in the countryside would be beneficial to their children. It was a vain hope, three of them died here before reaching adulthood.

Even if you don't wish to visit Down House, it's worth taking the short walk along what is little more than a country lane to take a look from a distance. There's a shop and a small tearoom at the house where you can get sandwiches and snacks. Or you could stay here and visit one of the pubs (who knows whom you might meet!). Or simply wait by the church wall for the 146 bus back to Bromley.

The choice is yours

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Birdsong and haikus in the Old English Garden

Local poet Hilaire found inspiration in the park

How's this for a cumbersome job title? Poet in Residence at Thrive Battersea for Open Garden Squares Weekend 2016. It's a title I'm happy I can add to my CV, but what does it actually mean?

Thrive is a national charity 'using gardening to change lives', and manages four gardens in Battersea Park. Open Garden Squares Weekend (OGSW) is an annual event when private and little known gardens open their gates to the public over the middle weekend in June. For several years Thrive has participated in OGSW as a way of raising its profile.

And the poetry bit? The Poetry School – 'the UK's largest provider of poetry education' – teamed up with the organisers of OGSW to match 30 early career poets with some of the participating gardens, to be that garden's poet in residence for the weekend. How each poet interpreted the role was left for us to decide in consultation with our host garden. I put myself forward for the scheme, and expressed an interest in working with Thrive.

Gardening club

There were a couple of reasons I was keen to work with Thrive. Battersea Park is a five minute walk from my flat, so the location was very convenient. But the more compelling factor was that I already had a connection with Thrive. Last year they helped set up a gardening club at the Doddington and Rollo Community Roof Garden, where I'm a committee member. I'd written a poem inspired by that experience, and I anticipated uncovering further fertile poetic soil as Thrive's poet in residence.

My residency started in May, after I'd met with Thrive to discuss my remit. Their main focus for OGSW was to increase awareness of the Herb Garden and the Old English Garden. I planned to spend time in these gardens, observing and making notes, and to write new poems to share with visitors during OGSW.

Although I've been visiting Battersea Park for over 25 years, I only discovered Thrive's showpiece



Solo

Today the fountain is doing its thing—
riffing water on water
five notes rising sharply
suspended quivering
for one sweet beat
before arpeggio tumble
onto skiffle surface
and five notes rise sharply
as the fountain practises
circular breathing

the fountain holding its own
plumb in the centre of the garden
not caring whether anyone's
listening
to its liquid repetitions
barely registering the magpie's
splashy improv
because the thing is
water on water
and today
the fountain is switched on.

Hilaire

gardens recently. Now I had a reason to stop, sit and really appreciate both gardens.

Idyllic

The Old English Garden, with its lush planting, is idyllic. Over the weeks I noticed its palette change from predominantly greens and purples to include creamy yellows, soft pinks and vibrant reds. I was amazed, too, at the variety of birdsong to be

A poetry reading in the Old English Garden, Battersea Park

heard between the planes passing overhead.

The Herb Garden feels more like a working garden. As well as a great array of herbs, there are vegetable beds, an impressive glasshouse and comings and goings in the staff yard. But I still found this a peaceful place to be, often sitting under the walnut tree, a robin hopping around my feet.

By mid June, I'd written a dozen haiku and seven longer poems. Thrive laminated the poems for me, so I hung haiku in the walnut tree and tied copies of the longer poems to benches in both gardens. I also had some postcards printed, featuring an acrostic poem about Thrive, to give away to visitors.

On the weekend itself, I alternated between the gardens. Sporting a small enamel POET badge, I approached people and offered to read to them. Most, to my surprise, were receptive, which led to some lovely conversations about poetry, gardening and memories of Battersea Park.

The highlight was reading to a group of Thrive gardeners and volunteers on the Sunday, as they took a break from working in the Old English Garden. The sun was out, and my audience listened attentively to poems celebrating the beautiful environment they have helped create.

‘Remember shingles? I’ll never forget it!’

It’s a painful illness, but health is at hand. Angela Roden explains

Ask anyone the simple question ‘Ever had shingles?’ and you are likely to get a dramatically affirmative response with accompanying groans and full explanations. Or so I found when I tried it out at a recent party.

Cllr Tony Belton wanted to give me full chapter and verse on the horrors, the fever, the agonising pain that went on and on. But he needed to call in his partner Penny Corfield to add the finer detail that he’d been too out of it to remember. For him the trigger to the dormant chickenpox virus re-emerging as shingles was getting run down on an extended work trip to a hot country. The NHS Choices website confirms stress can be a contributing factor. One in four older people have at least one episode of shingles. The older you are and the more you are under any physical or emotional stress, the more likely you are to get it. I got shingles – fortunately only mildly – just before the birth of my first grandchild. Sympathetic pregnancy anxiety no doubt!

But it can be gruesome. I watched my dad suffer from shingles in his mid 70s. It seemed to me that it

signalled the start of his final decline as he never really managed to pull himself back to full health after the weeks of agony he had gone through.

Pains

Local artist Julia Matcham also remembered the agonising pain. Apparently this may be a constant, dull or burning sensation, and its intensity can vary from mild to severe. There may be sharp stabbing pains from time to time, and the affected area of skin will usually be tender.

In some cases shingles may cause some early symptoms that develop a few days before the painful rash first appears. These early symptoms can include a headache, burning, tingling, numbness or itchiness in the affected area, a feeling of being generally unwell and a high temperature.

An episode of shingles typically lasts around two to four weeks. It usually affects a specific area on just one side of the body. It doesn’t cross over the midline of the body, an imaginary line running from between your eyes down past the belly button.



Any part of your body can be affected, including your face and eyes, but the chest and abdomen are the most common areas.

But after the horrors, I’m coming to the positive news now. From 1 September 2016 the NHS is offering a protective vaccination to anyone between the age of 70 and 80. The vaccine is not available on the NHS to anyone over 80 because it seems to be less effective in this age group.

So that’s really good news. You can have the shingles vaccination at any time of year, though it’s suggested many people will find it convenient to have it at the same time as their annual flu vaccination. Get that date in the diary now!



The Friends of Battersea Park Sculpture Award

On Monday 5 September, the Friends of Battersea Park awarded their 17th annual sculpture prize to Daria Jelonek and Franziska Hatton. The Mayor congratulated the winners for their joint work *Neither you nor I*.

The award was presented by Oliver Wainwright, the *Guardian*’s architecture and design critic.

Rossetti

Neither You Nor I explores the natural

phenomena of the wind. The initial inspiration was taken from the poem *Who Has Seen the Wind?* by Christina Rossetti, the 19th century

poet. The form of the sculpture was extrapolated from studies, over a set period of time, of live wind maps over Great Britain. The resulting line drawings were then extruded and arranged to form the layered aesthetics of the piece, revealing the invisible movement of the wind. What is strikingly revealed are the sudden changes in wind speed which appear as sharp shifts in the planes of the form.

Neither You Nor I will be outside the Millennium Arena in Battersea Park for a year.

The project is a collaboration between the Royal College of Art, the FOBP and Wandsworth Council.

From Paradise to Bollywood

Emma Martin introduces Earlsfield's new Tara Theatre

In September the new Tara Theatre in Earlsfield opened its unique Indian doors as London's new home for multicultural theatre.

The state of the art Tara Theatre, designed by AEDAS Arts Team, features a unique stage floor made of beaten earth, a 100-seat auditorium, a fully sound-proofed rehearsal space, a bar and a patio garden. The original Edwardian terraced house has been given a new lease of life with the insertion of light-filled spaces and a modern interior which includes handcrafted Indian wooden features, along with 7,500 reclaimed bricks from the original mission hall that was Tara's old home. A range of sustainable technologies includes solar panels and green sedum roofs.

Cultural gems

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, officially opened Tara Theatre on Thursday 1 September. He said, 'Tara Theatre has always held a special place in my heart. I have enjoyed many hours at the theatre and I'm delighted that the building has been given this new lease of life. As a result of this project, I hope many more Londoners will come and experience the magic of theatre at Tara Arts. This new space embodies all that is great about London, with diversity and creativity built into the very fabric of the building. It proves that London is open to all and that the capital's cultural gems are not confined to Zone 1.'

The opening production is the first-ever stage adaptation of Abdul Halim Sharar's prescient Urdu novel *Paradise of the Assassins* (15 Sept – 8 Oct). Written in 1899, this is a love story that explores the ideology of the medieval assassins sect. This highly relevant story for our times is adapted by director Anthony Clark, who directed Tara's first production at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *The Lion's Raj*, in 1982.

Two of the productions in Tara's first season showcase its collaboration with several regional theatres under the Black Theatre Live umbrella: Britain's first all-

black *Hamlet* (25 – 29 Oct), directed by Jeffrey Kissoon, and Ambreen Razia's *The Diary of a Hounslow Girl* (1 – 3 Nov), an acerbic comedy told through the straight-talking voice of an aspirational 16-year-old British Muslim girl. Other collaborations feature the Anglo-Japanese children's theatre company A Thousand Cranes' magical Shakespearean adventure *Round the World in 40 Minutes* (22 Oct) and new company Leviathan Goat's comic take on Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott, *Vagabonds* (4 – 5 Nov) which sees actor Robert Mountford explore how his own life story echoes Thin Lizzy's front man. The season ends at Christmas with Tara's traditional panto-with-a-twist, which this year sees Jack and the Beanstalk re-invented as *Bollywood Jack*, complete with songs based on some of Kipling's poems.

Next year Tara Arts will celebrate its 40th anniversary. The company was founded in 1977 by young Wandsworth residents, including its current artistic director, Jatinder Verma, in response to the racist murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, a 17-year-old Sikh boy in Southall. Tara's first production was staged at Battersea Arts Centre in August 1977.

**Tara Arts new home
opposite Earlsfield station.
Photo: © Philip Vile**



Since 1983 they have been based in an old mission hall with a maisonette above, which has become the basis for their new theatre.

Tara Arts is the only diverse, multicultural theatre company to have its own dedicated theatre building. Its work reflects the cultural and ethnic variety of London, as filtered through the Asian eyes of its artistic director.

The company has actively supported and inspired the development of theatre companies working in diverse communities. Although London now boasts over 60 touring theatre companies led by diverse artists, none has a dedicated theatre building. Outside London there are no theatres led by ethnically diverse artists.

Tara's artistic director Jatinder Verma said, 'This is the realisation of a life-long dream: to create a world class building right in the heart of the community we serve. We are passionate to continue and expand our work, now with the benefit of such a beautiful building.'

The development of the new Tara Theatre was made possible principally by support from Arts Council England, with additional funding from many trusts and foundations and over 1,400 generous individuals.

Emma Martin is marketing manager for Tara Arts.

*Tara Theatre
356 Garratt Lane SW18 4ES
020 8333 4457*

The theatre is across the road from Earlsfield station. It is served by bus routes 44 and 77.

Too weary to enjoy the river view

George Gissing sympathised with the working men and women walking over Battersea Bridge. Janice Morphet re-examines the 19th century novelist



Although George Gissing (1857 – 1903) never lived in Battersea, one of his best known books, *The Odd Women* (1893), was based here. Gissing was a teacher, novelist and journalist who lived by his pen. He wrote for periodicals and newspapers receiving payments by the column. His other well known work is *New Grub Street* (1891).

Gissing, born in Wakefield, went to Manchester University but left without taking his degree when he was imprisoned for stealing from other students. This incident was bound up with his relationship with Helen Harrison, a prostitute whom he thought he could save.

Difficult

After he left Manchester, he went to America for a year and on his return he married Helen. They moved to London, where he took private pupils and started writing for a living. His wife was an alcoholic and their life together became difficult. In 1882 he found a place for her in the care of the Misses Waskett who had recently opened a care home at 7 Queen Anne Terrace on the west side of Albert Bridge Road.

When Helen was there, Gissing moved his lodgings to 17 Oakley Crescent in Chelsea. From here he published a piece about Battersea Bridge in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (30 November 1883). This recorded his impressions of the old Battersea Bridge which was unsafe and replaced by a new one in 1890. As Gissing wrote, 'Pedestrians only are crossing, for the narrow, much-

propped bridge, condemned already, is closed against heavier traffic'. Gissing describes the people who are crossing, 'artisans with tool-baskets on back, heavy-footed labouring men, women and girls with the little bags and newspaper parcels which speak of stuffy workrooms, all on their way home... too weary to spend one thought upon the noble picture to be seen for the turning of the head'.

What are they missing as they return home from work with their heads bowed? Gissing describes the autumn evening as more appealing than the sight at noon as 'the rude blocks of new houses on the north bank show only a glimmering window here and there on the surface of what looks like a lordly pile; to the left, the group of factory chimneys does not lack its suggestive beauty in the murkier air' and goes on to describe St Mary's Church, the railway bridge and the many boats on the river.

In the gathering gloom, Chelsea Old Church strikes the hour of five. Gissing concludes this atmospheric piece by returning to the people who are using Battersea Bridge. A working man appears to be enjoying the scene, particularly focusing on the small waves on the foreshore. Gissing

turned his face in the direction of the man, who then 'noticed my appeal, looked at me in a friendly way, then nodding downwards, said gravely, 'Throws up a deal o'mud, don't it'.

True event

Gissing wrote to his brother that this piece recorded a true event and he was paid £2 5s for it. He later used this incident in his novel *Isabel Clarendon* (1886) where one of the characters has a piece entitled 'River Twilight' published in 'The Tattler', 'it occupied a couple of columns of the weekly paper, and was of course unsigned. Walking with Hilda along the Embankment a fortnight ago... it had first of all struck her that she might find bits for her pencil about here ... She went home ... and by midnight had written her description... it was despatched first thing in the morning...in a day or two there came to her an envelope.... It contained a proof'.

Change

Gissing went on to write more about Clapham Junction and Lavender Hill in *The Odd Women*. Keith Bailey (*Wandsworth Historian* 2013, no 59) suggests that these women may have been based on the Misses Waskett, who cared for his wife. When Gissing was visiting his wife, the home was one of the first occupied of the group of Thomas Pink houses built in 1880 – 1. Gissing must have seen the area around Battersea Park undergoing change. Only one house had been built in Prince of Wales Drive despite the building licences being granted in the 1860s.

In writing about Battersea Bridge, Gissing was linking the north with the south and the way that lives were intertwined. He was also writing for a readership that was moving south as the new development appeared. Gissing provides us with a view from the Bridge and the kind of ethereal pleasure that it gave him and suggests why so many artists chose to paint it. *I would like to thank Professor Richard Dennis, UCL for suggesting this piece and helpful references.*



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Nocturne: Blue and Gold, Old Battersea Bridge

Radicalised in Nine Elms, Charlotte Despard used civil disobedience to support the underdog

Battersea should commemorate this extraordinary woman, says Penelope Corfield

You probably won't agree with all the passionately held views of Battersea's Charlotte Despard (1844 – 1939). But she was a remarkable – even amazing – woman, who deserves commemoration in Battersea, where she began her civic life. Don't just take my word for her significance. Listen to Mahatma Gandhi. Visiting London in 1909, he met all the leading suffragettes. The one who impressed him most was Charlotte Despard. She is 'a wonderful person', he recorded. 'I had long talks with her and admire her greatly'.

They agreed that the best means to achieve lasting political change was not by fighting and bloodshed but

by non-violent civil disobedience.

They also agreed in the importance of symbolic dress.

Gandhi was in transition from his role as a sharp-suited civil

rights lawyer in South Africa to the sandal-shod, simply-robed figure of the Indian independence campaign.

Mantilla

Meanwhile, Charlotte Despard had already adopted a singular costume of her own. She too wore sandals (or stout boots in winter), under long, flowing robes, a lace shawl, and a mantilla-like head-dress, making her look like a secular sister of mercy. Both leaders were unmistakable – timeless, dignified, and unconcerned with passing fashions. (Both, too, were committed vegetarians)

Her healthy lifestyle gave Despard great energy and longevity, allowing her to flower as a late achiever. She came from a respectable Anglo-Irish family with military connections. She married happily; and, in her youth, wrote romantic novels. Only when Despard was widowed at the age of

40 did she move, dramatically, to live in the slums of Battersea's Nine Elms, where she was radicalised by witnessing structural poverty close at hand. She thereupon became an indomitable public campaigner.

Put very schematically: in the 1890s, Despard took direct action to improve the health, education and welfare of the Battersea working class; in the 1900s, she also campaigned for the female suffrage, breaking with Christabel Pankhurst in 1907 to establish the non-violent Women's Freedom League; in the 1910s, Despard provided practical assistance for the new Battersea Labour Party; and in 1919 was Labour's candidate in Battersea – at the first election at which women were allowed to stand. (Sadly, she lost). Then, in the 1920s Despard embraced Catholicism and moved to Ireland to support Irish nationalism. By the 1930s, she had changed tack to endorse Soviet communism. At her death in 1939, she was penniless, having spent all her funds on her 'good causes', whilst braving disappointment from Protestants who disagreed with her Irish nationalism, and anger from Catholics who opposed her on Russia.

Feminist feat

Despard's last major public appearance was on 12 June 1933, when she spoke passionately at a great anti-fascist rally in Trafalgar Square. At that time, she was aged 89. Her appearance flouted the long cultural tradition which discouraged women from public speaking, let alone from speaking out of doors, without a microphone. For that feminist feat alone, it could be argued that a statue of Despard should stand on Trafalgar Square's vacant



Charlotte Despard on form at an anti-fascist rally in Trafalgar Square, 1933

fourth plinth. After all, she really was there. But such an outcome appears unlikely.

Instead, it's better to mark Despard's indomitable career in Battersea. That's where she became a civic figure. Currently, her name is commemorated by the unremarkable Charlotte Despard Avenue, running through Queenstown's Doddington Estate. Yet that hardly meets the case.

Come on, Battersea Society: let's work at very least to get an information board on Charlotte Despard Avenue (there's nothing at present); and for her name to be given to some significant public building in Battersea.

As a campaigner, Despard always supported the underdog. Tactically, she pioneered non-violence civil disobedience or what she called 'spiritual resistance' – one of the great political philosophies (and practices) to emerge from the twentieth century. And Charlotte Despard never stopped believing, quoting Shelley on the need for Love, Hope, and Endurance. All that is worth commemorating in twenty-first century Battersea.

Helping young people speak the universal language of football

Abdi Musse and Roisin Feeny share an important goal

ROISIN: When Abdi Musse was ten he arrived from Somalia with his family as a refugee. He spoke little English and though a huge football fan this excluded him from local projects. He connected this experience with a local need and created Universal Language: I Speak Football. The project is for young people who have newly arrived or are struggling in school, due to English being their second language. Through creative ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and football sessions, they develop their language skills and have fun.

Abdi developed his idea through the Agency programme at Battersea Arts Centre. The Agency works with a cohort of 15 – 25 year olds from the Clapham Junction and Battersea area to design and then pitch their idea for a social enterprise to a panel of experts, with the chance to be awarded £2000. When Abdi pitched his idea, it was a stand-out success for the judging panel, which including Jane Ellison MP. It was clearly thought out, well articulated and addressed a real local need. Since being funded he has created links with South London Refugee Association, Football Beyond Borders and Katherine Low Settlement. He has run a pilot for five weeks with a great turn out from newly arrived young people. After pitching for further funding he has been awarded £3,700 from Wandsworth Council's Youth Opportunity Fund to run an intensive version of the programme.

The Agency, initially developed in another great global city, Rio de Janeiro in 2011, uses creativity to help young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to realise their ideas. Now in its fourth year, it supports the development of entrepreneurial skills and confronts youth unemployment. It also raises young people's aspirations and helps them to form professional networks and develop ambitions for their future. The social enterprises created by the young people contribute to making positive change happen.



Abdi hopes to study criminology

ABDI: I am 16 years old and I live in Balham. I came from Somalia to this country at the age of 10. I love playing football and I've been playing since I was 5 years old. Football is something that I have brought with me from Somalia to the UK and is one of my greatest passions.

I am a motivated person with a variety of interests. I attend the Agency Project run by Battersea Arts Centre after school and on Saturdays as well as going to the gym.

Active

In my free time I like to watch anime and I'm interested in film. I love spending time with my friends and family and I also enjoy gaming – it relaxes me and keeps my brain active, helping with my problem solving skills. I am bilingual and read a lot in both English and Somali. This helps with my grammar in both languages and I love being immersed in the stories.

After I finish college I want to go to university and learn criminology – that's my most immediate goal.

The mission of Universal Language is to enable teenagers who didn't grow up speaking English

to develop their language skills, socialise, integrate and increase their confidence through the universal language of football.

We plan to hold a week long half-term project, bringing together young people from all over Wandsworth. By providing ESOL and football activities we aim to help migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to develop their confidence and take part in a range of activities inside and outside of school, as well as making new friends and support networks. We are using football as a way to encourage people to learn English. There are not many youth clubs that help young refugees who struggle with English. This often stops them taking part in activities. The amount of people that go to my school who don't have English as their first language is amazing. I certainly think that this area really needs Universal Language.

Roisin: The Agency started its fourth year in September, working with 15 new agents. There are various ways for local people to get involved. We'd like to invite you to come along and hear the young people's ideas at The Agency Ideas Café on Saturday 26 November, 1:30pm – 4pm at Caius House, 2 Holman Road.

You can also join our network. Opening up networks is vital for these young people to grow their enterprises and be a voice of change. If you would like to offer your expertise to an agent please email roisinf@bac.org.uk

Roisin Feeny is a producer for The Agency. Abdi Musse is a young agent.

Rasheeda Nalumoso, the producer of the space to be called the Village Hall, on the Battersea Power Station site. Rasheeda explains some of the hopes and plans in her interview with Jenny Sheridan on page 16



Dominoes and drama in the Village Hall

It sounds like Ambridge – but it's under the arches. Jenny Sheridan meets its producer

How do you turn a railway arch into a performance space? One that will entertain both locals and theatre-goers from across the capital – and also house a chess or dominoes club. That is the conundrum facing Rasheeda Nalumoso, the young producer of the space that Battersea Power Station is calling the Village Hall.

This new cultural and community centre will occupy a 5000 square feet arch under Victoria Railway Bridge, close to the river, in the area the Battersea Power Station Development Company calls Circus West. 'It will be a multi-use space', Rasheeda explains. 'It can be used for meetings, for workshops or classes as well as for theatre performances. The way I see it, you could go to a yoga class there in the morning, have a cup of coffee before enjoying a dance workshop, then take in a fantastic theatre show or a concert in the evening.'

Welcome

The space will be divideable, with a small welcome area – 'comfortable chairs, a local feel, I'd love a book exchange' – leading onto a bookable space for up to 50 people. Rasheeda promises that this will be affordable, to encourage use by local groups for classes, such as Pilates or Zumba, a dominoes club, English classes, or for community meetings. There will be a discount for charities.

Space does not allow for a café or bar on the site but tea and coffee will be available. Nearby arches will include a variety of cafes and restaurants .

The largest, flexible central space will seat up to 150 people. It will be used for dance, theatre, comedy and other performances and events Rasheeda has been consulting with and getting to know people and organisations on the Savona and Patmore estates, across the road



Left: Railway arches such as these will house the Village Hall. Below left: the Village Hall and its surroundings

confusion. Accessing the Village Hall will not be easy and will depend on good signposting.

The Village Hall will officially open in April 2017, with a 'soft launch' early in the year.

Screening

The Battersea Society has pencilled in two events in the Village Hall for next year. In January there will be a screening of the 1952 film *Happy Family* which was partly filmed locally and in March the Panorama of the Thames will give us an updated screening of their project.

David Jubb, artistic director of Battersea Arts Centre, has been supporting Rasheeda. He says, 'The BPSDC is unusual in that rather than parachuting in a flashy cultural brand to run a programme of work for a year or two, they have set up a company to manage the site for the long term. We are helping them to shape a programme of events and activities for Nine Elms and Battersea, bringing together existing communities with new ones who will live or work at the power station or surrounding area.'

I see us working together around the new BAC Moving Museum and on annual seasons or festivals. I'm impressed by what they are trying to achieve. We're very excited to hear people's ideas for the Village Hall, and I would encourage readers to get in touch with Rasheeda if they have ideas.'

Rasheeda Nalumoso is producer of the Village Hall.

RNalumoso@bpsdc.co.uk

Other Power Station news

The river bus jetty will be complete in 2017, possibly as early as the spring. The chimneys will all be in place by the end of this year. They will be painted next spring.

BASE (Battersea Academy of Skills excellence) is also situated in Circus West.

from the power station – but miles away in terms of lifestyle and income. As Rasheeda notes, the Village Hall must cater for the interests of many different local communities, as well as audiences from across London; 'we're creating a vibrant artistic programme as well as connecting with the power station's heritage. London needs spaces to bring people together, and places where artists can explore and play.'

Rasheeda comes to the power station from the V&A and before that from Hackney Empire, where there is a strong tradition of local grassroots involvement. She is passionate about involving people, especially young people, who would not normally engage with cultural events. A community choir has already started, singing popular music, and involving staff from the BPSDC as well as people from the local area. Initial financial support for the Village Hall has come from the BPSDC; it will be expected to cover its costs and break even rather than make a profit. Rasheeda is confident that this can be done without charging extortionate ticket prices.

As anyone who has passed it on the 344 will know, the site is, and will for some years remain, a chaos of building materials, lorries and