

BATTERSEA MATTERS

THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER WINTER 2022/23



THE COST OF LIVING BITES IN BATTERSEA

We will get through the crisis if we work together, says Aaron Barbour

As the director of the Katherine Low Settlement, I see distressed and worried people every day now. 'I'm worried, really worried', Chris* told me yesterday. 'I am worried today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year even. My pension pays £97 a week. My wife has just gone into a care home. I couldn't look after her any more. They've asked for a financial contribution. She's got a bigger pension than me, so they're going to take most of that. She pays the bills at home too and with the gas and electric going up so much I don't quite know how I'm going to get by.'

The cost of living crisis is hitting our community in Battersea hard. At least one in three people in Wandsworth are already living in poverty (*London Poverty Profile, 2022*), and it is they who are being most affected by this crisis. Most of KLS's members already live on low incomes and struggle financially in the best of times. Now that inflation is at an overall 10.7% (Dec 22), and with food and energy inflation through the roof (as much as 60% on certain food staples), times are truly hard.

Heating off

'I'm used to living on not much, but now I've hardly got anything. I don't eat sometimes so that I can give food to my children. Thank God that cold has gone and it's raining. I can turn my heating off. I know others have to do this but I didn't think it would be me.' Samaria is just one of our ESOL students struggling with the cost of living increases.

Most of our members have cut back on essentials, especially heating. It's not a question of heating or eating anymore - some local people can't afford to do either. They are taking extra jobs where they can, asking friends and



Volunteers in a food bank sort donations

family to help out (if they can) and falling further into debt. This is straining their relationships with their partners, their children and their friends. It's having an obvious detrimental effect on their mental health too.

We have only just got out of one catastrophe: Covid and subsequent lockdowns, which led to many problems including overcrowded living, stressed family lives, isolation, loneliness, loss and grief. It seems cruel to be handed another now. The head of a local charity told me recently, 'We're in this for the long haul. It's not just a marathon, it's an ultra-marathon we've got to get through when it comes to this emergency'. Many economic experts are predicting two to three years of real hardship ahead, and it's always the poorest people who suffer most.

Like many local charities and community organisations, KLS is doing more to support our members. We have been a Warm Hub for decades, and we continue to offer a host of support and activities in a warm, safe and friendly

environment. We have started preparing and sharing more food at all our daily sessions. From January we will be making and distributing food parcels for our members to take home (thanks to one of our brilliant funders).

Our supporters were once again very generous this Christmas. Amongst the gifts and donations, a group of local companies gave us more than 130 electric blankets, which only cost five pence an hour to run. Emma, one of our elderly members, broke down in tears when we gave this to her. She was so relieved, and also overwhelmed that someone in the community cared enough to help her.

Support services

We're also working in partnership with other local charities, community groups and Wandsworth Council. Citizens Advice Wandsworth and South West London Law Centre have both set up new cost of living support services and we refer our members to them. Thinking Works and SW Leap are brilliant at supporting local residents with reducing

their energy consumption and bills. The foodbanks are being amazing, as are local schools, businesses, faith groups and other charities. And the

Council has invested £5m from their reserves into a new Cost of Living Hub, providing advice as well as financial support for local people who are struggling, which is excellent.

We've helped convene a new Battersea Cost of Living Network, a group of 30 – 40 local organisations working together to reduce the impact of this crisis. There is already a lot of support locally, but this new network ►



Visit our website: batterseasociety.org.uk for regular updates on Battersea Society news, events and planning matters

FROM THE EDITOR



For those of us (I include myself) not badly affected by the large increases in the costs of food and energy essentials, the

cost of living crisis can seem theoretical. We see the crowded cafés selling expensive coffees, the queues outside Northcote Road's cocktail bars, the £4 loaves of bread. What's the problem? But as Aaron Barbour describes, for many people in Battersea the problem is starkly real.

2022 was a year of much change and drama – almost all of it unwelcome – on the national and international stages. Probably the least welcome was Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which resulted, not only in an incredibly spirited fightback but in a flood of

refugees. Most were women and children, and some found their way to Battersea. Like other refugees, they are suddenly facing life in a new country, far from their families, learning a new language and living in a different culture. Interviewing some of their hosts was a privilege; you can read the article on page 8

Major events

The major events of the year here were the election of a Labour Council in May and the opening of Battersea Power Station in October. There is a list of all the Battersea councillors on page 4.

The power station has had a great deal of publicity. I expect many readers will have visited it; perhaps you've even skated on the ice rink or been whizzed up to the top of the chimney. I would be interested to hear your views.

Bookshops have also been in the news recently. There are now more

independent bookshops in the country than ever before. Balham has a new one, Backstory on Balham High Road. There's Clapham Books on The Pavement. Why doesn't Battersea have its own independent bookshop? A few years ago, when the Bolingbroke Bookshop on Northcote Road closed, valiant attempts were made to start one, but they came to nought.

It's clearly not because we don't read; Waterstones on St John's Road was crammed over the Christmas period, and is very rarely empty. Perhaps in part it is due to the general decline in independent shops. On page 15 you will find the story of two of the remaining family-run local independent shops. Long may they last! Which they will, but only if we all support them.

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MAN ON THE BATTERSEA BUS

Mike Roden considers prophecy, growing old, and looks back to the Great Freeze of 1963

So here we are in 2023. The hot news from the world of astrology is that this year Pluto will be moving into Aquarius for the first time in 225 years. And no, I haven't a clue what that means either. The last time this event happened we had the American war of independence closely followed by the French Revolution so things don't bode too well for Rishi Sunak in the next twelve months.

What's the year going to hold? According to Nostradamus, who died in 1555, it won't be good – the Black Sea will boil and all the fish will die, Mars will burst into flames, and a seven month long war will bring death and destruction. Well, I suppose the boiling fish might be seen as a prophecy about global warming and there's rarely a year without a bloody war happening somewhere. Still it's rather unsettling that the current conflict is happening on the shores of the Black Sea. And of course Elon Musk is planning to send people to Mars which – given what he's done to Twitter – could well end in tears and conflagration. I'll report back in 2024 if we're all still here...

The start of another year is always time to take stock. Long ago when I was a young whippersnapper heading for fifty I was told by a much older friend that while growing old was compulsory, growing up wasn't. It's still a bit of a surprise twenty-five years on when someone gives up their seat to me on a train, or there's that scuttle to the back of the bus as someone moves out of the seats for those with less mobility. Inside your head you can't really imagine that someone is actually seeing an elderly man getting onto the bus.

Blizzard

Being a teenager isn't all it's cracked up to be either. Sixty years ago this year Britain endured one of the worst winters of the 20th century. A massive blizzard at the end of December 1962 heralded a 'deep freeze' which didn't end till March. In January 1963 the sea froze for a mile from the shore at Herne Bay in Kent.



The only lasting effect of the freeze I suffered was an aversion to ballroom dancing. With the school playing fields under snow there were no games lessons.

That suited me fine but the powers that be – in the formidable shape of the games mistress – decreed that on Wednesday afternoons we would be given dancing lessons. Because I was new to the school, I didn't really know anyone so tended to be one of the last to get paired up. And often I was only saved from being a wallflower by the games mistress.

Thankfully time has erased most of the memory of the excruciating embarrassment though I can still hear her lecturing me about my inability to remember the simplest of steps. As you'll gather the experience scarred me for life. Should I be invited to take part in Strictly Come Dancing I shall politely but firmly decline.

See you next time. In the meantime mind how get on the bus.

Inset: Coping with the big freeze

◀ is binding us more tightly together. We can play to our strengths and work in a more strategic way. For example, we've developed a Cost of Living information leaflet (enclosed with this *Battersea Matters*), and distributed 17,000 copies across Battersea.

Training

Citizens Advice are providing Advice First Aid training in January, so that we are consistent in our approach to providing the help and support local people need. Each organisation is doing more fundraising so that we can extend our services and work in a more joined up way. As a community in Battersea we will get through this cost of living crisis together.

If you would like to help, volunteer or make a donation then please get in touch at www.klsettlement.org.uk

**Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.*

Aaron Barbour is the director of the Katherine Low Settlement



KLS has been a Warm Hub for decades

BATTERSEA SOCIETY EVENTS FEBRUARY – APRIL 2023

For any enquiries please contact events@batterseasociety.org.uk

- **Wednesday 1 February and Wednesday 8 February at 11am**
Tour of the Royal Academy of Dance, 188 York Road, London SW11 3JZ
A guided tour round the new headquarters of the Royal Academy of Dance that provides state of the art education and training facilities for members, students, teachers and staff. Ten people per tour. £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk

- **Thursday 16 February 6.30 for 7pm**
Film Night at the RCA
Royal College of Art, Dyson Building, 1 Hester Road, London SW11 4AY
A special screening of the 1977 family movie *Night Ferry* starring Bernard Cribbins, featuring scenes shot in Battersea. £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door

- **Thursday 2 March 6.30pm for 7pm**
Talk on Battersea Women of Interest
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
A talk by local historian Jeanne

Rathbone: The Duval Suffrage Family, Evelyn Dove, the first black woman to sing and broadcast on BBC radio and author Penelope Fitzgerald. £5 payable in advance online at www.batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door

- **Thursday 16 March 6.30 for 7pm**
Battersea Society AGM and talk on Nine Elms Arts Ministry
St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, London SW11 3NA
The Battersea Society AGM with news and updates and a chance for members to meet the trustees. Talk by Rev Betsy Bletchley, leader of the Nine Elms Arts Ministry. Entry free.

- **Sunday 2 April 12noon**
Spring Lunch at the Duke of Cambridge, 228 Battersea Bridge Road, London SW11 3AA
Come and join us at our Spring Lunch as we say goodbye to winter! Roast main course (with veggie option) and dessert. £26 for two courses, excluding drinks, payable in advance www.batterseasociety.org.uk



Jayne Tottman in *Night Ferry*

- **Sunday 23 April 2.30pm**
From Cradle to the Grave Walk
A guided walk with local historian Sue Demont taking in the sites and buildings that span every stage of life – from homes and schools to memorials and burial grounds. The walk starts at the corner of Thurleigh Road and Bolingbroke Grove and ends on Battersea Rise. Buses G1 or 319 . Free event.

BATTERSEA COUNCILLORS

After 44 years of a Conservative administration, in May 2022 the voters of Wandsworth elected a Labour council. The many changes since then include new ward boundaries and names in some areas and several new councillors from both the Conservative and Labour parties. We list here all the councillors for Battersea wards. New councillors were invited to provide information on their interests, and where they were made available, they are printed here.

Battersea Park

Juliana Annan (Labour) NEW
Children's, health and licensing committees
Tony Belton (L)
Chair of planning applications committee

Maurice McLeod (L)
Housing and licensing committees

Falconbrook

Simon Hogg (L)
Council leader

Kate Stock (L) NEW
Cabinet member (children)

Lavender

Jonathan Cook (Conservative)
Environment committee
Tom Pridham (C) NEW
Health and licensing committees

Nine Elms

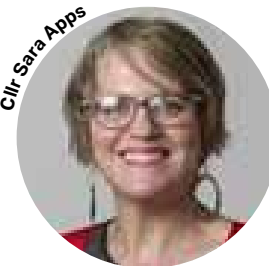
Matt Corner (C) NEW
Children's committee
I want to make sure that the ambitious Nine Elms regeneration brings opportunity, investment, jobs and homes to Battersea.

As a former maths teacher I want to see local children and young people being given the support they need to succeed in life.

I want to make sure the council continues to provide high quality services efficiently.

Mark Justin (C) NEW
Planning applications and licensing committees

For nearly 40 years I owned a bar and restaurant in Wandsworth. I have considerable experience in the areas of finance, business law and landlord and



Pictured: The new Battersea councillors elected in 2022

tenant disputes. I have lived in Battersea almost all my life.

Northcote

Emmeline Owens (C) NEW
Children's and planning applications committees

Aled Richards-Jones (C)
Finance and general purposes committees

Shaftesbury & Queenstown

Aydin Dikerdem (L)
Cabinet member (housing)

Sara Apps (L) NEW
Environment, licensing and transport committees

Stephen Worrall (L) NEW
Health, finance and grants committees

St Mary's

Jamie Colclough (L) NEW
Environment & planning applications committees

I work as a software developer from home which gives me time for my councillor duties. At 25 years old, I am the youngest councillor in Battersea

and the second youngest in the whole borough.

My main passion in politics is the environment. I'm the air quality champion for the borough.

In my spare time I play football and do taekwondo at Latchmere leisure centre.

Caroline Delasoujeole (C) NEW
Finance and transport committees

Jessica Lee (L) NEW
Children's, health and licensing committees

I am an NHS speech and language therapist, working with adults with autism and learning disabilities. I've lived in Wandsworth for over a decade, and I love this borough. My aim as a councillor is to help make Battersea the best place to grow up and to grow old.

PLANNING MATTERS: RESPONDING TO THE LOCAL PLAN

The planning committee examines the Local Plan and reviews the bus review. Monica Tross reports

LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC (EIP)

My colleagues on the planning committee, Liz Walton our chair, and Michael Jubb, fellow member of the committee, spent 10 days in November attending the EIP on behalf of the Society. This followed the work we and colleagues on the Open Spaces committee had done in putting together a thoughtful response to the consultation in March 2022 (you can see this on our website). I was in awe at their commitment and the amount of preparatory work they did to make sure any contribution they made was accurate and would help the process of making this a better plan.

The formal objective of these hearings is to test that the plan is 'sound' but in the past this has been combined with a wish by all parties – the planning inspector, the Council, ourselves and other parties – to have an open round table discussion about ways to make the plan 'better'. Sadly, the inspectorate for this EIP did not take this wider view but declared at the outset that soundness was all, not rewriting the plan.

Modifications to the Local Plan arising from the EIP will be published in early 2023 and yet again we will need to comment, with the final version planned to be available later in the year. Among other changes, it will incorporate the welcome commitment to publish the implementation results for most policies annually, and an increase in the amount of affordable housing required in major developments from 35% to 50%. On a less happy note, there is to be more flexibility in relation to the policy for tall buildings. Call me a cynic but I have seen no evidence of rigidity in relation to that particular policy in the past so any change of wording seems to me merely to justify the fees paid to the lawyers who attended the EIP on behalf of a number of property developers.

See our planning pages for a full update on the Local Plan process.



CENTRAL LONDON BUS REVIEW

A report on the consultation and the decisions taken has now been published. You can find it on the TfL consultation page. The key points for Battersea are that changes to the routes of the 19 and 49 will not take place, the 11 will not be dropped but the route restructured to run between Waterloo and Fulham and the 211 route will also be changed to start and finish at the Power Station, reconnecting at the old route at Lower Sloane Street westward. This is welcomed as it will provide a useful link from that part of Battersea to the King's Road and the Chelsea & Westminster hospital. Overall I found the review of the decisions not entirely clear but it seems that most of the changes in our part of London are not being implemented – although with the addition of the possibly ominous words 'at this time'. Let's hope TfL won't try a third time to mess with the 19.

PLANNING UPDATES

We have responded critically to three important applications this autumn: changes to the Latchmere Estate Conservation Area, 2022/3212, Arding & Hobbs rooftop, 2022/3294 and Go Ape, 2022/3095. We were disappointed that this last was approved under delegated authority despite objections from both ourselves and Friends of Battersea Park. We would have thought it merited discussion by the Planning Applications Committee.

The developers of the former Booker site at 41 – 59 Battersea Park Road withdrew application 2022/1835 to which we and others objected; they have consulted on new proposals. We think these are an improvement and will wait for an application before commenting. This is not the case for

Battersea Studios and we have given them critical feedback on their recent exhibition.

We will also comment on revised proposals by Greystar for their site at 57 – 59 Lombard Road and on TfL's proposals for Battersea Bridge Road and Beaufort Street. These are broadly welcome as we have been urging improvements to my knowledge since 2010 – probably earlier. Although as ever the danger is that improvements for some may cause problems for others. The planning section of our website has our responses to major applications and consultations and will include these.

OTHER NEWS

The pedestrian and cycle bridge alongside the Cremorne bridge at Lombard Road was billed as a Millennium project but still has insufficient funding. We were pleased to read that three councils, Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Wandsworth have got together to try to raise funds for this much needed crossing.

Tesco's plans for the Prince of Wales in Battersea Bridge Road are still stalled. They tell me that when problems are resolved it will take 22 weeks for the fit out – but they have promised to do something about the shabby state of the building.

We have no more news about plans for the Glassmill site but will let you know when there is a further exhibition.

Feedback appreciated. We always like to hear from our members so get in touch at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk with your concerns, queries – or even criticisms. We like to know what you think.

THE ONCE (AND FUTURE) MUSEUM

Sheila Allen relates the tale of Wandsworth Museum

This is a story of hope, determination, energy and triumph in the face of adversity.

Our aim is to achieve is a secure, accredited museum in Wandsworth that will use the collection to tell the borough's story, giving it a stronger sense of place, offering a service to schools and providing a social hub.

Here is our story.

Once upon a time (in 1986, actually) an enlightened Wandsworth Council Leader created a small museum in Putney in a room adjacent to the local library. It soon outgrew its home and in 1996 moved to the Court House in Garratt Lane. It became one of London's most successful fully accredited local museums providing a schools education service and telling the borough's history.

In 2007, in spite of the museum's popularity that same council which had been so supportive decided to close it in order to create a town centre library. This has now re-located to premises near South Thames College. The Court House has yet to find a new tenant.

Petition

The closure of the museum triggered a major public campaign, with over 20,000 people signing a petition. The issue was reported in the national press and raised in the House of Lords by the late Baroness Trumpington. This resulted in an incredibly generous donation from the Hintze Family Foundation. Michael and Dorothy Hintze are local residents who had made very good use of Wandsworth Museum. Their funding saved it from being consigned to storage.

New premises in West Hill library became available and there a director and a board of trustees established a museum, which opened to the public in 2010. The collection, much of it donated by local people, was kept in excellent environmental conditions. The Friends of Wandsworth Museum (FoWM) quickly formed and registered as a charity in July 2007. More than 300 people became Friends, supporting our efforts to hold events and establish projects and contacts with local school. A particular success was a collaboration



Wandsworth Common, by John Westell. From the Wandsworth Museum Collection

with Beatrix Potter School recreating the evacuation of local children to the Surrey countryside in the Second World War. Dressed for the part, including gas masks, 200 small children and their teachers marched to Wandsworth Common Station and boarded a steam train specially loaned for the occasion (see *Battersea Matters* Autumn 2009).

Guided tours were arranged for Friends to the City of London, the former lavender fields and asparagus beds of Battersea and much more. Once established in West Hill we held coffee mornings with guest speakers and housed many memorable exhibitions such as *The Villages of Wandsworth* and a display in collaboration with the V&A containing an early Picasso.

Youth projects

We shared the premises with the De Morgan Collection and were able to enjoy those marvellous works, we ran a café and shop, and our volunteers welcomed visitors at the entrance, worked on youth projects and developed an education service for local schools. All was set fair for obtaining accreditation. This is important as it confers formal recognition by Arts Council England and opens the door

to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other foundations whose constitutions restrict their support to accredited bodies.

But then the Council withdrew its special arrangement of a peppercorn rent. This was an almost fatal blow as, without this concession, the Museum was forced to close in June 2015. The collection was put into storage in the basement.

Thanks to heroic efforts and masses of good will, a merger agreement with Battersea Arts Centre was completed in June 2016. The brief included developing temporary exhibitions, installations and our very popular education services. The residual FoWM funds were donated for that purpose in July. We were rebranded The Moving Museum – moving round BAC and round the country.

Tragically, circumstances beyond anyone's control, including financial pressures following the Grand Hall fire and the Covid closures, meant that BAC had to terminate the collection agreement. In 2021 the collection was once more consigned to the West Hill basement, where it remains.

However local support for the museum was not destroyed and so the Museum Action Group was formed. We sent a letter outlining our plans and aspirations to Wandsworth Council in August 2021 offering to work with it to find a way forward.

Public support

So we continue to strive, offering to work with the new Council to ensure that Wandsworth is not one of only three in London without a borough museum. The story is not ended. I would love to say that we – the supporters, Friends and the museum – all lived happily ever after. We shall see. Watch this space!

Sheila Allen was formerly chair of FoWM. The Museum Action group: The Battersea Society, Putney Society, Wandsworth Society, Tooting History Group, Wandsworth Historical Society, Clapham Society, Friends of Wandsworth Museum, Friends of Wandsworth Common.

We are working with Battersea Arts Centre, Wandsworth Council, Museum of London, Roehampton University and other boroughs and their museums where appropriate.

PARADISE, SO CLOSE TO THE PRISON

Lauren Duncan introduces a community wildlife garden

Standing on Heathfield Road, looking at HM Prison Wandsworth you might well miss Dobbins Field. The Paradise Cooperative care for this sequestered acre of land opposite the prison on their behalf. Over the past eight years, with the support of dedicated community volunteers, this small site has been transformed from a derelict and unused space into a tranquil sanctuary for local residents and wildlife alike. A grant from The National Lottery Community Fund in 2021 enabled us to expand our volunteer sessions and launch some exciting new projects and events. At its heart, the charity strives to support local people to feel more connected with nature, something which is vital in keeping us all emotionally, psychologically and physically healthy. From providing skills to local people around sustainable urban growing to teaching young children about biodiversity in London, The Paradise Cooperative are working hard to bring together community, education and biodiversity.

Education comes in many different forms at Paradise. Volunteers of any level of experience are invited to come along and dig in, learning how to grow food organically and manage gardens for the benefit of wildlife along the way. Volunteer sessions include regular free workshops on sustainable gardening methods, from composting methods to sowing wildflowers.

Mud pies

The charity also runs The Paradise Learning programme, working with local primary schools to provide new skills and learning experiences through nature. Many children who visit haven't had the opportunity to explore wild spaces before – they may encounter their first newt, discover the joy of making mud pies or realise for the first time just how biodiverse a green space in London can be.

Although food is grown at Paradise primarily to teach local people about no-dig, organic gardening methods, we still produce a good deal of food. In early 2022 Paradise launched our Community Food Programme and all

Paradise produce is now donated to local social enterprises. One such is Home Community Café at St Andrews Church, which supports the Earlsfield community in many ways, including providing weekly cooked breakfasts to Foodbank guests. Their founder Meg Fry said, 'The food donations that Paradise provide help us to keep our costs as low as possible meaning we can give generously to our local community whilst maintaining standards and sustainability as a business. It makes local, organic, sustainable produce accessible to all of our guests.' In this way, food is grown with, and for, the local community.



People volunteer at Paradise for a wide range of reasons, from wanting to make a difference in their community, to meeting new people in the area or looking to understand how no-dig gardening works. Many regular volunteers don't have gardens and Paradise therefore provides a fantastic opportunity. 'My son was really keen to learn about gardening,' said one volunteer, 'we live in a flat so it has afforded him the opportunity to grow things from scratch. We love it here.' Others are primarily looking to gain new skills in sustainable urban growing. 'We've learnt loads of things that even if you googled you wouldn't immediately find anything about but here you learn through action.' Many people visit to access the benefits that connecting with nature can bring, 'When I come here I actually find it really therapeutic, even weeding! I really enjoy it,' said one weekend volunteer.

Fundamental to all of this work is biodiversity. Since Paradise began to look after the site, a small army of community volunteers have rolled up their sleeves and worked tirelessly to transform the space for the benefit of wildlife. Over five hundred trees have been planted, a wildlife pond has been



created, many metres of hedgerows are knitted together across the site, log piles provide sheltered habitats and wildflower meadows are a treat for pollinators and seed-eating birds. We are all increasingly aware of the extent to which human activity is creating a crisis for nature and more and more people want to find out how they can help. Paradise provides a unique opportunity for people to learn about gardening in harmony with nature. From organic 'pest' control methods to simple habitat creation, there are lots of lessons to be learnt here.

Next year looks set to be a busy one for the Paradise team. An exciting grant from the Wimbledon Community Fund will enable us to provide free nature-based wellbeing sessions for disadvantaged children from local primary schools. We are also going to provide a programme of mindful gardening sessions for social prescription guests and people suffering from loneliness or isolation.

Paradise will also collaborate with CARAS, who work with local people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. This project will focus on climate change and climate resilient gardening and include transforming the courtyard at their community centre in Tooting. There will be Spring and Autumn Garden Festivals to look forward to and we will announce many other events soon.

If you would like to get involved in the project, or find out more, then please email: team@paradisecooperative.org Or visit our social media:

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/paradisecoop>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/coopparadise>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Paradisecooppearlsfield>

Website: www.paradisecooperative.org

Lauren Duncan is team leader and head of education at the Paradise Cooperative

OFFERING A SAFE HAVEN

Jenny Sheridan meets families hosting refugees from Ukraine

It is almost a year since Russia invaded Ukraine. About 500 households across Wandsworth are hosting a Ukrainian refugee individual or family. Among them are Sara and John Turner, who host a mother and her two teenage daughters. Sara, a clinical psychologist, co-ordinates a WhatsApp group of hosts whose members share information and advice. She has compiled a report based on the experiences of 53 Wandsworth host families. Altogether they have provided a temporary home and safe haven – and often much more – to 93 guests, 64 adults and 29 children.

The hosts' experiences have varied but on the whole they were extremely positive. Only two of the 53 had very negative experiences.

Sara kindly introduced me to some families in Battersea who agreed to be interviewed. This article is based on those interviews. The names of all hosts and guests have been changed as some preferred to remain anonymous.

Martin and Sheila

Why did we decide to do it? I felt very strongly that unlike in some other refugee situations this was the invasion of a sovereign country and if we've got any values or beliefs we need to stand up and defend them. I can't fight but what I can do is offer succour and security to somebody to ride out this horrible situation.

Our guest comes from a small town between Lviv and Kiev. Nadia is a music teacher. When she arrived she hardly spoke any English so we relied on Google Translate. It's much better now but not good enough to get a job teaching. She does work though, mainly in childcare.

We are lucky that we have spare capacity here, so she has quite a spacious bedroom, with a desk, and a bathroom.

The main reason she came was to support her sister, who came with her children, a 15-year-old daughter and a toddler. I think there may have been a lot of fear of what invading troops might do to girls and women.

Nadia's got a positive outlook, and quite a sunny personality. She's very

easy to live with, and she's a good cook. She makes borscht by the vat – she loves the fact that she can give something back. She doesn't often eat with us. She's out most of the day either working or in ESOL classes and in the evening she often sees her sister.

She is making the most of being in London. She goes to museums and free lunchtime concerts. The other day she came in, very enthusiastic, and said, 'I've been to Tooting. It's amazing!' We found a choir for her to join – the Festival Chorus, and she has done two concerts with them.

How on earth do those poor people survive? No water, no hot drinks, no light. And the money's stopped coming in. Her husband's business has gone (he is in the defence force), her music teaching has stopped. She probably sends money home.

The future is unclear. Both the government and all of us hosts jumped into it without really thinking it through. We've said to Nadia that we can carry on as long as needs be. We reckon she'll be here for another six months at least.

I find it very hard to put myself in her shoes.

Catherine

Why did we decide to do it? Well, my husband comes from a refugee background. Both his parents escaped the Second World War as refugees from Germany and Hungary. I felt that the least we could do was to do something for another stranger. We've got a spare room and we've always had someone staying, either a student or an au pair when the children were younger.

We have three daughters aged between 14 and 20. I asked them if they were OK with the idea and they all said yes, and looked at me like, 'Why are you even asking us?'

Alina came to us through her daughter, who was working in London when the war broke out. We met her and then filled out the very complicated forms for her mother to come to us.

She is 52. Her husband and her other



daughter are still in Kherson and she speaks to her husband every day when he has an internet connection. She worries, of course. And the children – well, they are adults of course – their world has been ripped apart.

She has been amazingly positive. She is a hairdresser and she wanted to work from the start. She asked me to help her find a job and the first hairdresser I went into took her on and she has been there ever since. Work has given her a real sense of dignity and community and it's improved her English. She has also done lots of English classes. When she arrived she had hardly any English so we communicated through hand gestures and smiles and Google Translate, which is clunky. Now we often use text messages to communicate between rooms.

She has fitted into the household well. She has her own bathroom but she will be sharing it when my daughter comes back from uni. We don't eat together regularly but we do share our food. She usually eats before we do because she comes in from work hungry. And after that she wants to be up in her room talking to her husband and friends.

I think the situation is incredibly unfair. If you're from Afghanistan, why can't you get a job? I understand that the Ukraine scheme was set up in a hurry, and I guess the government thought the war would be over in a few months. Alina said, 'I thought by the end of summer I'd be home'. That was a tough time for her.

We've said we're very happy for her to stay as long as she needs to. I think she'd like to live independently and have her own space but that might be impossible financially.

Another nice thing: my neighbour heard about a young Ukrainian who was studying in the UK when Russia invaded and couldn't go home. I suggested to my parents (who also live in Battersea)

that they might like to take this on and that's been a huge success. She's like an honorary grand-daughter. They are going to her graduation in January.

Some hosts have had difficult situations but we've been incredibly lucky. It probably helped that I'm not precious about my house and that we're quite flexible.

Stephen and Marion

I used to do this kind of thing professionally. I have run refugee schemes for Syrian and Afghan refugees for two local authorities. So when the Ukrainian thing happened I thought we'd better put our names forward. My wife and I discussed it. It's quite a big thing to do; we'd had the house to ourselves since the children moved out and we were enjoying it.

We went through the community sponsorship programme and they found us a family quite quickly. We have three people staying with us: Anastasia, who is delightful, and her ten-year-old twin girls, who are also delightful. Both our children are adult so it's lovely to have children in the house.

Anastasia speaks English pretty well. The Ukrainian school system says they need to keep up with their curriculum if they want to go back, so they have to do that online after school, which is tiring. They are picking up the language but we still use Google Translate quite a lot. Marion is learning Ukrainian with Duolingo.

We have two spare bedrooms. The kids share one and Anastasia has the other which has an en-suite. There's an upstairs sitting room they can use but they often hang out in the front room with us.

I do most of the cooking – her husband used to at home. She'll make food for the children when they get in from school and I make a main meal in the evening. I cut down the spice quotient so it's child-appropriate.

The children run around and treat the house as their own. I try and treat them as if Anastasia is my daughter and the girls are my grandchildren. She says 'You are my English family' and I feel they are my Ukrainian family. It's very nice.

We talk about the situation every day, though not in front of the children – how the war is going, whether her husband's parents have electricity and so on.

She's amazingly resilient. I think she's a wonderful woman, strong and brave,

thoroughly decent. I love them all.

One of the flaws of the government's scheme is the six month deadline. Even though Anastasia is earning a graduate salary (she works for a multinational company) she can't afford to rent a two-bedroom flat in London, particularly in this area. The children are only in Year 5, so we have said to her that we will keep them all the way through primary school as an absolute minimum.

Anastasia has offered to pay towards her keep but we have said no, you're a family guest, we wouldn't charge our children. But I can see for other people that might be difficult.

It's a good thing to do and it's very enjoyable.

Anastasia

I met Stephen and his wife online before we came here. They are a very friendly, kind family and I think we will be friends all our life.

The children found school very difficult at first. They were learning English in school in Ukraine but it is different when all the lessons are in it. They have made friends, and now they are starting to go to birthday parties and I'm starting to meet other mums.

In Kiev I worked for an international company as a financial auditor and now I do the same here. It doesn't matter where I work. I used English in my work, so I could read the language, but not speak it so much. I go to classes at Lambeth College.

I try to speak to my family every day, whenever they have electricity to charge their phones. The kids miss their grandparents very much and they miss them too.

I saw my husband for a few days in May in a town in western Ukraine but now it is too dangerous. He isn't allowed to leave, nor is my father, who is 59.

This horrible war started rapidly. There were tanks and bombing close to our city. Since October there have been rocket attacks all over Ukraine. Education is disrupted; children go to school but they sometimes have to run to the cellars and they have to carry bags with spare clothes and phones and their parents' names and addresses. It's not good for them psychologically.

London is a big and dynamic city, but so is Kiev. It has a population of almost three million and we have parks and museums and theatres. We also do our recycling and worry about air pollution. Many people live in tall buildings which is a big problem when there are power cuts and the lifts don't work.

I am happy to be here in a safe place. We are grateful to the UK government for supporting Ukraine by giving us visas. And I am thankful to Stephen and his family.

Clare

Our experience was not without challenges but I am very glad that we were able to help.

Our guests arrived in late March. Lena and her two children had lived with her husband, with her extended family close by, in a very rural village. When she arrived she spoke very limited English, so we had to use Google Translate. Her children are 12 and 6 and they're delightful.

The first few months were spent setting up the admin needed for living in the UK, like getting visas, registering with doctors and dentists, Universal Credit, Oyster cards, English lessons and choosing schools – primary for both then secondary for the older girl. The challenge wasn't so much the time it took, it was the difficulty of balancing offering support and encouraging self-reliance.

I tried very hard to support Lena to make decisions for herself. However she lent heavily on me for both significant and minor decisions.

For example, after several months, she would still ask my advice on issues like what to do with an envelope addressed to her (like, 'Open it!'). And conversely, I found it difficult to be in the position of effectively choosing a school for her daughter.

Our life experiences are very different. She had spent most of her time looking after her children, husband and grandmother. Unlike me, she isn't interested in museums or galleries. And she's very quiet. She was reluctant to talk about her family, perhaps to protect herself emotionally. I had no problem with any of this, but it made building a relationship hard work.

They had to leave us shortly before the six months were up as we were ▶



◀ moving to a smaller house that needed building work. I managed to find another family who were able to take them, but it was a major transition for them, and I felt guilty putting them through that stress. If we hadn't moved, I would have been happy for Lena and her daughters to remain living with us. I'm fond of her and loved having the children around the house.

I am happy to have been able to help, albeit for a short time.

Graham & Christine

When the government announced that this was an option we didn't really even discuss it. We just looked at each other and knew we were going to do it. We're both Jewish and maybe that makes us feel more connected. We feel but for the grace of God we wouldn't be here either.

We were eager to save a life.

Maria is our second guest. The first spoke no English and missed her family desperately. And her boss put pressure on her to return, which she did.

We met Maria through a Facebook group. There is no official matching

of host to guest – you have to do it all yourself – and no vetting of hosts. It's quite alarming for both sides. Maria is an amazing girl and she speaks brilliant English. She has become great friends with our two adult children. We consider her part of our family. She is 24 and comes from Kiev. She worked in insurance but now she's got a job as a social media film producer. She is a very focused young lady.

We picked her up from Stansted and got home at 3am. We were all exhausted but the adrenalin kept us awake. We were having a cup of tea and chatting in that polite way and she said 'What books have you got?' We knew we had a connection.

Maria cooks for us at least a couple of times a week. She is eager to please and so are we. There's a symbiotic relationship that just flows.

We share the kitchen which could have been tricky because we run our bakery business from home, but it hasn't been an issue. We cook together, we sit at the dining table together, we talk and chat. It's exactly like having your own child.

'Don't mention the war!' was one of the first things we were told, but actually it's much easier to talk about it. A bomb went off in her street. Imagine – a bomb going off as close as Northcote Road!

Prior to the war Maria had a five year plan for her life. That was taken away. She is living day by day. She describes her life rather beautifully: 'Today I'm in this movie, that I'm in London. Tomorrow it could be a different movie.'

What happens when her visa runs out in 2024? We have said she is welcome for as long as she wants to stay, but I don't believe that's what she wants. I think she'd like to stay in the UK. She's got a good job, she's earning money, but renting around here is incredibly expensive.

It has been a fantastically life-enhancing experience.

I am very grateful to Dr Sara Turner and to all the hosts and guests who generously gave up their time to talk to me.

CHURCHYARDS, PARKS AND RECS

Clare Graham on the past and present of our older gardens

We can thank the Victorians for our largest and best-known local open spaces: Battersea Park, opened in 1858 on the site of Battersea Fields, and Wandsworth and Clapham Commons, preserved by Acts of Parliament passed in 1871 and 1878. The Victorians were as well aware as we are of the importance of recreational greenspace within crowded, ever-expanding cities. They also left us some smaller examples, which I introduce below.

Gardens of the dead

St Mary's Churchyard, Thames Path
St Mary's was the original parish church for the riverside village of Battersea; rebuilt in 1775 – 7 in its medieval location, it and its churchyard are picturesquely situated on a broad bend of the Thames. JMW Turner apparently liked to sit and sketch in the churchyard. Burials there came to an end in the 1850s, following parliamentary legislation designed to put an end to the overcrowded, insanitary conditions

which characterised London's old parish churchyards.

The churchyard soon began to develop more of a garden character; it was already being planted up with shrubs in the 1860s, and by 1918 many tombstones had been removed or flattened, to make way for ornamental bedding. The handsome iron gates probably date from Arthur Blomfield's improvements to the church in 1876-8. After World War Two the churchyard was handed over to the council, with some rights reserved to St Mary's. It is currently maintained by Enable Leisure and Culture (Wandsworth's contractor for open spaces, cemeteries and some other services) with help from church volunteers. Its orange coffee-trailer arrived during lockdown; run by youth charity Regenerate, it remains popular both with locals and the Thames Path's many walkers.

St Mary's Cemetery, Bolingbroke Grove.
This big L-shaped plot was acquired to replace the churchyard, from the

break-up of the estate of Bolingbroke Grove House, one of the large villas with extensive grounds characteristic of earlier development around the Commons. The new cemetery was laid out in 1860 – 1 by parish surveyor Charles Lee, with formal avenues and plantings to dignify grief, and encourage quiet contemplation. Burial space here ran out in the 1960s, and the attractive twin chapels (one for Anglicans, the other for everyone else) are sadly neglected. But it's a great place to visit to enjoy nature at any time of year – especially in spring when violets, primroses and bluebells abound. Enable's attempts to encourage biodiversity were recently recognised with a first London in Bloom Award. New hedging has just been planted along the Battersea Rise frontage, and the grassland habitat behind that is also soon to be improved.

Parks for poor neighbourhoods

Christchurch Gardens, Cabul Road.
As Battersea filled up with industry and dense, often poor-quality terraced housing, the need for some extra 'green lungs' was becoming apparent. The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association was founded in 1882,



initially specialising in converting unused graveyards into green and pleasant 'outdoor drawing rooms for the poor.' In Battersea it took on a never-used corner graveyard beside Christ Church, an Anglican church of 1847 – 9. The gardens opened in 1885, and were handed on to the local authority in 1889. A rustic oak shelter, apparently much favoured by older locals, was flattened by a bomb in 1944, as was Christ Church itself. Today's shelter is listed Grade II and was designed in 1951 by the Borough Surveyor as a memorial to Battersea's civilian war dead, with the gardens reconfigured to provide a suitably formal setting. Christ Church behind was also rebuilt, in 1957 – 9.

Local Authority Initiatives

Vicarage Gardens

This is the official name of the small embanked open space backing onto Vicarage Crescent, providing views

over the Thames towards Battersea Railway Bridge. This was erected on the old Thames foreshore in 1893 – 4 when the local authority created the Crescent itself, to link Lombard Road with Battersea village. The new embankment was laid out as a public recreation ground in 1896 by Borough Surveyor J T Pilditch, with the MPGA once more providing some funding. *Latchmere Recreation Ground* Sited in Burns Road this is at once the centrepiece and 'back garden' of the Edwardian Latchmere Estate, pioneering social housing built by Battersea Borough Council in 1902 – 3. It occupies part of the site of Latchmere Common, former common land enclosed in the 1830s; other areas had already been commandeered for public baths and a coroner's court (now a nursery). See the Winter 2021/2 *Battersea Matters* for the story of Brown Dog, the Rec's once celebrated, long-vanished anti-

Top: St Mary's Cemetery, Bolingbroke Grove; above left: St Mary's Churchyard; above: Vicarage Gardens, looking towards Battersea Railway Bridge

vivisectionist memorial of 1906.

Its iron railings and gates remain largely original, and it's good to know that Enable has plans to restore these, within a forthcoming scheme of improvements.

Clare Graham is chair of the Battersea Society's Open Spaces Committee

Two future articles will cover new parks created after WW2, and the Thames Path and post-1980s 'developers' parks'.

Do you love Battersea's open spaces? Could you help us out by monitoring your nearest one, or by joining the Open Spaces Committee? If so please email openspaces@batterseasociety.org.uk

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Mike Roden is sadder and wiser after falling victim to a street scam

Have you heard about the scam aimed mainly at older car-drivers doing the rounds? The victims are approached by 'officials' claiming they have been caught speeding. They're taken to a parking machine and told to enter their card details. As soon as the card is inserted it disappears, apparently 'swallowed' by the machine. In fact it's been palmed by the scammer, who's also noted the pin. Before walking away the conman pretends to ring up the help number and tells the victim that someone is on their way to investigate. Of course the stolen card is then used to withdraw money directly from their bank account.

I've read many accounts of people being 'scammed' like this and never understood how people fall for it. A few times I've found myself on the phone listening to someone – allegedly from Microsoft – telling me that my computer's been hacked and by giving them personal details including my password it'll be sorted out. I was never going to fall for that one...

Worried

Well I now know that dealing with a person is a different to talking on the phone. Shortly before Christmas a misguided attempt to be a good Samaritan showed I could be as easily manipulated as anyone else. Walking along Northcote Road I noted a smartly dressed young man clearly in need of assistance. He was staring worriedly at his phone and occasionally glanced at the parked cars. 'Can I help?' I asked.

I gathered that he was French. When I told him I spoke a little French he became very voluble in an incoherent mixture of French and English, gesticulating expressively in best Gallic fashion. He was clearly a stranger to the area and I gathered he was having some trouble with his car – and that his wife was in the car.

While this exchange was going on

we'd reached one of the side-roads heading up the hill. He pointed eagerly towards a Wandsworth parking machine a few yards along. This should have been my cue to make an excuse and leave. After all, if he recognised a parking machine he can't have been that helpless – but I felt myself being steered towards the machine. As it happens these things are a mystery to me as we dispensed with our car years ago.

Through all this he kept talking, pointing at the machine, shrugging expressively. He suddenly pulled out a folded £20 note and attempted to put it in one of the slots. Instead of becoming suspicious I carried on trying to 'help'.

Spotting the image of a credit card on the front of the machine I pointed it out. He started acting baffled again. Here I made a BIG mistake by taking out my small wallet and showing him my debit and credit cards. Light suddenly dawned and he took out his credit card and turned to the machine, blocking my view.

More shrugging. More head-shaking. 'No good – Français.'

He suddenly produced two pound coins and gave them to me. 'Keep change,' he said pointing to the wallet which I was still holding. He was asking me to use my card to buy a ticket. In the trade they call this the 'convincer'. Giving me some of his own money? He must be genuine. I sensed something wasn't quite right, but I wanted to get it over with so I agreed. He indicated the slot then at once pointed to the keypad. Inserting the card I tried turning my back on him so my pin was hidden. Trouble was he was moving around all the time, and talking.

Chatter

When I turned back my card had gone. Before I could take that in he reached round me and jabbed at the Cancel button. I pressed the button but my card didn't reappear. I supposed it was jammed inside the machine. If he'd let me think straight I would have realised that was most unlikely, but he was doing what a conjuror does – keeping my attention diverted by this bilingual chatter, constantly moving around and waving his arms. Of course I now

know he'd palmed the card. But I'd been preventing from realising that by his distractions. Almost as if I were hypnotised.

You must remember that all this was happening in the space of a very few minutes. Somehow our roles had been reversed and he was helping me. Probably in perfect English now (though I don't really remember) he suggested that putting a second card in would cause the first one to eject. Everyone who hears this story stares in disbelief at this point. But I inserted my second card into the machine and went through the same pantomime with of course the same result – the card disappeared 'inside the machine'.

Feigning exasperation he shouted something about finding a 'ticket man' to help and dashed off urgently round the corner. It took about a minute for the fog to clear. I walked round the machine staring at it, wondering about phoning the help number. And then light dawned. He'd palmed the cards as I was busy on the keypad and despite my efforts he'd almost certainly seen the numbers.

The hypnotic spell was broken. I immediately phoned my wife who quickly got the cards cancelled. In the short time which elapsed before that, £500 had been taken from the NatWest cash machine on St Johns Road, and £1800 spent on electronic or computer equipment in a nearby shop. And that was it, the crime was reported to the police and to the card companies. I've already had the £500 refunded by my bank and by the time you read this I'm very hopeful the other debt will have been cancelled.

Crime wave

I can report that Wandsworth police have been very helpful. As soon as he received my crime report I was contacted by a young officer from Wimbledon police station who came round to see me. He told me that he'd heard of several similar cases. He's already checked for CCTV cameras near the parking machine but without success. Clearly this is a mini-crime wave they'd like to bring to an end. But apparently the banks and credit card companies almost always refund the money to the victim, and rarely bring a prosecution themselves.

I think I've learned my lesson. I no longer carry those cards with me. I carry a small amount of cash, but usually pay



in supermarkets, coffee shops or pubs using my phone. And I should mention that in Wandsworth's press release

about the parking machine scam, they point out that cards cannot be 'swallowed' as they are never taken right

inside the machine. But the safest way of paying for parking is to pay online or by phone.

GOING WITH THE FLOW OF MUSIC

The joy of singing with others is alive locally. Jenny Sheridan reports on three choirs

As we learnt during the pandemic lockdowns, there are countless health benefits to singing together with other people, ranging from heart and lung health to mental support and social cohesion. In Battersea we have at least three choirs that attract a wide range of singers and give regular concerts. Some focus on the classical repertoire, others on pop or musicals.

The Festival Chorus is the longest established local choir. 'I've been a member of the choir since 1987,' says Michael. 'We mostly sing the standard European repertoire – Bach, Haydn, Mozart – and we have also commissioned works from contemporary composers.'

Collective

Michael enjoys learning music and improving that skill and knowing that 'it's not you the audience have come to hear, it's the collective. Also it very much enhances your enjoyment of listening to music.

'On the practical side, we rehearse once a week in south Battersea. There are three concerts a year in St Luke's on Thurleigh Road, so three seasons, and we pay about £100 per season – you don't have to do them all of course. It costs a good ten thousand quid to put on a concert by the time you've paid for the rehearsal space, the church, the conductor, the pianist who plays for rehearsals and the soloists. Ticket sales are important too. We do get good audiences.'

The Battersea Choral Society also sings a classical repertoire, plus carols at Christmas. Judy, Lucy and Adrienne

are all choir members. They value the social as well as the musical benefits of the choir.

'It's been completely life-changing,' says Adrienne. 'I've learnt a new set of skills, many of which are transferable. I have met many of my best friends through the choir'. The others nod in agreement. 'Everyone needs to get their endorphins from somewhere, don't they? And it gives you a sense of purpose and community. The choir has been there for me when I really needed it,' says one.

'If you sing in a small group your hearts all beat at the same time,' says Lucy. 'You synchronise with each other. Blending with other people is quite cathartic.' Adrienne describes 'an almost out of body feeling when you get into the flow.' 'You push yourself,' says Judy, 'and you help each other – you feel the person beside you leaning a little towards you.'

The first time the choir were able to sing together after the pandemic lockdowns 'was overwhelming. I cried.' They all felt that choirs were treated badly - 'If football crowds could get together and sing, why couldn't we? The politicians seemed to think it was just for middle-aged, middle class people who didn't really matter, but it's incredibly popular. There are choirs in factories, in villages, in sports clubs.' It is thought that around two million people sing regularly, in over 40,000 choirs.

The Choral Society rehearses every week in north Battersea and gives three concerts a year in Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street. Like the Festival Chorus, members pay a subscription.

Sam Evans, the Choral Society's music director, also directs the Battersea Power Station Community Choir. 'His passion, energy, humour, skill and immense musical knowledge are admirable,' says Herj, an NHS psychotherapist who says 'Coming to choir is my "Me time." Singing is healing, it allows me to let my hair down, have some fun and learn new skills. It absorbs your attention and encourages a state of flow, which is good for the mind and wellbeing.'

Herj had sung solo before but joined the choir 'because I wanted to learn how to sing harmonies. And I grew up in Battersea so the area means a lot to me. I learnt to read music at Belleville Primary School where we had an incredibly inspiring music teacher.' People don't have to read music to join the choir.

Welcoming

The BPSCC sings a mix of popular music, from pop anthems to musicals. Jordi, a tenor, had never sung in public before. 'The choir members were all really welcoming,' he says, 'and there is a great team atmosphere. The different ages and backgrounds mix together perfectly. I live in Nine Elms and being part of the choir makes me feel more integrated as a Battersea neighbour. The pandemic was a challenging time and I'm so grateful to be back in person to sing with old and new choir members.'

'During one of our online rehearsals in lockdown we had a surprise visit from Sting,' adds Herj. 'We recorded a song called Hymn with him. We also sang with Gareth Malone's Great British Home Chorus. Last October we sang at the opening of Battersea Power Station. Concerts are a real buzz, bringing joy to our audience's day as well as to ours.'

The BPSCC rehearses each week in east Battersea.

The Battersea Power Station Community Choir at the Battersea Society's Christmas festivities



HERITAGE INSPIRES NEW PUBLIC ART

Housing developments will be brightened by art, says Susie Gray

Over the coming few years, two new public art commissions will appear in different corners of Battersea. Both draw on rich local histories and bring earlier Battersea stories to life.

In 2021, artist David Appleyard was commissioned by the developers St William to design a series of artworks for a public walkway at One Prince of Wales Drive. These are currently being fabricated and will be installed later this year along the western walkway leading from Prince of Wales Drive north towards Chelsea Bridge. David has a track record of public art projects that are inspired by local heritage.

Balloons

Here his research has focused on the pioneering work in early balloon and aeroplane flights developed by the Short Brothers in the railway arches north of Battersea Park Station and Prince of Wales Drive. From 1906 to 1919, the pair operated from Arch 75 and Arch 81 where they experimented with 'lighter than air' balloons and 'heavier the air' planes that flew intrepid travellers across the Channel to Europe. As young boys they had viewed the skies through their telescope, dreaming (as they wrote) 'How grand it would be to float in space'.

Further west at the Surrey Lane Estate, Wandsworth Council has commissioned artist and architect Maria Gasparian. Her new artworks will be integrated within improved public realm areas at the Randall Close housing development. Maria completed a Ceramic Design MA and a PHD at Central St Martin's. She is developing a series of ceramic and brick pieces that will be integrated within the Randall Close scheme, bringing colour, pattern and craftsmanship into the public realm.

Maria's artworks respond to the prolific craft making of the Henry and Jesse Rust Mosaic and Tile Company

which was based close by. Their work can still be seen in the 'bee' floor at Battersea Arts Centre and at the V & A.. Both artists have visited the Wandsworth Heritage Service at Battersea Library, spoken with members of the Battersea Society's heritage committee and engaged with local residents when developing their ideas.

David held in-depth conversations with a former engineer & Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society who worked with the Short Brothers from 1959-79 in Belfast and has uncovered fascinating stories of engineering feats. Some of these were shared with St Mary's RC Primary School's Year 5 pupils, with whom David made lighter-than-air balloons which were flown in the school hall. The students used patterns based



on the balloons made in Battersea in the early 1900s when it was possible to phone '788 Battersea' or to send a telegram to 'Ballooning London' to book a cross-channel flight when the weather allowed.

Maria worked with print maker Augusta Ackerman to lead print-making sessions at St John Bosco School, as a way to explore the Rust Company's mosaic work. This will be developed into a collaborative artwork to be printed and installed onto hoardings at Randall Close. Maria also held a residents' Meet the Artist session where she sought input to her planning. She plans to follow up with a further session when her proposals are finalised.

Creative projects such as these help bring local history to life and contribute to the schools' STEAM curriculum (science, technology, arts and maths). They can also inspire the students to pursue their own creative aspirations,



helped by meeting and talking to professional artists about their work.

Pump House

I worked formerly as the curator and manager of the Pump House Gallery in Battersea Park and then as cultural planning manager for Wandsworth Council, so I know the area well. I feel privileged to be leading these commissions as part of the Dallas-Pierce-Quintero architectural team, who produced the cultural strategy for the Prince of Wales site and other local projects.

Both artists were selected by steering groups that brought together local stakeholders together with expert partners (Matts Gallery and Royal College of Art). Their artworks will be accompanied by interpretation that gives background information about the works.

Susie Gray, Cultural Associate, Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

www.davidappleyard.co.uk
David's 2022 Wandsworth Festival talk is at <https://tinyurl.com/383eccnu>

<https://mariagasparian.co.uk>

For more information about Dallas-Pierce-Quintero and other public art projects including in Wandsworth see www.d-p-q.uk

Above: Balloon workshop with St Mary's Primary School 2022
Inset: Henry and Jesse Rust floor at BAC
Courtesy Maria Gasparian

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Jenny Sheridan visits two Battersea institutions

The high street has been declining all over the UK for many years. The rise in internet shopping drastically hastened the decline and then the repeated lockdowns in the covid pandemic gave it a further downward shove. Battersea is no exception.

There has been a clear reduction in the number of old-established and family-owned businesses – what you might call Battersea institutions. Two of those that remain are R Laucher and Raynsford's greengrocers. Both have handsome traditional shopfronts, both are run by the family that started them, and both are in or near Battersea Park Road.

Donkey carts

Raynsford is almost certainly the oldest shop in Battersea. The current owner-managers are Bill and Terry Raynsford. Bill tells me, 'The family started the business before the first World War, in Wye Street, where the new estates are now. They had stalls and donkey carts for delivery.' 'They made wheelbarrows too,' adds his brother Terry. 'Some time before the Second World War they bought a shop here in Battersea High Street with stalls outside, which they ran throughout the 60s and 70s. In 1982 we bought the present shop.'

The brothers reminisce: 'It was always a family business – three aunts, brother,

cousins. Uncle Bob had a wholesale potato yard in Falcon Wharf and delivered them to restaurants and fish and chip shops all over London. Uncle Albert imported bananas wholesale, going down to the docks and picking out the bananas and delivering them.'

'It was my old Granny who started the business in about 1911' says Terry. 'She was the brains. She set her sons up in businesses – not the girls, mind! My Dad used to go over to Summerstown, near Tooting, to pick watercress from the watercress beds. And when I was a kid I worked in the shop for four bob a day that's about 40p!'

Raynsford has a loyal customer base, drawn by the quality and value of their fruit and vegetables. An added attraction is the use of paper rather than plastic bags. The shop is cash only.

A few minutes walk away, on Battersea Park Road, is the distinctive shopfront of R Laucher, clock and watch repairer. You knock on the door to be allowed in by the current Mr Laucher. John's father bought the premises in 1954, having previously operated since 1947 from a shop in Plough Road. Roman Laucher had been a sailor in the Polish Navy until the German invasion in 1939, when he managed to escape and join the Royal Navy. While in the Navy he studied with the British Horological Institute, qualified and set up business in Battersea.

John Laucher followed in his father's footsteps in clock and watch repair. The shop is full of clocks in various stages of repair. John showed me an Edwardian grand-daughter clock, at under 5ft much smaller than the traditional grandfather. He is also working on a clocking-in mechanism, originally for a factory or works. 'When you arrive at work you put your card in, it's stamped, the bell rings.' Bongs, ringing or tinkling tones and chimes are the shop's background music.

Hanging above the counter are the specialised tools he uses for different jobs. All repairs are done by hand. 'Expensive watches, which can cost up to £70,000, are made by machine but finished by hand.' Mr Laucher tells me.

Snowed under

'I'm snowed under with work. Since covid I've never been so busy. There are so few repairers left – in my Dad's day they were everywhere.' R Laucher does not have a website or social media contacts. Payment is by cash, not card.

As a sideline, Mr Laucher sells rather flamboyant necklaces, made in Malaysia or Indonesia. They are displayed against a backdrop of books, many of them from the 1940s or 50s. The books sell rather better than the costume jewellery. 'Maybe I'll become a bookseller,' he muses. 'I like books.'

Raynsford, 153 Battersea High Street, SW11 3JS. Open 7am – 6pm Thursday to Saturday.

R Laucher, 302 Battersea Park Road, SW11 3BU. Open 11am – 5pm, closed for an hour at lunchtime.

Below: John Laucher; below right: Bill and Terry Raynsford





Lights at Clapham Junction and the Northcote Road were inventive at Christmas, and residents in Kelmescott Road also put on a good show.



VINTAGE STYLE

Suzanne Perkins congratulates charity shops that put on a good window show

Once upon a time St John's Road sported a few fashion shops. They came and went. Some were cheap and cheerful, such as Maggie May, New Look, Ash (for flashy glam) and in the 80s the glorious mish-mash of What She Wants.

In the mid-range, we had plenty of cardigans and knickers in M&S, chic sweaters in Benetton and a good variety of brands in Arding & Hobbs-then-Allders-then-Debenhams. (Although my daughter took the news badly that Debenhams was opening. 'Oh, no!', she wailed, 'They'll have those swimming costumes that stand up by themselves!')

All gone now, and the only hope of a quick wardrobe lift is TKMaxx, which requires stamina.

What I miss are the window displays that used to give you a quick hint of the changing fashion scene, what was in or out, what colours were all the go – whether the clothes were for 15-year-olds or the coach party set.

Charity shops are practically all we have left now, but two of them in particular are at least putting up a good effort, and giving us something interesting to look at.

Trinity Hospice shop has really impressive window displays that change regularly. They do not pretend to be a fashion shop, but the creative outfits on the mannequins in the window manage



to display as many items as possible, while still exuding a certain style. Extreme layering! Colour is used very creatively, giving a complete change of mood from week to week.

Challenge

Currently, Trinity windows are being dressed by Izzy Clark, a PhD photography student who works there part-time, and is hoping to start a fashion brand with her partner. She tells me that creating interesting looks from random, but usually good quality donations, is a fun challenge. She then uses her photography skills to record her work.

Traid (Textile Reuse and International Development) has 12 shops in London, and we have been treated to extraordinary and unique creations by Francesco Colucci, which rather than showing clothes, express the spirit of masquerade, transformation and mystery. His inventiveness seems endless, and never ceases to astonish. He has a keen following on Instagram, francesco_colucci_vm

I hope 2023 brings more colour and style to Battersea!



Clockwise from top left: Windows by a Trinity Hospice shop manager Janet, by Izzy, and two by Francesco Colucci for Traid