



“My aim is to widen engagement”

Jenny Sheridan hears from new council leader Ravi Govindia

Wandsworth Council has a new leader. Following Edward (now Sir Edward) Lister's departure for City Hall, Conservative councillors chose Cllr Ravi Govindia as leader. A councillor for almost 30 years, he has lived in the borough since 1975.

Ravi Govindia arrived in Britain as a refugee from Idi Amin's Uganda.

How does Wandsworth welcome today's refugees? "This country has always been a haven for refuge and we recognise the need for support – it has become part of all councils' normal response. We have a sizeable Tamil community in Tooting, Somalis in Battersea and others in the borough from almost all conflict zones. The Middle East may throw up further pressures. By and large people respond reasonably well, though cultural clashes sometimes arise."

Community commitment

I asked Cllr Govindia about the small proportion of affordable housing in the Nine Elms plans and the likelihood that, as in Chelsea Bridge Wharf, many residents will be wealthy foreign nationals with minimal commitment to the local community. He appeared relaxed about this. "There will be 16,000 homes in Nine Elms of which 15 % - that's 2,500 - will be affordable. Proportionately it's small but in reality it's a sizeable number which will generate its own needs for schooling, shops and so on.

World class

"London has been a centre of commerce, learning, the arts, creativity of all kinds for centuries. You can't be a world class city without a constant influx of new people. And practically I don't see how we can



stop people buying property in London. Chelsea has become a summer home for people who may leave in the winter." I tell him that just a few weeks ago I walked through Eaton Place and saw almost every flat security-gated and locked.

continued on page 3



Celebrating in style...

...as Battersea marks the Royal wedding



Battersea High Street put out the flags on 29 April. Full story on on back page (Photographs by Suzanne Perkins)

From the Editor

It's midsummer, the longest day. What strange weather we have had this year: weeks of drought, then fierce rain and high winds (see page nine for a tree down near St Mary's Church). By the end of May the grass on the commons looked as brown as August; now it has recovered to lush green.

Romantic

An absolute joy at this time of year is the fleeting scent of lime blossom, perhaps the most hauntingly romantic smell in the world. It drifts across the road from commons, parks and gardens, breathing childhood holidays. It's not necessary to go away to enjoy summer. Our wonderful city offers so many opportunities to explore, to be stimulated by

galleries and museums or to relax in the sun on the grass or a park bench (all free!). This edition shows in pictures the fun to be had at urban celebrations of the royal wedding and the fair in the square.

Community

This sense of community is what the Battersea Society seeks to encourage. The new Leader of the Council seems to want to compare our area to Chelsea. I hope he means the Chelsea of my childhood, with a fete in the rectory garden, a thriving civic society, artists and eccentrics, quirky shops and cafes and a mix of young and old, rich and poor.

Chelsea has its green (it's tiny, tucked away behind the King's Road) and its squares (private). We have the park and of course the commons. Clapham Common hosts a rock festival in August, followed



ten days later by a family weekend promoting the Paralympics with live music and children's activities. All to be welcomed no doubt, but the Clapham Society fears that the common will not have time to recover between the two. Less disruptive will be a concert at the bandstand on 3 July, featuring an Australian all-women band playing barbershop, jazz and classical music. Sounds fun!

Jenny Sheridan
newsletter@batterseasociety.org.uk

As the tourist season gets going those of us living close to the river get used to hearing the waterman's commentary floating out from the boats bound for Richmond or Kew. They rarely miss out the hoary tale of how the folk of this part of Battersea lobbied to change its name to South Chelsea. I suspect it might be the other way round now.

But the variety of river transport always fascinates: the party boats frightening the seagulls with their insistent thumping music, or the trusty tugs hauling their rubbish barges. Not long ago we saw an intrepid traveller pedal off towards Putney on a raft powered by a bicycle. I hope he made it.

Just one cornetto...

Most bizarrely the other day I spotted an amphibious ice-cream van about to depart down the slipway by St Mary's Church, accompanied by a few bars from Rod Stewart's anthem *Sailing*.

Disappointingly this was simply a PR promotion, but what an excellent idea for more mundane transport. An amphibious 319 or 49 bus could avoid all the bottlenecks

on Battersea Bridge by simply driving into the river. I gather that TfL are even now considering the idea - although of course passengers would be required to use real oysters to pay their fares.

Hill walking

For those of you who have not yet tested the lifts at Clapham Junction station, I urge you to give them a try, and possibly visit the sparkling new loos as an encore. Both facilities have been long overdue, and though CJ has a long way to go to rival Dresden, it's a start.

But, and it's a big BUT, why are there no bus stops directly outside? It is to be sure only a short way up St John's Hill from the main entrance to the new entrance, but



The Man on the Battersi Bus

Mike Roden always travels hopefully

the operative word there is UP, and it's a steep hill to negotiate with luggage. Still, it would be churlish not to acknowledge the improvement, so let's give it two and a half cheers, and press for the missing bus stops to be put in place.

Party time

Finally, as you must all know, the highlight of the London season is yet to come, namely the Annual Battersea Society Party on 7 July. A time to meet friends: "old ones, new ones, loved ones, neglected ones"* .

Sound Minds will be providing a suitably upbeat soundtrack as they did last year, so remember to put on your dancing shoes. Hope to see you there.

**I'll buy a drink for the first person who comes up to me at the party and correctly identifies the source of the quote.*

New Leader for Wandsworth (continued from front page)

“But in Chelsea there’s an Italian Christmas market, they have to some extent become part of the community,” he replied. “The challenge is to find a way to weave people in.”

High density housing

The Battersea Society has expressed concern about the high density planned for Nine Elms. “The Mayor’s vision statement for this area foresees 16,000 homes and up to 25,000 jobs”, says Cllr Govindia.

“Personally I don’t think high density is either bad or good. Much of Kensington is high density. The alternative is further nibbling into the countryside, and surely that is not the way forward.”

The concentration of very tall buildings is also one of our concerns. “The tallest buildings will be clustered at the Vauxhall end and the rest of the area will only be up to 14 or 15 floors. The height of the applications we’ve received so far for most blocks in the Ballymore and Royal Mail sites are 10 to 12 storeys. The linear park and riverside path will humanise Nine Elms and allow it to carry off its height.”

To what extent can the Council demand good design from developers? “It is an issue in all our discussions, but design on its own is not strong grounds for a refusal of an application, especially if it goes to appeal.”

Council tax

Wandsworth prides itself on its low council tax – but is this sustainable over the coming years? “It’s a question my colleagues and I need to ponder. But it’s not just the council that is proud of it – residents are as well. My commitment to low taxes remains and the appetite is that we should continue to maintain our good record.”

Cllr Govindia acknowledged that difficult decisions need to be made and that all services will be reviewed. “I can’t say that any group,

including the elderly, will be protected. We need to have a very careful look at the figures and we’ll be working on it from September.”

The Council has come under fire over its decision to charge £2.50 per child to use the adventure playground in Battersea Park at weekends. “It’s a pilot project for just eight weekends. We will find out how much money it generates and whether usage goes down. At the end of eight weeks we will review it. The key cost is safe-guarding children by trained staff. Nobody begrudges trained lifeguards in a swimming pool.

Environmental issues

“We are keen to explore the idea of a Wandsworth card, a bit like an Oyster, which people can charge up to pay for services like library fines or swimming lessons. It could offer discounts to our residents and could be used for things like the adventure playground.”

Many Battersea Society members worry about environmental issues. Cllr Govindia commented, “Our investment in the new incinerator at Belvedere will mean that there will be brass where there is muck – there will be a huge reduction in what we send to landfill. We are keen on river transport both for the public and for waste removal.

“We’re also keen to look at speed reduction measures such as the 20 mph pilots in Putney. If they are successful in keeping speed levels down without road humps we will extend them to help reduce pollution and encourage cycling.

“We’re committed to car clubs and to limiting parking spaces in new developments. There is a lot of public interest in looking at alternatives to the car. But there are tensions even with public transport: it’s much more attractive to have a bus running down a neighbouring street rather than the one you live in!”

Public service

Councillor Govindia comes from a family with a tradition of public service: “there’s no point in

complaining unless you’re prepared to roll up your sleeves and do something about it. Most of what the Council does is a team effort: my colleagues, officers, sometimes even the opposition. I can offer leadership but fundamentally my aim is to widen engagement in what we do.”

Finally, on the new Leader’s register of interests is his directorship of Volcanoes Safari Company, which, he says, “majors on mountain gorillas in the idyllic border land between Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. There’s a need for ecotourism so that the gorillas can survive the encroachment of humans. Don’t get me wrong – this is not philanthropy, it’s a commercial enterprise, but we aim to be responsible and to put back into the local community, buying local products, offering employment and building up people’s skill base. It’s hugely satisfying.”

Ravi Govindia would love to visit his company’s Ugandan lodges more often, but his new leadership role means that this is unlikely in the immediate future at least.

Defending the Wandle against Boney

The threat of foreign invasion preoccupied British minds in 1940 but this was not the first time. During the Napoleonic Wars an attack appeared imminent. Wandsworth, then just a village in Surrey, raised a company of armed volunteers to help defend the realm.

The Wandsworth Historical Society’s new publication, *King and Constitution: the Wandsworth Volunteer Infantry 1794 – 1809* tells the stirring story of how a small community responded to a great event.

Copies can be obtained from Neil Robson, 119 Heythorp Street, SW18 5BT. Cost £4 plus £1.50 p&p. Make cheques payable to Wandsworth Historical Society.

Wild about walls

Vertical surfaces can provide colour, scent and wildlife interest, says Jenny Sheridan

We sometimes forget that gardens have vertical as well as horizontal surfaces for plants to decorate. But everyone with any outside space at all - whether balcony, roof terrace or garden - has a wall or fence of some kind. Many plants love to climb, even those that are not labelled as climbers. And wildlife loves climbing plants, so if you like to encourage birds, bees and insects, you don't need to have a large space to do so.

Cover for birds

Ivy is one of the best plants for insects and birds. It's the plant to grow if you have brown fingers: it will grow anywhere, even on a north-facing wall, and there are many attractive varieties. Goldheart has small leaves with a yellow central splash; Buttercup is pure yellow if grown in the sun, Suzanne is variegated green and white and less vigorous than some ivies. If your space is very restricted, Spetchley is the variety to look out for, as it grows slowly and rarely reaches more than half a metre.

If you allow your ivy to grow thick, it provides wonderful cover for nesting birds, which will give you hours of interest as the parents fly in and out of the dense foliage and the nestlings squawk inside. The insignificant autumn-blooming flowers offer nectar to late-flying butterflies and moths and black-birds love the berries in early spring.

If you want a climber with glor-

iously scented flowers, honeysuckle is an obvious choice, its only disadvantage being a tendency to look scruffy if not pruned now and then. It likes some sunshine but flowers in semi-shade. Mine, currently covered in yellow flowers and smelling delicious, is on a north-east facing wall. Birds enjoy its red berries and may nest among it or take strips of bark for nesting material. Spiders and other insects find shelter among its woody stems and the flowers attract nocturnal moths. Honeysuckle is not a fussy plant and will grow in any soil.

If you have plenty of space, clematis armandii is attractive. It is evergreen, unlike most clematis, and has masses of vanilla-scented white flowers in spring. Again, it is a plant that birds love to nest in and it provides early nectar for bees

Rambling roses

Roses are of course the classic climbing plant. There are far too many kinds to include here, but I can't resist mentioning a couple. Zephyrine Drouhin has sweetly scented deep pink blooms with a second flush in late summer, will grow on a north wall and is virtually thornless. And it has such a pretty name. The pale pink Madame Alfred Carriere (pictured) will flower for several months, even on a shady wall. Other popular climbers are Albertine and New Dawn. Both are lovely, but Albertine flowers only once and New Dawn is prone to mildew.



Ballota is a foliage plant usually grown as a small shrub. But with its attractive woolly grey or yellowish green leaves it can be encouraged to grow up a trellis. My mother grew one on a sunny wall that made a strokeable upright furry mound up to five foot tall.

Winter colour

My winter jasmine gives me joy at a time when little else is in flower. It usually starts its yellow blooms before Christmas and continues well into March. It needs a trellis or wires to twine around and should be pruned after flowering. Along with shrubs such as berberis and cotoneaster and a small crab apple tree in my front garden, it provides the dense twiggy structure that birds need to feel safe. Tits, robins, greenfinches and sparrows queue up along the small branches for a place at the birdfeeder outside my kitchen window. Washing up even the greasiest frying pan has become a pleasure.

Albert Bridge works delayed

Albert Bridge has been closed for - how long? If you live on or travel along Battersea Bridge Road it must seem like an age (while those on Albert Bridge Road are probably enjoying the peace and quiet).

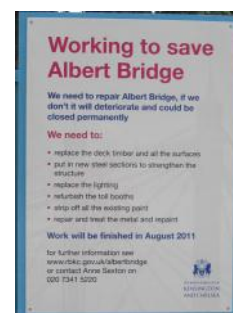
The work to repair and strengthen London's prettiest bridge started in February 2010 and was due to be finished this July (*Battersea Matters*

Autumn 2010).

But in May a local resident was told that completion is not now due until September or October. Anne Sexton, construction manager for Kensington & Chelsea Council, said that extra steel repairs were needed and the hard winter had also caused delays.

There were proposals on Streetlife for a picnic on the bridge to celebrate the re-opening. Let's hope

the party won't be delayed until Bonfire Night.



Yoga for strength, flexibility and relaxation.

Jeanie Phillips, a local yoga teacher, offers the second in a series of articles on physical activity for the gym averse

London is awash with yoga classes of many different styles and from different yoga traditions. Many are taught by well qualified, committed teachers. It may take some time and effort to find the right teacher but don't be put off.

Benefits

Once you find the right person for you, the health benefits derived from attending a regular yoga class are real and well documented. These include improved muscular strength and flexibility, posture, balance and joint mobility. Internally, circulation, breathing, digestion and lymphatic systems can all benefit from regular yoga practice. Sleep improves and energy levels rise. Stress and anxiety reduce and many people find that concentration is strengthened.

Over hundreds of years several different paths of yoga have developed. Hatha yoga is the one best known in the west. The best known styles of yoga are:

- ◆ Iyengar, which is very strong on body alignment.
- ◆ Vinyasa, quite vigorous, breath-synchronised movements and sequences.
- ◆ Ashtanga or Power, strong, fast-

paced sequences.

- ◆ Kundalini, breath and physical movement, focusing on releasing energy.
- ◆ Bikram or Hot yoga, a sequence of up to 26 postures practised in a room with temperatures between 95 and 100 degrees.

After teaching yoga in Kent for many years I recently moved to Battersea. I run a regular Monday morning yoga class in the Katherine Low Settlement, 108 Battersea High Street. The class takes place in the top floor chapel room of the historic building, a lovely space for this friendly, relaxed class.

I come from a fairly traditional yoga background and am a qualified British Wheel of Yoga instructor. The BWY is a well respected organisation with high standards of teacher training founded on safe practice and respect for the origins of yoga and its philosophical traditions

Strength and flexibility

A typical class at KLS lasts 75 minutes and begins with settling the body, breath and mind. Warm-up exercises precede traditional yoga postures, or 'asanas', which are performed in a focused,

mindful way and are adapted for all levels of physical ability. These postures help promote strength and flexibility and are beneficial for all the bodily systems.

Underpinning the class is always the spirit of 'Ahimsa': Do no harm to yourself or to others. Less demanding, restorative postures follow, then breathing practice 'Pranayama', relaxation and a short meditation. Students are encouraged to be aware of their bodies, observe their strengths and limitations and work with these. The overall aim of yoga is to achieve a calm and peaceful balance in our lives.

Currently the class consists of 8-12 women but we would welcome new members, including men. The average age is 40-50, a great time of life to discover or re-discover yoga. I am delighted to offer this type of class in Battersea. If you are interested in coming along or have any questions please phone or email: 07845 481 790

jeanp56@gmail.com

Or just come along on Monday morning at 11.45-1. Cost is £5 per class and the first one is free.

To find other classes locally, see the *Find a Teacher* page on the British Wheel of Yoga website www.bwy.org.uk

Grist to the mill in Brixton

Jenny Sheridan looks at a little known local landmark

The windmill on Wimbledon Common is well known, and there is the remains of one on Windmill Road, off Battersea Rise. But there is also a mill in Brixton. Built in 1816 when Brixton was a village, it operated until the 1850s, when the development of new houses sheltered it from the wind and it could no longer work. It was operated by a steam then a gas engine until it closed in the 1930s, and gradually became derelict. In 2003, concerned local residents formed the Friends of Windmill Gardens and started fund-



raising to restore the mill to full working order.

Restoration

The half-million pound restoration is now complete and the mill was opened by local MP Chuku Umunna on May Day. On Mill Weekend, 14-15 May, its sails turned for the first time for decades. One day soon it may be possible to bake your own bread with flour milled in Brixton. The mill will be open to the public on seven days in 2011 for educational and community activities. You can find it in Blenheim Gardens, just off Brixton Hill.

The next open days are Sundays 10 July, 14 August and 11 September.

Boris bikes for Battersea?

Mary Ann Tarver celebrates a two-wheeled revolution, and looks forward to it coming our way

On-street cycle hire (Barclay's Cycle Hire, commonly known as Boris bikes) is now well established in central London; you have probably noticed the distinctive blue bikes with their winking lights. Those working in central London may already be familiar with the system. The first ones arrived in July last year and a survey six months later revealed that they have received an overwhelming thumbs up.

First thirty minutes free

To hire a bike you can either become a member (£45 a year or £5 for a week) or simply pop a credit or debit card into a docking station. It costs £1 for any number of rides within a 24 hour period. The first half hour of each journey is free. After that the cost increases with time but few bike journeys within central London take more than half an hour. Each docking station has useful advice about cycling in London and maps of the local area and also shows the nearest docking station if no bike is available at the one you chose, or if there is no free stand when you

want to return it. Maps of the whole cycle hire area are available showing the location of all docking stations. The London Cycle Guides showing all the cycle routes can also be obtained from Transport for London (TfL) through their website or phone 020 7222 1234. Bike shops also stock them.

Sturdy and stately

The bikes are sturdy, even stately, and easy to ride having three gears which get you up and over any bridge or slope. Hills virtually don't exist in the centre of London. The recent survey showed that the bikes are being used by a wide variety of people, for all sorts of purposes, mainly as a convenient and attractive alternative to the tube or bus. And, of course, as a way to travel in a more active way directly to one's destination but quicker than walking.

South of the river

The Wandsworth Cycling Campaign has been working with local MP, Jane Ellison, on a petition to expand the system south of the river into



north Battersea. The petition was presented to Boris Johnson on 15 March at the Battersea Arts Centre. The Mayor said he was 'hugely supportive' of the campaign to extend the scheme into Battersea and would look carefully at the proposal.

Encouraged by the Mayor's words Ms Ellison commented, "There is a compelling case for extending the cycle hire scheme into Battersea – there are plenty of suitable locations and dozens of docking stations north and east of Battersea to connect up with'.

She continued, 'Having the 'Boris Bikes' here would improve the quality of life in our area and open up more travel options in and through Battersea'".

Test drive

If any readers are interested in trying out the scheme, a safe and very attractive way to start is to ride around Hyde Park. There are plenty of docking stations inside the entrances.

If you're not very confident, why not contact the Wandsworth Cycling campaign to ask if someone could go with you to explain the system and go through the process? Email them at:

info@wandsworthcyclists.org.uk

You'll find lots of other information on the scheme website:

tfl.gov.uk/barclayscyclehire



Picture: Jane Ellison MP (right) presents the proposal to the Mayor, accompanied by WCC members Susie Morrow and Jon Irwin

Planning Matters

Monica Tross has all the latest news

The main news this past month has been the successful meeting on Nine Elms (see page 8). We were particularly pleased that colleagues from neighbouring civic societies came along. The regeneration area may be based in Queenstown Ward but its effects will be felt over a very much wider area of Battersea and surrounding neighbourhoods

Ballymore and Marco Polo

First, details of two bulky (in every sense of the word) applications. The proposed building for the Ballymore site (or Embassy Quarter as they call it) is shown right. There are fuller details on our [website](#) and on the council's planning applications site, (reference 2011/1815). The second is for the replacement for the quirky Marco Polo building facing the park on Queenstown Road. The plans have some nice features but, if agreed, would overshadow the Chelsea Bridge Wharf buildings, dominating the streetscape. The application gives the proposed heights as between six and sixteen storeys compared with Chelsea Bridge Wharf at 10-13 storeys. The council reference is 2011/2089 and 2090.

Other developments

The Tideway Marina is also set to increase in size and while an upgrade is welcome, we are a little concerned about the bulk. Reference 2011/1926. The Covent Garden Market Authority is developing a planning application for residential development alongside a new market and there will be an exhibition of further plans for the Royal Mail site in the summer.

Elsewhere the re-development of the Peabody Estate in Clapham Junction has been the subject of a scoping application (2011/1751) and we assume a full planning application is in the pipeline. Outline plans are for buildings between 4 and 12 storeys.

The development of the Travis Perkins site in Battersea Park Road was agreed at the May planning applications committee. We have yet to study the report and must hope that some changes will be made to the appearance and bulk of the development.

Local knowledge

We very much appreciate the fact that a number of members – and non-members

– have been in touch with us about applications made contrary to conservation area guidelines or to good neighbourliness. While we scan the planning applications list each week, local knowledge is a great help and we are always grateful to be alerted to members' concerns. On this, is there anyone out there who might not want to come to regular meetings but would be prepared to lend a hand with site visits in their area? We would be very grateful for any offers of help. Please do send an email if you think you can help in this way.

Let us have your views on any planning or transport matter. Please contact us at planning@batterseasociety.org.uk



My kingdom for a hose!

The first of an occasional series by David Rathbone on the trials and pleasures of allotmenting

As I write this, in early June, something unusual is happening outside. There are gurgles in the downpipes, plops on the patio. It is raining. Will the butts brim? Will the soil



even look damp? Or will tomorrow scorch it all away again?

Times are tough

As the owner of a small garden and a half-size allotment, I have had a tough time in the drought. Lugging a heavy watering can about may be good exercise, and at least there is no hosepipe ban yet. But apparently most of the south-east will need twice the normal level of rainfall for the rest of the summer to make up the deficit. Nature is giving me little help on my plot but fortunately there are no serious casualties yet. The strawberry crop is good and the seedlings of parsnip, carrot,

beets and many others are hanging in there.

Let it rain

What sends my blood pressure up is the perverse language of so many TV and radio weather reports. They speak of “threatening” showers, they are “afraid” we may have some rain, tremble at the prospect of clouds but brighten up to tell us it may become fine. The good things about rain just don’t get a mention, in spite of the fears of low crop yields and high prices or the effects of the dry weather on asthma and hay fever. Of course, no-one wants their wedding, barbecue or cricket match spoiled, but lets keep a sense of proportion and cheer for some decent rain – preferably, of course, at night.

The Regeneration of Nine Elms

Sara Milne and David Lewis report on a recent public meeting

Around eighty people attended the recent Battersea Society public meeting on Nine Elms Regeneration, which brought a number of issues and concerns of local residents to the fore.

The new Leader of the Council, Cllr Ravi Govindia began with an overview of the site. Wandsworth had identified Nine Elms as an area of development as a result of a London-wide review of industrial and employment land instigated by Ken Livingstone when Mayor of London. The three main partners of the Nine Elms Regeneration, which will create up to 16,000 new homes and 25,000 jobs, are the Mayor of London, Wandsworth Borough Council and Lambeth Council.

These partners along with major landowners and Transport for London (TfL) make up the Strategy Board. Momentum is now growing with landowners and stakeholders looking to make the plan a reality; a development that will take well over 15 years to complete.

Consent has already been granted for several landmark sites within Nine Elms

- ◆ the Battersea Power Station master plan has been approved
- ◆ Tideway Wharf planning application has been approved
- ◆ approval will be sought later this year for the details of the new US Embassy (outline planning approval has already been granted)

Covent Garden Market will be submitting a planning application next year.

High quality design

New public parks, a shopping district, commercial centres, cultural attractions and public squares are all part of the master plan. Cllr Govindia said that Wandsworth had made a commitment to high quality design especially in the planned civic buildings, to make Nine Elms an international, place-to-be part of central London.

The vision for Nine Elms was set by the Mayor’s Office as part of their objective to increase new housing building in London.

However, Wandsworth have clearly stated that safeguarding Battersea Power Station is also critical, as it plays such a major role in defining the area.

Transport

Part of the remit is to improve all public transport in the Nine Elms area. However there is at present a shortfall in funding for the planned Northern Line extension. It is not possible to expand the road network, but it is believed that there will be a long term reduction in traffic into and around the area with cycling, walking and public transport being the choice for most journeys. Wandsworth has been

limiting the amount of parking allowed in planning permissions, which helps to reduce road usage.

Affordable housing

Across Wandsworth the level of affordable housing for new developments is 33%, however for Nine Elms only 15% of the overall scheme will be affordable. The development partners will be making a larger than usual contribution for infrastructure.

Jobs

Of the 20,000-25,000 ‘new jobs’ being quoted, 17,000 will be linked to Battersea Power Station. The rest will be in the cultural and retail sectors, plus jobs that support or are directly part of Covent Garden Market or the US Embassy.

Concerns

The concerns expressed in discussion were mainly about the high density of planned development and the resulting concentration of tall buildings. It was the density of development that had made an Underground extension necessary and density was now being ratcheted up further in order to find the money for that. People also expressed concern about the small element of affordable housing and the likelihood that much of the new housing will be taken up by foreign residents and left unoccupied for much of the year, so preventing the emergence of any real community.

BAC to basics

Battersea Arts Centre celebrated a re-launch with an open evening on 9 June. There was live music to accompany tours of the building and talks with the artistic directors and resident artists.

Culinary delight

Performers and local residents of all ages mingled in the foyer and queued for kebabs and salads from the new caterers (a definite culinary improvement).

BAC’s future plans are known as ‘Cook up/Tuck in/Take out’ and include extending the concept of scratch performances where works are developed with feedback from the audience.

Original structure

The aim is to use all of the buildings 71 rooms, some of which are being stripped back to their original Town Hall structure.

There will be more from BAC in the next issue of *Battersea Matters*.



Eye-catching slogan on a Naples election poster (spotted by Mike Roden).

Singing by the river

Scott Inglis-Kidger, artistic director of Battersea Choral Workshops, introduces this new group for singers



Byrd, Morley and Gibbons. In addition to rehearsing the music, we welcomed Ghislaine Morgan, a highly experienced professional vocal coach who led a fantastic coaching session, helping our singers develop their techniques. Her very physical style may have come as a surprise to some but there is no doubt we were all singing more beautifully after her session.

Impromptu performance

Perhaps the highlight of the day (apart from the home-made cakes) was an impromptu performance on the steps of the church as the glorious sun shone down on the river. Within minutes we had attracted an audience of joggers, cyclists and families who were passing by. One of our singers summed up the day:

Thanks! - fab day - I got home physically shattered but sure I had worked hard. Singing in balcony a great idea. Fabulous direction and a good variety of pieces. You will have to run a strict waiting-list policy for future workshops!

Many people love to sing. After two years directing Thomas's Choral Society, a Battersea-based choir that rehearses in Thomas's School, I found my members were starting to ask for more opportunities to sing in a smaller group. Battersea Choral Workshops was launched to meet the demand for more singing opportunities for enthusiastic amateur singers in south-west London. Its aim was to explore a wider repertoire of choral music not regularly performed in large choral societies.

The website went live in January, promoting our 2011 season, Tallis

to Whitacre - a journey of choral music through the ages. We were excited to find that all 35 places for our inaugural workshop in March, Renaissance Masters, were filled very quickly. Singers came from all over London and ranged in age from ten to over 60. All were reasonably experienced members of choirs.

Perfect setting

We were lucky to be able to hire St Mary's Church, which provided the perfect setting for our first workshop. The singers thoroughly enjoyed working on music by Tallis,

Our most recent workshop, Age of Enlightenment, was on Saturday 11 June and other workshops will follow in the autumn. If you love singing and would like to take part in one of our workshops, please take a look at our website for further information. There are no auditions but singers will need to be reasonably experienced. www.batterseachoral.co.uk

Timber...!

This tree in Battersea Church Road fell during the strong winds on 26 May, blocking the road and causing considerable traffic disruption, in particular to the 170 bus.

But Battersea Society member Stephanie Tickner, who took the photograph, was impressed by the Council's swift response in sending a team to deal with removal of the tree.



Commissioning original artwork

Jenny Sheridan looks at the pleasures and the possible pitfalls

Who commissions works of art? Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel, and Henry VIII commissioned portraits of several wives. But you don't have to be either royal or vastly wealthy.

Logical step

Last year Battersea Society members Mike and Angela Roden commissioned their former neighbour, Daisy Addison, to create a work for them. Angela explains, "We went to the Royal College of Art graduates' end of year show in Battersea a couple of years ago and really admired one of Daisy's wall-mounted pieces. We thought of offering to buy it to fill a boring wall in our flat, but it turned out to be much too large.

"But once the idea of buying an original work of art had taken hold it seemed a logical step to ask Daisy to do something specially for us. She came to talk to us, listened to us, getting to know us a bit better, and measured the wall. Within a year she had created this wonderful piece for us." (picture below)

Informal sitting

Portraits are perhaps a more usual commission. Wandsworth-based artist Vanessa Wembridge says many of her clients want a portrait of their children as a birthday present to their spouse. Vanessa paints in oils, working from quick sketches and "hundreds of photos, taken at an informal sitting" when she gets to know the individual



adult or child. She says, "I think it's unfair to expect someone to give up a couple of hours on a regular basis, and anyway children can't sit still for that long. I meet them to get an impression of their personality. I take the best bits of the person – not meaning to flatter, but showing what's attractive about them, what interests me. It might be a twinkle in their eye or a half-hidden smile." Vanessa compares the process of creating a portrait to conducting an interview rather than to taking a photograph. (An example of Vanessa's portrait work is shown above).

Surprise

The process takes between three weeks and two months. "I don't let the sitter or client look at the portrait while it's being painted, so when it's finished it is a complete surprise. Sometimes it takes a few

days before I get feedback about how much they and their friends like it."

Vanessa says painting portraits "gives me huge satisfaction. In terms of cost, I don't want it to be exclusive or elitist. So an A3 size head will cost about £300. It is something people will be pleased to have on their wall for a long time."

Animal portraits are also popular. "It's a bit of a luxury to have a portrait of your dog or cat but it makes a lovely gift. I've never been asked to paint a picture of a person together with their pet, but it might be quite interesting. I'd like to do one of my daughter with her hamster."

Vanessa will be taking part in Wandsworth Artists Open Studios in October.

Sculpture

My own experience of commissioning an artwork is of sculpture. I wanted something to commemorate my partner Michael, who died in 2009. At the RCA sculpture school's opening party in Battersea in 2008, Michael and I both admired the work of student Lucy May (*Battersea Matters* Spring 2009). So it seemed appropriate to approach Lucy, now graduated, via the RCA. She accepted the commission and visited me at home, where I told her a bit about Michael and showed her my house.

We discussed her work which she described as "customised suburban baroque". I asked her to make the work in wax rather than bronze, one of her other materials, largely on cost grounds.

Sketches

We agreed that she would show me sketches of the work and we agreed a price. This was difficult for both of us as she is a young artist starting up and I had no idea what was correct.



Beaten Path by Daisy Addison (wood, fabric, and copper leaf)

continued on next page

Commissioning original artwork
continued from previous page

Over the next three months Lucy developed the sculpture. I visited her studio in Dalston to see the work in progress but I very much respected her artistic integrity and didn't feel tempted to interfere.

In early April this year, Lucy delivered the sculpture (pictured right), carefully swathed in layers of bubble-wrap, and staggered up the stairs under its weight. She unveiled a riot of swirly wax embracing colourful artificial flowers and fruit. It's like a 3D abstract version of a 17th century Dutch flower painting, with *memento mori* aspects, and I love it.

Significance

Lucy describes the experience from the artist's viewpoint:

"To be asked to do something with such great personal significance was humbling. In addition, I saw it as an opportunity to put my interests in commemorative sculpture and emotive objects to the test. While my main concern was of course to do justice to the request, I was also mindful of retaining creative integrity. The mutual trust and respect necessary was crucial for what was a new experience for both Jenny and myself.

Organic development

"The commissioning process is a balancing act, one of listening and responding, where both subtlety and frankness have equal importance. Our meetings were, for the most part, spent talking not about the sculpture, but in finding common ground - ruminations on



art, travel and life. Creating this space was vital to the organic development of the piece.

"I have often worked in the traditional manner of the individual artist, developing work via solitary labour and reasoning, allowing dialogue to enter the equation only after the act of making. This project necessitated the re-evaluation of what 'work' consisted of. Right from its inception, the commission was a collaborative process.

"Work, then, refers to something greater than just the sculpture. It is everything that happens around the piece - the conversations, the states of mind, the reflections after the event."

Relationship

Commissioning an artwork is a step closer to the creative process. It is exciting and thought-provoking and, though obviously not inexpensive, may cost no more than choosing a work from a gallery wall. What the buyer gets is a relationship with the artist and with the work that is unique and deeply personal.

See more work by these artists on their websites

- www.daisyaddison.org
- www.vanessawembridge.com
- www.lucymay.net



This year Artists' Open House takes place over the first two

weekends of October. From working studios, garden sheds and front rooms – 200 artists across Wandsworth will throw open their doors to the public. And at least 20 of these will be in Battersea.

This year, the Council's Arts Team

is partnering with local artists to make the Open House event in Battersea bigger and better than ever.

Competition

A number of new initiatives are underway, including a schools poster competition, school workshops, a blog and a £500 commission from Wandsworth Council for a Batter-

sea-based artist to create a point of interest for the Open House weekends. From September you'll be able to find what's happening by picking up a copy of the local area trail in the library, or look out for the balloon-festooned houses and just knock on the door. You'll be very welcome! Find out more by visiting:

sw11art.wordpress.com

Having fun in the sun in Battersea

Thousands take part in two community events in SW11

Royal Wedding Party

Billed as the 'biggest street party in London', Battersea High Street's royal wedding celebration on 29 April was organised by the Battersea High Street Traders' Association in conjunction with Wandsworth Council and supported by a host of local traders and business. BBC Radio London broadcast all day from the event, which was also covered by BBC TV and by foreign film crews. There was day-long entertainment, and dancing, with plenty of food and drink on hand, and the

wedding (and the kiss on the balcony) was shown on a giant screen at the end of the street.

Summer in the Square

Taking place on 14 May this was the second such event organised by the [Friends of Battersea Square](#) and was opened by tennis legend Greg Rusedski (right) who lives in Battersea. More than eighty stalls from local business and organisations filled the square and stretched down Battersea High Street. There was non-stop musical entertain-

ment from the central stage by local schools, choirs, and amateur and professional musicians, and a whole range of events and activities for children.



Top left: Robert Elms of BBC Radio London interviewing a resident about local history; right, donkey rides at Summer in the Square. **Bottom**: left: enjoying the Royal wedding party; right: refreshment time in Battersea Square. Photographs by Michala Maughan, Mike Roden, Liz Shaw and Suzanne Perkins.

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