

Churches and Chapels

Battersea's places of worship mostly date (or dated) from the competitive Victorian era of church-building. Between 1906 and 1939 there were seventeen separate Anglican ecclesiastical parishes in Battersea, served by nineteen churches and two missions. All but two were created between 1847 and 1902. Eleven currently survive, seven in Anglican use, three under other Christian denominations, one as a community centre. Of the eight which have been demolished, four were rebuilt on a smaller scale after the Second World War; among these, one has passed to another denomination and another has shrunk itself again. Today there are ten Anglican churches in Battersea, one Georgian in date, six Victorian, and three of the post-war period.

Battersea's three Catholic churches date from between 1868 and 1907, and all are still in use. Nonconformists are harder to enumerate. There was one old-established Baptist congregation in the parish, but it was again during Victoria's reign that missions and chapels ran riot. From over twenty foundations of that period just two, the Northcote Road Baptist Church and the Welsh Presbyterian Chapel in Beauchamp Road, can claim continuity in their original premises. Some have rebuilt, others have moved into their halls, but most have closed.

St Mary's, Battersea, pre-eminent as the original parish church, has been the subject of an exhaustive study, J. G. Taylor's *Our Lady of Batersey* (1925). It was a dependency of Westminster Abbey up to the Reformation. Its patronage passed along with the manor of Battersea to the St John family in 1627 and hence in 1763 to the Earls Spencer. But when St Mary's was rebuilt

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in 1775–7, the initiative came from the Vestry, not the patron. The new church was a symptom of gathering bourgeois confidence, as local influence became shared between the rising number of Thames-side manufacturers and mercantile villa-dwellers, and an older agricultural constituency.

Battersea's vicars were often figures of minor note.¹ An example is Robert Cromwell, a cousin of Thomas Cromwell and agent of Wolsey's who looked after building material at York House on its way to Hampton Court. During the St Johns' lordship, the incumbents often served as their chaplains, notably Simon Patrick (vicar, 1657–75), and after the founding of Sir Walter St John's School as their schoolmasters. The church's rebuilding took place under another scholar, William Fraigneau, appointed by the last of the St Johns.

Because the right of presentation had been temporarily purchased for one term, Fraigneau was succeeded by his curate John Gardnor, who possessed no degree but had practised as a landscape artist and run a drawing academy before his ordination. As the 'Rev. Mr. Galispinus' of the 'parish of Asparagus', Gardnor became the butt of newspaper satire. The alleged complaint was his grasping composition of tithes, no trifling matter in a still largely rural parish. Underlying these attacks lay a quarrel with a contumacious parishioner, Isaac Akerman, over burials and vaults.² Evidently Gardnor lacked the authority needful in a vicar of Georgian Battersea; and he had no known contact with the famous revival of religion promoted from within his parish, through the campaigning of the 'Clapham Sect' – Henry Thornton, William Wilberforce and their friends.

The Spencers made amends with their four nineteenth-century appointments to Battersea, all Whigs and Liberals like themselves. Joseph Allen (1808–34) was an intimate of the 2nd Earl Spencer, tutor to his heir at Cambridge, and spiritual adviser and confidant to both earls;³ he went on to

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the bishoprics of Bristol and then Ely. Allen rebuilt the vicarage and revived Sir Walter St John's School (page xxx). But his involvement with Battersea's first district church, St George's, created in 1827–8 to serve Nine Elms, remote from the old village was marginal, indeed almost hostile. When St George's seemed to be faltering, Allen wrote to the 2nd Earl, 'I am happy to say that notwithstanding my contiguity to Clapham ... the Evangelicals look upon themselves as foiled in my Parish'.⁴

Allen's successor, Robert Eden (1835–47), also advanced to bishoprics, first of Sodor and Man, then of Bath and Wells. His Battersea incumbency was effective and benevolent. As a son of the 1st Lord Auckland (and eventual successor to the title), Eden moved in the high Whig circles around the Spencers; his promotion to Battersea was supported by his friend Lord Melbourne and other grandees.⁵ Eden readily intermingled politics with his duties. He has perhaps the best claim for inspiring Battersea Park, while his direction of the parish school led to the founding of the Battersea Training College for teachers. As a local church-builder Eden has just one foundation to his credit, Christ Church, started in 1847 as a personal response to the take-off of population, not the promotion of an incoming clergyman. He would doubtless have built more, had he stayed longer.

With Eden's successors the high tide of Battersea church-building arrives. J. S. Jenkinson (1847–71) comes across as uncharismatic, as well as 'a bit of a terror to boys and girls'.⁶ The renewed independence of Sir Walter St John's School came about partly through Jenkinson's tactical errors. And having been balked from shifting the parish church from St Mary's beside the deteriorating riverside (where he declined to live) to modern Christ Church, he refused to allot a separate district to the latter until 1861.

Thereafter Jenkinson moved towards subdividing his exploding parish into further districts. With St John's already in the offing, he anticipated 'two

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more churches in course of time', as he told the 5th Lord Spencer, 'one in B. Fields near the Park according to Mr Cubitt's plan – and another which I think will come first on or near Wandsworth Common'.⁷ St Mark's, Battersea Rise, the second project, was as much Jenkinson's foundation as it was his successor Erskine Clarke's.

The other Anglican churches of the 1860s – St John's, St Paul's, St Saviour's, and St Philip's – followed the new pattern of independent promotions. St Paul's and St Saviour's were both spun off from existing districts, while St Philip's, created by Philip Flower as an attraction for his Park Town development, became Battersea's only estate church. Such foundations generated disputes about their territories and boundaries, since each church required a proportion of middle-class houses within its district to prosper.

Except perhaps for St Luke's, none of Battersea's Anglican churches after 1860 was funded by the immediate local faithful. That was predictable in an area with many newcomers and little social stability; the same holds for the local Catholic churches (but not for Nonconformist foundations). The donors ranged from Flower the businessman-speculator through property-owners like Lord Ashcombe (George Cubitt) to the evangelical supporters tapped for St Barnabas's. But a core of contributors to Anglican church extension crop up as early as Christ Church and continue through into Erskine Clarke's ventures. Largely merchants or businessmen living near the commons, they included Henry Sykes Thornton, son of the 'Clapham saint' and banker Henry Thornton; William Evill, owner of the Orlando Jones starch works; and pre-eminently Philip Cazenove. This philanthropic stockbroker became Clarke's main supporter, probably paid for most of St Mark's and had embarked with him on St Michael's before he died. Through these networks a respectable evangelicalism permeated Victorian Battersea.

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The other significant donor was John Erskine Clarke, vicar of Battersea from 1872 to 1908 and the parish's outstanding personality in the generation before John Burns.⁸ When Clarke died in 1920, his various enterprises (running beyond churches to dispensaries, clubs and missions) were said to have been 'greatly assisted by the possession of ample private means which he expended freely and generously for the good of others'.⁹ Clarke's wealth came from an East India Company fortune, doubtless augmented by the publishing enterprises he started during his early ministry in Derby. There he invented the modern parish magazine, with inset contributions distributed nationally. Two wholesome papers for children followed: *The Prize* (1863) and the more successful *Chatterbox* (1866). In 1871 Clarke started *Church Bells*, a magazine supporting his 'central' churchmanship which he edited until 1906.

Clarke therefore was a good communicator and businessman. He ran his Battersea fiefdom via a large, changing staff of curates, some of whom took over the district parishes as they came into being (III. 3.1). The earliest was John Toone, who accompanied him from Derby, became vicar of St Peter's, and stayed locally for the rest of his career. On arriving in Battersea, Clarke launched a parish magazine which broadcast his plans and commonsense beliefs in ebullient prose. He was also aware from a preliminary visit of the parish's growing pains, and of the boundary disputes which had beset Jenkinson, as he confided to his patron, the 5th Earl Spencer.¹⁰ Within a year he had a fair idea of where he wanted to build churches, often anticipating housing development.

Some portions of this plan took shape. St Mark's assumed permanent form, and three new churches and districts were created: St Peter's north of Clapham Junction, and the future St Michael's and St Luke's in the south. In 1874 Clarke bought the land himself for St Luke's, where he spent his declining years. Elsewhere he encountered setbacks. Like Jenkinson, he tried to draw the centre of parochial gravity southwards from St Mary's into

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wealthier territory. Rejecting the damp, riverside vicarage, he established himself in Altenburg Gardens, and hoped for a church near by on the edge of Clapham Common. That fell through, and Clarke's plans were further complicated by the High-Church challenge of the Ascension, Lavender Hill, promoted from 1872, which he regarded as a 'disorganizing' factor in his parochial strategy. As a compromise he paid from his own pocket for the small St Matthew's between Lavender Hill and Clapham Common, but it did not prosper.

Clarke's focus in the late 1870s was on a church by the western edge of Battersea Park meant to supersede St Mary's. The project can be traced back to Thomas Cubitt's idea of a church serving the villas which were supposed to help pay for the park. St Mary le Park, as it came pretentiously to be called, proved Clarke's Waterloo. The established pew-renters declined to desert the old church, while development around the park stalled. Clarke's main mistake, as he came to admit, was to project a cathedral-scale church in the shaky milieu of northern Battersea. Some mystery attaches to its scale. Clarke may have been thinking of St Mary le Park as the future cathedral which was in people's minds when Battersea along with most of South London was transferred from Winchester diocese to Rochester in 1877. He and A. W. Thorold, his new bishop, were on warm terms. But though Thorold held up Clarke's Battersea church-building as a model for South London, he seems to have shied away from St Mary le Park, which never got beyond a rump.

The architect for St Mary le Park, as of five other Battersea churches and several mission halls and schools, was William White. The building enterprises of Clarke's heyday were the outcome of a close partnership with White, an architect of quirky distinction.¹¹ How Clarke came to employ him is unknown; for his church-building début, St Andrew's, Derby, he had gone to Sir Gilbert Scott. White seized on his Battersea opportunities to explore the economical construction of urban brick churches. At St Mark's, the first and

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happiest in the series, started in 1873, he experimented with concrete wall cores; at St Michael's, essentially a mission church, he explored reductions in height and wall thicknesses. These, along with the last of the series, St Stephen's, are the sole survivors. The others were St Peter's, brilliantly squeezed into a tight space and equipped through Lord Ashcombe's generosity with a tall tower; the modest St Matthew's; and St Mary le Park, which with its twin towers and steeples was the reverse of economical – indeed the grandest church design White ever produced. Its failure doubtless caused him as much grief as it did Clarke.

White's Battersea churches have one local rival in quality, the Ascension, Lavender Hill, started by James Brooks in 1876 and respectfully finished by Somers Clarke in the 1890s, after Brooks had withdrawn. It boasts the noblest of Battersea's church interiors, but lacks the tower intended for it or any rich embellishment, as its parish was never prosperous. By contrast, the basilican interior of St Luke's, one of two churches where Clarke deserted White in favour of F. W. Hunt, has the most impressive fittings of any Battersea church.

As South London swelled, the Winchester diocese had made grants towards church-building there through the Surrey Church Association and its subsidiary, the South London Fund, but there was little co-ordination. Under Thorold that changed. The Bishop of Rochester's Ten Churches Fund, targeted towards the diocese's inherited urban areas, effectively bankrolled three Battersea churches of the 1880s, All Saints', St Andrew's and St Stephen's.

By the time of St Stephen's (1886) Clarke had withdrawn from front-line advocacy for new churches. Only two further Anglican churches were erected, both by individual promotion: St Barnabas's (1897–8), successor to Clarke's scheme for a church on Clapham Common; and St Bartholomew's

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(1900–2), a better piece of architecture but endowed with a parish of just twelve streets, and in Anglican use for under seventy years. It is one of the churches which have acquired fresh life under another denomination, as the Greek Orthodox Church of St Nectarios. A final project never materialized. That was a church of the Holy Redeemer, planned around 1908 for the last portion of Battersea to be built over west of Clapham Common, to designs by J. S. Quilter, Clarke's architect after William White died.¹²

Most of Battersea's churches and chapels belonging to non-Anglican denominations were built according to occasion and inspiration. Both the two main Catholic churches, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Sacred Heart, have eventful histories smacking of improvisation. Both, as mentioned above, were paid for by outsiders; in the Countess de Stacpoole, the Sacred Heart boasts one of Victorian Catholicism's more wilful benefactors.

There had been a long tradition of dissent in Battersea. The Baptists were by many years the first to organize. Their Battersea Chapel in York Road went back by their own account to 1736 and throughout the nineteenth century hung on to the traditions of respectability and enlightenment nurtured under Joseph Hughes, their distinguished minister from 1797. A more forthright tone asserted itself in several Baptist foundations of the 1860s onwards linked to C. H. Spurgeon, who lived in Nightingale Lane and whose sons ministered in local chapels. The Northcote Road Church, the last of these, is of interest as Battersea's first building designed by E. W. Mountford. The only chapel of comparable merit, the Broomwood Road Wesleyan Church of 1900 by Read & MacDonald, has been demolished. Countless other foundations, too small to notice, strove to raise the morale of Battersea's working masses in cheap chapels and back-land mission halls.

It remains to summarize the decline, or changing face, of Battersea's places of worship. It is now well appreciated that Victorian urban churches

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were seldom full, however vigorous their activities. In the *Daily News* religious census of 1902–3, Battersea was recorded with the lowest church attendances of any of the South London boroughs canvassed, one per 6.43 inhabitants on a given Sunday. The Anglican churches boasting the highest numbers were St Barnabas's, the Ascension and St Luke's, in that order, each with over a thousand worshippers. Several other denominations claimed more than a thousand. The Wesleyans of Queen's Road Chapel rated much the highest figure of all, 2,401, while between the 1,000 and 1,200 mark came Broomwood Road Church, Lavender Hill Congregational Church and Northcote Road Baptist Church. The highest Catholic attendance, 938, was at the Sacred Heart. The total Anglican attendance in Battersea, excluding missions, was given as 10,705, perhaps a tenth of the borough's population at that date; the Wesleyans came next (4,121), followed by the Baptists (2,734) and then the Catholics (1,737).¹³ These figures must however be read with caution.

Attendances at Queen's Road Chapel tumbled by a third during the First World War, and in 1932 a continuing decline was deplored.¹⁴ Several Anglican churches were in trouble before 1939: St George's and St John's in depopulating riverside districts, and St Matthew's, overshadowed by St Barnabas's. Wartime damage forced reassessment. Christ Church was the only total loss, but there was no enthusiasm for repairing the damaged St John's, St Andrew's and St Matthew's. A proposal in 1945 for six large parishes instead of the former seventeen proved too radical for most clergy.¹⁵ The emphasis soon turned to rebuildings. Christ Church was reconstructed in the 1950s on old foundations, dull outside but with a Festival-of-Britain charm within. Challenging positions on council estates found some favour. The new joint St George's with St Andrew's was rebuilt on the latter's site in the heart of the Patmore Estate, while the Battersea Chapel abandoned its historic roadside situation and built the strongest of the district's post-war places of worship in the lee of a slab block off Wye Street.

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From the 1960s the emphasis was again on amalgamations, shrinkages and closures. John Betjeman, sent to inspect some Battersea churches threatened with redundancy in 1966, expressed the gloom of the time. 'It's a terrifying district,' he reported, 'where the parochial system seems hardly to exist in a flitting population, and the churches are barricaded with padlocks, and all the telephone booths are wrecked, so that one cannot ring up the vicars'.¹⁶ St Bartholomew's, St Paul's and St Stephen's were all shut, the first and last being sold to other denominations. The Ascension and St Mark's both narrowly escaped closure. St Mary le Park was rebuilt on a smaller scale in 1968-70, using part of the site to develop flats, but even so could not sustain itself and was later sold to a Filipino congregation. All Saints' and St Peter's were destroyed by fire in 1969 and 1970 respectively, to be replaced in reduced and in the latter case temporary form. Another means to shrink the worship area was to convert the church interiors, as has happened since the 1980s at St Saviour's and St Barnabas's.

At the time of writing some Battersea churches are still precarious. Others have renewed themselves, whether because of recovery of population and social cohesion, the transfer of buildings across denominations, or more tolerant and charismatic leadership. Many churches seem to be sustained by rents from nursery schools. There have been no major demolitions since Broomwood Road Church disappeared in 1981 – in itself some token of success.

Anglican Churches

St Mary's, Battersea

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Battersea's stout and sober parish church has the best position of any London riverside church. Sited at the northern edge of Battersea village, its steeple stands up forthright to distant view at a broad bend in the Thames. It was built in replacement of a medieval church to designs by Joseph Dixon in 1775–7, and has been remarkably little altered. Though enveloped by recent rebuildings, it remains the chief architectural symbol of Battersea's historic identity (Ill. 3.1a).

Before 1775

Unequivocal evidence for a church at Battersea goes back to 1157. If one of the fabricated charters of Westminster Abbey is credited, one may have existed ninety years earlier, when William the Conqueror is said to have granted to the abbey the manor of 'Batriceseia' along with its outlier at Wandsworth and another manor at Pyrford in Surrey 'with their churches' – a phrase that obscures whether all or just some of these places had churches. The 1157 document refers definitely to a church at 'Patriches' and a chapel at 'Wandelswrth', suggesting that Battersea was the senior settlement, and mentions a rector. By 1185 the rectorial powers were in the hands of the Abbey, leaving a perpetual vicar on the spot. The dedication of the church to St Mary is attested from 1403.¹⁷

As the fabric of the first church was obliterated and overlaid by the present building in 1775, what is known of it comes from episodic book-keeping entries and scanty engravings. For the pre-Reformation years the Westminster Abbey infirmarers' accounts list expenses incurred between 1320 and 1532 in maintaining the chancel and the south chapel at Battersea. One item in these lists is of special interest. In 1379–80 Henry Yevele was paid £5 for a stone window with iron bar and glass for the chancel, a work inspected at intervals during its progress by the infirmarer himself.¹⁸ The position of this

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window is not stated, but it has always been assumed that it was at the east end (of which no view survives). When the church was rebuilt, it was resolved on account of the St John glass of the 1630s in the east window to retain its form in the new fenestration (see below). On that ground it has been suggested that the present east window reflects Yevele's creation, at least in broad arrangement.

St Mary's at the time of the Reformation probably consisted of a west tower, an unclerestoried nave and chancel, and a south aisle with separate pitch extending the church's full length and terminating in what sixteenth-century documents call the St Nicholas chapel or chancel. The most informative view, by James Peak, shows the south aisle full-on c.1760–75, when it retained two windows in the Decorated style and two broader ones of Perpendicular or Tudor date (III. 3.3). J. E. Taylor maintained that the eastern end of this aisle, with a St Nicholas altar, dated from 1489–90, when works are mentioned in the accounts, but that is hard to reconcile with Peak's depiction of a Decorated-looking window in this position.¹⁹

The Reformation broke the link between Battersea and Westminster Abbey. In 1559–62 the usual Protestant stripping and simplification occurred including the removal of the rood loft, though the wording of the churchwardens' accounts suggests that the screen was left.²⁰ Battersea's Elizabethan and Jacobean churchwardens were not inactive in looking after the fabric. In 1599 they had a 'new loft' built, probably at the west end, where no doubt the gallery seats were placed in 1608.²¹ Further evidence of pressure on space came in 1613, when the churchwardens entrusted a narrow pitch-roofed north aisle to a Mr. Benson of St Martin's in the Fields, 'who undertooke the new buildings of ye yle, the taking downe of ye pillers of ye churche & to sett up collumes of wood in theyre places'. Preparatory to this work, a visit had been paid to St Martin's in the Fields itself, where new aisles had just previously been built.²² Arnold Taylor has suggested that the

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craftsman in question may have been John Benson senior, a bricklayer later involved in building St Paul's, Covent Garden, and other development in that area.²³ Following this work, the Battersea nave probably had timber columns on both sides.

Next came the rebuilding of the west tower, carried out in 1639 but perhaps planned as early as 1624, when the churchwardens' accounts record that 'the Surveyor came to veiwe the steeple'.²⁴ Arnold Taylor has hypothesized that this surveyor could have been Inigo Jones, citing the courtly connections of Sir Oliver St John, Viscount Grandison, whose wife held the lease in the manor of Battersea before he bought it from the Crown in 1627, and was commemorated in the church after his death in 1630 with a monument by Jones's associate, Nicholas Stone. Taylor also noted that in 1638, just before the Battersea tower was undertaken, the churchwardens made a journey to Staines. The Staines church tower had then not long been rebuilt, and still bears a Georgian inscription stating that it was built by Inigo Jones in 1631.²⁵ There is no suggestion that the Battersea tower was designed by Jones, only that he may have had passing oversight or knowledge of it.

The Battersea tower was built largely of bricks (made in the parish at Latchmere) with a modicum of Oxfordshire stone. The contractors, Augustine Granger and William Dee, were also Oxfordshire men, from Henley, as were three of their assistants. Arnold Taylor pointed out that a further brick church tower at Purley, Berkshire, not far from Henley, had been rebuilt by Lord Grandison in 1626.²⁶ The various engravings showing the tower ([Ills 3.2, 3.3](#)) differ in detail but all depict a robust, traditional Gothic structure with traceried windows, corner buttresses and battlements, perhaps replicating features of its predecessor. It cannot have been soundly built, for it was pronounced dangerous less than a century and a half after its construction.

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By the time the tower was built, the manor house next door had been reconstructed and the famous Van Linge stained glass installed in the east window of the church by Sir John St John, probably in 1631. This glass (III. 3.19) survived the destruction of the old church and is described below.

The last known set of major alterations to the old church took place in about 1703–7 when under Sir Walter St John's auspices repairs took place and a cramped gallery for the boys of his charity school was tucked under the south aisle roof. Peak's view shows a new outside staircase, upper entrance and dormer windows spatchcocked on to the aisle to achieve this, belying the reported inscription on the gallery, 'This Church was beautified Anno Dom. 1707'.²⁷ In at least its final years, there was a vestry room in the south-west corner beside the entrance.²⁸

The church of 1775–7

By the 1770s the old structure was dilapidated and the churchyard too small, with burials accumulating inside as well as outside the church, and sometimes riverlogged. A sense of renewal was also felt after the Spencers succeeded the St Johns as lords of the manor in 1763. Many land transactions ensued, and Battersea Bridge opened in 1772. Other suburban parishes around London enjoying an influx of bourgeois commuters reconstructed their churches around this time, among them Lewisham and neighbouring Clapham. But neither the Spencers nor the forces for religious reform gaining strength in Clapham lay behind the Battersea rebuilding. The initiative came from the Vestry. While the vicar, William Fraigneau, presided over the campaign, his role appears largely one of compliance. A Bolingbroke appointee going back to 1758, he was a pluralist with another living at Beckenham.

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The key to the project was extending the churchyard, hemmed in to the north-west by a dock belonging to the manor, to the south and east by outbuildings of the manor house, and to the south-west by cottages flanking the churchyard entrance. Attempts at enlargement by removing the cottages in 1738 and again in 1758–9 had aborted. When the idea was revived in 1771, their demolition was linked with a proposal to rebuild the church and extend the burial ground northwards by filling in the manorial dock and re-embanking the river front. Earl Spencer, who had no personal or ancestral interest in the manor house, consented to that ampler plan. The additional ground was eventually consecrated in 1778.²⁹

A rebuilding scheme for the church is first hinted at in December 1769, when one of the churchwardens, Joseph Dixon, was asked to appoint two ‘proper persons’ to join two vestry members in inspecting and reporting on the state of the tower.³⁰ Dixon, a parish overseer in 1767 and churchwarden in 1768–73, was to dominate the rebuilding strategy. A Stamford-born mason, he had come to London in the 1750s along with his older carpenter-brother Richard. After winning contracts for Blackfriars Bridge, the Dixons were soon in a large way of building. But the collapse of a bridge at Exeter during construction in 1775 heralded a downward spiral for Joseph Dixon’s fortunes.³¹ He himself attributed his troubles to a sudden rise in the cost of Portland stone while building Blackfriars Bridge, and the fact that he contracted rheumatic gout through his assiduous site supervision there. At any rate he was declared bankrupt in 1778, and his Battersea house was sold, as were substantial speculative interests on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. Dixon was unable to work much thereafter and died in 1787.³²

Luckily for Battersea, the repercussions from these events came too late to derail the rebuilding. Throughout the proceedings Joseph Dixon appears as businesslike. Accusations against his probity while churchwarden were made in 1772,³³ but were discounted by the Vestry. Despite his misfortune he was

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awarded a twenty-guinea gratuity in 1779 'for his extraordinary assiduity and trouble in conducting the building of the church', and he was buried there without fee.³⁴

The 'proper persons' duly chosen to examine the church tower were Messrs Norris and Wyatt (perhaps the builders Richard Norris the elder and George Wyatt). Their report was damning enough for the Vestry to consider the church's 'ruinous Condition' in November 1770. A year later an outright rebuilding had been agreed. A committee, naturally including Dixon, advised the Vestry in 1773 that a 'Brief' or warrant for raising money would be needed. That document specified what was wrong with the old church: 'that the Tower therof is rent from Top to Bottom on two sides and in a most dangerous situation every time the Bells are rung and that the Walls of the said Church and the roof thereof are so old and rotten and decayed as to endanger the Whole Fabric'. (Part of the south wall along with the adjacent sexton's house duly collapsed in 1774, some months before building began.)³⁵ It was now agreed to carry through a plan which Dixon had promised to produce after the decision to rebuild.³⁶

An Act of Parliament in May 1774 sanctioned the raising of a sixpenny rate, and the sale of church property as well as up to forty pew-rents in the projected building.³⁷ Over forty trustees appointed under its terms now requested 'those gentlemen' who had sent in plans for the new church to attend on them. So Dixon was not yet in the clear against competitors.

The 'several Artists' who attended the trustees turned out to be three in number: William Jupp and William Newton, working together, who decided it was 'not agreeable to leave their plans &c. on the terms proposed'; and John Plaw, who came without a section or estimate.³⁸ Drawings survive for Newton's design (the Jupp and Newton submission appears to have been his alone); it was sponsored by John Walter of Clapham Common, who claimed

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that 'the Plan has been approv'd by the most eminent Surveyors in England, and it is different from any yet executed'. A neoclassical temple front with an Ionic portico in antis prefaced a galleried interior rising up to a coved ceiling and terminating in an apse housing a baldacchino. A tower was to be attached behind the east end; the crypt would have been entered from its base. In Newton's handsome presentation drawing, the church is depicted in an ideal landscape and the tower omitted (Ill. 3.4). The inscription over the portico suggests a dedication to St Patrick, perhaps a piece of guesswork as to Battersea's etymology.³⁹

By now Dixon had dropped out of the trustees and was being referred to as 'surveyor' to the project. In July 1774 his plan was unanimously approved, with a cost-limit of £3,500. Amendments followed, among them the portico, added 'so that the Inhabitants may be set down under cover'.⁴⁰ The spire was probably also an addition to Dixon's first design, and after prevarication the trustees decided to position the tower 'one half within the body of the church and one half without'. They also ordered 'that the painted window in the Chancel, be placed over the Altar'.⁴¹ In January 1775 the trustees resolved that 'the site of the Ground for the new Church shall enclose the Old Church, and leave one foot distance between the new and old Walls in the same manner as described in a former Plan delivered by the Surveyor'.⁴² As this affected the crypt, Dixon now produced a plan 'for groin'd Arches to be constructed on the Bases of the Pillars that support the Old Church'.⁴³

Competitive tenders in gross were sought in March. Dixon was in sufficient control to ensure that his brother Richard put in the winning bid, for £3,450. Five of the trustees met at the Langbourne Ward Coffee House, Fenchurch Street, to draw up the articles for building. In May the last service was held in the old church, the congregation transferring to 'Lord St John's

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Charity School' and then to a barn next to the workhouse while rebuilding took place.⁴⁴

Richard Dixon's work was in hand by the time Fraigneau, deputizing for Earl Spencer who was abroad, laid the foundation stone on 10 July 1775.⁴⁵ Work must have been well advanced by June 1776, when the trustees viewed the tower and decided to heighten it slightly; a fortnight later the workmen applied for a 'Bean Feast instead of a raising Feast', suggesting the roof was nearly finished.⁴⁶ Meanwhile the Dixons had abandoned the idea of using the old walls or columns as foundations for the piers of the crypt. These were founded on oak sleepers and fir planks five feet below the old church floor, brought up in brickwork to that level, and then raised above ground in soft stone culminating in Portland stone caps carrying the groining.⁴⁷

By 1777 the exterior was mostly complete apart from the spire, which when ready was ordered painted 'in a warm Stone Colour'. Inside, the trustees were exercised by seating arrangements. They also contemplated placing the pulpit at the west end before reverting to the conventional Georgian arrangement of parallel pulpit and desk. Fireplaces or stoves against the middle of each aisle wall were the sole means of heating. There were some gifts. Isaac Akerman undertook to pay for the altarpiece in return for a free pew, and an unknown donor gave the central chandelier. Towards the end of the work Richard Dixon, running late and in evident straits, asked for advanced payments. These he generally received despite a reproof and one threat of litigation 'for great neglect of the Business ... after several repeated Promises'. The rebuilt church opened six months late on 26 October 1777. The year concluded with the hanging in the vestry room of framed and glazed plans, elevations and sections of the church by Joseph Dixon junior, for which he was paid 14 guineas. These drawings, though damaged, are extant (III. 3.6).⁴⁸

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We have the names of only a few craftsmen and suppliers involved in the rebuilding. Richard Dixon's foreman, Thomas May, received four guineas for 'Sobriety good Behaviour and Diligence'.⁴⁹ The more significant independent figures include: John Dagley, extra brickwork; John Fairchild, painting royal arms; Patrick Hutton, tower clock; Thomas Janaway, bells; William Pindar, extra masonry; Edward Smith, upholstery; Underwood & Co., iron and lead altar rails and metal lights over altar.

Later alterations

An early addition of note was the insertion in 1795–6 of the two small stained-glass roundels by James Pearson left and right of the east window.⁵⁰ This was during the incumbency of the clergyman-artist John Gardnor, who probably brought in Pearson.

Significant alterations took place in 1823–4, when £3,608 19s 6d was spent on repairs and improvements. The architect was 'Mr Shaw', presumably John Shaw, and his clerk of works Mr Berry.⁵¹ The purpose was to enlarge and improve access to the galleries, no doubt in response to Battersea's growing population. The seating was rearranged,⁵² galleries were projected forward on all three sides, while external single-storey wings were tucked in left and right of Dixon's portico to house new staircases (III. 3.8). The ceiling may also have been raised. In the western gallery, the organ installed there in 1791 was replaced by a superior one in the same position, paid for by subscription. The maker was George IV's organ-builder Henry Lincoln, who had built the instrument for the Brighton Pavilion. It was later much altered and enlarged by Bishop & Son.⁵³

The inevitable Victorian recasting was conducted with a lighter touch than normal, thanks to the limited role assigned to St Mary's in the schemes of Canon Erskine Clarke, vicar from 1872 to 1909. There had been plans to add a

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chancel just before Clarke arrived.⁵⁴ He however decided that transforming St Mary's, isolated by the river and attended by an old-fashioned, pew-renting congregation, was not a priority.

'There is nothing at all attractive about the old parish church as a place of worship,' Clarke told his patron Earl Spencer just before taking over, 'but I do not intend to make any changes till we have, I hope, educated the people to wish them'.⁵⁵ Soon he could report that he was gaining ground by means of 'a fairly hearty service, with the Choir brought down from the Gallery'.⁵⁶ By 1875 Clarke had decided to build a new parish church – the future St Mary le Park – next to Battersea Park, leaving the old church much as it was.⁵⁷ As it turned out, the failure of his fund-raising for St Mary le Park left it as an appendage of the parish church rather than the other way round.

Clarke did not neglect St Mary's. One of his early acts was to suppress a proposed mission chapel in 'Old Battersea' in exchange for a promise to improve the parish church.⁵⁸ The first reforms dealt with the dead. Within the crypt some coffins had been left above ground, with occasional unpleasantnesses when 'a coffin burst and the church was redolent of deceased citizen'. In 1875 the bodies were reinterred under a foot of concrete in the vaults beneath, leaving the crypt available for parish purposes.⁵⁹ Next year a small mortuary was built in a corner of the churchyard next to the river (page xxx).

The church's interior could not be reorganized until the 99-year pew leases granted to help fund the rebuilding had expired. In 1876 Clarke commissioned a report from Arthur Blomfield, who specialized in adapting Georgian churches. Predictably, Blomfield opined that the church had been built 'at a time when architecture and art of every kind was at an extremely low ebb', while the seating was 'a standing record of the old idea of exclusiveness and privacy, and of the distinction between rich and poor'. Yet

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he conceded that the church was solidly built, and saw no point in adding a chancel or otherwise disturbing the external envelope.⁶⁰ Blomfield's proposal provided for new flooring, alterations to the pewing, the formation of simple choir seats with the organ brought down from the gallery to a position beside them, the adaptation of the pulpit, the removal of gallery partitions, and new heating and lighting. A compromise between Clarke and the congregation left some seats appropriated, while others became free.⁶¹

This work took place in 1877–8, with Macey & Son as builders. The colour scheme included parti-coloured columns (fitted with gas brackets) and green walls; the choir was paved in encaustic tiles, while the architect E. Swinfen Harris stencilled the pulpit and the wall over the sanctuary arch. A basin by Blomfield was added atop the existing slight marble font and positioned on the north side behind the choir. In addition the vestry acquired a small wooden stair down to a storeroom, and the quaint oriel window peeping out under the portico (Ill. 3.10).⁶²

Later Victorian and Edwardian works included an accumulation of stained-glass windows, and a scheme of 'garish, gold-lacquer paper' in the apse, put up in 1895 to J. S. Quilter's designs along with new decorative patterns over the sanctuary arch in place of Harris's stencilling. These have now all gone, but a litany desk (1896), a lectern (1897), and oak panelling round the sanctuary erected to honour Clarke in 1909 remain.⁶³

The de-Victorianization of St Mary's started in 1923–4, when the Quilter decorations round the sanctuary were expunged and electric light was installed.⁶⁴ In 1937 Walter Godfrey, expert in historic buildings and a leading member of the London Survey Committee, was asked to advise on the bell frame. When he went on to examine the main roof, three of the trusses turned out to be failing and indeed 'very badly designed'. Finding the roof, once opened up, riddled with dry rot, Godfrey counselled replacing it. This urgent

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work was carried through by Dove Brothers in 1938–9. Besides the roof, a new bell frame was installed and the spire repaired. Inside, Godfrey tidied up and redecorated, eliminating the two-tone colouring of the columns and the decoration over the sanctuary arch so that the royal arms could stand out again. The old metal altar rails were reinstated and the gallery fronts refreshed with gold inscriptions painted by Walter Coe. After the war a painted triptych by John Napper was installed to form a reredos to the chapel at the end of the south aisle, while some floral murals were painted on the crypt walls by Mary Campion.⁶⁵

Under the superintendence of Laurence King, the church's architect for some years, St Mary's was relit in 1963 with neo-Regency fittings (since dispensed with) and its crypt rearranged in the early 1970s, when the Campion murals were destroyed.⁶⁶ By then the lively, left-wing John Morris was vicar. The spire was strengthened with a new steel base in 1977. Artistic legacies from Morris's incumbency include four striking aisle windows designed by John Hayward (III. 3.22).

One of these, the Turner window, was presented by Morgan Crucible in 1979, as the firm was about to leave Battersea.⁶⁷ When Morris himself left in 1988 he noted a 'dramatic change' in the locality over the previous decade, 'with the balance swinging to the private sector and the arrival of more affluent residents'. The trend was confirmed and the setting of the church transformed by the destruction of the looming Rank Hovis Flourmills to the east in the 1990s and its replacement by a building hardly less dominant, Richard Rogers & Partners' Montevetro Apartments. From negotiations over this development St Mary's gained a more open setting for the eastern part of the churchyard in 2000. A new organ was installed by Saxon Aldred in 1992–3. Under plans of the same date by Graham Locke, architect, the crypt acquired its present form under plans of the same time.⁶⁸ At the time of writing it was used by a private nursery school. As to the church's (and

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Battersea's) role the vicar, Paul Kennington, remarked in 2005: 'We're here for people with alternative lifestyles, for all ethnic backgrounds, for people who have been through a divorce and been remarried ... A lot of young people move into the parish, live together, get married and have children – usually but not always in that order – and stay here for a couple of years. Then they need more space and move out to Wimbledon'.⁶⁹

Exterior

Like Clapham parish church, its exact contemporary, St Mary's is a compact rectangular structure with stock-brick walls, pronounced stone quoins, and (as built) a brief apsidal excrescence (Ills 3.8, 3.11). As befitted its more prosperous parish, Holy Trinity, Clapham, was larger, with an extra bay on each side and stone dressings round all the windows. The floor level at riparian Battersea was raised higher over the crypt, while the roof was more candidly expressed at either end by means of pedimented gables.

The west end of St Mary's is particularly effective (Ill. 3.10). Here the roof gable is broken by the tower, and echoed by the stout, pedimented portico beneath. Plastered and customarily light-painted, this portico projects against a backdrop of short wings (part of John Shaw's changes of 1823–4) in the same simplified Doric order and colours, adding dignity to the approaches. The pediment is of the timber eaves type, with block-like modillions over a shallow frieze set off by triglyphs alternating with paterae; the empty tympanum within was once marked by false stone lining of the type still present on the stuccoed backdrop. The portico columns, originally baulks of timber faced in red brick and cement, were replaced in 1923 with all-brick cores, again cement-covered.⁷⁰

The tower and spire were carefully meditated by Joseph Dixon and his trustees, for changes were more than once ordered during the rebuilding,

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presumably to enhance Battersea church's quality as a landmark. Among conspicuous parish churches along the metropolitan banks of the Thames, including Chelsea, Putney and Rotherhithe, the stalwart Battersea steeple on its southward river bend is the most memorable. It has had its critics. It was dismissed in 1782 as an 'insipid Trifle'.⁷¹ A century later the architect J. O. Scott mentioned in a letter to *The Times* 'the absurd spire at Battersea, its vivid green being conspicuous far and near'. He was challenged by Edward Poynter and E. Ingress Bell, the latter arguing that if Scott passed it twice a day as he did 'he would learn to admire its beauty gleaming like a jewel out of the mirk and dinginess of its surroundings'.⁷²

The tower itself is old-fashioned for the 1770s, a date given away only by four slim urns crowning the cornice. As it is engaged with the body of the church, its eastern half breaks through the roof, but the join is invisible from below. Above it come two octagonal stages, the lower one with clock faces towards the cardinal points, the upper one with open lights all round, before the copper-clad spire begins, culminating in a weathervane 130ft above ground.

The sides of the church are little altered above the stone plinth; at lower level however, Dixon's regular round openings have been interrupted once on either side by triplets of Victorian stone windows, probably belonging to the crypt improvements of 1875-6 and presumably cut through to help light and ventilate the crypt.⁷³ Originally the upper halves of the round lights were all glazed, as now, but some were subsequently blocked. At the east end the apsidal projection also retains its original appearance, copper-roofed but without quoins or other indications of status. The tracery of the main window, reinstalled in the rebuilt church, appears entirely of the 1770s in profile, if much renewed. An engraving in Lysons showing tracery in this and the two small flanking roundels is antiquarian invention. Blocked openings at the eastern ends of both aisles indicate original doors here for access. That is

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corroborated by Joseph Dixon junior's plans, though these give no indication of the stairs needed to reach them. They were abandoned as early as 1791.⁷⁴

Interior

As the earliest interior views of St Mary's date from 1826 (III. 3.13), how the church looked before the alterations of 1823–4 must be deduced from Joseph Dixon junior's drawings of 1777. These show that the layout has remained remarkably constant (III. 3.17). The body of the church consists of a galleried space some 60ft by 50ft in plan and 24ft in height, topped off with a Doric cornice, cove and broad flat plaster ceiling. The chandelier given in 1777 doubtless hung from a central rose, as does the present modern brass one. Opening eastwards is the sanctuary arch, set over panelled and capped piers within a slightly projecting centrepiece, ornamented left and right by painted roundels carrying the royal arms. This remains as shown in 1826, including the plaster ornaments on the arch soffit. The form of the apse is also unchanged, with its two small round lights left and right of the central pointed window, rescued from the old church and containing the venerated St John glass of the 1630s.

The main alteration since the 1770s has been the enlargement to the galleries (III. 3.15). These are supported on all three sides by neatly capped timber columns, set well back from the line of the gallery fronts. Beyond the columns is a raised overhang carried on long timber brackets. Details of these arrangements and of their relation to the east wall show that the galleries were brought forward by Shaw to add extra accommodation in 1823–4. The fronts and the columns themselves, however, are Dixon's. The painted roundels of the royal arms, those of Elizabeth I on one side of the sanctuary arch and George IV on the other, doubtless also date from Shaw's alterations, as must the present ceiling, with its Greek corner motifs hiding ventilation extracts.

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The pewing, though reset amidst woodblock flooring in Blomfield's alterations of the 1870s, was always arranged as now, with narrow side aisles outside the line of the gallery columns (Ill. 3.17). The oak pews were never higher than they are today but they extended further east in the centre, almost up to the easternmost gallery columns. Beyond them, Dixon disposed pulpit and desk left and right of the centre aisle giving a clear view of the sanctuary, but by 1826 these had been rearranged centrally in one high block obscuring the east window and altar. The present arrangements, with choir stalls made up largely from old pews set on a tiled floor surround, are basically Blomfield's, modified by later hands.

Beneath the galleries, the side seating extended up to the east wall after 1791 but was cut back at the ends of both aisles by Blomfield when the choir area was created. On the north side he formed a baptistery, moving and enlarging the font in the process. The corresponding southern space was allotted to the pulpit and organ. Only the top deck of the Georgian pulpit survives, set on a Blomfieldian hollow base and still carrying traces of Swinfen Harris's stencilling. Behind it stands the organ. When Henry Lincoln's organ was removed from the gallery in 1877, the console was brought down to ground level but the pipes and case were adapted and raised above it, on the eastern end of the south gallery. The bare flank of the organ at ground level was mitigated by the creation of a side altar in 1946, with John Napper's triptych as its reredos. The present arrangement dates from the organ's rebuilding in 1992-3, when this section of the gallery was removed altogether so that console and organ could form a coherent whole.

Within the sanctuary the flat ceiling with its small central rose, the fine mahogany altar table and the sanctuary railings are all original. The encaustic floor is Blomfield's, and the side panelling dates from 1909, perhaps then

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replacing the decalogue and creed tables shown in 1826. For details of the stained glass see below.

The galleries take the deep form given them in 1823–4, but their plain pine seating is due to Blomfield. The approach staircases are also by Shaw. Two of the three doors under the west gallery have lost their fanlights, while the central one was given glass doors in 2008 designed and made by Sally Scott. It leads to the tower vestry, the only vestry on the main church level. Small and study-like, it is connected by stair to a storage room and enhanced by the 1870s window under the portico.

The crypt is a robust and spacious area with separate access from the east, as well as from the church. It has undergone many alterations since it was cleared in the 1870s. The vaults, white-painted long since, spring from large square piers which were for a time decorated with old coffin plates (III. 3.24). The eastern portions of both sides have been partitioned for office and other uses.

Stained glass

The east window of St Mary's commemorates the St John family, lords of the manor of Battersea (III. 3.19). Along with glass in a similar style in Lydiard Tregoze Church, Wiltshire, which Sir John St John embellished at much the same time, it is now usually attributed to Abraham van Linge, the younger of the two Dutch brothers who made stained glass in London during the reign of Charles I. It can be dated to about 1631, as Sir John St John's second marriage in October 1630 is referred to in the heraldry, but not that of his daughter Anne in October 1632.

The window testifies to the heraldic consciousness of the St Johns. In tints dominated by a venerable gold, it shows at its base portraits of three Tudors with whom the St Johns claimed kinship: Margaret Beauchamp, grandmother of Henry VII by her second marriage, and ancestor of the St Johns by her first; Henry VII; and Elizabeth I. The frames of the portraits incorporate 31 shields and 13 badges. Above are the Stuart arms in the centre, those

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of Oliver St John, Viscount Grandison, on the left, and of his son Sir John St John on the right. The composition is completed by an eagle and falcon rising, and by the Tudor rose in the apex.⁷⁵ Left and right, the apsidal roundels were filled with glass of a painterly character by James Pearson in 1795–6, depicting the lamb and the dove.

The St John window was restored by John Hayward in 1975. Afterwards Hayward was commissioned to design four windows, two in each aisle, depicting famous figures associated with St Mary's. The first executed was that of Benedict Arnold (loyalist general in the American War of Independence, buried here), in 1976; William Blake (married in the church in 1782) and J. M. W. Turner (who painted from near by) followed in 1979 (III. 3.22); last came the botanist William Curtis (also buried here), in 1982. The windows are delicately coloured and incorporate studied references to works of art and nature as well as local landmarks.⁷⁶

Monuments and Memorials

The following is a select list.

North aisle

Percy Thornton, M.P. (d.1918). Tablet.

Samuel Fitch (d.1799) and his wife Elizabeth (d.1800). Tablet.

Thomas Crowder (d.1814) and his brother William (d.1816). Tablet with urn by John Bacon junior, 1816.

James Broadhurst (d.1837) and his wife Mary (d.1846). Tablet with wreath by Garland & Fieldwick.

Sir George Wombwell (d.1846), his daughter Georgiana (d.1834) and wife Elizabeth (d.1856). Pedimented tablet by Henry Weekes.

William Willis (d.1831) and family. Tablet signed Patent Works Westminster.

Thomas Ponton (d.1853). Tablet by Samuel Cundy.

Sarah Willis (d.1857). Tablet signed Westminster Marble Company.

Nathaniel Middleton (d.1807). Tablet with urn.

John Inglis, Bishop of Nova Scotia (d.1850). Tablet with mitre by T. Marsh.

Thomas Dives (d.1880) and his wife Ellen (d.1879). Tablet within Gothic canopy with rich foliage carving.

William Hollingsworth (d.1825) and his sister Phoebe Franck (d.1824). Tablet with draped urn.

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Frances Bull (d.1738) and her son John (d.1738). Cartouche.

James Franck (d.1843). Tablet signed Patent Works Westminster.

South aisle

William Francis (d.1805). Tablet with urn.

Charles Wix (d.1845) and family. Sarcophagus relief, signed Cockerell & Son.

Mary Vardon (d.1808) and her husband Thomas (d.1809). Tablet with urn.

Thomas Astle (d.1803). Tablet with urn, by Charles Regnart.

Ann Mills (d.1816) and others. Tablet.

Thomas Ashness (d.1827) and his wife Abigail (d.1823). Tablet with draped urn.

Martha Hale (d.1736) and her husband Charles (d.1739). Small cartouche surmounted by arms.

West wall

John Erskine Clarke (d.1920). Tablet.

John Rapp (d.1834). Tablet signed by James Loft.

War memorial, c.1920, with frame and winged angel of terracotta.

North gallery

Three tablets commemorating Chalié family, 1793–1838, all signed by J. Bedford.

Robert Vaughan Richards (d.1846) and wife. Tablet.

Sir John Fleet (d.1712). Large cartouche.

Robert Banks Hodgkinson (d.1792) and his wife Bridget (d. 1792). Tablet.

Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke (d.1751) and his wife Mary Clara (Marie-Claire) (d. 1750). Draped double urn with portrait busts in relief, by L. F. Roubiliac, 1753 (III. 0/xx).⁷⁷

Oliver St John, Viscount Grandison (d.1630) and his wife Joan (d.1631). Pedimented frame with busts beneath, by Nicholas Stone (III. 0/xx).

Thomas Fletcher (d.1800). Tablet with broken pediment.

William Vassall (d.1800) and his daughter Margaret. Tablet with urn, by Samuel Joseph.

South gallery

Holles St John (d.1738). Flaming urns flanking small sarcophagus against obelisk, by Rysbrack.⁷⁸

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Sir Edward Wynter (d.1686). Cartouche with rectangular frame crowned by portrait bust, and relief depicting Wynter wrestling with tiger and slaying Moors. Sometimes attributed to Bushnell (III. 3.24a).

John Camden (d.1780) and his daughter Elizabeth Neild. Signed by Coade, 1792.

William Young (d.1807). Tablet by Charles Randall.

West gallery

Margaret Pounsett (d.1820). Tablet with sarcophagus by J. G. Bubb.

Richard Rothwell (d.1821). Tablet with angels by J. G. Bubb.

North gallery stairs

Russell Manners (d.1800). Large tablet by Westmacott junior, i.e. Sir Richard Westmacott.

South gallery stairs

James Bull (d.1713). Very rich cartouche (III. 3.24b)

William Taylor (d.1910). Bronze bust by Mark Rogers. Moved here in 1988 from hall at Sir Walter St John's School, where Taylor was headmaster.

Churchyard

Since the rebuilding of the 1770s St Mary's churchyard has always had a dual approach from the south and south-west, with the larger western gate for vehicles, and a pedestrian gate opening on to a footpath on line with the end of the portico. Until Battersea Church Road was extended, the south side was enclosed by buildings. The first churchyard wall on this side was a low brick affair with higher piers and wooden gates (III. 3.8), while posts or stones interlinked by chains flanked the carriage drive. By the 1820s the western and southern sides were already well filled with tombstones, the most conspicuous being the railed table tomb of Sir Rupert George (d.1823), axial with the portico and crowned by a pyramid.

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Burials ceased in the churchyard at the end of 1853 and were transferred to St Mary's Cemetery, Battersea Rise. At the Vestry's behest shrubs were planted in the areas without headstones in 1866; a plan for laying the stones flat was happily rejected.⁷⁹ The Ordnance Survey of 1867 shows trees lining the churchyard's four borders, and the same circuit of drive at the west end as obtains today. These trees may have been cut down when the churchyard wall was rebuilt in 1884, in response to 'the necessity of raising the level of the adjoining dock'.⁸⁰ The handsome ironwork and brick piers along the south side suggest Arthur Blomfield's hand. At the churchyard's northern extremity, reached by a path along the river wall, stood the mortuary of 1876. Though decommissioned in 1902, it may have survived until after the Second World War.

By 1918 there had been much clearance of tombstones, at least on the west side, where ornamental bedding was taking over amid stones laid flat. The George tomb was among the victims of this policy. The protected south side continued to harbour many stones, as it still does, but the north side had probably also been partly cleared.

After the Second World War the churchyard passed into the control first of Battersea (later Wandsworth) Borough Council, becoming public open space with rights reserved to the church. A revised layout was made in 1964. If carried through it cannot have been found satisfactory, for in 1971 the Greater London Council was proposing a 'facelift' in connection with flood defence works. A further new plan by Wandsworth in 1974 was linked with the ideal of a riverside walk. When proposals for the flourmills site were mooted, developers wooed the church authorities by suggesting that their schemes offered a 'once in a lifetime' chance to improve the setting of St Mary's. The Montevetro development did indeed open up the south-east side, partly by creating an area of garden beyond the churchyard boundary in 2000.⁸¹ At the time of writing the churchyard still looks scruffy, but these

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defects are made up for by the allure of moored boats along two sides and open river views beyond. Its new function as a route through to the Thames-side path makes it much used.

St George's and St Andrew's Church

St George's, the second oldest Anglican parish in Battersea, goes back to the 1820s but possesses the newest church. Built in 1994–6, this occupies a site in Patmore Street formerly belonging to St Andrew's, a church spun off from St George's in the 1870s. Hence the double dedication of the present church—the fourth to occupy this ground (see below). Until 1953 St George's stood nearer the river, on a site now lost among the approaches to New Covent Garden Market.

St George's Church, Battersea Park Road (demolished)

The first St George's was built in 1827–8 to Edward Blore's designs and twice extended. It responded to the gradual urbanization of Battersea's north-eastern neck around Nine Elms, remote from St Mary's, which picked up after the opening of Vauxhall Bridge in 1816. The district's population was estimated in 1826 at some 1,500, about a third of the parish's total. So it was 'very expedient that a Chapel should be built ... in the proposed situation,' wrote the Bishop of Winchester.⁸² The state subsidies available at that time for Anglican church-building spurred the project on.

The foundation was driven by two merchants of apparently evangelical sympathies, George Lewis Hollingsworth and Alexander Gordon. Hollingsworth took the lead; a banker from Darlington, he had a Battersea house some distance away at Lavender Sweep, but his uncle William Hollingsworth, a prosperous merchant and brewer, had died at Nine Elms in

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1825 after fifty years' residence there.⁸³ Hollingsworth and the 2nd Earl Spencer both subscribed £500. The earliest proposal, of 1826, was for a modest chapel to cost about £2,000. By the start of 1827 the first site investigated had been abandoned for an acre belonging to R. W. Southby facing what is now Battersea Park Road, just east of Battersea New Town. The Commissioners for Building New Churches agreed to subsidise construction up to £3,000, if Hollingsworth would guarantee the incumbent's stipend.⁸⁴ Battersea Vestry appears to have contributed some £800, but Battersea's vicar, Joseph Allen, took a cautious stance, ripening to hostility.⁸⁵

Early on, Hollingsworth had an architect in mind, perhaps the J. [Joseph?] Walker later paid for some plans and a specification. But the two architects who submitted designs in about February 1827 were John Davies and Edward Blore – the latter suggested through the Bishop of London, relaying the views of Earl Spencer who 'strongly recommends Mr Blore'.⁸⁶ His was the costlier design, promising 596 sittings; Davies's cheaper one provided only 482, yet Blore's thirteenth-century Gothic was preferred to Davies's fifteenth-century effort. The contractor Francis Rickman started work in September. Consecration took place in August 1828.

St George's was the first of Blore's many churches. Within a burial ground some 175ft by 220ft he set a lancet-style box of brick with stone dressings, high-pitched roof, brief chancel, regular buttresses, western bellcote, corner pinnacles and summary porches on both flanks (III. 3.26). At the ends the lancets were tripled. Internally the nave was flat-ceiled under a queen-post roof – a feature criticized by E. J. Carlos of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as the ceiling forced on the chancel arch a profile 'more obtuse than the period adopted strictly allows'. The chancel, flanked by plain pulpit and reading desk, had a coved ceiling and an altar 'covered with crimson velvet'. On either side of the windows the Creed, Paternoster and Decalogue were jammed into niches. The densely pewed nave contained a font imitating

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Sussex marble. A west gallery, cutting across the long lancets, was included from the start, but north and south galleries were an afterthought during construction. All three were propped by iron columns.⁸⁷

St George's early years under its first incumbent, J. G. Weddell, must have been shaky, for in 1831 Joseph Allen pronounced it to have been 'a complete failure, no income of any consequence arising from the Pews'.⁸⁸ In time it settled down and the churchyard, enclosed at Battersea Vestry's expense, filled up.⁸⁹ Only after Weddell's death in 1852 was a district formally assigned to the parish. Following the prohibition of churchyard burials within London, the headstones were laid flat and the churchyard was levelled and replanted in 1867.⁹⁰ A vicarage just east of the church was built in 1862–3 for the third vicar, the Rev. Burman Cassin, to Ewan Christian's designs with Messrs Lathey as builders.⁹¹ It survives, extended and mutilated, as 33 Battersea Park Road.

Though St George's district shrank as neighbouring parishes were formed, by the 1870s its population was over 16,000, entirely working-class and some ten times the number it had been built to serve.⁹² Erskine Clarke described it as 'a large district' with 'a very miserable church'.⁹³ A new broom, the Rev. John Callis, now decided to subdivide the parish and build a mission church, the future St Andrew's. He also added short aisles in 1874 to the economical designs of Henry Stone, architect, with Lathey Brothers as builders (Samuel Lathey was a churchwarden).⁹⁴ These alterations swept away the north and south galleries, but Blore's west gallery and nave ceiling remained. Later another fresh vicar, the Rev. G. F. Whidbourne, used the 'ample means' available to him through his marriage into the Lucas family, local landholders, to overhaul the 'parochial machinery', enlarging the vicarage and the schools, building a mission hall, and reconstructing what was termed 'the ugliest old church but one in the Diocese'.⁹⁵ Under Chambers and Dewes, architects, Lathey Brothers rebuilt the chancel in 1895–6 with

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stepped lancets in the east window, replaced the makeshift girders of the 1870s between nave and aisles with correct arcades, raised the aisles themselves, and took out the nave ceiling and western gallery. In the reconstructed church (Ill. 3.27), only the revealed trusses of the nave roof betrayed St George's original date.⁹⁶

Whidbourne left a dignified yet frigid St George's. In 1912–13 it was said that on a cold day the temperature never rose above 42°F.⁹⁷ Yet an Edwardian schoolboy, Edward Ezard, remembered the church as flourishing, with 'two frock-coated churchwardens, both Express drivers on the Line' stationed at the door to welcome worshippers, and a choir of 'high tenors and deep-throated basses in lusty harmony', until the removal of the LSWR's works from Nine Elms caused its 'sad depletion'.⁹⁸

From the 1930s the parish's plight was exacerbated by slum-clearance and by Battersea Power Station's proximity. The aisles having been cordoned off, an air-raid of 1940 blew open the north aisle wall. Despite further damage and evacuations, St George's remained open. After the war the fabric was in fair condition, but with the railings gone the churchyard deteriorated. The authorities would do only basic repairs until the issue of uniting St George's with St Andrew's had been settled. As the London County Council had zoned the environs of St George's for industry, while the ruinous St Andrew's occupied the middle of a proposed housing estate, the die was cast in the latter's favour. Though the last service was held at St George's in April 1953, it clung on till 1959. A few of its fittings were transferred to the new permanent church. The site was sold to the Covent Garden Market Authority in 1969, when some 1,800 bodies were removed to the necropolis at Woking.⁹⁹

St Andrew's, Patmore Street (demolished)

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St Andrew's began as an iron mission church in 1878. Its permanent replacement of 1884–5 was gutted by bombing in 1940.

In 1875 the Rev. John Callis of St George's and his churchwardens bought a site for a mission church in Patmore Street between Stockdale and Dashwood Roads, close to the LSWR's Nine Elms locomotive sheds. This developing district was described as thickly populated, and of 'extreme poverty'.¹⁰⁰ Under Callis's successor, the Rev. Thomas Lander, a small iron church was shifted from Chelsea to Battersea and erected by Lathey Brothers on the northern end of the site, opening on St Andrew's Day, 1878.¹⁰¹ In 1882 Lander proposed adding a schoolroom at the other end,¹⁰² but as the permanent church soon followed over the whole site, it was probably not built.

Better funding became available to Battersea churches in the 1880s from the Bishop of Rochester's Ten Churches Fund. So the permanent St Andrew's could be built in 1884–5 by Macey and Sons to designs by Henry Stone, the architect who had enlarged St George's. A nave and south aisle only were provided, the north aisle, tower and spire being deferred. An orthodox, Early English performance, the church was oriented southwards and had five-bay arcades in brick surmounted by a clerestory with lancets. A shallow narthex faced Stockdale Road, while the tower base came over the semi-transept facing Patmore Street. The iron building was moved to serve as a mission hall elsewhere in the parish.¹⁰³

In 1899 Erskine Clarke described St Andrew's to Earl Spencer as having 'a squalid population of 10,000'.¹⁰⁴ Appeals from its eccentric and pugnacious vicar, Isaac Tapper, give a flavour of this harsh part of Battersea at that date. By holding services that were 'frequent, bright, and fairly attended, often very large', and spending from his own means, Tapper claimed some successes 'amongst the dense and dark masses of my people'. These he described as

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partly artisans and partly costermongers but 'Alas! Many of them are nondescript and of the very residuum of Society'. The next vicar described the local sociology more laconically: 'Mr Charles Booth in his book on South London marks us black'.¹⁰⁵

The fabric of St Andrew's gave recurrent problems. Reporting in 1939 that the floor had sunk seven inches in places and 'the little hand-pumped organ fell to pieces', the vicar of the day tried a raw tactic in fund-raising on the Incorporated Church Building Society; 'I'm going to say my prayers and wait for your answer'.¹⁰⁶ More positively, Martin Travers cheered up the chancel in 1926–8 with a reredos in carved and gilded wood, and communion rails to match.¹⁰⁷

Use of St Andrew's came to an end after the Patmore Street area was badly bombed on 13 September 1940 and subsequently evacuated. The church's condition may not have been irremediable, but the damage was deepened when the district became 'a designated street fighting area'. After the war the roof suffered further in a fire.¹⁰⁸ The ruins remained till about 1955, when they were replaced by the new church of St George with St Andrew.

St George's with St Andrew's

In about 1949 it was decided to combine the two parishes and build a new church on the St Andrew's site, uniting the dedications. First in 1953 came a temporary prefabricated church next to the derelict St Andrew's, designed by Covell & Matthews, architects.¹⁰⁹ In 1955–6 this was replaced by the permanent St George's with St Andrew's on the old church site, also by Covell & Matthews, while the temporary church gave way to a vicarage.

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For cheapness' sake the architects superimposed on the old foundations an Orlit portal frame system in reinforced concrete to create a conventional church plan directed towards a shallow sanctuary behind a parabolic arch. The plan widened out next to the choir stalls to allow a side chapel, and there was a narrow narthex for the font. Externally, a pencil-like tower, finished off with teak louvres to the bell openings and a copper spirelet, enlivened the brick-faced composition (III. 3.30).¹¹⁰ This is the only portion of the building to survive. The church benefited from a proviso that some of the war-damage compensation money had to be spent on paintings or stained glass. The result was a set of windows by W. T. Carter Shapland including scenes from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Covell & Matthews's church proved too big for post-war congregations. Soon after the west end was converted into a hall in 1972, the parish was united with St Saviour's. In the early 1990s it was decided to redevelop the whole site and build a smaller church within a housing scheme. The work was carried through in 1995–6 by the Southwark Diocesan Housing Association, with Levitt Bernstein as architects. The project comprised a small development of maisonettes and one-bedroom flats as well as the church and hall.¹¹¹ These together form a simple rectangle, oriented northwards. The church space takes its character largely from the large bolted wooden trusses which carry the roof and the central monitor lighting. Six of the Carter Shapland windows, reintegrated in the new church, form the most significant decoration. West of the main vessel, Covell & Matthews' petite tower still signals the church's presence amidst the Patmore Estate.

Christ Church, Battersea Park Road

Sited on an open triangle of land south of Battersea Park Road, Christ Church hides a period-piece interior behind its plain outward face. The present

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church, built in 1957–9 to Thomas Ford's designs, replaced a bomb-damaged predecessor of 1847–9.

The original Christ Church was the first offshoot organized from St Mary's. Battersea's vicar of the day, Robert Eden, took up the cudgels in 1846 on demographic grounds. 'More than 400 new houses have been built and occupied during the last three years at the Bridge end of the parish', he told the Ecclesiastical Commissioners: 'we have an addition of 2000 parishioners from this source alone, and chiefly persons in very humble circumstances... The church at Nine Elms [St George's] is of no use to these inhabitants – it is separated from them by the whole length of Battersea Fields'.¹¹²

In September designs were solicited from six architects. The chosen scheme was by Charles Lee, locally influential. Talbot Bury was 'associated' with Lee in the design,¹¹³ and an engraving of it 'most respectfully inscribed' to Eden by Bury alone (Ill. 3.31).¹¹⁴ Yet only Lee is mentioned subsequently. An ample site, between Battersea Park Road and Sheepcote Lane, was acquired in May 1847 by an exchange of land with the Fownes family. Just then Eden was raised to the bishopric of Sodor and Man, but he laid the first stone and attended the consecration in 1849.¹¹⁵ The church was paid for by subscription and accommodated 980, many seats being rented.

Lee's church was in the Decorated Gothic orthodox in the 1840s, built in Kentish rag with Bath stone dressings. The plan was cruciform, with nave, lean-to aisles and galleried transepts; the northern transept also housed a children's chapel. A crocketed porch under the north-west tower and spire accentuated the west front's asymmetry and acted as the main entrance, supplemented by a southern porch. The flowing tracery of the windows may have been due to the architect-artist Thomas Allom, not Lee or Bury, since lithographs for them survive marked 'Allom Archt' (Ill. 3.32).¹¹⁶ The original builder chosen was John Hawker, who soon failed and was replaced with

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Winsland and Holland.¹¹⁷ Ollett of Norwich carved the reading desk, stalls, pulpit and communion rail. The east window, though non-pictorial, was embellished with James Ballantine of Edinburgh's patent prismatic glass and described as 'a most perfect specimen of geometrical pattern glass painting'. At the west end were a font in Caen stone and the organ, at first-floor level over the tower porch.¹¹⁸

At the outset J. S. Jenkinson, the next vicar of Battersea, hoped to make Christ Church the parish church and turn St Mary's into a chapel of ease. So a separate district was not at first allotted to it. That, Jenkinson thought, would 'altogether alienate one portion of the population, and that the richest, from the other, and create a separate interest in the very heart of the parish'. But his plan to transfer authority to Christ Church was rebuffed at a vestry meeting in 1855. Deadlock ensued until 1861, when with Battersea's population mounting and a further church (St John's) in the offing, a division of districts became inevitable and Jenkinson relented.¹¹⁹ Samuel Bardsley became the parish's first independent incumbent. That paved the way for building a Victorian-Gothic parsonage north of church, where the present vicarage is sited. The plans, by a local architect, William Bennett Hays, date from 1865.¹²⁰

In 1870 Christ Church was 'repaired, decorated and re-heated under the superintendence of Mr. E. C. Robins'.¹²¹ An interior photograph, probably taken after a further restoration in 1930–2 under Cecil H. Perkins, architect, shows plain whitewashed walls, small-scale angels lately painted upon the simple reredos and a replacement for Ballantine's east window. At that date the church was described as 'extremely poor'.¹²² The parish had been in decline since the 1880s, when modest housing grew up round the hitherto isolated building. Changes followed suit on the open triangle of church land. The western end was let to the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association in 1884, laid out as a garden with a fountain, and eventually sold to the Battersea Vestry (page xxx).¹²³ In 1889 there were thoughts of financing a hall south of

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the chancel by building houses at the apex of the triangle to a sketch plan by William White, but nothing came of this.¹²⁴

On 21 November 1944 Christ Church was smashed by a rocket bomb which felled the tower, steeple and north aisle and most of the roofs, along with the vicarage. Thomas Ford, the diocesan surveyor, reported that no part of the fabric could be realistically incorporated into a new building, so clearance was speedily agreed.¹²⁵ A temporary church was erected in 1947–8 to Ford's design next to Cabul Road. It was paid for by the South London Diocesan Fund and included an organ from Holy Trinity, Sloane Street and a font (later transferred to the permanent church) from St Anselm's, Kennington.¹²⁶

Thomas Ford was retained to design the new permanent Christ Church, conceived by 1956, built by William E. Ismay in 1957–9, and a good example of the post-war churches Ford built in the Southwark diocese ([Ills 3.33–35](#)).¹²⁷ It uses the previous foundations and therefore has a traditional plan with nave, aisles and transepts, but vestries and halls occupy the footprint of the former chancel. On the exterior, brick-faced with Portland stone touches, flat-roofed aisles contrast with the canted profile of the copper-clad nave and transepts. There is a diffident bell turret midway along the north aisle. The main front faces westwards, where the aisles project as porches whose tapering door-frames have a hint of Soane's Dulwich Art Gallery. Over the west windows a relief panel in stone by Philip J. Bentham carries the letters Chi-Rho flanked by angel heads; similar panels appear under the transept gables.

In the interior, Festival-of-Britain lightness complements ecclesiastical decorum. The nave and short chancel are in one space, ceiled by a coved plaster vault, lit from clerestory lunettes and seated with chairs. The piers to the aisles are pierced with arched openings and surmounted by Adamesque

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palmette motifs, which continue as a frieze round the chancel. Similar details occur on the boxy pulpit and reading desk. The light fittings add to the period tone, though the globes are not original.

Of note are three mural paintings. Two are by Hans Feibusch: Christ appearing to those accepting and those rejecting him, over the altar; and the sacrament of baptism over the font in the south aisle (III. 3.36). The third, over a side altar in the south transept, is an Adoration scene in grisaille by Augustus Lunn, influenced by Crivelli. Also in the south transept is small-scale stained glass by A. E. Buss. Elsewhere are fragments of glass rescued from the bombed church. An altar cross was presented by the West German Government, while candlesticks on the high altar were given by the Liebfrauenkirche in Bremen.

Later buildings within the church precinct include the present vicarage, built on the site of its predecessor facing Cabul Road, and a clumsy hall added to the south side of the church in 1974.¹²⁸

St John's Church, Usk Road (demolished)

St John's, sited in an unpropitious sector of the parish close to the Wandsworth border, was the first of many Anglican churches constructed in Battersea during the 1860s and 70s. Eventually united with St Paul's, its daughter church, it was demolished following bomb damage.

The main force behind St John's was Daniel Watney, a scion of the brewing family and a partner in the nearby York Road distillery.¹²⁹ He may have been brought in to boost earlier church-building efforts.¹³⁰ Plans were advanced by November 1861, when Battersea's vicar, J. S. Jenkinson, was negotiating an endowment.¹³¹ Soon afterwards Watney bought a piece of land

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on the east side of Union (later Usk) Road which he later presented to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. According to the first incumbent, Edwin Thompson, St John's was intended as 'in all respects a poor mans church', serving a rapidly growing district marked by 'extreme ignorance, spiritual destitution and poverty'.¹³² Early services were held in a schoolroom at Price's nearby candle factory.

The fund-raising committee included the vicars of both Battersea and Wandsworth (since the church's district drew on both parishes), as well as local churchmen like H. S. Thornton, Philip Cazenove and William Evill junior.¹³³ A design by Edward C. Robins was chosen in April 1862 from ten submitted in a limited competition, and the builders Sharpington and Cole started work that summer.¹³⁴ The consecration took place in May 1863.

St John's was the first of three churches and chapels Robins designed in Battersea. A crammed preaching box with rear gallery (III. 3.37), it ran to arcades, a minimal apse and a spiky west front in geometrical French Gothic. Here the steep gables of the separate nave and aisle roofs were originally punctuated by a pair of open bell-turrets, but these were removed for safety's sake around 1890. The external materials were stocks relieved by red-brick bands and arches plus keystones and details in Bath stone.¹³⁵

Since St John's was built for the poor, the whole church was to have been 'free and open'.¹³⁶ The endowment of £1,000 promised by a Mr Lancaster on that condition was for some reason turned down, so that about a third of the 770 sittings had to be rented. But Price's Patent Candle Company reserved an aisle for free seats for their workforce, and also gave the original organ, brought from the Belmont Institute, Vauxhall.¹³⁷

Thompson, a zealous first vicar, built a parsonage facing Wandsworth Common to Robins' design (1864), and a school south of the church (G. H.

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Page, architect, 1866),¹³⁸ before adding St Paul's near by as a second church for the district. After his death in 1876 some stained glass was installed, including windows in the apse in Daniel Watney's memory,¹³⁹ while stalls replaced the old-style proximity of choir and desk to the sanctuary.

Later the neighbourhood deteriorated, 'growing poorer and poorer'. In 1918 the vicar noted that St Paul's had always been 'the larger force' than St John's, 'and we can see no prospect of the centre of gravity returning to the other Church which stands in a backwater amid mean streets'. Some restoration took place at both churches in 1936 (Cecil H. Perkins, architect). Three years later St Paul's became the parish church for the district. St John's was put out of its misery when it was 'extensively damaged by a rocket'. The decision not to rebuild having been taken by 1947, the church soon succumbed.¹⁴⁰

St Paul's Church, St John's Hill

St Paul's was built in 1868 to the designs of Henry E. Coe. It remains only nominally in use for worship, having been divided up and leased by a residents' association for community and nursery uses since the 1970s.

In 1865 soon after St John's, Usk Road, opened, its first vicar Edwin Thompson began promoting a second church in the upper portion of his district, 'where the more respectable part of his congregation chiefly reside'.¹⁴¹ Next year land at the corner of St John's Hill and Brussels Road was taken on long lease from T. C. Mackley.¹⁴² A temporary iron church was first built, probably under the superintendence of G. H. Page, who had designed the St John's schools and was involved in development locally.¹⁴³ The permanent church followed fast, designed by Coe and consecrated on 16 December 1868, while its iron forbear with all its fittings passed on to St John's, Wimbledon.¹⁴⁴

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At a cost of £6,300 including the land, St Paul's was not cheap; in default of evident fund-raising Thompson may have paid for it himself or secured an anonymous donor. A preliminary lithograph by Coe faithfully conveys the broken-up profile of the exterior, with its thin south-western tower and spire (Ill. 3.39). The colourful banding depicted was never achieved, what looks in the engraving like dressed masonry having given way to random ragstone. The auditorial plan with apse tacked on followed arrangements at St John's. There were no galleries. The nave was broad, open-roofed and flanked by flat-faced arcades sitting on polished granite columns with foliated capitals (Ill. 3.40). Pseudo-transepts with large windows helped light the centre of the church and contained seating facing inwards towards a richly carved stone pulpit – among the few original fittings. Early perhaps in date too was the organ, which survives in the north transeptal space.

Thompson seems to have wished to shift his middle-class pew-renters to St Paul's, thus increasing the free space for the poor at St John's. The effect was to impoverish St John's, which in 1939 was described as 'completely overshadowed' by St Paul's. The latter was never rich, but was able to extend the vestries in 1878 and build a church hall to their north in about 1910 (Joseph & Smithem, architects: now converted to housing as 6–14 Plough Terrace).¹⁴⁵

During the Second World War, St Paul's lost most of its stained glass and suffered some structural damage. Its chronicle was enlivened by the brief incumbency (1949–53) of the Rev. Chad Varah, future founder of the Samaritans. Varah moved into the vicarage at 68 North Side, Wandsworth Common, 'by our standards ... a rather small house, with only thirteen rooms'. He spent much time helping his friend the Rev. Marcus Morris with his boys' magazine, *The Eagle*; in the parish he concentrated on the young people, 'because the old people had, as I toughly put it, "had their chance – if

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they hadn't been converted by now they never would be.'" The young became the subjects of Varah's innovative techniques of sexual counselling and sex therapy.¹⁴⁶ Embellishment of the church was not neglected. A west window came from Powells, while for another in the north aisle Varah persuaded 'that eccentric old Irish genius who looked like a witch, Wilhelmina Geddes, to do it before she died; but she died before it was finished and someone else [C. F. Blakeman] completed her design, not wholly unworthily'.¹⁴⁷ Visiting St Paul's in 1966 when it was teetering on redundancy, John Betjeman thought the Geddes-Blakeman window (not installed till 1956) 'a nice design' but 'pale in colour'; the church as a whole he found 'very dismal'.¹⁴⁸ This and the other post-war windows are still in place, obscured behind protective glass.

The destruction of St Peter's saved St Paul's from redundancy, the parishes being formally united in 1972.¹⁴⁹ Some years later a coarse internal conversion ensued, and the Louvaine Area Residents Association took over the building. Few internal features are now visible and most fittings have been removed, apart from the organ and the apsidal panelling.

St Philip's Church, Queenstown Road

This large church, formerly Anglican but used at the time of writing by an Ethiopian congregation, was built in 1869-70 to designs by James Knowles junior as the centrepiece of the City merchant Philip Flower's Park Town estate. Set back and elevated above the east side of Queenstown Road, its ragstone Gothic bulk outweighs the taut brick houses of St Philip Square. Also within the square's enclosure is the former vicarage, south-east of the church.

In Knowles's original prospectus for Park Town of 1864, a square in the present position was delineated, with the centre marked 'site for church

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parsonage & schools'.¹⁵⁰ Not until 1868 did plans for the church get off the ground. By that November a minister had been appointed: John Hall, a missionary-curate from Walworth.¹⁵¹

By an agreement of February 1869, Flower promised to build and endow the church, pay Hall until it was finished, and install him in the south-west corner house of the square, No. 1.¹⁵² Hall started with services in the new-built Victoria Hotel close by, while tenders were obtained for building a design by Knowles, as surveyor to the estate. The winners were Colls and Sons.¹⁵³

Flower gave the site, but refused the full cost of Knowles's ambitious building, estimated at between £10,000 and £13,000. Though praised at the time of consecration in July 1870 for erecting the church 'at his entire expence',¹⁵⁴ in reality Flower paid only half and even in that there was 'a large deficiency', estimated at about £1,250 at his death in 1872. Some £2,000 of the remainder came from W. S. Salting, his partner in developing Park Town; another £2,000 from the Diocese of Winchester's South London Fund, though Flower may have provided half of that; and £1,000 from the Incorporated Church Building Society. Hall then scrambled for the balance.¹⁵⁵

Hall's early hopes were balked when J. S. Jenkinson, vicar of Battersea, refused to endorse the scheme for assigning St Philip's a district, because it took away the middle classes of Lavender Hill from Christ Church. Neighbouring incumbents and Bishop Wilberforce of Winchester were drawn in. 'I am constantly asked whether I can marry people at my church', complained Hall in 1871. 'My reply has been hitherto – No! because I am not yet gazetted! Am I still to say, No! ... The Queen is in Town. Will her Majesty sign the representation so that I may be gazetted? I should so like to be settled'. When Erskine Clarke succeeded Jenkinson next year, the issue of St Philip's boundaries was reopened; it took Earl Spencer's mediation before

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Hall would give up his district south of Lavender Hill.¹⁵⁶ Next Hall proposed, then lost control of, the future Church of the Ascension, whose creation further reduced St Philip's parish (see below).¹⁵⁷ Other confrontations followed. In reference to Hall's churchmanship, which was expected at the time of consecration to be 'of the high-ritualistic type', the Flowers' man of business, James Gould, nicknamed him Park Town's 'self-elected pope'.¹⁵⁸

St Philip's was the last and largest of four churches designed by James Knowles junior, all in South London and of the 1860s, and is the only survivor. Not far southwards lay St Saviour's, Cedars Road, Clapham (1862-4). There too the architectural context was created by Knowles himself, but was one of detached villas. The rectilinear setting of St Philip's was more formally urban.

Knowles's personality is more manifest in the houses of Park Town than in its church, which is reminiscent of Sir Gilbert Scott. Aligned north-south, it consists of a broad nave and aisles, separately pitched, a short chancel flanked by an organ chamber on one side and a vestry on the other, and a polygonal apse (Ill. 3.41). The show front towards Queenstown Road is marked by a sturdy tower over the entrance porch at one end, and a second projecting porch further along (Ill. 3.42). The facing materials are coursed Kentish ragstone with Bath stone dressings. Buttresses intervene between the high traceried aisle windows, while ornamental parapets curb the steep, slated roofs, and small-scale carving surrounds the entrances.

The one external naiveté is the tower, whose two stages cannot compensate for the loss of an elaborate timber spire, which was to have had flying buttresses. It has been claimed that the spire was left out because a committee of architects including Street and Scott feared for its stability on the local alluvial soil.¹⁵⁹ Shortage of funds is the likelier cause. When Knowles's original design was vetted by an architectural panel for the Incorporated

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Church Building Society, J. P. St Aubyn merely noted that ‘the treatment of the Flèche is that of stone construction and possesses none of the characteristics of timber tracery though described as such’.¹⁶⁰

Internally, St Philip’s is generous but barn-like. High arcades allow light to penetrate from the well-windowed perimeter into the unclerestored nave, but the hammerbeamed nave roof vanishes into darkness (III. 3.43). The nave piers vary from round to octagonal and composite, and bear elaborate capitals. The corbels carrying the roof are also carved, and in the chancel depict angels with instruments. Among the original fittings are the deal nave benches, the font, and the elaborate stone pulpit, all Scott-like in style. Since the coming of the Ethiopian congregation the chancel has been curtained; there were originally simple choir stalls and four steps up to the altar, surrounded by two-light apsidal windows. There was no reredos at first, but the chancel was soon decorated with painting, including a ‘regular array of stars’ on the apse roof.¹⁶¹ On the liturgically north side of the choir was the organ, installed by Hill & Son in 1877.¹⁶²

Among enrichments, now gone, were a dwarf chancel screen of 1884 and a beefy oak reredos of 1885 to Hall’s memory. The reredos may have been designed by T. J. Bailey, architect to the School Board for London, who lived near by and proposed it in the church Vestry.¹⁶³ Repairs carried out under the architect R. Stephen Ayling in 1909 chiefly affected the tower, but about then a side chapel was created in the north aisle.¹⁶⁴

In 1922 the Southwark Diocesan Advisory Committee’s secretary advised a radical de-Victorianization. St Philip’s, he said, ‘is spoiled by excessive darkness. It is urgent that this should be removed; in the first place by distempering the walls white, in the second by gradually substituting clear glass for the present stained glass, which is about the worst I have ever seen ... The whiter the church the less the gas bill; the whiter the church the greater

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value you get from coloured glass or coloured hangings'.¹⁶⁵ For the moment stonework repairs received priority, but a wartime bomb disposed of the glass. Stained glass returned to the apse with the installation in 1954 of the present picturesque windows designed by T. D. Randall for Faith Craft Works, showing saints surmounting monuments of South London, including Lambeth Palace, Battersea Power Station, Southwark Cathedral, St Thomas's Hospital and St Philip's itself.¹⁶⁶

In 1964–5 some stripping away of fittings took place under the direction of Gordon Cook, architect, and the chancel was finally whitewashed, but colour was restored to the angel corbels and a revised decorative scheme created above the altar.¹⁶⁷ By then the uphill struggle common to Battersea parishes was making St Philip's precarious. A plan to turn the church site into 'housing units for the needy' having aborted, unsuccessful attempts followed to curtail the worship space and devote part of the nave to meeting rooms and offices. To raise cash the fine organ, recently restored, was sold to Reading School. By a reduced scheme of 1994–5 under Jonathan Louth, architects, pews were removed from the aisles, and offices and studios tucked into side spaces. The roof was put right with lottery money in 2000–1, but soon afterwards the Diocese of Southwark closed the church, let it to an Ethiopian congregation and made the church formally redundant in 2006. The parish was united with that of the Ascension.¹⁶⁸

South-east of the church stands the Tudor-style vicarage, built in 1927 to J. M. Sheppard's designs because the vicar of the time, the Rev. W. A. Gibson, found 1 St Philip Square impossible 'for a man with no private means, and with the domestic problem as acute as it is'.¹⁶⁹ It was not the first proposed incursion into the open space behind the church. A school designed by Knowles and taken up to tender in 1873 was probably meant for this site.¹⁷⁰ Plans for a Sunday school, seemingly of iron but equally unfulfilled, were sketched out for the north-east corner by Sydney Rogers, surveyor, in 1874.¹⁷¹

St Saviour's Church, Battersea Park Road

The ragstone church of St Saviour fronts northwards on to a bleak stretch of Battersea Park Road. Built in 1869–71 to the designs of E. C. Robins, it is the only Victorian church in eastern Battersea still in Anglican use.

St Saviour's was created to serve a swathe of small houses recently built between the railway and Battersea Park Road, described as 'all deplorably poor'.¹⁷² It grew out of Christ Church parish, which in 1866–7 had established an infant school in Orkney Street (page xxx). Under the Rev. John MacCarthy this school doubled as a mission church serving a notional district of St Saviour's, Battersea Park.¹⁷³

By February 1868 the present site, part of a former strip in Battersea Fields belonging to Samuel Poupart, had been earmarked for a permanent church. Together with some 400 feet of land behind, at first intended for a parsonage and schools, it was bought that May.¹⁷⁴ MacCarthy embarked briskly on St Saviour's, using E. C. Robins (author of St John's, Usk Road) as architect and the local Lathey Brothers as contractors.¹⁷⁵ The Incorporated Church Building Society voted £100 so long as the walls and roofs were thickened up. When the church was finished, MacCarthy and Robins extracted £20 more on the grounds that 'the expence of fulfilling the stipulations upon which the grant was given cost nearly 2/3rd of it.' Of the total cost of £6,200, not £100 was raised in the vicinity, reported MacCarthy.¹⁷⁶

Work commenced in July 1869, and a foundation stone was laid by Henry Sykes Thornton, the building committee's treasurer, early next year.¹⁷⁷ With the church roofed in, money ran out and the works were suspended in July 1870. An unsuccessful move was made to sell the half-acre of back land

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behind, by now deemed unsuitable for schools or a parsonage as it had become hemmed in 'by the backs of five or six-roomed cottages of the most common character'. Robins advised building housing on the back land and devoting the proceeds to the church.¹⁷⁸

The balance was found and the interior completed by Latheys in the autumn of 1871.¹⁷⁹ Following the consecration by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce of Winchester, a cousin of Thornton's, a district was assigned to the church early in 1872.¹⁸⁰ That year Heaton, Butler and Bayne patterned the chancel walls and reredos in gold and colour. Robins forewent his fees for this work as a gesture to the churchwardens 'for allowing me to decorate the Chancel in a manner suitable to the style of the Church and creditable to myself'.¹⁸¹

St Saviour's is an orthodox mid-Victorian evangelical church, oriented southwards. The exterior, faced in randomly coursed Kentish rag with Bath stone dressings, has a clerestoried nave surmounted by a timber flèche just short of the chancel arch and flanked by equal aisles, which end in cross-gables hinting at transepts. The entrance front (Ill. 3.46) has three doors, of which one served the stairs to a small western gallery. The slate roof was originally diapered.¹⁸² Only the end and transept windows boast geometrical tracery, lancet windows prevailing elsewhere. The piers to what were once five-bay arcades are mostly circular, but turn octagonal towards the east end; all have carved stiff-leaf capitals. The short chancel is ceiled by a boarded and coved roof, later decorated with plaster lozenges, in contrast to the open-roofed nave.

At first MacCarthy wanted all the 669 sittings at St Saviour's to be free. Wilberforce agreed: 'no pew rents can be calculated upon as giving support to the clergyman in this parish from its universal poverty ... a free & open church is the only provision of any practical avail for this population.' Then MacCarthy backtracked: 'I have been made to see that the plan of making the

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church free and open would give offence to many of my best supporters', so some pew-renting was tried.¹⁸³ Yet by the 1890s all the seats were free.¹⁸⁴

In 1879 a permanent organ by Walkers, lately introduced in the chancel, was brought out into the aisle so that the space could be used as a vestry. A proposal of 1896 to build a new vestry failed for want of money. There were still problems with vestry space in the 1920s when a site was acquired geographically east of the church, but again nothing happened. The chancel window was stained by Ion Pace in 1884 and a stone pulpit appeared in about 1896, while a font in an equally old-fashioned style arrived in 1906. Behind the altar, a plain oak reredos (now in the south transept) was installed in 1915.¹⁸⁵ In 1931 the choir stalls were shifted into the nave to make space in the chancel.¹⁸⁶ From all this work, only the Pace window survives in situ.

In the twentieth century St Saviour's was often fragile. In 1927 the Bishop of Southwark noted that it was 'in a hopeless condition financially, and we may very easily have a public scandal'.¹⁸⁷ With the environs transformed by post-war public housing, the parish meditated a redevelopment scheme involving the church and the hall behind. The latter, a sizeable mission hall designed probably by E. Elton Hawkins, had been built in 1884–5 after an exchange of property promoted in 1882 by the vicar of the time, Samuel Gilbert Scott. Under that arrangement the back land was mostly sold, while the parish acquired a plot west of the church. This allowed access from Battersea Park Road to the portion of land retained.¹⁸⁸

A first attempt to redevelop the whole site and incorporate worship space within housing did not prosper. By a revised scheme of 1983, the hall only was sold to the Threshold Single Persons Housing Association, which redeveloped the site. The receipts were then used to reconfigure the church into a smaller space with meeting rooms. That took place, to the designs of Hinton Brown Langstone, architects, in about 1984–6.¹⁸⁹ The worship area

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shrank to a cruciform space with carpet and flexible seating, while the interior surfaces were painted from top to toe. Meeting rooms occupy the aisles, while there is space for a nursery school upstairs, reached by a new stair. All the old fittings were sold, the Walker organ finding its way in 1992 to the church of St Engelmundus, Driehuis, Holland.¹⁹⁰

The vicarage immediately west of the church was built in 1995–6 to designs by R. G. Pickett, the diocesan surveyor, with Bryen Langley as builder.¹⁹¹ It supplanted the impressive Victorian vicarage built for the Rev. Samuel Gilbert Scott in Alexandra Avenue (vol. 50).

St Mark's Church and School, Battersea Rise

St Mark's Church, among Battersea's foremost buildings, was erected to designs by William White in 1873–4. Though planned before the Rev. J. Erskine Clarke was Battersea's vicar, it became the first fruit of his local campaign for church-extension and his long partnership with White. It was preceded by a school, empty at the time of writing, tucked into a corner of the church site. This was built in 1866–7 as St Mary's Infant School and designed by Benjamin Ferrey.

In 1865 J. S. Jenkinson, then Vicar of Battersea, consulted the 5th Earl Spencer about how his growing parish might be subdivided. Jenkinson preferred a new chapel of ease for St Mary's to a separate district church, and mentioned a site 'near the cemetery' which he asked Spencer to come and consider with him. As Jenkinson noted that those who were 'very tenacious of common rights' would need placating, the site was probably the present one, then common land.¹⁹² For the time being, however, this proposal took a back seat in favour of a school.

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The pressure for school accommodation in St Mary's parish prompted Jenkinson to procure from Spencer in 1866 the gift of a triangle of land on the edge of Battersea West Common. Its 285ft frontage to Battersea Rise comprised more than was immediately needed, so the church was evidently in mind. But the deed of transfer mentions only a school, to be erected for teaching the poor children of Battersea.¹⁹³

By February 1867 the school was complete. It was designed by Benjamin Ferrey, built by Charles Jarrett and mostly paid for by the local philanthropic stockbroker, Philip Cazenove. It consisted of one large schoolroom with a single classroom attached.¹⁹⁴ The school is a pretty miniature in stock brick with red brick bands, a tiled roof and half-hipped gables; a hexagonal bell turret disappeared long ago (III. 3.47a). It was at first called St Mary's School, but because of confusion with the parish school in Vicarage Crescent (page xxx) this was soon changed to St Mark's. According to Erskine Clarke, the name was chosen for the pragmatic reason that only one letter had to be changed in the inscription over the principal window.¹⁹⁵ Sunday services were held here when the building was new. It ceased use as a school in the 1960s.

Early in 1868 Jenkinson and his ally Cazenove were ready to go on with the church project. An appeal was issued, but Earl Spencer prevaricated, as a report had been commissioned on Battersea's ecclesiastical needs and he was awaiting the verdict of Bishop Sumner of Winchester, then, as it proved, irrecoverably ill. Spencer therefore sanctioned only a temporary church.¹⁹⁶ In May accordingly Francis Morton, a civil engineer, supplied an iron church beside the school.¹⁹⁷ This temporary St Mark's, as it was called, flourished and soon outdid the parish church in number of baptisms.¹⁹⁸

When Erskine Clarke succeeded Jenkinson in 1872, turning the temporary St Mark's into a permanent church was the obvious project to

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begin with; Earl Spencer did not demur. How Clarke came to select William White as his architect is obscure, but it inaugurated a long partnership. 'I have a scheme afloat for a Church in my great Parish of Battersea', he announced in July 1873, while White scrambled to get his drawings together before taking his annual continental tour.¹⁹⁹ To Spencer, Clarke advocated the design as both 'as simple as it can be' yet having 'features that make it an effective and Church-like interior'.²⁰⁰ Thomas Gregory of Clapham Junction, chosen as builder without competition, was on site by September. He 'has already beleaguered the Iron Church with scaffold-poles and hoarding', Clarke told his parishioners, 'which makes it look very small and rather forlorn.' It was re-erected on the future church hall site, 'shorn of its pinnacle and some ornamentation', to be taken down anew once the church was completed.²⁰¹ After its second dismantling it served as the temporary church for the future St Luke's, Ramsden Road (page xxx).

A building committee on which Cazenove was joint treasurer with Clarke, soon found the money.²⁰² The foundation stone was laid in November 1873, the consecration following in September 1874 despite technical difficulties. Clarke wanted most of his Battersea churches fast and cheaply built. At St Mark's, partly for economy, partly because settlement was feared on suspect ground, White opted to construct not just the foundations but also the wall-cores from poured concrete, the latter within a double skin of brickwork. There was much experimentation in concrete construction around this time; and White doubtless knew about the concrete-walled St Barnabas's, Oxford (1868-72), built by his fellow-ecclesiologist Arthur Blomfield. But he had not bargained for the authorities' caution. The Metropolitan Board of Works insisted that the wall thicknesses be equal to those prescribed for brickwork, so obviating one advantage of building in concrete with a brick skin. It was also stipulated that the brickwork be laid up in Portland cement, not ordinary mortar.²⁰³

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Asked for a grant towards St Mark's, the Incorporated Church Building Society consulted its Committee of Architects, which prevaricated until it had digested G. E. Street's report on a parallel application to the Surrey Church Association. Street was himself building concrete boarding houses at Marlborough School just then, but thought St Mark's too ambitious for the sum assigned. White replied that there was 'no superficial display about the treatment of the building. It is massive in its parts and ... simple in its arrangements and details'. After a visit by its Committee of Architects well on in the building process, the ICBS followed the Surrey Church Association and offered a modest grant.²⁰⁴

The Architectural Association too visited during construction,²⁰⁵ and White later read a paper to that body setting out his experiences. He reported success with the cement-concrete filling, despite its tendency to swell when poured. But he admitted that it had not saved money and did not repeat the method. 'A deduction was made from the estimate in consideration of using concrete instead of brick for the filling of the walls...but it appears that there ought to have been an addition instead of a deduction to pay for the extra labour'.²⁰⁶ In structural terms the wide but shallow foundations may have counted for more than the concrete walls. Underpinning became necessary after cracks appeared in the west wall and the tower in 1933-4, and further strengthening to the tower took place in 1989. There is no written evidence for severe settlement to the tower during construction, as was claimed on the latter occasion.²⁰⁷

Among St Mark's unusual features was an asymmetrical western narthex-porch. At the east end, the altar stood free within a five-sided apse, but the ambulatory behind it housed a stairway down to a groined crypt beneath the sanctuary and choir. This was the first and most logical of three vestry-crypts White built in his Battersea churches, as the land fell away to the east. Though planned as a schoolroom, it was appropriated for the choir,

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Clarke remarking that ‘in these days, when so much was thought of histrionic worship, the effect of the choir, ascending as it were from the subterranean regions, was very interesting’.²⁰⁸ The plan (III. 3.48) incorporated touches of asymmetry. The south aisle was longer than the north, since it extended into the base of the south-west tower; the north chancel aisle or transept, destined for the organ and a vestry, was wider than its southern equivalent, which provided children’s seats with a doorway out to the school next door.

In style St Mark’s adopts an early French Gothic, freely treated. The exterior (Ills 3.49, 50) is faced in stocks with dressings and patterns of the same red Aylesbury bricks used by White at St Saviour’s, Aberdeen Park, plus a modicum of Bath stone. It offers several picturesque viewpoints. Specially incisive is the flat west end, with two long lancets under the gable, the narthex-porch beneath, and the square tower shouldering up from the corner, set back only by the depth of a plinth, then rising to a corbelled-out belfry hutch and shingled broach. This hint of rusticity is confirmed by overhanging tile roofs throughout. At the east end, the stepping-down of the ambulatory windows undermines the apse’s formality.

The interior is more conventional, though the tall clerestory and open king-post roof give the four-and-a-half-bay nave surprising height. Some critics disliked the difference between the rhythm of the clerestory and roof trusses and that of the arcade below; White responded that ‘breadth and repose’ had been aimed at through enlarging the bay-widths of the roof. The wall surfaces are plastered, but the arches and inside faces of the windows are of brick, while the nave piers are of Pennant stone. Originally these were of Coalville brick, like the drum piers round the apse. Following signs of distress when the clerestory was superimposed, the bricks were tested at Kirkaldy’s testing works and Pennant stone was substituted.²⁰⁹ There was also trouble with the crypt, where the original ‘beautiful groined roof’ springing from a single central pier collapsed from the weight of wet gravel heaped on it while

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the nave was being constructed, and had to be replaced with a multi-columned arrangement.²¹⁰ The choir, placed between the transepts, is only slightly above the nave, but steps rise sharply to the high altar, set against a French backdrop of arches and two-light geometrical windows with cinquefoiled heads (Ill. 3.52).

The decoration of St Mark's was tackled methodically. At the time of consecration it was confined to figures in the three eastern apsidal windows by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake; pretty tiles on the sanctuary floor (from a design by J. R. Clayton for Lichfield Cathedral); the font and font-cover; the altar-table; and the cross or reredos upon it. These three last were all designed by White. The font, made by H. Faulkner of Exeter, consists of a bowl of Devonshire marble resting on stubby granite columns and with pebbles gathered by Clarke from the River Jordan embedded in its base. The altar-table is still in position, but the eccentric oak reredos, consisting of a plain cross against a lozenged frame with crocketed borders, disappeared in 1928.²¹¹

In 1875 the organ (by Lewis of Brixton) was installed, and carving the church's capitals began according to Clarke's programme of symbolism. Those in the chancel and under the chancel arch were said to be the work of Mr Broomfield (perhaps the carver Thomas Bromfield).²¹² Next year the nave capitals (Ill. 3.53) were tackled by Harry Hems, who excused tardiness by explaining that there were only some '200 men who are experts in the beautiful art of stone-carving, and that some 70 or 80 of these are employed in the new Law Courts'; and Lavers, Barraud and Westlake painted the spandrels in the apse with angels playing music, after White's sketch (later replaced by a heraldic scheme).²¹³ The same firm gradually added stained glass in the aisles and west window.²¹⁴ When in 1883 the partnership undertook mural work at the west end, it was noted that Francis Barraud had been sacristan and choirmaster at St Mark's.²¹⁵

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The pulpit, transferred from the temporary church, was never replaced, but a lectern was installed in 1880 to commemorate the Rev. H. B. Verdon.²¹⁶ It was to Verdon, curate and secretary to the building committee, that Clarke hoped to entrust St Mark's when it acquired its own parish, but he died in 1879. Only in 1883 was the first independent vicar appointed.²¹⁷

An early addition was the hall, built in 1887 to William White's designs and placed parallel to the church, with an elevation and quirkily projecting porch towards Boutflower Road, and a rear gable with west windows echoing those of St Mark's.²¹⁸ A sanctuary rail was installed in 1896, a larger organ, again by Lewis's firm, in 1912, and a war memorial at the west end, by Thomas Rudge of Clapham Common, in 1920.²¹⁹

In 1925 W. H. Randoll Blacking was invited to beautify St Mark's. An all-white project was deemed too radical, but in 1928 he raised a Renaissance-style tabernacle over the altar, with angel figures surmounting the riddle posts.²²⁰ Bomb damage on 17 October 1940 destroyed much of the stained glass.²²¹ The central window in the apse was replaced in 1946 with war memorial glass by Wainwright and Waring.²²²

By 1987 St Mark's was in low water and close to redundancy. In that year a robust approach to its life and fabric asserted itself under the evangelical ministry of the Rev. Paul Perkin, who brought with him helpers from Holy Trinity, Brompton. Under the architects Russell Hanslip Associates, the tower was underpinned and the crypt refurbished before the shell and roof of the church were restored in 1989–90, with substantial grant-aid. New railings round the perimeter replaced those removed during the Second World War, and in about 1991 makeshift additions north of the hall were cleared away for new offices. Within the church, some reordering and carpeting also took place, including the removal of the Randoll Blacking tabernacle and the creation of a forward stage in the nave.²²³

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By 2000 the parish sought better accommodation for its activities, claiming that the congregation had increased more than tenfold. The architects Timpson Manley brought forward a scheme proposing new buildings south and north of the church. White's church hall was to be replaced by a larger building abutting against the north aisle and transept, while Ferrey's redundant school was also to be cleared away in favour of a 'lighthouse' building at the angle of Battersea Rise and Boutflower Road, and a glass link into the south transept. The northern element proved less controversial, though details were contested by the planning authorities and amenity societies. The southern building proved contentious; the listing of the old school in 2001 scuppered that element of the scheme. Timpson Manley's revised project incorporating the school was not proceeded with. The north-side building was finally carried out to fresh designs by BCP Architects in 2005–7. It includes ample open space at the level of the church, and a glass-clad front towards Boutflower Road.²²⁴ The southern element has not been pursued further at the time of writing, and the school building remains derelict.

St Peter's Church, Plough Road (demolished)

St Peter's, of 1875–6, was the second of William White's Battersea churches, and the only one with a tall tower. It was largely demolished after a fire in 1970, leaving the tower until it too was pulled down in 1994. The congregation and parish have since survived in makeshift premises.

The church was Canon Erskine Clarke's response to the mushrooming working-class development between Clapham Junction and the Thames. In 1873, with Clarke a year in post as vicar of Battersea and St Mark's under construction, he commissioned the surveyor Frederick Beeston to investigate

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a house in Plough Lane (later Road) belonging to Captain J. B. Burney, with a garden running back to Newcomen Road. Clarke described it to Earl Spencer as 'one of your Lordship's old farm houses'.²²⁵ Beeston reported that the property had 'grown out of place', but thought it valuable as building land. Clarke persuaded the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to let him buy it with money from selling glebe land at Penge. He then announced his intention of creating a new parochial district to take in 'the great railway centre "Clapham Junction"'.²²⁶

The land was conveyed and the St Peter's district gazetted in October 1874.²²⁷ Meanwhile a 'school church', donated by George Cubitt, MP, designed by William White and built by Thomas Gregory, opened that summer on part of the garden (Ill. 3.54).²²⁸ One of Clarke's curates, the Rev. S. Cooper Scott, moved into the house, destined as the vicarage. In January 1875 Scott appealed for a permanent church, circulating shareholders of the railway companies operating from Clapham Junction. However Cubitt offered £5,000 anonymously, and White set to work. As Scott soon left, it was under the Rev. John Toone, who had come with Clarke to Battersea from Derby, that St Peter's took shape.²²⁹ A foundation stone was laid on St Peter's Day, 29 June 1875, and the church consecrated exactly a year later. Two months before came a topping-out ceremony for the spire, followed by a tea-party for the workforce at Price's Candle Works.²³⁰ The builders were Carters of Holloway, with W. H. Williams as clerk of works.²³¹

White produced for St Peter's a 'very ingenious Plan adapted to an unpromising site' (Ill. 3.56).²³² The school's position north of the vicarage on Plough Lane left an irregular area behind, with an eastward aspect towards Newcomen Road. The tight layout, with the church set against the northern boundary at the back of an angular court, had an urban, somewhat continental flavour. Butterfield's All Saints', Margaret Street grouping was a probable influence. The awkward north-west angle was disguised by a wide

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four-sided projection over the font – effectively a western apse. Entrances were on the south side alone, either from a porch between school and vicarage reached from Plough Lane, or from Newcomen Road via a passage attached to the tower, which rose over the clergy vestry.

Basil Clarke described St Peter's as 'one of White's simple brick churches'.²³³ Economy was certainly aimed at in the main fabric, White having for instance to thicken up the aisle walls to qualify for a grant.²³⁴ But St Peter's was not a cheap church, costing some £10,000 exclusive of the site, as against £6,000 for St Mark's, Battersea Rise. Cubitt's £5,000, together with £1,000 procured under the Union of Benefices Act, made a high brick tower feasible.²³⁵ In massing this resembled White's tower of 1868–9 at Lyndhurst, Hampshire, but in detailing it studied the austerity of All Saints', Margaret Street, with thin brick buttresses next to the corners, and bands of stone alternating with brick in the spire. Colourful gables carried clock faces on all four sides, above which lucarnes were wedged eccentrically in low positions across the angles.²³⁶ The body of the church was faced in yellow brickwork, relieved by red patterning and some Bath stone. Just three lancets punctuated the unbuttressed east end. The aisles were almost unfenestrated, as there were ample clerestory windows arranged in pairs of cusped lights surmounted by quatrefoils. At the west end, the apsidal projection carried up into a high tiled roof.

The interior had an auditorial flavour, with a nave over three times as broad as the aisles, a clerestory continuing round the unusual western apse, and a roof with deep king-post trusses (Ill. 3.57). The short chancel stepped in from the nave. The upper walling was finished in plain brickwork, but below the clerestory plastering was applied. The brick arcading rested on clustered columns of Pennant stone, as at St Mark's, with capitals carved by Harry Hems. The tiled flooring was supplied by Mintons, and included 'seven large subject tiles', again as at St Mark's. On the south side an organ projected over

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the vestry behind 'a front of open and carved work'. The font took pride of place, elevated in the western apse. This and the pulpit mixed various stones and marbles, and included figurative carving by Hems.²³⁷

Under Toone a club house was built in 1878 south of the church at the angle of Plough Lane and Newcomen Road (later 29–31 Plough Road). In 1878–9 additions were made to the vicarage, designed by E. Swinfen Harris and built by W. H. Williams.²³⁸ About then too the school acquired a southern extension, with crow-stepped gables at the ends and monitor lights along the flanks. Within the church, windows by Clayton and Bell were inserted in the early 1880s.²³⁹

Despite the parish's poverty, much effort had to be spent in maintaining the fabric. The roof tiles had to be replaced 'owing to the atmosphere of Battersea' in 1898–9, and the spire to be rebuilt in 1911–12.²⁴⁰ Compared to the original topping-out, it was said that 'the outlook from that lofty stage was a very different one, nothing now but street after street of houses, where at that time were still to be found fields with cabbages'.²⁴¹

St Peter's went through the usual local decline after the First World War. In 1938 the vicarage, pronounced 'very nearly impossible to live in', was cut down in size; and in about 1951–2 works were done to the old school, now just a hall.²⁴² By the mid 1960s the Winstanley Estate was replacing the streets behind the church, and there were desultory discussions about redeveloping the site.²⁴³ With the congregation said to be down to six by 1965, worship moved to St Paul's and demolition was debated. When a fire started on Guy Fawkes Night 1970, blamed on children playing with fireworks, St Peter's was out of use and uninsured, though there had been a plan to move the congregation back to this larger and finer of the two churches. The roof fell in (III. 3.58), so demolition was inevitable.²⁴⁴ The tower remained for the time

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being, as did the old school and vicarage at 21 Plough Road – fragments in an urban waste.

With public housing circumferent, a youth centre was built behind the hall to Gordon Cook Associates' design (1977). The combined parish of St Peter and St Paul, formalized in 1972, used this building on Sundays. Faced with a proposal to develop the site for housing, plans for extending the worship-space to Michael Blee's designs were put forward in 1988 but did not proceed.²⁴⁵ In 1994 the tower and spire, too costly to maintain, shared the fate of the church and were taken down. Still, however, a congregation hung on. At the time of writing the youth centre was being used as a church, with White's altar-table as its focus. There were fresh plans to redevelop the whole site including the surviving school-hall and vicarage, and to rebuild a small new church within the development.

Church of the Ascension, Lavender Hill

The Church of the Ascension was started in 1876–8 to designs by James Brooks, and finished between 1883 and 1898 by J. T. Micklethwaite and Somers Clarke. Among Battersea's outstanding buildings, it is also its only church to have maintained an Anglo-Catholic tradition.

In 1872 the Rev. John Hall of St Philip's, Queenstown Road, floated the idea of a daughter church on Lavender Hill under his charge to serve the impending 'Shaftesbury New Town' for artisans. The plan had some backing from Bishop Samuel Wilberforce of Winchester, a shareholder in the Artizans', Labourers', and General Dwellings Company, which was about to start building Shaftesbury Park. Hall duly approached or was approached by John Bourdieu Wilkinson, curate at the chic Belgravia church of St Paul's, Wilton Place, to take on the task. But Wilkinson proved to have

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controversially high-church backing and ideas of his own. Soon, Hall lost control of the project.²⁴⁶

An appeal outlined Wilkinson's aims: to build a church dedicated to the Ascension, parochial schools and a vicarage, and to open a 'House of Mercy for Penitents' (for which funds were already promised) with an orphanage to follow. A temporary church would come first, convertible into schools.²⁴⁷ All this cut across plans Canon Erskine Clarke, the new vicar of Battersea, was germinating for a church south of Lavender Hill. He therefore 'strongly remonstrated', pressing Wilberforce's successor, E. H. Browne, to stop the project.²⁴⁸ But the new bishop rebuffed his objections, reminding Clarke of Wilberforce's encouragement, and judging 'that I must not put a positive veto on the plan of Mr Wilkinson, if he can raise funds and will promise not to exceed such Churchmanship as Mr Hall exhibits in his Church.' Wilkinson had promised not to carry out 'extreme practices', Browne assured Clarke.²⁴⁹

By the spring of 1874 Wilkinson was holding services in a local room. In October he opened a temporary church of brick and cement on the west end of the site earmarked for the permanent building. 'I did my best to prevent it but failed', Clarke told his patron, Earl Spencer. 'I doubt not he will do good where he is, for the population is growing rapidly – but the scheme is a disorganising one from my stand-point'.²⁵⁰ Hall now turned against Wilkinson, 'since it is indispensable that Vestments, Incense, Banners and Processional Crosses be not introduced into the ordinary worship of the new church, excepting they may eventually be pronounced legal; and Mr Wilkinson is not disposed to accede to these conditions'.²⁵¹ Despite all this opposition, Wilkinson was granted a district in 1875. This was probably because he could call on funds, for the new parish was endowed with £2,500 in railway stock.²⁵²

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The creation of the Ascension was always ascribed to Father Wilkinson and his friends, but his primary patron was evidently the Dowager Lady Boston. Caroline Amelia Saumarez (1839–1927) married the 4th Baron Boston as his second wife in 1861. Her husband died in 1869, and neither of her daughters survived childhood. The older daughter's death in 1873 left her without close family and precipitated her into a life of devotion. According to parochial tradition, Wilkinson was supported by two other wealthy Belgravians, Lady Anne Antrobus and Jane Duff-Gordon. But Lady Boston went further by founding a tiny religious order, the Community of the Compassion of Jesus, which she headed for the rest of her long widowhood as Mother Mary Caroline. The new church was intended to support and work with this order, whose aims are identifiable with the penitents' house mentioned in Wilkinson's first appeal. In the event, no such building was ever erected. In 1881 Lady Boston was living at 1–2 Ecclesbourne Terrace, Lavender Hill, along with female boarders and servants; she and one other of the residents were described in the census as 'sisters of charity'.²⁵³ After Wilkinson's death she reduced her connection with the church and moved away, but she paid the rent of the Mission House in Grayshott Road until 1918.²⁵⁴

The site acquired in 1874 consisted of the whole frontage on the north side of Lavender Hill between Grayshott (now Acanthus) and Pountney Roads, lately laid out as part of an area bought speculatively by the architect Edward I'Anson. Lady Boston also purchased land in Pountney Road, of which a sliver north-east of the church was conveyed by her in 1878.²⁵⁵ An early plan shows a parsonage on this extra land and a tower in the north-western position.²⁵⁶ But in the design published in January 1875 the tower had been switched to the south-west and the extra ground devoted to the north or morning chapel and a block containing a vestry and parish room, as built (III. 3.59). The *Building News* explained that 'the chapel on north side of choir is, so to speak, separate from the church, being intended for the use of a community

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of nuns, whose convent will be erected on the opposite side of the road north of the church'.²⁵⁷ If that is accurate, Lady Boston intended to build the penitents' house north of the church on the west side of Pountney Road, with access by a bridge to and from the chapel, and to create a convent on the east side of the road.

The design thus published was by James Brooks, who had garnered a reputation for his Anglo-Catholic churches in Shoreditch and Haggerston. For the airier site at Lavender Hill he devised a plain yet powerful urban church in his preferred early French style, with an aisled nave leading without a chancel arch straight into the choir, and hence to an apsidal sanctuary inscribed within an ambulatory. The north-east chapel, vestry and church room were the only unusual features. At the west end, the tower and spire surmounted a deep south porch, while the west door itself was reached up a flight of steps because of the northward fall in the ground.

A view published in March 1876 shows the west front and the intended bridge to the future conventual building (Ill. 3.60). The Ascension was then described as 'now in course of erection'.²⁵⁸ Wilkinson's strategy was to build the chancel first before replacing the temporary church with a permanent nave. A foundation stone was laid under the altar position that June. But already the site was giving cause for anxiety. The *Building News* reported 'considerable difficulty ... with the loose nature of the ground, which has caused much delay. The parish room, however, is almost roofed in, and the aisle walls are several feet above ground level'.²⁵⁹

Photographs survive showing the Ascension at just this stage (Ills 3.61, 62). The temporary church appears as a shed with cement-panel walls upon battens and windows under the eaves; internally, it is fitted up with chairs and an altar with stencilling above. To its east Chessums of Shoreditch (the builders Brooks had used for his East End churches) are raising the chancel

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and ambulatory. In Pountney Road scaffolding has been struck from the vestries and parish room. In later photographs the end of the temporary church is shown opened up by an arch and steps to the fragment of the nave included in the first contract, beyond which come the chancel and ambulatory. Though these were completed on plan, they were not so in height, the chancel roof being finished off below clerestory level with a temporary roof and top light (III. 3.66). The north chapel and adjacent aisle were vaulted but also topped off below their present external height.

After this first phase of building ended in July 1878,²⁶⁰ Brooks's name disappears from the record. According to Basil Clarke, his supervision 'was not thought to be satisfactory' and the work was 'taken out of his hands'.²⁶¹ At all events he 'withdrew from the work'.²⁶² Brooks was profoundly committed to his churches, so possibly a mishap was involved. In a later report Ewan Christian noted that the sloping site was 'remarkably awkward as regards cost for building purposes'; Brooks had elected to lay foundations for the entire church including the tower, so that there was little superstructure to show for the money expended. Although Christian stressed that what had been built was 'most solid and excellent of its kind',²⁶³ it was later reported that the foundation under the north chapel was 'of an extremely bad nature'.²⁶⁴

By 1882 Wilkinson was ready to carry on. His replacement architects were the partners J. T. Micklethwaite and Somers Clarke, the latter assuming the lead. To justify consecration the church had to be tolerably complete, so it was decided to lay out the nave, but again to build only to a certain height. This time the temporary covering consisted of a low-pitched central roof with monitor lights. The specification for this phase, undertaken by the builder Charles Ansell in 1883, confirms the architects' determination to respect Brooks's design. The temporary church was left intact within until the work was complete and then removed.²⁶⁵

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Next in 1884–5 came the massive south porch, conceived as a base for the future tower.²⁶⁶ Meanwhile the north chapel received a communion table in 1884 and began to be known as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.²⁶⁷ A vicarage was also now built for Wilkinson. Having apparently given up her hopes of building in Pountney Road, Lady Boston conveyed the land immediately north of the church in April 1884 as a parsonage site. But Wilkinson suggested that this ground be used as glebe, while a vicarage was built on the intended convent site opposite. The Tudor-style house was nearing completion there to Micklethwaite and Clarke's designs, with Ansell again as builder, when Wilkinson died in July 1885.²⁶⁸

The church was completed under his successor, Charles Wallace. The chancel and east end of the nave were raised to the height envisaged by Brooks in 1893. The west end followed along the same lines in 1898, leaving only the tower – never attempted. Micklethwaite and Clarke remained in charge for these phases, with Adamson & Sons as builders.²⁶⁹

The Ascension long remained bare internally. Enrichment started late in Wallace's cure with the rood and dominant screen, erected to designs by his architect son, George Wallace (1910-14), and an imported organ (1912-13). The organ's arrival involved changes to the space above the north chapel, and it may have been then that the roofline here took its final form. Wallace's successor, Arthur Montford, appealed in 1915 for 'a really splendid high Altar' and a grille to the side chapel in his predecessor's memory. The grille was duly erected and the high altar lengthened, but behind it is only a modest superaltar instead of the reredos then hoped for.²⁷⁰ Externally the one later embellishment is the war memorial, a Calvary with figures of the Virgin and St John in relief, sculpted by A. T. Bradford and erected on the west front in 1921. It had been hoped to have a freestanding Calvary facing Lavender Hill, but funds did not suffice.²⁷¹

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Since 1918 much effort and money has been spent on combatting the Ascension's treacherous site. Repairs and underpinning to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel took place under Rowland Plumbe and Partners in 1923–4 but may have extended to a wider area in 1929–30, after which an internal renovation took place.²⁷² The floor in the chancel area and ambulatory remains uneven to this day. Plans of 1972 and 1990 to cut up the body of the church by converting part or all of the nave and restricting worship to the eastern area were resisted, and a threat of redundancy in 1993 was successfully staved off.²⁷³

Description

The austere nobility of the Ascension is best taken in from a distance. Seen from the railway, its silhouette holds the crown of Lavender Hill. The south side, veering slightly away from the main road, is less arresting at close quarters. The jostle of apses, vestries, slated roofs and turrets facing Pountney Road is the most pungent episode of the exterior. These belong to Brooks's first campaign and are reminders that elsewhere Micklethwaite and Clarke toned down his assertiveness. The main materials are a finely coloured red brick with minimal Bath stone dressings.

The fenestration is restrained. The clerestory consists of single lancets, evenly spaced except at the transition to the chancel, while the aisles are window-less and the ambulatory openings tiny. The vestigial south transept and the vestry block – all of 1876–8 – alone have paired lights under a large round window, a motif Brooks favoured. At the west end Micklethwaite and Clarke contrived their one major revision, suppressing the intended central entrance and lengthening the lancets above. The change makes this front look less French and robust.

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On the north side, Brooks first designed a high transept enveloping the morning chapel, whose apse would have protruded from its eastern face. As built, the transept was curtailed and a roof built over the chapel vault. Atop the main roof Brooks designed a flèche over the choir, to act as a foil to his grand tower over the south porch. Micklethwaite and Clarke suppressed the flèche but still hoped for the tower. In 1898, as no prospect of that beckoned, they introduced a square lead-and-timber bell turret near the west end of the nave roof. It was removed after a fire of 1979 in that roof, leaving the church's length bereft of accent.²⁷⁴

The stateliness of the Ascension's interior depends on its consistency of upper levels from end to end. The uninterrupted roofs, the procession of clerestory lancets, the apex of the arcades and capitals are governed by uniformity of height, as in a French great church. Against that, the geometry of the apsidal east end, the rise in floor levels and the protracted building programme all create adjustments in proportion.

Brooks's authentic touch is manifest in the chancel. Here the plain brick walling descends on the circular stone piers with slab-like force (III. 3.68). To achieve a regular curvature for the apse, the arcade's spacing reduces to less than half that of the choir bay, resulting in nine stilted arches whose pinched dimensions underline the stubbornness of the piers on their hefty bases. In the Ile de France churches from which these features derive, so aggressive a proportional contrast would have been unthinkable. Carved ornament—added in the Edwardian years but no doubt intended by Brooks—is restricted to the pulvinated abaci of the capitals and to the odd colonnette attachments (only in the chancel) dropping from their corners.

In comparison the clerestory and roof, Micklethwaite and Clarke's work of the 1890s throughout, are unchallenging. Brooks probably hoped to vault the whole church. Both his Haggerston churches had vaulted chancels

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divided from timber nave roofs by chancel arches, but at the Ascension no such arch was intended, implying vaulting throughout. That ambition perhaps collapsed when it became clear that the ground was poor. Boarded timber roofs with simple tie beams, of a later mediaeval form, were substituted instead (III. 3.67).

Vaulting, of rendered brick infill between stone ribs, does occur in the north chapel and adjacent chancel aisle, completed structurally in 1876–8 (III. 3.63). An arcade carried on composite piers connects these two spaces, first intended for the nuns. Their feminine proportions contrast with the male bluntness of the main order. Brooks's sketch for the chapel of 1876 shows its southern flank open to the aisle and a grille between the latter and the choir. When a grille was eventually erected, it was between chapel and aisle, allowing the north chancel aisle to be annexed to the processional route round the passage aisles and ambulatory, although here alone on that route does vaulting occur. Elsewhere, lean-to timber roofs with exposed rafters prevail.

The nave, due to Micklethwaite and Clarke apart from the easternmost bay and a half, follows Brooks's plan. The round piers sit here on octagonal not square bases, the more visible since the Ascension is chaired not pewed. At the west end, the abolition of a central entrance no doubt anticipated an elevated font under a high suspended canopy, an ambition never fully achieved.

Furnishings

High altar. Probably by Brooks, c.1874, lengthened in 1915, when superaltar with figures in low relief was added, perhaps by Powells. Superaltar subsequently dismantled and reassembled, apparently much remodelled.²⁷⁵

Choir stalls. 1922 or shortly after.

Organ. Brought from Annunciation, Bryanston Street, 1912–13. Case (probably designed by George Wallace) never completed.²⁷⁶

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Chancel screen, loft and rood. Designed by George Wallace, 1910, all in oak. Rood beam with figures installed 1910, followed by framework of screen. Loft installed and screen enriched with carving, 1914.²⁷⁷

Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Reredos given in memory of Wilkinson, 1885, probably designed by Micklethwaite and Clarke, painter unknown. Grille to chapel by Powells, c.1915.²⁷⁸

Pulpit. Probably by Micklethwaite and Clarke, c.1885. Originally one bay further east. Shifted and sounding board removed, 1917.²⁷⁹

Lectern. Of brass, from St Philip's, Queenstown Road.

Stations of the Cross. Bought in 1916.²⁸⁰

Font. Probably by Brooks, c.1874. Wooden font cover later, probably by Micklethwaite and Clarke.

St Matthew's Church, Rush Hill Road (demolished)

St Matthew's, of 1876–7, was the simplest of the six Battersea churches designed and built by William White for Canon Erskine Clarke. It soon became subordinate to St Barnabas's, Clapham Common, and was pulled down after the Second World War.

The church's origins go back to the early 1870s, when Clarke was laying his first plans for church-extension. Having succeeded in detaching the zone south of Lavender Hill from St Philip's, he hoped that Earl Spencer would give a site for a prominent church on Clapham Common, to be excluded from the sale of Spencer's interest in the common, then being transferred to the Metropolitan Board of Works. But champions of the common objected, so Spencer's agents withdrew the plan in 1874.²⁸¹ The unexpected promotion of the Ascension, Lavender Hill, also forced Clarke to settle for a smaller church in this neighbourhood.

Among landowners hereabouts was John Westwood of Dulwich, who had bought Rush Hill House with development in mind. Clarke appears to have induced Westwood to present a site for a church at the bottom of the

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new Rush Hill Road, a cul-de-sac. (At much the same time, Westwood also gave the site of Emmanuel Church, Norwood.)²⁸² At first Clarke planned a new 'compact parish' here, but on second thoughts he decided to start off the church as a chapel of ease to St Mary's.²⁸³

St Matthew's was built at Clarke's 'sole cost' as a personal memorial for his sister Emma, who died in 1873.²⁸⁴ In his recollection it was 'intended to be only a Mission room, meant for social purposes as well as religious, but Mr. William White ... built it in the style of an old English tithe barn, and it proved too dignified to be used for social purposes, and it has been a church from the beginning'.²⁸⁵ It was a plain brick vessel with timber arcades and lean-to aisles, lit from triplets of clerestory windows under gable-heads. Three lancets on the east wall and two on the west, where a bell was housed externally, afforded extra light. The church could be entered from a north porch facing the end of Rush Hill Road, or on the south side from Gowrie Road. There was no structural division internally, but the nave could be screened off from the sanctuary and used for meetings and teaching.²⁸⁶

Built under W. H. Williams, clerk of works at St Peter's, and said to be 'making rapid strides towards completion' in December 1876, St Matthew's was opened the following April. *The Builder* then noted a canopied niche filled with 'a goodly-sized figure' of St Peter in pitch pine, as well as a pulpit and some sgraffito panels between the clerestory windows, both by Harry Hems. The font, 'slightly carved', came from St Peter's mission church.²⁸⁷ An organ was added in 1878.²⁸⁸ In 1882-3 a meeting room and Sunday school was added cheaply, tucked next to the southernmost house on the east side of Rush Hill Road. White was again employed together with a local builder, William Ellis.²⁸⁹

St Matthew's was never consecrated nor acquired a district. This may have been because of difficulties with the title, which was eventually

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reconveyed to Clarke personally by Westwood's widow, or because of the relative slightness of the fabric.²⁹⁰ During the Rev. F. H. Baring's short time as minister (1885-6), the suggestion arose that a second church—the future St Barnabas's—might be built not far away.²⁹¹ After that came to pass in the late 1890s, St Matthew's became the cinderella in the new parish of St Barnabas. The church struggled on with ups-and-downs until, according to the Rev. Basil Clarke, 'it was closed early in 1941, and afterwards bombed. The remains have been cleared away: some of the roof timbers were used to build a garage for the vicar of St Barnabas'.²⁹²

St Mary le Park Church, Albert Bridge Road (demolished)

The church of St Mary le Park, raised between 1882 and 1902 mainly to William White's designs, was Canon Erskine Clarke's grandest building project in Battersea, but never fulfilled his ambitions for it as a replacement for the parish church. Demolished in 1967, it was replaced by flats and a smaller church that was only briefly in Anglican use.

A new church 'for the population lying between Bridge Road and Battersea Park' was one of three schemes put by Clarke to his patron, Earl Spencer, late in 1872, his first year as Battersea's vicar. Once Albert Bridge opened, Clarke anticipated that the land around the park was 'likely soon to be occupied by a wealthy population'. Building here was linked in Clarke's mind with the destiny of St Mary's, half a mile westwards. 'The Old Church by the river is much better attended now', he told Spencer, 'but the church will never be a church for the poor and I am very desirous to get a Church near the Park.' In this he hoped for help from Hedworth Williamson, who had interests in the bridge company and had taken building land along the park (vol. 50).²⁹³

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The project took shape slowly. Not until 1875 did Clarke hint openly at his idea of building a chapel of ease – ‘perhaps a S. Mary-the-Less’ – in Park (later Parkgate) Road or near by, to relieve the parish church.²⁹⁴ Two years later he reviewed for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners his church-building progress in the light of ‘the vast increase of population ... caused by the influx from the inner metropolis.’ Having identified ‘an admirable site’ next to the park, he appealed for a grant from the demolition and sale of City church sites so that he could ‘build such a Church as might hereafter become the Parish Church, leaving the present parish church as a chapel of ease.’ Many people in Battersea, he argued, were spending ‘the greater part of their working life in or near the parishes whose churches are now being amalgamated with others’. Moreover, the new church would appeal to the influx of visitors to Battersea Park by steamboat or foot every Sunday. ‘My aim would be to have such a church and such a service that some of those thousands might be led to combine an act of worship with their search for fresh air and their enjoyment of the beauties of Nature’.²⁹⁵

Despite a non-committal answer, Clarke went ahead and in 1877 bought from the Battersea Park Commissioners a prime site at the corner of Albert Bridge and Parkgate Roads. The purchase price, £980, came from a sum bequeathed for church-building in a riverside parish by the ship-owner Money Wigram.²⁹⁶ As this was part of the ground promised to Williamson, Clarke had also to make terms with him, arguing that the church, to be completed within three years, would enhance the quality of housing projected.²⁹⁷

In 1879, with building yet to start, the agreement was revised. The Commissioners now passed a plan and elevations for the intended church ‘with a hall or chapter house’. This last element was to be built first, completed and fitted up as a temporary church by July 1880.²⁹⁸ The design thus approved was, predictably, William White’s. Drawings dated March

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1879 plus a lost watercolour show a stone-faced church on a grand scale, with double towers and spires flanking a chancel and separately articulated apse, and the 'chapter house' at the corner (Ills 3.71, 73).²⁹⁹ Behind this conception lay the fact that in 1877 Battersea, along with most of South London, was translated from the Winchester to the Rochester diocese. The change was acknowledged as an interim measure, until a separate South London see could be created. Eventually Bishop Thorold of Rochester, a supporter of Clarke's, decided that the seat of such a diocese should be St Saviour's, later Southwark Cathedral. That point had not yet been reached in Thorold's early years. So there may be truth in the rumour that St Mary le Park was designed speculatively as the seat of a future 'suffragan Bishop of Battersea'.³⁰⁰ But if the glint of a potential cathedral helps account for the chapter house, it was not explicit. Ewan Christian, vetting the plans, thought the room must be 'intended in future for Parochial purposes'.³⁰¹

Tenders were promptly sought for the agreed first element, the chapter room at the north-east angle.³⁰² But with little money raised, no start was made. In January 1880 Williamson's solicitors demanded progress, alleging that the 'nonfulfilment' of the terms had inhibited their own buildings.³⁰³ Clarke reacted emotionally, confessing to the Office of Works that the project had proved 'too big a business for me ... If your client [Williamson] thinks well to intervene about the site I shall offer no obstacle as I am dispirited about the whole affair'. A large grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had eluded him; his chief donor, Philip Cazenove, was at death's door, and though he had been prepared to put in £1,000 himself, 'I feel I could not really commit myself to ruin by starting on a church-building work of such magnitude practically single-handed. I am much discouraged, but I am not yet quite hopeless'.³⁰⁴

White now suggested starting with the chancel and the aisle or chapel to its south, and Clarke made a fresh overture for proceeds from the City

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churches, reiterating that the project – still nameless – was the ‘future Parish Church of Battersea’.³⁰⁵ The Bishop of London granted £2,000, with the same to follow on completion. ‘New St Mary’s’ or ‘St Mary-by-the-Park’ could at last begin, but in a scaled-down version. In Autumn 1881 White produced a revised design which cut out the southern tower, reduced the church’s height and length, substituted brick with stone banding for all-over stone facing, and separated the building programme into definite phases.³⁰⁶

In 1882–3 Macey and Sons erected the first phase, consisting of the chancel and south chancel aisle. At the time of opening, temporary annexes stood on both the north and the west sides of the chancel.³⁰⁷ By then Clarke had taken a back seat and an appeal committee at last emerged. Their first draft requested funds almost in terms of a confidence vote in ‘the energy and good work of the well known Canon’.³⁰⁸ Yet the church made no progress for over a decade. Instead money was spent on a mission hall designed by White on the spot where the original west end might have been, and opened in 1892.³⁰⁹

By 1895 the crestfallen Clarke accepted that the church – now definitely denominated St Mary le Park – had been ‘designed, as it has proved, on too dignified a scale’ and could not supplant Battersea’s parish church: ‘I fear that I made a mistake in contemplating so grandly designed a church for that particular site ... With the river on the north and the park on the east, the site was not well chosen for the part of the mother parish which it has to serve.’ The balance of new population had been further west than expected, he explained, while instead of villas round the park ranges of flats had arisen, less favourable to church-going and giving.³¹⁰ Enough money was raised to build in 1895–6 three bays of the original six-bay nave and north aisle. A new temporary west end of wood covered with slates was constructed, along with a wall outside the southern nave arcade.³¹¹ The architect J. S. Quilter, who was

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then living in Albert Bridge Road and acted as treasurer of the church fund, was involved in this campaign, but the design was still White's.³¹²

The next phase, initiated in 1898 with a donation from Lord Ashcombe, the former George Cubitt, was intended not to add accommodation, as the church was 'really large enough for its congregation', but to tidy up the ragged north side. Executed in two stages in 1900–2 by the builders Johnson & Co., it consisted in building apsidal vestries where the chapter room had once been planned, and a high projecting north transept to serve as a baptistery and base for a future tower.³¹³ White having died in 1900, Quilter took over as architect. It was reported that he 'has for some years worked with Mr White and is carrying out his design', but there were some changes from the scheme of 1881.³¹⁴

St Mary le Park progressed no further. Plans of 1919 to finish the south aisle and a south transept as a war memorial to Aston Webb's designs came to nothing.³¹⁵ After the church was finally allotted its own district, as late as 1935, there were signs of renewed initiative. H. S. Goodhart-Rendel was commissioned in 1937 to design a new wall to replace the temporary west end, and there was even talk of adding a south aisle. Repairs took place in 1938 and money-raising for the wall started, but the project died with the war.³¹⁶

The exterior of the church (Ill. 3.74) was in a severe Auvergnat style. The east end, drawn together by stone banding between layers of brickwork, was its best aspect. The main apse and ambulatory, semi-circular in shape not angular like White's other Battersea apses, and shouldered at high level by stepped buttresses, together with the subsidiary apse of the southern chapel, were hangovers from the first design. They were complemented by the apsidal vestries of 1900–2 to the north. Towards Parkgate Road the obtrusive transept *cum* tower base, of the same date, differed in position from the single

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slim tower suggested by White in 1881; an octagonal belfry was tucked into the re-entrant angle. Two bays of the nave of 1895–6 projected beyond the transept, with triplets of windows in the aisles and quadruplets in the clerestory. The western and southern elevations were unfinished.

Basil Clarke found the interior impressive but ‘very poorly fitted’.³¹⁷ A watercolour of 1897 gives an inkling of nobility at the east end, where the chancel broke back to focus on a tall sanctuary lit by lancets over four closely spaced high stone drum-piers with naturalistically carved capitals, like those round the apse at St Mark’s, Battersea Rise. The brick-faced body of the church (Ill. 3.75) was spacious and varied. The string courses below the clerestory carried round cleanly, but the choir arcades and clerestory were smaller in proportion to those in the nave. In the abbreviated nave, the arches died into the piers without capitals, but in the choir the capitals were carved with the same naturalism as in the apse. Where the north transept interrupted, the clerestory openings were left as voids.

Records of the furnishings are sparse. A tripartite reredos designed by White in 1882 (Ill. 3.76) was never executed.³¹⁸ In 1918 floors and spandrels in the arches of the chancel were filled with Rust’s mosaic, while some late Morris & Co. windows were also inserted.³¹⁹ A spindly iron screen by Hart, Son, & Peard was inserted at the choir entrance as a war memorial in 1921.³²⁰ It was probably in 1951 that much of the internal brickwork was whitewashed. That year, a large statue of the Madonna by Heinz Henghes was installed after some controversy.³²¹

The size of the Victorian church having become unmanageable, it was demolished in the autumn of 1967, to be replaced in 1968–70 with a small new church, vicarage, hall and 38 flats leased to the Bloomsbury Municipal Housing Trust.³²² The architect for the new church was David Cole of Weybridge. It occupies a ‘reticent position’ away from the park frontage in

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Parkgate Road. Sited above the hall, it is reached by a flight of steps. Externally the building is of dark brick with concrete dressings and has echoes of Louis Kahn. The interior was originally square, with an altar in the south-east corner. As this smaller church too proved unsustainable for its Anglican congregation, it was declared redundant and taken over by the Church of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo) in 1994.³²³

All Saints' Church, Prince of Wales Drive

The current All Saints' Church was built in 1976–8 to the designs of David Gill. A small but forceful building, it houses an ecumenical congregation with multicultural interests. It replaced a larger church of 1882–3 designed by F. W. Hunt and demolished after a fire in 1969. Hunt's vicarage survives beside the church at 100 Prince of Wales Drive.

All Saints' began as one of Erskine Clarke's projects, intended to serve a district of some 6,000 carved out of St George's parish. It is first heard of in 1878, when Clarke's surveyor Frederick Beeston applied to the Battersea Park Commissioners to buy the site of the present church and vicarage, at the south-west corner of Queenstown (then Victoria) Road and Prince of Wales Drive (then Road). The initiative followed Clarke's application for the ground of St Mary le Park on the other side of Battersea Park. In 1879 he put up on part of the site 'a little temporary iron Building, unexpectedly offered in that neighbourhood'.³²⁴

Around then the architect E. Swinfen Harris wrote to the Incorporated Church Building Society 'by desire of Canon Erskine Clarke' asking for a design by him for the permanent All Saints' to be grant-aided. The society demurred, objecting to Clarke that 'the cost seems very large, and the design is pretentious for such a poor district'. Its committee, added the secretary,

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'believe that it is not yourself, but the curate in charge who has ventured on this costly scheme, and they request you to be so good as to induce him to modify the design'.³²⁵

No more is heard of this. It was Clarke who preached when the iron All Saints' opened, and agreed final terms with the Office of Works.³²⁶ In November 1880 he told Earl Spencer that foundations had been put in and that he had procured promises of £4,000.³²⁷ Nevertheless the drive behind the project seems indeed to have come chiefly from the curate referred to, A. Ernest Bourne, previously at St Peter's, Plough Road, where Harris had added to the vicarage (page xxx).³²⁸ Bourne was successful enough for the iron church soon to acquire an annexe constructed by 'mechanics and workmen' from his congregation.³²⁹

A second application for aid, this time successful, was submitted in January 1881 by Bourne together with the architect Frederick William Hunt.³³⁰ All Saints' was one of two Battersea churches designed by Hunt, preceding by a short head the grander St Luke's, Ramsden Road. Hitherto all the Clarke-inspired churches had been designed by William White. Why Hunt, an architect of lesser stature than White, should have been retained for All Saints' and St Luke's is unclear, but he had designed a church (St Anne's) in Derby, where Clarke had served before moving to Battersea. The project was boosted in 1882 with a £4,000 grant from the Bishop of Rochester's Ten Churches Fund.³³¹ All Saints' was now presented as a memorial to J. S. Utterton, Suffragan Bishop of Guildford, who before his death in 1879 had set up the Surrey Church Association and its affiliate, the South London Fund, to promote church-building in these areas. With that guarantee, the iron church could be dismantled and Hunt's design built by Macey & Sons, while the congregation met in a railway arch opposite 'which makes an excellent church'. The foundation stone was laid in December 1882 in the presence of

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Utterton's friends and relatives; consecration took place on All Saints' Day, 1883.³³²

All Saints' was a hard-looking building in dark red brick, reminiscent of the work of Ewan Christian, whom Hunt had served as assistant. A forthright square tower over the chancel, with crenellation and pyramidal capping, gave the church presence on its prominent site (Ill. x/xx). Its language was the lancet style, varied by plain circular windows in the gables of the vestigial transepts and west end. The east end was apsidal, flanked by a lesser apse to a chapel on the north side and a three-sided bay to a vestry on the south (Ill. 3.77). The south aisle was narrower than the north, while the arcades of four and a half bays were brick-arched on composite stone piers. Above came the clerestory in paired lancets recessed behind arches, and above that a steep nave roof carried at the wall plate by plain hammer beams. Among the original fittings, only a white marble font was noteworthy.

Bourne left in 1888, to be replaced by the Rev. Gerald Harcourt, who built the vicarage. Embellishment seems to have been confined to the east end, where a low reredos with painted figures was added in 1911. The side chapel to its north also acquired a reredos and screen, designed by W. Ellery Anderson, in 1912.³³³ In 1926–7 major repairs were necessary to the exterior which had suffered in Battersea's corrosive atmosphere.³³⁴ Following minor war damage, there had already been talk of redevelopment when Gordon Barnes photographed the church in 1969. Late that year fire destroyed most of the roof coverings (Ill. 3.79). The damage might have been reparable, but at a time of local church closures there was no reprieve.

The present All Saints' occupies the site not of the Victorian church, which was sold off for housing, but of the parish hall beyond the vicarage.

³³⁵Vicarage and hall both occupied positions on the western part of the site conveyed by the Commissioners of Works in 1883. The vicarage, an ample

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Tudor-style house with half-hipped gables at the rear, was built by Holloway Brothers to F. W. Hunt's designs in 1890, the hall following on.³³⁶

St Michael's Church, Wandsworth Common

The low-key brick church of St Michael, built in 1880–1 to designs by William White, is wedged between the arms of Cobham Close, off Bolingbroke Grove. A school in similar style abuts to its south, added in 1887–8 by another architect, William Wallis. Formerly church and school were as enclosed by housing to the east as to the west. Clearances in the 1960s left the east end open to view, enhancing the independence of a quirky ensemble.

St Michael's, the fourth of the six churches William White built in Battersea under Canon Erskine Clarke's patronage, was a considered experiment in cheap, low-key church-building. It became a memorial church to two allies of Clarke who had set it on its way: Philip Cazenove, who presented some of the site; and H. B. Verdon, the curate in charge during its first, impermanent phase.

When Clarke arrived in Battersea in 1872 there was already a nucleus of development along Chatham Road (today the northern arm of Cobham Close). He quickly announced his intention to erect an iron building which could double as a school and place of worship for 'this rapidly increasing neighbourhood'.³³⁷ Verdon, previously curate at St James's, Clapham, was entrusted with the enterprise. An iron church was duly erected that June by Charles Kent.³³⁸ It occupied a parcel of ground now represented by the western end of the church site, fronting Chatham Road. Along its eastern flank a new road was then anticipated under plans of the 1860s hatched by the speculator-barrister James Lord (vol. 50).

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The freehold of the iron church site was bought in 1873 from the Lord family by Philip Cazenove, septuagenarian founder of the stockbrokers Cazenove and Company and a veteran Anglican benefactor. Cazenove had lived in Battersea since 1846 and had already contributed generously to several local churches, notably St Mark's, Battersea Rise, then in construction. His son Arthur was on the committee of the Incorporated Church Building Society.³³⁹

In 1877 Clarke decided to give up the school held in 'St Michael's iron room' because it could not compete with the new Belleville Road board school.³⁴⁰ The campaign for a permanent church now gathered pace. As the original plot was small, negotiations for extra land followed between Clarke, his surveyor Frederick Beeston, Cazenove, and the discredited James Lord's representatives. In contention was a strip east of the iron building, where plans for a road had now been abandoned. 'This makes the seventh site with which I have had to do for Mr Clarke', Beeston told the vendors, 'and in no instance have I known him to rest content with less than two frontages'.³⁴¹ The upshot, confirmed after the deaths of the consumptive Verdon in October 1879 and of Cazenove the following January, was that Clarke secured an L-shaped plot stretching through to Darley Road east and south of the iron room, more than doubling the space available.³⁴²

When Verdon died, it was said that he had seen and approved plans for the church 'some time prepared'.³⁴³ But White started consistent work on the design only after Arthur Cazenove confirmed an offer of £500 from his family in their father's memory, if St Michael's could be quickly built.³⁴⁴ Soon after Philip Cazenove's death, White sent Clarke three alternative plans for 'St Michael's Mission Church'. All show a church built up to the edges of the enlarged site, with aisles of unequal width, a rectangular projection for the sanctuary, and a flanking 'parochial room'. An amended plan shows St Michael's largely as built: towerless, with modest intercolumniations and the

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vestry-crypt typical of the White-Clarke churches, but lacking the distinctive apse. White warned that his estimate of £3,400 had been arrived at by thinning down the walls to 18 inches, so rendering the church ineligible for a grant from the Incorporated Church Building Society.³⁴⁵ Indeed no such application was made, despite Arthur Cazenove's urging.

White's absorption at this time in economical church design is borne out by a lecture he gave to the Architectural Association in 1881, while St Michael's was building. Reducing height was its keynote. Thinner walls only became possible by substituting dormers for a clerestory, he explained. But he had resisted doing away with aisles, since 'by dividing it up into parts, the building assumes a more manageable form with respect to height'.³⁴⁶ In the event the contract was for £4,150 and the final cost including fittings £4,700, mostly subscribed by friends and family of Cazenove and Verdon. Some of the extra was due to the added apse, for which White first made a design with gables before a simpler version was substituted.³⁴⁷

Construction was delayed by a legal hitch over the Chatham Road frontage but had started by the end of 1880, with J. D. Hobson as builder.³⁴⁸ Archbishop Tait laid memorial stones in the dwarf chancel screen in June 1881, and the church was dedicated that September, before the crypt and choir had been finished.³⁴⁹ A district was formally assigned to the church in 1883.³⁵⁰

As a three-bodied church with a nave little higher than the aisles (III. 3.80), St Michael's presents a subdued exterior. It would originally have looked plainer, as only the northern flank was open to view. Here White set a separate porch surmounted by a figurine of St Michael at one end, and a bellcote atop the aisle roof at the other. The ends of the aisles and the porch are enlivened with stepped gables, of a type used only for ancillary buildings in White's previous Battersea work. Their employment signifies the modest

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status of this mission church. Wallis later repeated them on the gables of the school, adding zest to the motif. Indeed it is where church and school read together at the eastern end, exposed only by clearances of the 1960s, that St Michael's comes into its own externally, with the apse barging out between gables to add force to this semi-accidental composition (Ill. 3.82). The overall texture of plain stock brickwork relieved by high-level courses of red diaperwork, now faded, is delicately pungent. The fenestration is simple, with full tracery only at the ends of the aisles. Only the north aisle has side windows, and only from a few angles can the heavy dormers lining the nave roof be glimpsed.

The interior balances conventional Gothic with some flouting of ecclesiological proprieties. Dominant are the three roofs of unequal width, each of a trussed rafter type with the plank-like principals flitched, sometimes doubled, and liberally tied with tension-rods. In the nave, unbroken by a chancel arch, the ties are specially conspicuous (Ill. 3.83). Here timber tie-beams would have interrupted sightlines and probably cost more. Over the sanctuary the sharp rise in levels (nine steps from nave to altar) brings the roof closer to the eye, and gives the ties almost a cat's cradle effect. The nave roof is broken by continuous rows of five-light dormers, extended by White into the chancel after the gablets of his first apse design were suppressed.³⁵¹ Bizarrely, pavement lights were let into the chancel floor to help illuminate the crypt via the dormers, though this indirect source has long been blocked off. Eccentric too are the low-key arcades, which run through into the chancel. These have plain capitals close to head height carrying stilted brick arches. The miniature octagonal columns, which have been painted, are of 'granolith', a mixture of granite chips and Portland cement, not of marble, as *The Builder* reported; the capitals are probably of stone.³⁵² The Granolith Company also laid the chancel floor, insisting on extra columns in the crypt to support it.³⁵³ The stalls as well as the pews are of soft wood – a further clue to economy.

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The font, reredos and pulpit were installed in 1881, all to White's designs. The marble inlay of the Calvary reredos, against a mosaic ground (III. 3.84), was entrusted to a Mr Keith in preference to the costlier Powells. 'I should leave the figures themselves cut out in groundwork of the white marble uncoloured', White advised Clarke, 'inlaying only the lines and shadows in colour, and the foliage and background'.³⁵⁴ The sentimental angels on the oak pulpit, by Harry Hems, may have been an afterthought.³⁵⁵ The stained-glass angels in the six tiny lancets of the otherwise blank apse, probably sketched out by the architect, were entrusted to Francis Barraud of Lavers, Barraud and Westlake, as at St Mark's.³⁵⁶ A series of larger windows by the firm followed, beginning with the west window, given by Cazenove's grandchildren in 1882 and continuing along the north aisle up to 1890.

Later fittings include a lectern of 1894, the organ by Henry Jones of 1897 (moved in 1905 to the north side), the open chancel screen, installed in memory of Philip Cazenove's daughter Susan in 1905 to designs by Charles E. Howes, and sanctuary panelling of 1917. A war memorial chapel was installed in the south-east position in 1922 with a window by William Morris and Company of Westminster, a screen to the chapel following on. The faded painted decoration of the sanctuary seems to be the scheme painted by Messrs Campbell Smith in 1950; it replaces a scene with two angels surmounted by St Michael slaying the dragon, sketched out by White and painted by a Mr Clay in 1883 at Mary Cazenove's expense.³⁵⁷ The subsequent history of the fabric has been uneventful. There was talk in 1967 of demolishing St Michael's in connection with the Wandsworth housing scheme to its east, and later of sacrificing both this church and St Luke's further south in favour of an ecumenical place of worship on the site of the Broomwood Road Methodist church. Neither scheme materialized.³⁵⁸

St Michael's School

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This building is so tightly connected to St Michael's Church that the two form one composition. Indeed the main entrance to the church is from the south, through a covered way bisecting the school.

When construction began on the church, the 'iron room' was taken down and re-erected on the south side of the enlarged site facing Darley Road, continuing there for a few years.³⁵⁹ There had been some talk of building a vicarage here, but a permanent school along with a hall was the priority, and represented as fulfilling Philip Cazenove's intentions.

The scheme came forward in the spring of 1886 under J. S. Barford, first vicar of the permanent St Michael's. Legal obstacles as to the use of land conveyed for ecclesiastical purposes had first to be overcome.³⁶⁰ While supporting Barford, Bishop Thorold of Rochester added: 'but I should like to be assured that you will employ Mr White ... It is so important to have a unity of style and plan'.³⁶¹ This proved embarrassing, as the committee had already asked three architects to submit designs. Barford had to admit that they had voted in favour of William Wallis, surveyor to the Peabody Trust: 'They feel very strongly that the designs by Mr White are inferior to those by the others ... Several of the Committee also feel – perhaps not rightly – that the alterations which were necessarily made in the Crypt of the Church last year, to prevent its falling in, and other features in the construction of the Church fail to inspire confidence in the strength of the buildings now proposed by Mr White'.³⁶²

Wallis was duly confirmed as architect. The school went ahead in 1887–8 after some squeezing of his original design. The two-stage contract for the new school went to the local builders Turtle and Appleton. The iron room was finally carted away around the end of 1888.³⁶³ To judge from his copious surviving letters to Barford, Wallis looked assiduously after details, flaring up when a member of the building committee accused him of slackness.³⁶⁴ His

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two-storey school shows intelligent deference to White's architecture. It is a symmetrical composition of seven bays in defined compartments, centred upon the internal passageway through to the south church door. Its brickwork and stepped gable treatment mimic White's, but his Gothic idiom is expressed only in plain wooden fenestration, the passage arch apart. At the back, lower elements abut the church.

St Michael's School appears to have shut before the Second World War, but the building is still owned and run by the church.

St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road

St Luke's is the most embellished of Battersea's Victorian churches. Built between 1883 and 1899 to a basilican design by F. W. Hunt, it was largely the personal creation of Canon Erskine Clarke.

A church in southern Battersea close to Nightingale Lane was in Clarke's mind from early in his incumbency. The district was as yet sparsely developed, but speculation had started and the grounds of villas were being sold up. One such was the Old Park House estate, purchased by T. G. Bullen in 1871 with a covenant that only detached or semi-detached houses could be built there. The first plan seems to have been for Clarke's wealthy supporter Philip Cazenove to buy a portion for 'a new and advanced out-post in Nightingale Lane', as he told Earl Spencer in August 1873.³⁶⁵ That did not happen, so in 1874 Clarke himself bought from Bullen two large adjacent lots at the northern end of the Old Park House grounds, across which Thurleigh and Ramsden Roads had already been projected.³⁶⁶

Once the permanent St Mark's had opened, its temporary iron church was taken down and 'its component parts carted to a continuance of Ramsden

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Road, Nightingale Lane' where, 'dedicated to St Luke the Evangelist we pray that it may be as useful and fruitful as it has been on Battersea Rise', hoped Clarke. The covenant prohibiting non-domestic buildings provoked no difficulty.³⁶⁷ The re-erection was undertaken by Thomas Gregory, builder of St Mark's; dedication took place in November 1874.³⁶⁸ In that guise (with an organ added in 1878) St Luke's continued for some years against a semi-rustic backdrop. It boasted a nave, lean-to aisles, a pretty west porch, a flèche over the east end, ornamental bargeboards and even transeptal projections.³⁶⁹

With the Broomwood estate in the throes of development, Clarke convened a meeting in 1882 to discuss a permanent church. That summer the architect Frederick William Hunt produced plans.³⁷⁰ A foundation stone was laid in November 1883 and the first or eastern half, built by W. Johnson of Wandsworth Common, dedicated a year later.³⁷¹ It stood eastwards of the iron church, which remained in situ with a screen between them until the rest of the nave was added in 1888–9. The tower followed in 1892 and the projecting apsidal baptistery in 1899, while iron railings with brick piers surrounded the curtilage in 1897.³⁷² St Luke's was consecrated in 1892, after Clarke had conveyed his interest in the church part of the ground. The church hall site next door and much land to its east and south remained his.³⁷³

Both the architect of St Luke's and its style are a surprise. In his Battersea church-building endeavours, Clarke had hitherto favoured Gothic and patronized William White. A portrait of White hangs in the St Luke's vestry, testifying to their friendship. Yet Hunt not White became the church's architect, following on from his other local commission, All Saints', Prince of Wales Drive (page xxx). Perhaps Clarke felt he ought to spread his favours, given that White was then building St Mary le Park, intended as Battersea's grandest church. Yet for the St Luke's hall, opened in 1885 when the church was only half built, Clarke reverted to White, who went on to design fittings.³⁷⁴

The reasons for St Luke's basilican architecture are clearer. Following South London's transfer to the Rochester diocese its new-broom bishop, A. W. Thorold, was keen to further church-building. In a visitation charge of November 1881, Thorold praised Clarke's economical Battersea churches, poised between 'sordidness and extravagance'. But, he pursued, 'it may be worth considering whether we have not had enough of Gothic churches, with their difficult acoustics and expensive ornamentation. Why not try a Basilica, with a font big enough for immersion, and a pulpit in which the preacher can both move and think, and space in which people can see, hear, and worship? ... a fine red brick Basilica is the one thing of all others I wish to see'.³⁷⁵ The last sentence was quoted by Clarke when St Luke's was germinating, and became part of Hunt's brief.³⁷⁶

The exterior of St Luke's is a workmanlike essay in the *Rundbogen* style that had found some favour for English churches in the 1840s and returned again from the 1880s. Its projecting transepts suggest a Gothic-Revival design translated into basilican language without much recasting. The wall surfaces are arranged into brick panels recessed between pilaster strips and broken up only by round-arched fenestration. The east end, where the apses of the chancel and the southern chapel are treated as separate volumes, is well handled. But the tour de force is the stout tower over the north-west porch (III. 3.87). It enjoys larger dimensions on plan than most such towers, and rises four full stages to an open belfry framed by tripartite openings. At the topmost level deep corbelling reaches up and out to a parapet, over which a copper-clad pyramid crowns the whole.

Internally, St Luke's impresses for the richness of later fittings grafted on to the brick core. The plan (III. 3.85) is straightforward, with a wide clerestoried nave, narrow aisles and an arcade that continues up to the arch of the apsidal sanctuary. The piers of this discreetly pointed arcade (III. 3.88) are

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among the few places where the fabric admits stone; they are of Pennant stone, with bases of red Mansfield and capitals of white Mansfield, carved in 1890.³⁷⁷ The nave roof is open, with twin arches at the centre of each truss. Ample vestries are provided on the north side, and a chapel opposite.

After the main fabric's completion in 1889, the decoration of St Luke's proceeded by means of private gifts. There is no record of Hunt's involvement in that process, while it was White who designed the choir stalls and other chancel fittings in 1896–7. Despite these Gothic-tinged contributions, the early Renaissance tone of the church was intensified by the later fittings, some based on Italian originals. Their main artistic value is as a totality. The exception is the set of electrical fittings installed in 1903 – a time when, in Basil Clarke's words, 'no one was apologetic about elaborate electroliers' – by Perry & Co. at the expense of James Haydon Bartlett in his wife's memory. Bartlett, a maker of light fittings and chandeliers, was later churchwarden and had a hand in some of the other fittings, so it seems likely that the design was his own, while the employment of Perrys, a large firm of contractors owned by H. H. Bartlett, suggests a family connection.³⁷⁸ The ensemble of elaborate switches, wall sconces and graceful pendant fittings (Ill. 3.90) adds to the interior's verve. Attached to the pendants, said to be based on a jewel in the Pitti Palace by Benvenuto Cellini, are the names of virtues and, in the chancel, painted panels after Fra Angelico.

Details of other fittings and decorative features are as follows:

Sanctuary. Marble cross on gradine behind altar of 1889, copying early Christian crosses from Rome.³⁷⁹ Decoration of apse commenced in 1895.³⁸⁰ Marble and mosaic panels on walls of apse by James Powell & Sons, framing and central panel of 1902, flanking figurative panels of 1906–7.³⁸¹ Painted panels on altar front perhaps also by Powells. Two bronze light standards on Florentine marble bases after an original by Giovanni da Bologna.³⁸² Communion rail by Martin Travers, c.1928.

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Choir. Mosaic by Salviati over door to north vestry copied from circular window in St Mary's, Battersea.³⁸³ Triple sedilia, bishop's throne and choir stalls all in oak, carved by Harry Hems to the designs of William White, 1896-7.³⁸⁴ North and south screens of c.1895. Organ by Ingram and Co. of Hereford, 1905, replacing or extending earlier instrument by T. C. Lewis of Brixton; case c.1908. Pulpit (1890), dwarf wall to chancel (1894) and lectern with large angel frontispiece (1901) all carved in various marbles and alabaster by Farmer and Brindley: sounding board to pulpit added in 1896 with carving by Harry Hems.³⁸⁵

Lady Chapel. Apse first decorated in 1904.³⁸⁶ Recast in 1925 to the designs of Martin Travers, including the folding wooden reredos with relief carving in Baroque taste, pedimented entrance screen, parclose screen and communion rails. David figure in the chapel's west window added by Travers in 1927.³⁸⁷ Lamp after original in shrine of San Carlo Borromeo in Milan Cathedral crypt, 1903, by Perry & Co.³⁸⁸ Benches with carved ends added, 1934.³⁸⁹

Nave. Font of Derbyshire alabaster on piers of red Verona marble, 1889. Pebbles from Jordan set on step in front, 1924.³⁹⁰ High canopy with top stage after tower of St Stephen Walbrook added to designs of Martin Travers, 1927.³⁹¹ Mosaic panels over westernmost arch of nave by Salviati, 1899.³⁹² Clarke memorial on north wall with banner of General Alured Clarke, formerly in Westminster Abbey. War memorial on south side, c.1920.³⁹³

Stained glass. All by James Powell & Sons, 1894–1902, except for Travers window in Lady Chapel.

Originally St Luke's was a dependency of St Mary's, staffed by Erskine Clarke and his curates – never less than three of four. With Earl Spencer's consent it acquired its own district in 1900, which by dispensation Clarke was allowed to hold in plurality with St Mary's.³⁹⁴ In 1902 he moved to the vicarage built to the south of St Luke's with the family of his nephew, the Rev. Charles Erskine Clarke, who succeeded his uncle as vicar here. Clarke senior resigned the living of St Mary's in 1909 but continued to be a presence at St Luke's until his death in 1920.³⁹⁵

The most important of the later embellishments listed above were those by Martin Travers. This characteristic work is concentrated in the Lady Chapel, where a scheme proposed by the Rev. W. T. Havard was carried out

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in 1925–6 at the cost of John Scott of Nightingale Lane.³⁹⁶ Since then the church has not been greatly altered, though its external iron railings were removed during the Second World War. In the early 1970s a proposal to demolish St Luke's in an amalgamation of parishes and church plant was successfully resisted.³⁹⁷

Church hall

The original church hall was built just south of the church, with William White as its architect, late in 1885. It was a quiet design with a broad roof and three round windows in its west elevation, in keeping with the church. It occupied land owned by Clarke and was presumably paid for by him. This 'very useful and genial centre' opened with an ambitious loan exhibition on art and industry.³⁹⁸ Extra rooms were added in 1891.³⁹⁹ It was replaced by the present community hall in 2001–2, paid for in part from the sale of land left to St Luke's by Clarke. Stephen Buck was the architect, and Broadland Construction Ltd built it.⁴⁰⁰ There is a glazed link between the hall and the north porch of the church.

Vicarage (former), 192 Ramsden Road

This generous house of red brick with Mansfield stone dressings was privately built by Canon Clarke in 1901, to house the family of his nephew, the Rev. Charles Erskine Clarke, as well as himself. The architect was J. S. Quilter, with Lathey Brothers as builders.⁴⁰¹ After Clarke senior's death in 1920, it was conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, along with some other properties owned by Clarke. It is now a private school.

St Stephen's Church, Kersley Street (now Assemblies of the First Born)

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St Stephen's, built in 1886, was the last of the six Battersea churches designed by William White. It passed to a Pentecostal congregation in 1978.

The church derives from a modest chapel founded by Samuel Gilbert Scott, vicar of St Saviour's, to supplement provision in his parish. In 1878 a plot was bought on the east side of Poyntz Road, in the railway-locked triangle off Latchmere Road.⁴⁰² St Aldwin's Mission Chapel opened there in 1880, ministering to a district informally assigned to it from the parishes of St Saviour and Christ Church.⁴⁰³ The chapel had a crow-stepped brick front in White's manner, but was pragmatically detailed and may have been designed by a builder or surveyor. It was demolished around 1980.

St Aldwin's soon boasted 'a somewhat extensive parochial organization' under Scott's curate Thomas B. Brooks, helped by 'mission women'.⁴⁰⁴ But the plot was too small for a permanent church. By July 1880 Canon Erskine Clarke had been drawn in to negotiate for a fresh site on Crown land between Kersley Street and Battersea Park Road, then destined for development by Thomas Pink, who was ready to make over his interest in the plots. Pink failed (vol. 50), but his successor too proved amenable, as did the Office of Works, on the usual grounds that a church would keep up property values. Brooks now put out an appeal, and an agreement to purchase the Kersley Street site followed in October 1881. A year later a temporary church was built there by William Gulliver. It took the name of St Stephen, probably after St Stephen's, Westbourne Park Road, Paddington, which had been founded and largely paid for by Brooks's father.⁴⁰⁵

Neither Scott nor Brooks stayed in the district long enough to build a permanent church. In 1885 the Rev. H. Percival Smith took up the cudgels and appealed for £1,400 over and above the promise of £4,000 secured from the Bishop of Rochester's Ten Churches Fund. That body it was which appointed William White as architect, not his long-standing patron Canon Clarke. Smith

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stressed that Clarke 'has really nothing to do with the building of the church except being on our committee and the site being in his parish'. Over six months in 1886 Smith – described by Bishop Thorold of Rochester as 'a really good man' – pushed St Stephen's through to efficient erection by Holloway Brothers.⁴⁰⁶

Somewhat old-fashioned for its date, St Stephen's repeats ideas from White's earlier Battersea churches (Ills 3.91, 92). White himself regarded it simply as 'an effort to plan for a poor congregation'.⁴⁰⁷ Nevertheless St Stephen's has a neat, disciplined air. The materials are his favourite London combination of buff stock bricks with red dressings and touches of polychromatic patterning on the upper parts of the west front, now faded. That front's plainness is set off by half-hipped roofs at the ends of the narthex and aisles. Nave, chancel and aisles have the conventional interrelationship, but the chancel is perked up by an apse. Towards Kersley Street the tower tucks in beyond the east end of the aisle. In the published sketch design it ended in a tall broach, but more money must have come in, for on revision White raised the belfry stage, inserted an extra level for a clock-face on each side 'with a pointed brick for each of the hours', and topped things off with a hutch-style crown as at St Mark's.⁴⁰⁸

Internally (Ill. 3.93) the broad chancel arch and good lighting from the clerestory, contrasting with the windowless aisles, contribute to the auditorial air. The bases, shafts and capitals of the four-bay arcades are of stone, but the arches and most other features are of red brick. There is little carving. The short chancel, as in other of White's Battersea churches, is raised over a vestry. The nave roof is of the king-post type, the chancel roof boarded.

The initial fittings were simple. The wooden sedilia and credence may be those for which White allowed £15. Also economically specified were a pulpit, lectern, altar and rails.⁴⁰⁹ The east window (designed by White and

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probably made by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake) showing St Stephen's condemnation and martyrdom was noted at the time of consecration.⁴¹⁰ An organ under the tower and the clock in its top stage followed in 1887; next year came a plain reredos backed by a painting by a Kersley Street artist named Norris, later removed. A humdrum chancel screen arrived as a war memorial in the early 1920s.⁴¹¹ The panelling behind where the stalls once were seems of the same date.

In 1929 the open space at the west end was curtailed when Battersea Bridge Road was widened.⁴¹² Artistic alterations took place from designs by Martin Travers in 1939–40. St Stephen's having by then drifted upwards to a High-Church tradition, Travers contributed an inventive version of the English altar, using fabrics for economy and adding communion rails in front. A suspended timber font cover was also installed. In 1953 a side-chapel was formed south of the chancel.⁴¹³

By 1966 St Stephen's was one of three Battersea churches earmarked for possible closure. Deputed to visit, John Betjeman attended Evensong. He found the interior 'very pretty ... not grand, but homely and well-proportioned ... there were about fifteen people there, which isn't bad for an Extreme church, where Masses are the chief services.' The 'really beautiful' Travers reredos, he added, 'is well related in colour to the warm brick walls and a rather pleasant 1880-ish window above'.⁴¹⁴ Despite this eulogy St Stephen's was shut and its parish united with Christ Church. Under the present Pentecostal congregation, the church is well cared for. A podium has been created in front of the chancel arch, while the screen has been set further back, obscuring the former sanctuary which functions as an office. The Travers reredos and font cover have gone.

St Barnabas's Church, Clapham Common North Side

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This church appears externally much as it did when built in 1897–8, to designs by W. & C. A. Bassett Smith. Its interior was reordered in 1993–4.

St Barnabas's beginnings were bound up with St Matthew's, Rush Hill Road, of 1876–7 (page xxx). St Matthew's continued as an outpost of Battersea parish church until the early 1890s, when Canon Erskine Clarke appointed to it a young evangelical, George Martin Claris. Allegedly, Claris agreed to take on St Matthew's only if candlesticks and cross were removed from the altar. Having built up the congregation, in 1894 he was permitted to form a separate parish with a new church if he could raise the money.⁴¹⁵

There were several reasons for downgrading St Matthew's. Clarke thought it no longer big enough, as many of the large houses and grounds along Clapham Common's north side were being redeveloped for building.⁴¹⁶ The decisive factor was the availability of a better site facing Clapham Common. This was the front garden of the Shrubbery, Lavender Gardens, which had come into clerical ownership when the wealthy Rev. Francis Henry Baring, briefly in charge of St Matthew's, purchased it in 1885. Baring had in view building a church here, then left for India. Clarke thereupon bought the property; the house itself became the Vicarage School, leaving the front and back gardens vacant. He was therefore able to sell the front garden to Claris in 1895 for his project.⁴¹⁷ That year the district was gazetted, before a church could be built.⁴¹⁸

Claris first accepted his senior's desire to appoint the architect, 'although somewhat reluctantly as he wished to have a Church of his own choice of style'. Then he persuaded Clarke that they should both nominate architects, the plans to be judged by a competent authority. Claris's nominee, William Bassett Smith, prevailed; but it was Clarke who named the new foundation St Barnabas ('son of consolation') to mark the fact that the parish

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he had long wished to found, close to his home in Altenburg Gardens, would at last be realized.⁴¹⁹

Claris proved an effective fund-raiser. In evangelical circles St Barnabas's was floated as a memorial to the 'holy men' of the Clapham Sect - who had congregated near by.⁴²⁰ Later, the church's completion was linked to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.⁴²¹ The Bassett Smiths had produced their matured design by February 1897. Once a dispute about the line of frontage had been settled, a foundation stone was laid by the Duchess of Somerset in June.⁴²² The contract drawings were signed by J. & M. Patrick, but a memoir of Claris ascribes the construction to H. Gough, perhaps the firm's owner, described as a 'government contractor' who had lately come to live locally. Gough gave the marble chancel steps but was said to have lost considerably on the job.⁴²³

Midway through the contract (Ill. 3.94), Claris was taken ill and died in January 1898. He is interred at Wandsworth Cemetery beneath a monument by the local sculptor and member of the congregation, Thomas Rudge, who carried out all the carving in the church. Responsibility for completing St Barnabas's passed to his father, W. M. Claris, aided by the banker John Deacon as treasurer of the building committee. Despite the setback the church was efficiently finished, and indeed Claris's death together with £2,000 from the Marriott bequest swelled fund-raising.⁴²⁴ The upper stage of the tower had been omitted from the contract, but it now proved possible to complete it to a revised design, while many internal fittings were in place at the outset. The church was dedicated on 1 October 1898, but consecrated later because of legal technicalities.⁴²⁵

Anglican evangelicals were seldom in the vanguard of architectural taste in the 1890s. Claris's choice of architects for St Barnabas's confirms that pattern. It is believed to be the last church by William Bassett Smith, who

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lived on Clapham Common North Side and is commemorated by a window in the chancel, though his son Charles Aubrey Bassett Smith was associated with him. It has a dated air, with its separately pitched aisles and nave, its Decorated arcades, chancel arch and tracery, and its rubble-stone exterior punctuated by buttressing. The stout Somerset-type tower, with a crenellated parapet above a belfry stage in an earlier style, offers vigour at the south-west corner (III. 3.95). Unusual is the linkage of the two vestries by a passage behind the east end.

Inside (III. 3.96), the walls are in two tones of brickwork. Original fittings include a naturalistically carved pulpit on a marble base, a brass lectern and a brown alabaster font. Gothic arcading over a dado of the same alabaster round the sanctuary flanks a Caen stone reredos incorporating a depiction of the Last Supper in high relief, carved and presented by Rudge.⁴²⁶ Many of these fittings, all presumably designed by the Bassett Smiths, were given in memory of Claris. The organ south of the chancel, by Vowles of Bristol, dates from 1899.⁴²⁷ The liveliest of the memorials is a mosaic panel on the west wall behind the original position of the font. It depicts Christ the Good Shepherd in a 'romanticised Ravennate style' and was erected in memory of Max Williams, vicar until 1937.⁴²⁸

The church underwent few alterations until recent years. Plans of 1972 for rebuilding the whole church except for the tower, with a smaller church oriented northwards and a hall to its east, were not proceeded with.⁴²⁹ In 1990 a more conservative scheme came forward for converting the western end of the nave. This was carried through by the Brown Matthews Partnership of Warwick in 1993–4.⁴³⁰ It entailed partitioning off the westernmost bays of the nave and aisles and converting them into independent space on two storeys for meeting rooms, offices, a kitchen and WCs. Most of the pews and stalls were replaced by chairs, and the body of the church was carpeted.

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St Nectarios Greek Church (formerly St Bartholomew's), Wycliffe Road

The length of the Greek Church of St Nectarios squeezes narrowly on to a site between Wycliffe and Wickersley Roads. It started life as St Bartholomew's, built in 1900–2 from designs by G. H. Fellowes Prynne to serve the last Anglican parish formed in Battersea.

St Bartholomew's began as a mission church taken from the parish of St Philip's, Queenstown Road. Its initiator, in 1889, was the Rev. Frederick Louis Goslett, who held charge of the venture until his death in 1916. Mark Beaufoy, MP, gave the land; as part of his vinegar empire, he owned a plant where John Burns School now stands, north of the church.⁴³¹ A two-storey mission hall *cum* church holding about 220 people was built by W. Johnson at the west end of the site in 1891–2.⁴³² Its foundation stone was laid by Arthur Blundell Stevens of Lambeth, a doctor and churchman from a publishing family, who appears to have been the project's major benefactor throughout. The plain interiors of the hall have not been much changed.

By 1897 Fellowes Prynne had been appointed architect and made what was probably close to the final design for the permanent church, abutting eastwards end-on to the mission hall (Ill. 3.97). With Stevens's help it was hoped to start next year, but difficulties with the soil, Prynne reported, had increased the cost. In applying for a grant, he crossed swords with J. T. Micklethwaite, the architect deputed to comment by the Incorporated Church Building Society, who wanted him to rearrange his steps in the chancel and lower the sanctuary level. In bed with flu ('it was only by continuous application of ice that brain fever was prevented'), Prynne defended his dispositions, arguing against dropping levels to avoid deep excavations, as the water table was high.⁴³³ In the event, construction (by W. H. Lorden and Son) was postponed till 1900–2. Once again Stevens laid the foundation stone.

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Consecration took place in October 1902 but a district was not assigned until 1906.⁴³⁴

St Bartholomew's constituted a faintly old-fashioned specimen of Victorian town church (Ill. 3.98). Its cramped setting, aligned with the mission hall and accessible only by a narrow passage leading to a north-west door, adds to the exterior's gauntness. The materials of both buildings are stock brick, with an admixture of stone and red brick in the church. This is lit by triplets of clerestoried lancets, a large geometrical east window and a rose at the west end, made possible by hipping back the hall roof. The church roof, slightly higher, is uniform in level. There is no tower; the upper stages of a flèche over the chancel arch have been taken down.

Within, the space is united by a plain boarded wagon roof running from end to end, though interrupted by a high chancel arch. The whole was originally faced in plain brickwork with lines of red. The five-bay arcade is arranged in two stages, rising to encompass the clerestory lancets with blank arches, while the lower arches rest on single pillars against the piers. The north aisle always included a baptistery beside the entrance and an altar at its east end, while the south aisle is a passage. The chancel and sanctuary are narrower than the nave; to their north are vestries, while to their south a passage formerly led to a secondary entrance from Wycliffe Road. The original furnishings were mostly plain, with chairs in the nave and simple stalls. Among fittings attributable to Fellowes Prynne are the dwarf chancel screen, the font, and a powerful square pulpit, the gift of Ada Mary Stevens.

St Bartholomew's was never a prosperous parish. A proposal to reunite it with St Philip's was on the table in 1969, when there was talk of taking its ground into the school then being planned on the vinegar works site. The church became redundant in 1972. The Greek community came to the rescue, taking over St Bartholomew's and renaming it St Nectarios. The new

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congregation respected the church's structure and fittings but painted the exposed brick surfaces a vibrantly Greek cream and blue. At the east end an iconostasis was introduced. In present hands the church enjoys a livelier use than it probably ever had in its Anglican incarnation (III. 3.100).

St James's Mission Church and Hall, Ponton Road (demolished)

A small Anglican mission church and school, the latter an offshoot of St George's Schools, was built in 1869–70 on a triangular site in the poorest part of Nine Elms between Ponton Road and Woodgate Streets. The initiative came from Benjamin and John Mills Thorne, owners of Nine Elms Brewery nearby; the designers were Lee Brothers and Pain. The school was taken over by the School Board for London in 1877, then closed when Ponton Road School opened in 1885.⁴³⁵ But the church continued and was enlarged around 1880, by which time it was known as St James's and run as a diocesan mission.⁴³⁶ In 1914–15 a complete rebuilding was undertaken by L. & H. Roberts, to designs by James, Laycock and Bellamy.⁴³⁷ The upshot was a substantial hall with mission church above, housed in an old-fashioned, stock-brick building with a flèche on the roof. This survived until about 1970.

For Caius College Mission Church, Holman Road, see pages xxx.

Roman Catholic Churches

Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph, Convent of Notre Dame and schools, Battersea Park Road

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The austere brick church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph is the remnant of a former Catholic enclave which once extended to a presbytery, a convent and three schools. The church, Battersea's first Roman Catholic foundation, consists of an original chapel with presbytery of 1868–9 designed by C. A. Buckler, supplemented with a nave by A. J. Adams in 1877–8. Opposite, the first portions of the convent and schools were built to Buckler's designs in 1869–70 and enlarged from the 1890s. South of the church is the former St Joseph's boys' school, empty at the time of writing, while the convent and its schools have been converted to offices.

The first inkling of a Catholic mission in the Battersea Park district came in 1867, when Bishop Thomas Grant of Southwark investigated setting up a small church and convent there. That was against the advice of a priest sent to report, who advised that Vauxhall would be a better location, as 'very few Catholics reside in Battersea New Town'.⁴³⁸

Grant appealed for help to the Namur-based Sisters of Notre Dame, a teaching order established since the 1840s in Clapham, who also ran a house and school close to his cathedral in Southwark.⁴³⁹ The diocese was to build a church and presbytery, while the nuns erected a convent. On that understanding, land was bought for the church in 1868 from the liquidators of the abortive West London Wharves and Warehouses Company. Tucked beneath the new high-level railway under the lee of Battersea Park Station, the position was not eligible. Thomas Drinkwater, appointed priest that September, candidly told Grant after his first visit 'how almost disheartened I have been and am at the size of the building and its *position*'.

By December 1867 Charles Alban Buckler had been appointed architect and was writing chatty letters to the bishop. Though the chapel was to be cheap and small, he was happy, he said, to be working for the first time in his native Surrey. He admired the 'grand' overall site and was only 'sorry to be

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put, like a naughty boy, *quite* in the corner'. Once allotted more space, Buckler planned a 'roomy' apse 'with plenty of "swing" for the thurifer' and envisaged a future 'telescopic prolongation of the nave'. B. E. Nightingale built the church in the second half of 1868, followed by the presbytery attached behind. Buckler hoped that Grant was pleased with the result, 'lowly though it be – with a tinge of poverty, which gives a severity to its style and takes away the *modern* look'. To Namur he sent a sketch (III. 3.104) and note: 'The church and presbytery are *entirely of brick*, with rigorous economy, in fact a tone of *holy poverty*, the house with stepped gables, as in the old Flemish and East Anglian styles.' The nuns approved, one writing: 'Nous avons vu la petite Eglise qui nous a bien plu.' To pay for the church Grant turned to Jane Mary Boschetti Shea of Bayswater. But Mrs Shea became piqued when it emerged that another donor, the Countess de Stacpoole, had been promised the gift of the high altar, designed by Buckler and made in 1869 by R. L. Boulton of Cheltenham. Frozen out from the rest of the fittings, the Countess turned her benevolence to the future Sacred Heart Church (see below).

In 1869 the nuns of Notre Dame took up their side of the bargain. Their operations were managed from Namur by Sister Mary of St Francis, formerly the Hon. Laura Petre, née Jerningham.⁴⁴⁰ This aristocratic widow had already paid for the sisters' freehold at Clapham, and probably defrayed the cost of the early buildings at Battersea. Buckler acted as their architect too. His father, J. C. Buckler, still active in the 1860s, had extended the Jerninghams' ancient Costessey Hall, Norfolk, forty years before, copying the crowstepped style in evidence there. Hence no doubt the allusion to 'Flemish and East Anglian' styles at Battersea.

The nuns opted for a site just east of the church, across what had been scheduled as a short public road between the present Battersea Park Road and Prince of Wales Drive (III. 3.103a). The north end was earmarked for 'poor schools' for 100 girls and 100 infants on two floors – the western portion of

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what is now Garden House. The convent itself constituted the northern section of the present Cloisters House. This was to hold ten to twelve sisters, housed in small dormitories, as well as an oratory, refectory, room for the superior, and visitors' parlour. In addition there were schoolrooms and dormitories for better-class girls.

These two buildings, economically specified, were built to Buckler's designs by B. E. Nightingale in 1869–70. There was delay over the Belgian blue stone which the sisters fancied for the staircases and landings. "Slow-coaches" are Flemish quarrymen', wrote Buckler to Sister Mary of St Francis: 'I hope the cargo has not been deposited at the bottom of the Sea, or in the bed of Schelde or Thames'. The sisters moved in and the schools opened in the spring of 1870.

Not until convent and school were functioning did the Sisters buy the rest of the triangular site between Battersea Park Road and Prince of Wales Drive. The largest of three lots was a tongue of land running eastwards, destined for the convent garden. These purchases, made in about 1873–4, together with the sale in 1871 to the diocese of the future boys' school site between the church and Battersea Park Road, paved the way for closing the road. Buckler designed a boundary wall high enough, so he thought, 'to be a good barrier to the Easter Gipsies', but it had to be heightened 'to keep out expert Battersea climbers'. This was built by G. H. & A. Bywaters late in 1875. Piers and gates at both ends were provided, at first perhaps in temporary form.

Buckler still had hopes of augmenting the little church by adding a three-bay nave, a parallel aisle of equal overall length next to it, and a substantial chapel on the other side. As funds were tight, Canon Drinkwater counselled building only the chancel of the parallel aisle. Buckler thought this a mistake, but recognized there was nothing for it but to 'pray away, in hopes

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that faithful people may arise to carry on the *extra 40 feet* and the side chapel which would make a fine church'. Instead, for reasons unclear, Drinkwater dismissed him and brought in A. J. Adams of Bayswater, 'a clever Scotch convert architect' who had worked with the well-known J. J. Stevenson. It was to Adams' design that the parallel aisle was built, becoming the new nave. Constructed by John Tyerman in 1877–8 and formally opened in 1879,⁴⁴¹ it was a cheap job. The seats, for instance, were made up by men of the congregation from a sketch by Adams.

Buckler's original chapel, hidden from external view, is now the liturgically north aisle of the enlarged church (III. 3.103b). Like the taller nave added by Adams, it ends in a three-sided apse. This latter portion (III. 3.105) is in a lancet style, with rubbed brick dressings and minimal stonework. Its best feature is the deeply ribbed arch over the entrance, but even that is without enrichment. The end of the nave was damaged by an oil bomb in 1940 and has been patched.⁴⁴²

Internally (III. 3.107) the whole church has been stripped of older fittings and plain-painted, with loss of colouring and stencilwork, but the livelier quality of Buckler's contribution can be discerned. His aisle is now used as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and its altar, incorporating relief figures by R. L. Boulton within vesica panels, remains in place. To one side is a small baptistery added in the post-war years but now redundant. The arcade dividing nave and aisle is almost featureless. The chief remaining fitting in the body of the church is the high altar donated by Sir John Stuart Knill in about 1878, in red marbles. A wooden pulpit with tester does not survive. New seating was installed in the 1960s along with the gallery at the end of the nave and a new organ. A forward altar was installed in 1985, in which year the church was finally consecrated.

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The rest of the triangle filled up with schools. South of the church is the single-storey former St Joseph's boys' school, run at first by the Xaverian Brothers. Its first plain portion, built by 1882, faces Battersea Park Road.⁴⁴³ This front originally had small porthole lights only, the present windows being later insertions. A classroom added behind to designs by F. A. Walters in 1891 is cheerier, with wide windows and red-brick dressings touched by the School Board style. Next to it, fresh gates in a robust, baroque style, also by Walters, were erected at the enclave's entrance in 1892, following reports that the private road was 'used at night for every kind of abomination'.⁴⁴⁴

The convent undertook fresh initiatives from 1893 to meet educational expansion. Walters' services appear to have been solicited for this work but rejected in favour of the architect-surveyor J. C. Radford.⁴⁴⁵ His work included a southern addition to the convent for the higher grade school (Turtle & Appleton, builders, 1893). He extended the building again at the back on the east side in 1899-1900, when the first-floor chapel was also lengthened (Blackmore, builder). Cloisters House as it stands today is therefore of three phases. It has a mainly flat front of nine not quite symmetrical gables, centrally emphasized by a tall traceried window marking the chapel. At the back the projecting centre is flanked by further traceried openings once lighting the sanctuary. There was no east window but a small vestry behind the altar, denoted by a crowstepped sub-gable. Internally the chapel was plain, with two open trusses and a transverse arch. Until the post-war period, there was a five-part reredos over the altar with painted figures and a tabernacle supplied by Hardmans.⁴⁴⁶

North of the convent, Radford also in 1893 made an eastward extension to St Mary's School, as the poor schools became, again copying Buckler's stepped-gable style but with white-brick dressings round the windows. This is the building now known as Garden House, backing on to Prince of Wales Drive, where it has lost chimneystacks rising from the parapet. Further west,

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Radford in 1907 added the plain but high brick building now known as Priory House, north of the presbytery and abutting on Prince of Wales Drive.⁴⁴⁷ This was an extension to Notre Dame High School, as the higher-grade or secondary school held in the convent was now called. Its siting entailed stopping up the north end of the private road.

As completed with its schools, the convent formed a local oasis. The 'ample walled garden with a gravel walk and a very compact grotto' created between the converging roads was much used by the schoolgirls and enjoyed fine trees.⁴⁴⁸ Eastwards beyond the walls, impoverished Nine Elms was the focus of effort, Drinkwater reporting in 1876 on an influx of newcomers 'who are almost worse than those they find already there'. Clubs and philanthropy made up much of the work. There were intermittent connections between the convent and the Currie Street club of the Catholic social reformer and feminist Charlotte Despard. After she left, a small school with a room used as a chapel was built on the south side of Nine Elms Lane to Henry C. Smart's designs in 1923.

Expansion of the schools, especially the secondary school, led to the eventual demise of the convent, as in the post-war period the existing premises were deemed unsuitable. St Mary's Primary School moved to Lockington Road in the 1970s (page xxx). The secondary school was eventually amalgamated with others and closed in 1985, when the last nuns left. In 1986 the convent and schools sites were purchased by the developer-builder William Sapcote & Sons. Conversion to office and other uses followed after indicative designs by Anthony Richardson & Partners, architects. At the apex of the roads a remnant of the garden was excised, and the gaudily clad Creative House, a small apartment building, eventually built here in 2004–5 to designs by Priestman Architects for Sapcote Developments.⁴⁴⁹ The church and presbytery remain.

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Church of the Sacred Heart, Trott Street

This conspicuously steepled church was built to F. A. Walters' designs in 1892–3, replacing an iron church of 1875. Since 1887 it has been staffed by the Salesian Order, which also serves the Salesian College to its north. A school to the east, now L'Ecole de Battersea, formerly also belonged to the church. These schools are discussed on pages xxx and xxx respectively.

Soon after a mission had been established near Battersea Park in 1868–70, calls came for a second Catholic foundation. The prime mover seems to have been Henry J. Hansom of Falcon Road, scion of the Hansom dynasty of Catholic architects and district surveyor for Battersea North. That job allowed him from 1871 onwards to draw Bishop Danell of Southwark's attention to potential properties. Responding to the doubtful Canon Drinkwater of Battersea Park in 1873, Hansom pointed to the surge in population and argued that there were some 450 Catholics around Clapham Junction far from a local church. 'Catholics are here in a state of religious destitution,' he wrote, 'great number never going to Church, others lax in the duties of their religion, their children either going to Protestant schools, or none at all'.⁴⁵⁰

In 1874 Hansom wrote to the bishop that as another recent probe for property had failed, 'there is really nothing but Mr Trott's or delay'. The reference was to Trott Street, then being laid out by the eponymous Joseph Trott of the Surrey Iron Works, Battersea High Street. Trott proved compliant to leasing a plot north of the corner of his L-shaped development.

The Countess Georgiana de Stacpoole now entered the scene. This highly strung personality, a 'papal countess of Irish origin whose family were first ennobled by the restored Louis XVIII', oscillated between London, Paris and Rome.⁴⁵¹ Having been marginally involved with Our Lady of Mount

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Carmel, she was doubtless redirected to 'Battersea West' by Drinkwater. After a 'conversation détaillée' with him she took the project over, paying Trott £1,000 for the freehold and commissioning an iron church from a Mr S. Dyer (or possibly the minor architect Frederick Dyer).⁴⁵²

Perhaps in deference to the basilica of atonement then planned for Montmartre following the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune, the countess insisted that her foundation should be named the Sacred Heart. She was soon acquiring sacred paraphernalia from Paris. Extraordinarily, she also took up residence in an 'iron cottage of three rooms' annexed to the temporary church,⁴⁵³ 'though a family memoir suggests she kept a suite at the Cadogan Hotel as well, no doubt for the occasional hot bath'.⁴⁵⁴

The building of this church proved onerous. Dyer having been sacked, supervision passed to Hansom, who was pestered by the countess and obliged to wait on her daily. Dyer's iron supplier also had to go after offering Hansom 'the vilest insolence'. The church was completed by Trott himself and opened in Autumn 1875. Tensions soon resurfaced. Drinkwater and the Countess de Stacpoole quarrelled over music, the latter preferring Gregorian chant to the former's Haydn or Mozart, interlarded with 'something of his own composition which the organist told me was not written correctly and could not be rendered', as Hansom informed the bishop.

The endgame between the countess and the locals followed in 1878–9, when Hansom was building schools next to the church. Bored with Battersea and apprehensive that he might foist Gothic on her when it came to the permanent church, she diverted her energies to a new project at Caterham: 'If your Lordship would only say to her – Do one thing well!!!', Hansom besought Danell. Instead, she asked the contractor for the schools if he would build the Caterham church without an architect, causing Hansom to erupt

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with a litany of reproach. After a final crisis in 1879 the countess decamped dramatically.

These stresses did no favours for the Sacred Heart mission, which Drinkwater described as in a 'sleepy' state in 1880. The iron church also worried Hansom, as 'it sways considerably in ordinary rough weather'. Brick buttresses were built around it under his supervision, the chancel roof was strengthened and Trott recovered the whole in galvanized iron. But the Countess de Stacpoole still owned the ground, the church and its contents, and would not release them. For some years she was in intermittent contact with Don Bosco, eminent founder of the Salesian Order in Turin. Probably she met him in Rome, where the Salesians too were building a basilica to the Sacred Heart. England interested Bosco, and he agreed to take over the Battersea mission. Not however until 1887 did the Salesians obtain papal authority to do so against a foot-dragging Diocese of Southwark.⁴⁵⁵

A small Salesian party arrived in November 1887, repairing to 26 Trott Street where, they were informed, 'Mrs Pash will have the "minestrone" ready'.⁴⁵⁶ The early years were difficult. The countess continued to intervene, not least over the contract transferring the property to the Salesians, and their first leader, Fr McKiernan, soon died. An Italian priest, Fr Bonavia, described the iron church as having:

a fancy belfry on the front like a pointed chimneystack. In the fog it looks like an apparition, but the reality is somewhat more prosaic ... Before I came, I can't say how splendid I expected the rest of the church to be, but it still looks like a station roof or a puppet stall like you see on the Rondo or at Porta Palazzo ... Some workmen have tried to improve and whitewash the whole, but the rains accompanying these interminable fogs mean that the interior is still completely humid ... Inside, a family of devout and pious mice reign supreme. Yesterday at Father Macey's first mass, when Rabigliati stopped giving vent to that voice of his ... better suited to a prison

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than his office of music master, our attention was drawn to a male and female mouse in contention with one another.⁴⁵⁷

Leading the Salesians and raising a permanent church now fell to Fr Charles Macey. The first thought was to improve the schools and build accommodation for the fathers. Designs were commissioned from the prolific Frederick A. Walters in 1889. He produced a scheme for a three-storey block west of the church, with clergy accommodation below and boys' dormitories on top. He also sketched in a thoroughly English church with a Perpendicular front to Trott Street (Ill. 3.108). The presbytery idea soon fell away in favour of the church. In 1890 Walters produced a fuller design, still English in style, with a squared-off sanctuary and semi-detached tower.⁴⁵⁸

It now emerged that the money would have to come from abroad, and that the authorities in Turin as well as the tenacious Countess de Stacpoole preferred a round-arched style. So Walters adapted his designs to a Romanesque idiom.⁴⁵⁹ This probably was the plan which Macey took to Italy and had approved in September 1891. Next February there was a further change, allegedly made to please the countess. Walters now recomposed the front and added a tall tower and spire instead of the gawky belfry previously intended, taking as his model the recent Salesian church of San Giovanni Evangelista, Turin, built in 1877–82 to designs by Edoardo Arborio Mella.⁴⁶⁰

There was no prolonged fund-raising effort for the church, which according to Salesian tradition was paid for from the inheritance of Prince August Czartoryski, a wealthy Pole who joined the Order but died young in 1892 and has since been beatified.⁴⁶¹ J. Langley & Co. of Crawley carried out the work in 1892–3, and the church was consecrated in October 1893.⁴⁶²

The resemblance between Mella's church in Turin and the Sacred Heart is confined to the main front, which stacks up from the cross-gabled ends of

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the aisles to an octagonal tower and bald, copper-clad spire (Ill. 3.109). The main entrance and triplet of windows also adopt the Turin pattern, but the ruddy red brick and English Romanesque language give the Battersea church a non-Italian beefiness. The sombre exterior reminded one commentator of 'a Belgian or Dutch country town church'.⁴⁶³ The English source noted at the time was the Galilee Chapel, Durham Cathedral, which Walters evidently took as a model for the four-bay arcades. These are of slim quadripartite piers carrying thin rounded arches, without the dogtooth embellishment of Durham. Above are a clerestory and a groined rib vault in timber (disguised now by paint) over the nave. Over the vault the roof is metal-trussed. The aisles have lean-to roofs with panelled soffits. At the liturgically east end (like its iron predecessor, the church runs north-south) a high arch flanked by awkwardly narrow ones prefaces a narrowing-down to the apsidal sanctuary, which was originally lit only by high small round windows, lengthened later. The aisles also terminate in apses for subsidiary altars, flanked by transepts for chapels. At the entrance end is a narrow passage with a baptistery, and an organ gallery above.

The Sacred Heart has drastically lost embellishment since the Second Vatican Council. In 1893 the roofs were decorated in gold and colour, but the main focus was the high altar and screen behind, cutting off the back of the apse from which the Salesian choir sang (Ill. 3.110). Of this composition only much-altered portions of the altar front and the retable, carved with instruments of the passion, survive. Originally the screen culminated in open arches on either side of a triptych reredos painted by N. H. J. Westlake, representing the Sacred Heart flanked by four saints.⁴⁶⁴ Before the sanctuary was a marble and alabaster communion rail with gilded iron gates. Walters designed a complete set of fittings, many of which have gone, though his square font survives.⁴⁶⁵ An oak pulpit ('by far the most commodious ... in London's Catholic churches') has also been removed.⁴⁶⁶

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From about 1910 a Salesian artist-priest, Fr George Fayers, covered the walls of the church with Preraphaelitesque paintings. Almost every surface was gradually occupied, and in addition Fayers added eight flanking saints left and right of the Westlake triptych, so blocking the openings in the upper part of the screen.⁴⁶⁷ Most of these paintings have been whitewashed out. They remain exposed however above the sanctuary arch, in the baptistery and the upper walls of the apse.

Simplification of the interior took place in 1970 under Greenhalgh and Williams of Bolton, architects, when a chapel of St John Bosco was also formed off the north aisle.⁴⁶⁸ In 2011–12 a new entrance and annexe were added along this side to designs by St Ann's Gate, architects from Salisbury.

Church of St Vincent de Paul, Altenburg Gardens

This church was built in 1906–7 to designs by Kelly & Dickie. Its classical front fits demurely between the houses of Altenburg Gardens.

The idea of supplementing Battersea's existing Catholic churches arose from the needs of the Shaftesbury Park Estate, ill-situated for attendance at either Our Lady of Mount Carmel or the Sacred Heart. In 1903 the Diocese of Southwark bought 5 (now 36) Altenburg Gardens and installed Fr George Grady, who converted the ground floor into an oratory. Simultaneously some Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul moved into No. 69 opposite, in part to help develop the new parish. In the event they left in 1906, but they supplied the name for the church.⁴⁶⁹

This was being discussed by February 1905. After some contention about the choice of architect, Claude Kelly's firm was appointed early in 1906, as Grady preferred.⁴⁷⁰ By then he had a building committee, and a gap site had

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been secured on the north side of No. 36, which became the presbytery. The church, paid for largely by mortgages, was started in July 1906 and opened the following March. The builder was F. J. Bradford of Leicester.⁴⁷¹ A proposed campanile shown in a watercolour view by Claude Kelly (III. 3.111) was omitted.

As completed, St Vincent de Paul's best feature is its red-brick front, in a typical Edwardian style of Catholic architecture mixing Italian and English seventeenth-century features. The upper portion, topped off with an eaves pediment over a Diocletian window, adheres to the line of the houses left and right, but the lean-to narthex projects. This has an arched and pedimented entrance, and is lit by simple round windows. The upper half sports three niches; the topmost one is filled with a statue of St Vincent de Paul by Thomas Rudge. A mosaic of the Virgin and Child by Anna Weiner was added in the tympanum in 1987.⁴⁷²

The interior is a single vessel, with an apsidal sanctuary and a domed Lady Chapel to the south. It is ceiled by an elliptical barrel vault beneath a steel-framed roof. The lighting is from clerestory windows above a strong cornice. The flank walls are articulated by pilasters between which arches intervene, blank on the north side but opened up on the south towards the baptistery, organ chamber and Lady Chapel. The baptistery itself, along with a large sacristy behind the Lady Chapel, was added around 1960.

John Walsh, an altar boy at St Vincent's in the 1960s, remembered that 'it always needed a new coat of paint, a new heating system and some new unchipped statues. An air of mystery or solemnity or wonder would have been nice too, but instead it radiated a crouched atmosphere of dogged survivalism'.⁴⁷³ The east wall formerly bore a painting, apparently no masterpiece, by an artist named Crescioli of 'St John giving Communion to Our Blessed Lady'.⁴⁷⁴ There are now plain-painted panels here. A pulpit of

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variegated marbles and onyx was destroyed in 2008, leaving only a clumsy font to testify to the original fittings; this however looks as if it came from elsewhere.

Baptists

Battersea Chapel

Battersea's oldest continuous gathering of nonconformists is a congregation of Baptists who took the name of the Battersea Chapel in the eighteenth century. Long located in the York Road area, they worship today in a building of 1972–3 in Wye Street.

The foundation date for this congregation is traditionally given as 1736, for reasons not now clear. No line of continuity can be confirmed with the congregation of Thomas Horrockes, Battersea's first recorded Baptist preacher round about 1670, or with Horrockes's successors, named as John Beaumont, Thomas Simmons and Abraham Larward.⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless the link with the site where the chapel stood for most of its existence, on the north side of York Road just east of the junction with Lombard Road, can be taken back to at least 1728, when an advertisement for a house near the 'Sugar Houses' then in Lombard Road described it as 'about a Stone's Cast from a Meeting-house'.⁴⁷⁶

Under Jonathan Brown(e), the long-serving minister from about 1755, the chapel was built or rebuilt in about 1770, on or close to this same site.⁴⁷⁷ Brown also ran a school at Wandsworth Common, attended by Joseph Benwell, a future partner in the distillery run sequentially by Messrs Bell, Benwell and Waymouth (page xxx). The partners were all adherents of the

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chapel near by. By 1796, with Brown 'far advanced in years', the congregation had dwindled, 'the inefficiency of the ministry' causing 'many pious people to resort to chapel in Chelsea and in Town on the Sabbath'. Among these were Benwell and his wife Eliza. After the minister's death they took the initiative of asking Joseph Hughes to preach at Battersea on probation. His success was such that the Benwells and Hughes next year concerted 'measures for establishing a Christian Society in the Meeting-house occupied by the late Mr Brown'. They described themselves as 'Protestant Dissenters of the Antipaedobaptist Denomination' but agreed to admit others, trusting that 'the operation of this liberty will not be injurious to discipline'.⁴⁷⁸

Under the cultured Hughes and with the Benwells' financial support, the renewed foundation prospered and 'drew a sophisticated audience'.⁴⁷⁹ The chapel was enlarged with a gallery paid for by Benwell and Waymouth in 1798-9, while in 1799 what became Grove House School was founded near by.⁴⁸⁰ Hughes was on close terms with the 'saints' of the Clapham Sect, and as secretary to the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society had much to do with drawing them into these interdenominational causes.⁴⁸¹ Aided by his friend John Foster, he in 1799 briefly took responsibility for educating the twenty boys brought over from Sierra Leone by Zachary Macaulay that year and afterwards taught at the 'African Academy' in Clapham.⁴⁸² Increasingly the work of the 'Bible Society' drew Hughes away much from Battersea, though he kept the ministry till his death in 1833. The break-up of the distillery partnership in 1814 and the removal of the Benwells also contributed to a temporary decline.⁴⁸³

In 1837 the forceful Israel May Soule became minister. He was supported by the Tritton banking family, relations by marriage to the Benwells, and himself married a Tritton. Soule was able to purchase the freehold in 1842 (there had previously been a lease from Earl Spencer) and to refurbish and refront the chapel, giving what had been a bare façade with

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three large windows and side entrances an assertively classical look, with attached pilasters and the date plaque '1736' (Ill. 3.113). The builder was D. Nicholson and the surveyor Bridger. A semi-circular drive was also laid out.⁴⁸⁴

Expansion took place after an extra slice of land on the east side of the site was offered in 1868, still under Soule's ministry. The architect E. C. Robins produced an enlargement plan, which soon turned into an entirely new building, erected in 1870.⁴⁸⁵ Robins chose a Victorian Romanesque brick style, 'as most readily adaptable to the exigencies of the site', with the long side set back from York Road and projecting end wings for the entrances and staircases. Rose windows on the wings and the ends added punch (Ill. 3.114). The interior, seating 900, had galleries on three sides and a high Romanesque arch and arcading framing the elevated pulpit, which was at the east end (in the old chapel it had been at the west end). There was also a meeting room. In 1886–7 an organ was inserted.⁴⁸⁶

Following war damage in September 1940, the Battersea Chapel was restored by Richard Mountford Pigott, architect, and reopened in March 1956. Pigott de-Victorianized the building, removing the galleries, lowering the ceiling, lightening the colours and introducing a new organ. The restored chapel had a short life. In 1963 Battersea Council gave notice of a compulsory purchase order on the Sunday school building opposite (page xxx). Pressed by the London Baptist Property Board, the congregation negotiated an agreement for resiting the chapel and school in a joint building on land within the public housing then being planned west of Wye Street. That paved the way for demolishing the 1870 chapel as well as the Sunday school.⁴⁸⁷

The new Battersea Chapel was built in 1972–3 to designs by Michael Manser Associates as the backdrop of a new pedestrian 'Twentieth Century "Village Square"'.⁴⁸⁸ In a first sketch of 1967 the church was set in front of the hall, but in the executed building they come together in a single low

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composition of some force. Precisely square in outline and raised on a sloped podium, this is concrete-framed with blank, brick-faced walls, overhanging eaves to the flat roof and inclined clerestory windows at the back (III. 3.115). Several of these features were calculated to discourage vandalism, already anticipated in the area: indeed the chapel was published under the headline 'Vandal-Proof Baptist Chapel'. Internally, the main spaces are divided between a church and a hall for the Sunday school. The bench seating in the church (Manser had wanted chairs for flexibility) is arranged in arcs around the communion table.⁴⁸⁹

For schools associated with the Battersea Chapel, see pages xxx.

Battersea Park Tabernacle (now Life Tabernacle), Battersea Park Road

A cream-painted, twin-turreted building of 1869–70, set back from the road at 32–36 Battersea Park Road, is all that remains of the Battersea Park Tabernacle. The foundation was linked to the celebrated C. H. Spurgeon, who lived in Nightingale Lane and strove to extend his London Baptist Association's branches in South London.

In 1868 Charles Berridge requested a plot of surplus land from the Crown's Battersea Park purchase, to be used 'as a branch from Mr Spurgeon's tabernacle'. It was to Spurgeon that the freehold conveyance was made. He undertook to build a lecture hall immediately on the back of the present site, followed by a chapel in front, though he declined to give an absolute promise to build the latter. William Higgs of Lambeth, a frequent associate of Spurgeon's, took part in the negotiations and acted as both builder and architect of the hall, which survives. Its port south front has pyramiddally capped towers over the lobbies and stepped windows in the centre. Four-square in plan, the hall originally offered 486 sittings in three rows facing

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north towards the platform, under a timber roof part-supported on iron columns. A gallery was soon added, followed by classrooms and vestries at the back.⁴⁹⁰

The chapel followed on in 1883–4 at the initiative of the Rev. T. Lardner, minister from 1877. The architect was W. Allen Dixon and the builder George Howard. It was a competent building with a tripartite Italo-Byzantine front on to the road; the centre rose to an open pediment reflecting the chapel roof behind, over a shallow portico in antis (Ill. 3.116). The materials were 'Malins' brick with Bath stone dressings. The interior, holding 1,220 sittings, was covered by a bowstring roof.⁴⁹¹

The chapel was demolished probably in the 1970s. Its site is vacant, while the lecture hall behind is used by the United Pentecostal Church's Life Tabernacle.

Northcote Road Baptist Church

This church, a local landmark, is the foremost survival from Battersea's depleted nonconformist heritage. It was built to the designs of E. W. Mountford in 1887–8, marking its architect's first work in the district.

It sprang from the New Baptist Chapel, built on the north side of Chatham Road close by in 1875 and first ministered to by two of Charles Spurgeon's sons. That foundation in its turn originated from open-air services started on Wandsworth Common in 1859 by a 'worthy gardener', George Rides, and then transferred to his house in Swaby Road.⁴⁹² The Chatham Road chapel, designed by William Higgs junior and built by the family firm of Higgs & Hill, had a simple brick classical front with pilasters and a

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pediment.⁴⁹³ It continued under Strict Baptist rules after the main congregation moved to Northcote Road, finally closing in the 1950s.

The ambitious new chapel, at the corner of Northcote and Wakehurst Roads, was the project of the Rev. C. E. Stone. The story goes that Stone had seen a sign 'Site for New Hotel' on the vacant lot, and determined to raise a church instead of a pub, taking a large mortgage to supplement donations. The site was purchased from Alfred Heaver in 1886–7.⁴⁹⁴ Mountford's design (III. 3.117) was then built by W. Johnson, allowing the chapel to be opened in February 1888 by Spurgeon, who preached to an overflowing audience.⁴⁹⁵

The exterior, in a round-arched style carried out in strong red brick, is robust but not otherwise akin to Mountford's later Battersea buildings. The oblong tower at the corner, with stout corner pinnacles of Douling stone, originally had a pyramidal cap, removed in 1974 after a falling slate hurt a passer-by. The hipped slate roof with overhanging eaves is prominent. Internally Mountford provided an auditorial plan for 1,000 worshippers. The dais, set against the backdrop of a round arch, occupied the centre of the long side, allowing proximity to the pulpit, while the congregation sat in a stepped hemicycle – at first on chairs, though there are now benches. A gallery on iron columns with wooden trusses followed the hemicycle's shape. Vestries and ladies' rooms filled the sides of the upper floor; in the basement beneath was a lecture room *cum* Sunday school. The dais area has been more than once altered. Changes to Mountford's fairly plain arrangements were proposed in 1891 by a young Scottish architect of talent, J. A. Carfrae, then briefly resident in Lavender Gardens,⁴⁹⁶ but the giant Ionic pilasters that flank the arch behind the dais probably date from the inter-war years.

The large hall and ancillary rooms in matching style west of the church in Wakehurst Road were added in two stages, around 1903 and 1915–16, to designs by Spalding & Myers.⁴⁹⁷

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Other Baptist chapels

There were other smaller Baptist places of worship in the parish. The earliest after the Battersea Chapel was a congregation started in 1868 by J. A. Spurgeon which began meeting in the Lammas Hall. It soon moved to the nearby **Surrey Lane Baptist Chapel**, a temporary iron building not retained beyond about 1880.⁴⁹⁸ At the corner of Meyrick Road and Speke Road north of Clapham Junction were the **Providence Chapel** and connected school, built by Turtle & Appleton to G. Gordon Stanham's designs in 1875.⁴⁹⁹

Congregationalists

Both of Battersea's congregational churches had their roots in Clapham. First came **Battersea Congregational Church** of 1866–7, at the angle between Battersea Bridge Road and Bridge Lane. It originated with the Surrey Congregational Union, which started holding services at the Lammas Hall from January 1865. J. Scott James was appointed minister and five promoters, most with Clapham connections, approached the Battersea Park Commissioners for the Bridge Road site.⁵⁰⁰ The freehold was acquired and the church duly built by J. W. Sawyer to designs by the leading Congregational architect, Henry Fuller. It was in the Gothic style, of Kentish ragstone with Bath stone dressings; a broad traceried window overlooked the angle between the roads. At the north end facing Battersea Bridge Road was a porch and a pencil-like tower and spire, taken down later because it was deemed unsafe. The pitchpine pews accommodated 500 sittings, soon augmented by a small gallery over the south entrance. A Sunday school and lecture hall followed on at the north end of the site in two phases, of 1874 and 1887.⁵⁰¹

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The church received a direct hit in November 1940, but the damage proved reparable. In 1949 the architects Ernest W. Banfield & Son put forward a clever plan for updating the fabric, adding classroom space, lessening the church's volume and enlarging its windows with modern Gothic tracery. A reduced version of their plans was carried out by Marshall-Andrews & Co. in 1956–7.⁵⁰² By 1982 the church was out of religious use; it was demolished in about 2000.

Lavender Hill Congregational Church, Stormont Road, was created to serve the increasing population thereabouts, notably on the Shaftesbury Park Estate. The church, of 1883–4, was preceded by a hall of 1878–9. They have been replaced with a smaller church on the hall site, and the Devas Club where the old church stood.

The initiative originated with the Grafton Square Congregational Church in Clapham and its minister, the Rev. J. Guinness Rogers. The first idea, of 1875, was to build a church at Clapham Junction and then move on to Lavender Hill. Instead, the present site on the west side of Stormont Road was bought by the London Congregational Union from Ebenezer Bristow under an agreement of 1876.⁵⁰³ As often, a hall and Sunday school came first, erected at the south end of the site in 1878–9 by Higgs & Hill, to the brick Lombardic-Romanesque designs of T. H. Vernon. Classrooms flanked a lecture hall, whose gallery surmounted an extra room in front (Ill. 3.118).⁵⁰⁴

The hall functioned as an 'introductory chapel' until 1883–4, when the church followed to its north, again to Vernon's designs and similar in style, though taller.⁵⁰⁵ At the north end was the base of a tower, on which a weighty belfry stage was superimposed in 1900.⁵⁰⁶ The interior had the usual side galleries; the seating below faced a central pulpit set against a windowless backdrop. Mural decoration painted on this back wall in 1888 commemorated the first minister, Richard Bulmer.⁵⁰⁷ Some found the chapel's cost

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extravagant, at about £7,000. Much correspondence survives between well-off Congregationalists in Clapham and Battersea, many of them City merchants, about how to extinguish the debt incurred in building 'a young church in a wage-earning district'.⁵⁰⁸

By the 1960s hall and church were outmoded. Under a scheme of 1969–70 the church moved to a small new building on the hall site, designed by Beard, Bennett & Wilkins, architects, and consisting of a concrete-framed, brick-clad auditorium and a house behind.⁵⁰⁹ This is now the Evangelical Church of Yahweh. To its north where the Victorian church stood is a larger, harsher building in the Brutalist style of 1970, with expanses of concrete surfaces and few windows. It houses the Devas Club, successor to the Devas Institute. This was founded in 1884 by Jocelyn Devas, an Oxford graduate who began working with boys and young men in Battersea, offering evening classes and training in sport, but died in a climbing accident. The institute started in Nine Elms, and for many years had purpose-built accommodation in New (now Thessaly) Road. The club's Stormont Road home was opened by the golfer Tony Jacklin in 1970.⁵¹⁰

Milton Congregational Hall, 21 Cabul Road, is a sizeable hall with a handsome front in two tones of brick, designed in a restrained Queen Anne style and displaying the date 1885. It was built by James Holloway to the designs of Searle & Hayes, architects.⁵¹¹ The congregation united with the Battersea Congregational Church in the 1930s.⁵¹²

Methodists

Wesleyans first foregathered in Battersea in the streets between the village and Battersea Bridge. Simmonds quotes John Cullum, artist and teetotaler, to

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the effect that a congregation met in a house near Battersea Bridge Road, then moved to King Street, in other words the west end of the present Westbridge Road, where a chapel opened in 1840, doubtless in converted premises. The Rev. J. Partes Haswell was the main minister involved.⁵¹³

In 1844–6 Haswell instigated and largely funded a new chapel. This was the **Wesleyan Chapel, Westbridge Road** (then Bridge Road West), built behind two houses on the site of the present No. 8. Initially the architect Andrew Trimen produced an early Tudor design which, he claimed, ‘possessed more real architectural merits than any Gothic chapel in the county of Middlesex’ (Ill. 3.119a). Haswell dropped this after tender stage because of its expense, and got the chosen contractor, John Sugden of Bermondsey, to substitute a smaller building ‘in the warehouse style’, so aggrieving Trimen. In the 1850s ‘agitations’ among Wesleyans ‘were felt with great severity in Battersea’, Simmonds recounts; the chapel was briefly occupied by ‘the seceding party’, in other words the United Methodists, but then surrendered to Haswell. The chapel was effectively rebuilt in two stages, in 1864 and 1871, ending up with a plain, pedimented brick front, three windows wide, and a capacity of 700; an addition was also made by Higgs & Hill in 1874.⁵¹⁴ It was demolished in the 1980s.

Wesleyans later erected two ambitious chapels in the parish. The **Queen’s Road Wesleyan Chapel** was built in 1881–2 at the junction of the present Queenstown Road and Stanley Grove. It housed a congregation which started in the Wandsworth Road district, bought this site in 1878 and opened an iron chapel (erected by Charles Kent) next year. A grander permanent chapel than usual became possible following a grant from the Metropolitan Chapel Fund endowed by the will of Sir Francis Lycett. The architect was James Weir and the builder James Holloway, a member of the congregation. At the ‘express desire’ of the committee Weir chose an Italian style. The front, in stocks with liberal Bath stone dressings, was divided into

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two storeys, but Weir's Wren-style twin flanking towers (Ill. 3.120) were not built. The interior seated 1,000, two-thirds on the ground and one-third in galleries.⁵¹⁵ Classrooms were added at the back in 1887, and a lecture hall with a Queen Anne front on the south side in 1889, with James Holloway again the builder;⁵¹⁶ following his death, the chapel next year acquired an organ in his memory. An important event in its early history was a two-week open-air mission by the American evangelists Moody and Sankey, held in 1884 on a vacant triangle of ground near by. 'Here, night by night, great crowds gathered, and multitudes were unable to get in'.⁵¹⁷ After some years of decline, the chapel was destroyed by bombing and replaced with a garage.

The **Broomwood Road Methodist Church** was built in 1899 to the designs of the able Arts and Crafts partnership, Read & Macdonald. Sited in prosperous territory off Clapham Common West Side, it occupied the corner of Broomwood Road and Kyrle Road, with hall buildings behind along the east-west stretch of the latter road. The church, in a free brick Gothic, had an octagonal corner tower topped by a little spire. There were porches on both roads, and a single transept, probably housing a gallery (Ill. 3.121). The tracery, drip moulds and copings had a vigorous swing.⁵¹⁸ In 1980 the congregation decided to move into the hall and use the church site for accommodation to be built by the Methodist Homes for the Aged Housing Association. An attempt to have the church listed regrettably failed and the sheltered housing of Ash Court duly replaced it.⁵¹⁹ The hall buildings survive.

Battersea Central Methodist Mission, 14-28 York Road, is an extensive building with a large front clad in artificial stone, a separate hall, chapel and plentiful other rooms. Its date is unusual, 1939-41. It was the brainchild of the Rev. John Thompson, previously at the Queen's Road Chapel. Thompson fixed on impoverished northern Battersea as the proper focus of local Methodist mission, starting work in 1932 in a former lodging house at 134 Battersea High Street. Four years later he bid successfully for the present site,

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although he had no money to pay for it. By dint of sedulous fund-raising among the great and good, notably the generous benefactor of Methodism, J. Arthur Rank, Thompson got the mission on to a secure footing, and leased the disused Radium cinema nearby as temporary premises. In 1938 he formulated an ambitious plan for a modern centre incorporating besides the normal chapel and hall, a 'youth town', 'a physio and electro-therapeutic section', roof gardens, and a crèche.⁵²⁰ Permission to build the basement was granted in 1939 because it could double as an air-raid shelter, but the superstructure was delayed. Reputedly Thompson 'slept on the steps of 10 Downing Street [Mr & Mrs Neville Chamberlain were among his supporters] to get authorisation for supplies'.⁵²¹ He was successful, as foundation stones were laid in May 1940 and the building, dubbed a 'temple of health' and designed by the surveyor-architects Perriam & Son, opened a year later.⁵²² Besides the rather plain chapel, there were rooms for medical and child welfare, thronged as long as the war lasted, and shops on the ground floor. The youth hall on the back of the site to the north was added after the war (Paul Mauger & Partners, architects, 1953),⁵²³ as were two large stained glass windows in the foyer. Support for the mission dwindled toward the end of the twentieth century, but at the time of writing it has been reopened.

There were two **United Methodist Free Churches** in Battersea. The earlier and smaller one, on the south side of Battersea Church Road, was built in 1858 (after the United Methodists relinquished the Westbridge Road Chapel) and enlarged in 1864. Simmonds gives Stephen J. Stedman, designer of the Lammas Hall and other United Methodist churches, as its architect.⁵²⁴ Further east, a gaunt Gothic chapel was built in 1871–2 on Battersea Park Road at the western corner of Landseer Street. It was designed by Lee, Brothers, & Pain, architects, and probably built by Pearce Brothers. It was preceded by a schoolroom at the back, which dated from 1865 and at first doubled as a 'preaching station'. This may have been rebuilt when the chapel was erected.⁵²⁵ The sites of both chapels now form part of housing estates.

Primitive Methodist congregations tended to be working-class. What was probably Battersea's first began meeting in the York Road neighbourhood in 1855. They used Orlando Jones & Co.'s reading room until they were able in 1871 to build an iron church in Knox Road, a street now obliterated east of Plough Road. This structure lasted till 1880, when F. Stocking built their Plough Lane Chapel, 'a substantial brick Chapel with School-room underneath', at the corner of Plough and Maysoule Roads.⁵²⁶

Battersea acquired three further Primitive Methodist foundations in the 1870s, two designed by A. J. Rouse. The Grayshott Road Chapel, at the corner of that road and Gideon Road, was built in 1874–6 to serve the Shaftesbury Park estate. It was built in two stages and had schools beneath the chapel.⁵²⁷ Soon afterwards Nine Elms acquired the New Road Chapel, built in 1878 by James Holloway at the corner of New (now Thessaly) Road and Sterndale Road. Rouse did not live to see it completed, for he was drowned in the Princess Alice disaster off Woolwich that year. Simmonds described it as 'plain, neat, and substantial, with stone facings'. It may have developed from an adjacent schoolroom of 1874, designed by a Mr Murphy.⁵²⁸

The only surviving Primitive Methodist buildings in Battersea are the **Mallinson Road Chapel** and adjacent school. On the south side of that street near Wandsworth Common, they sport contiguous Gothic fronts, end-gabled, buttressed and traceried. The facing brickwork has been heavily cemented over. The school, to the east and with a rose window, came first in 1878 and was used for worship until the chapel proper followed on westwards in 1886. Both these old-fashioned buildings were designed by Edward Speed and built by James Holloway.⁵²⁹ They are now used by the Ransom Pentecostal African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Other denominations

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Battersea Rise

The present church on this corner site, of 2001–2, replaces a Presbyterian church of 1896. The Presbyterians established a ‘preaching station’ known as Clapham Junction Presbyterian Church in 1894, meeting first in Munt’s Hall and then in the old vestry hall.⁵³⁰ They soon acquired a good site at the south end of Altenburg Gardens, fronting Battersea Rise with an oblique view over Clapham Common. The architect was Edward Beckitt Lamb, son of the better-known Edward Buckton Lamb. The design built in 1896–7 by Aldridge Brothers represented a simplification of Lamb’s first intentions, following economies. A hall came first at the back, followed by a broad-gabled church end-on to the main road. A squat tower with freestanding columns at the four corners and a shingled spire emerged from the side of the roof slope (III. 3.122). Internally, open queen-post trusses covered the church’s wide span. It was known from 1902 as St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.⁵³¹

After bomb damage to the hall, the buildings were disused until a partial reconstruction took place in 1953, followed by the tucking in of an extra hall at the south-west corner. In 1977 a fire led to the removal of the tower and spire.⁵³² Later it was decided to replace the whole building. The present St Andrew’s United Reformed Church was squeezed on to the Battersea Rise front in 2001–2 by Richard Harrison, architect, leaving the space northwards to be filled with four houses, 3–9 Altenburg Gardens, in a clever pastiche of the terrace beyond. The church has a brick base, rendered upper storey and octagonal staircase tower with lead lantern at the corner. There is a small worship area on the ground floor with meeting rooms above.⁵³³

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St Jude's Church (Free Church of England), Sarsfeld Road

This Gothic church and adjacent school building at Battersea's southern extremity were built in 1892–3 for a group which had seceded in 1886 from the increasingly ritualistic St Mary's, Balham. They soon joined the Free Church of England, a denomination founded in 1844, and under the Rev. Philip Eldridge began worshipping in a temporary building in Balham Park Road. Probably through benefactions from Eliza Bell, of Park Hill, Upper Tooting, the congregation bought a good site at the corner of Sarsfeld and Heslop Roads and built a plain brick church with prominent roof and paired lancets, followed by a Sunday school to its south. Their architect was E. Elton Hawkins.

Inside, a single-cell nave without aisles or galleries notable only for its wide-span hammerbeam roof precedes a shallow chancel with panelling of 1936 and choir stalls of 1954–5. The east window of 1954, by Shrigley & Hunt, replaces an earlier triplet of lancets. At the north (liturgically west) end a flat-roofed and metal-windowed hall of 1935, built by John Greenwood Ltd to the designs of G. Wyville Home, architect, replaced a small lean-to porch.⁵³⁴

Welsh Presbyterian Church, Beauchamp Road

Marked 'Welsh Chapel' in the pediment oversailing its front, this stout and ruddy building occupies the right-angle of Beauchamp Road (Ill. 3.124). It dates from 1896–7, when the Welsh Calvinistic Connexion raised the chapel following its establishment of a Sunday school near by. The environs of Beauchamp Road had been developed under the auspices of Alfred Heaver. But this plot, occupied by the villa of William Dives, owner of the estate

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bought by Heaver, had been used as a builders' office, and so had escaped development. According to Erskine Clarke's reminiscences, 'an architect gutted the house, cased it externally with red brick, and made it a typical and commodious meeting-house'.⁵³⁵ Probably little of the old structure survived beyond the foundations and lower walls. Two houses, 28 & 30 Beauchamp Road, were also built to the north of the chapel, as well as the caretaker's house at No. 32 to its west. The main donor for the project is likely to have been Timothy Davies, a successful shopkeeper from Fulham Broadway.⁵³⁶

The church is old-fashioned-looking but stately, with tall Italianate windows round three sides. The ceiled and ungalleried interior was originally square, with the congregation facing east. But in 1924 the building was extended subtly westwards to take in the chapel keeper's house at 32 Beauchamp Road, to designs by F. R. Gould Wills.⁵³⁷ This allowed the auditorium to be lengthened and turned round towards a niche inserted at the new west end, flanked by Ionic columns and filled two years later with a new organ. The pride of the church is a stained glass window in honour of Mair Lloyd George, David Lloyd George's favourite daughter, who died aged 17 after an operation for appendicitis. Designed by T. F. Curtis for the firm of Ward & Hughes and installed in 1909, it depicts Mair seated at an organ, since she was a pianist (Ill. 3.125). She and her mother Margaret attended the chapel. The congregation attained its peak of 478 members in 1938, when migration from the Welsh valleys to London reached its height as a result of the Depression.⁵³⁸

Bennerley Mission Hall, 46 Bennerley Road

A rare survivor of the small Victorian mission hall, this lowly building squeezed between houses on Bennerley Road's south side dates from around 1886. In that year William Harbrow, a supplier of iron buildings, applied to

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build a gymnasium on this site, which belonged to the back garden of 45 Salcott Road.⁵³⁹ The present structure may represent a substitute for or a refacing of the gymnasium. It is now Battersea Spiritualist Church.

Shaftesbury Christian Centre, 2 Austin Road

This purpose-built chapel with offices and recreation rooms attached derives from work started in the 1890s by John Dyer, agent for the Ragged School Union founded by Lord Shaftesbury. The energetic Dyer ran what was called the Shaftesbury Welcome Hall from a temperance hall in Doddington Grove, soon extending the union's activities to another mission room off Culvert Road. He also organized a winter shelter for gypsies and van dwellers in a railway arch off Cabul Road, and summer gatherings for the Fresh Air Fund.⁵⁴⁰ What was left of these activities transferred to the present buildings, serving mainly the Doddington Estate, in about 1964.⁵⁴¹

Speke Hall, Speke Road (demolished)

Speke Hall began as a private baths building promoted in the district north of Clapham Junction by the builder John Dickeson around 1870. In 1883 it was converted into a hall for hire, and from 1887 largely taken over by the barrister Richard Reader Harris's non-denominational missionary movement, which had started out in Grant Road.⁵⁴² Known from 1891 as the Pentecostal Mission or Pentecostal League of Prayer, its charismatic services drew attendances of 1,000 and more, continued popular for years, and spawned sub-groups all over the country.⁵⁴³ The Booth volumes are condescending: 'The local influence is not very important, but the whole thing is interesting as a religious development'.⁵⁴⁴ F. Leon Hill went to the Speke Hall Sunday school in the 1920s, which he recalled as 'in one of the toughest parts of Battersea'

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but well attended. 'The Superintendent was a very imposing man with a full set of whiskers, when he said quiet then quiet it was'.⁵⁴⁵

Church of the Nazarene, Grant Road

This striking small church stands opposite the north entrance to Clapham Junction Station (III. 3.126). It was built in 1968–70 for the pentecostalists of the Nazarene Church, displaced when Speke Hall was to be demolished for the Winstanley Estate. Green, Son & Lloyd were the architects. The brick-faced structure is octagonal and houses a worship space over club and administrative rooms. The external concrete ramp, incised with a sacred text in conspicuous capital letters, is used only for funerals.⁵⁴⁶

For the **Thomas Memorial Church of the Nazarene**, Battersea Rise, see page xxx.