

Battersea High Street area

The High Street area, encompassing the historic core of Battersea village, has a long and involved building history but little pre-Victorian fabric. The economic influence of London was always strong, and wealthy Londoners long occupied the best houses, but it was not until the 1840s that development pressures began to really transform its settled, essentially rural character. By the mid 1870s the village was almost completely subsumed by the parish-wide processes of suburbanization and industrialization. For the next century it was predominantly an industrial and residential district with a working-class population, an increasing proportion accommodated from the 1930s in new council housing. Almost all industrial buildings have now gone, their sites redeveloped for more housing, public and private. Houses and housing are this chapter's principal concern, and while the main emphases are on patterns of development and standing buildings, several demolished houses call for consideration, notably the manor house, known as Bolingbroke House. Among extant buildings, the most important is Old Battersea House of the 1690s, in Vicarage Crescent.

The chapter is in two main parts, the first a series of broadly chronological discussions of the area's character and development. The second is topographically arranged and deals in more detail with individual buildings and localities, beginning in the north with Bolingbroke House and concluding with Vicarage Crescent.

The Town

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By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, when the oldest surviving maps were drawn, building was more or less continuous along what are now the northern half of Battersea High Street and the south-west end of Battersea Church Road — the ancient spine of what had long been known as the ‘Town’, where some half the parish population then lived.¹ At that time the roadway ended at the churchyard gate and a riverside landing. Beyond the church, where Battersea Church Road now runs eastward to Battersea Bridge Road, the way was blocked by the manor house and its grounds; the bridge, long talked of, had not yet materialized. The route east, to the horse and foot ferries to Chelsea or across Battersea Fields towards Nine Elms and Lambeth, was along King Street — the west end of Westbridge Road, identifiable as East Street in a rental of 1385. A gate in King Street separated the Town from the fields beyond (Ill. 1.2). To the west, a lane (the north arm of Vicarage Crescent) led to the riverside, where houses and private gardens and at least three inns, the Old Swan, White Hart and Hoop, lined the bank upstream towards Wandsworth. Along the southern half of the High Street, close-packed small houses gave way to a scatter of larger houses and some cottages, with a row of almshouses at the end, close to the Town or Town Field gate and parish pound.² Something of the ancient field-strip pattern survived in what was still mostly open ground between the street and riverside properties.

The Town had no unity of character. On the contrary, two contrasting settlements coexisted: a muddy working town ancillary to the raising of crops for the London market, and a residential London suburb. One was the town of the Bundles, the half-rustic, half-Cockney asparagus-growers caricatured in Dibdin’s musical comedy *The Waterman* (1774) — the ‘low, nasty, dirty town of Battersea’, so described in 1772. The other was that ‘pleasantly situated’ village with its ‘good’ church and ‘several handsome houses’, in the conventional terms of a London guidebook of 1776.³

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Like many metropolitan satellites, Battersea had long attracted townspeople seeking retreats and retirement homes. Edward Catcher, a wealthy merchant tailor in Watling Street who died in 1635, was not unique among Tudor and Stuart City dwellers in maintaining a second home at Battersea. In the case of Elizabeth Stillian, who was taken there as a child in 1665 and remained until she died in 1760, aged 104, Battersea was intended as a refuge from the Great Plague – from which the village actually suffered quite badly.⁴ Throughout the eighteenth century, newspaper reports of marriages and deaths show the social and occupational spectrum of noteworthy or just well-off residents, in their own houses but sometimes in lodgings, from London tradesmen and shopkeepers to naval and army officers and well-connected bankers and lawyers. Many of these people occupied houses in the Town.

Throughout this district, larger houses mixed haphazardly with lowly dwellings. Despite Battersea's popularity there were none of the formal squares or terraces of superior houses seen about post-Restoration London's outskirts. In some instances (as with Old Battersea and Devonshire Houses), large houses were rebuilt, perpetuating the Tudor or medieval building pattern. The growth of labour-intensive gardening in the seventeenth century doubtless led to some infilling or extension of the built up area with low-class housing. There is little evidence of speculative building, though an early eighteenth-century row in the High Street, now demolished, was probably built on that basis (Ill. 1.3). John Bowden, a City toyman who became rich selling adhesive 'issue plaisters' (to dress incisions for draining wounds or swellings) was said to have been building a row of houses at Battersea when he died in 1736 – possibly the riverside Seven Houses north of York Place Creek, in the vicinity where he was living.⁵

The lordship of the manor passed from the St Johns to the Spencers in 1763, and around this time began a series of developments suggestive of a

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new spirit of improvement and a loosening of feudal shackles. In an attempt at smartening up, the justices ordered the townspeople in 1766 to 'take down their Signs immediately, and fix them on the Front of their Houses'. The long-awaited bridge was built. The church was rebuilt, the churchyard opened up and enlarged, with a carriage sweep – this last an appropriation of burial space that 'justly incensed' some parishioners but reflected the pretension and power of affluent newcomers. Bolingbroke House and much of its grounds were turned over to industry, the house itself being largely demolished. Growing social sophistication is suggested by a scheme of 1772 for a 'large commodious coffee-room', with cards, board games and newspapers, the profits to go towards poor relief.⁶ All this might seem to have augured well for improvements and high-class development throughout the Town, but this did not happen. The creation of Battersea Bridge and Battersea Bridge Road let travellers avoid the High Street, giving – in the long run – impetus to development elsewhere in the parish, where from the 1760s the new lord of the manor Earl Spencer was selling off land better suited to residential purposes than the Town.

Beyond the overwhelming importance of farming and horticulture, it is difficult to gauge the Town's business character and self-sufficiency. Probably most of the common occupations recorded in the parish registration book of 1695–1705 or occasionally in the ratebooks – shoemaker, basket-maker, baker, grocer, carpenter, bricklayer and so on – were found in the Town. To these may be added 'Savidge ye Frying pann maker', mentioned in 1692, perhaps meeting special local demand. There is evidence for barbers, surgeons and apothecaries, and Mrs Alderman, a midwife who died in 1777, attended locally to rich and poor alike for many years.⁷

If the indigenous population was small, there would have been enough day labourers and other transients to sustain the various inns and alehouses: 'plenty of good water', boasted an advertisement in 1797 for the sale of the

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Prince's Head at the north end of Falcon Lane, 'and as much town trade as it can possibly supply'. If a report of 1787 is to be believed, the Black Goat offered shaving, shoe-mending, rat-catching, knife-grinding, wet-nursing, and 'readin and spellin tote in parfecschan'. There was enough of a literate community to support one or two private schools, and a book and stationery shop – until the proprietor went bankrupt in 1803.⁸

Development and decline to the First World War

In its nineteenth-century transition from village to urban district, the Town experienced almost total loss of status as the effective centre of the parish. St Mary's church remained to perpetuate some sense of its historic role, while Sir Walter St John's School expanded and gained local prestige. Two teacher-training establishments arrived, St John's College in 1840 and Southlands College in the early 1870s. But overall the picture was one of steep decline from the mid-century. Decline was absolute as well as relative, at least in social character, with a proletarian influx and the near-complete disappearance of a middle and upper-middle class.

Signs of decline in the heart of the Town are evident as far back as the late eighteenth century, with the falling status of properties in and around the Square, notably the conversion of an old mansion there into the parish workhouse in 1792. In the early nineteenth century, two more large old houses – Surrey House in the High Street, and Althorpe House in Battersea Church Road – underwent institutionalization, becoming lunatic asylums. Surrey House (Ill. 1.4) was eventually pulled down in the late 1850s for the rebuilding of Sir Walter St John's School, while Althorpe House survived for another century as works offices.

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The 1830s–40s saw the building of several cottage courts and rows along the High Street. These included Crescent Place, a row of the mid 1830s with front gardens (Ill. 1.5) behind Sir Walter St John’s School, which acquired and cleared the site in 1916–17; Bourne’s (originally George) Place of the mid 1840s, up a dirt path north of the later Sacred Heart church, again with front gardens; Ashton’s Buildings of about 1850, later partly rebuilt or extended and demolished for the Althorpe Grove Estate. South of the workhouse, Alfred Place (Saltdean Place from 1920) was built by the late 1830s and nearly all occupied by field and garden labourers in 1841; by the 1850s there were still some gardeners but typically urban trades were coming in.⁹

In 1845 the term ‘Battersea Old Town’ appears, acknowledging the Town’s changing status. It may never have had much currency. ‘Old Battersea’ came into use in the late 1870s.¹⁰ In the early 1860s the West London Extension Railway obliterated the so-called Manor House on the site of the new Battersea Station, ploughing through the grounds of the Cedars opposite, and opening up the vicinity for building. The Rev. John Jenkinson, the vicar of Battersea, chose this time to leave the historic vicarage (for a house off St John’s Hill); his successor from 1872, J. Erskine Clarke, never lived there, preferring a house at Lavender Hill. Within a few years the vicarage was in the hands of settlement workers from Gonville and Caius College, who established a mission in Holman Road. The headmaster of Sir Walter St John’s School and several shopkeepers complained in 1881 about a prolonged encampment by travelling showmen, shaking their windows with a drum and brass instruments and nightly attracting ‘a crowd of roughs, mostly of the lowest class’, whose ‘riotous behaviour and abominable language are quite changing the character of the High Street’. Its character was changing anyway. Cheap housing filled up sites as they became available, notably in and around Orville Road, where the new houses were let by the floor to low-class tenants. Along the riverside, villa after villa had given way to industry. At the end of the century, the creation of the metropolitan borough of

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Battersea and the building of the town hall in Lavender Hill, replacing Lammas Hall in Westbridge Road, completed the Town's eclipse. By the eve of the First World War much of it was endemically poor and stagnant. Sensing historic decline, in 1912 the *Victoria County History* noted that the High Street, once the main road through the village, was reduced to 'a narrow and somewhat squalid street lined at the lower end with stalls'.¹¹ The implied contrast is misleading, for the High Street was always narrow and to some extent squalid.

At its south end the first houses were built about 1845 on the west side (Nos 140–144, 150–154). No. 158 followed about 1857, the Greyhound at No. 136 (early licensed for music and dancing) by 1868, and the rest of this line of building in the mid to late 1870s.¹² North of the Greyhound a short stretch was affected by its belonging to an extensive plot with a frontage to York Road but mostly comprising backland. The result was Gurling's Yard, an L-shaped mews with entrances in both roads, and miscellaneous buildings set back from the High Street edge: the Falcon Pencil Works (1878) in Gurling's Yard, a Salvation Army Citadel (1883), and the double-fronted Laburnham House (No. 134), built c.1882 as Battersea Liberal Club and Institute. The clubhouse closed on the outbreak of war in 1914, and was later a lodging house before acquisition by the Methodists' Battersea Central Mission, which built the front extension as a milk bar in 1938. The remaining frontage north to the railway, formerly belonging to the Cedars, was bought by James Gwynne and built up in the late 1870s and early 1880s with houses and shops and a Plymouth Brethren hall, all now gone. On the east side, development of the Manor House estate was launched in 1866, leading to the building of Simpson Street and Winders Road. Among the first buildings was a six-bar pub, the Railway Hotel, on the north corner of Simpson Street. A few shops were built at the south end, but some High Street frontage remained vacant until more shops were built on leases running from 1878.¹³

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This was all poor territory by the early twentieth century. On the south corner of Simpson Street, a pawnbroker had separate shops for clothing and jewellery. A regular street market emerged by the 1890s, continuing to the present. Inland Revenue valuers in 1911–14 found dilapidated and vacant property and ‘rather poor’ stalls. Houses on the site of George Potter House, extolled when new as profitable ‘shop property, of handsome elevation and soundly built’, were now dilapidated, two empty, one partitioned into two pokey shops. This end was, even so, a ‘fairly busy’ shopping centre (Ill. 1.6). On the bend into York Road, a branch of Sam Isaacs’ famous fish-and-chip chain prospered at No. 158. Destroyed by wartime bombing, this corner was reinstated in the 1950s.¹⁴

As the south end of the street developed, there was some rebuilding along the northern frontages. In 1840 a bakery and two small houses (latterly numbered 49–53) were built for William Alexander, a Hampstead gardener. They were demolished in 1953. At the top, two cottages were crudely rebuilt in 1869 as a single house and shop – long decrepit by the 1980s and since rebuilt, with the addition of an attic floor (12 Battersea Square).¹⁵ Piecemeal Victorian rebuilding still characterizes the west side of the street north of Orville Road.

Survivals and losses in the twentieth century

Most of the eighteenth-century and older buildings standing at the start of the twentieth century had gone by the end of the 1960s. Mixed in character and scattered, they had nothing to offer middle-class adventurers who might have been drawn to a concentration of historic houses. But losses did not occur unnoticed. In the 1920s the destruction of the remaining fragment of Bolingbroke House attracted considerable publicity. A few years later the battle to save Old Battersea House was a close-run thing, and the building’s

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preservation was deeply resented by utilitarians on Battersea Council. When three late seventeenth-century cottages and an early Georgian town-house in Westbridge Road were demolished for factory-building in 1937 (Ill. 1.7), the loudest voice raised in protest was that of the writer A. M. W. Stirling at Old Battersea House. Letters of regret were sent to *The Times*.¹⁶ Also in the 1930s, the expansion of Sir Walter St John's School involved the demolition of old houses in the Battersea Square part of the High Street, including the Priory, a Georgian pair and a part-weatherboarded cottage (dismissed in 1915 as 'quite unworthy of the site'). Near by, a house on the south side of the square with 'a graceful colonnade and balcony of eighteenth-century design' was demolished for a laundry building.¹⁷

Second World War bombing destroyed the 1830s villa Southlands and most of its collegiate accretions. In the early 1960s council flats replaced the remnants of a row of early eighteenth-century houses on the east side of the street (Ill. 1.3). The loss was compounded by the demolition of the old Castle Inn adjoining (see Ill. 1.24), part of which had been removed in the 1950s.

Except for the Raven, no historic inns survive, and few of more recent date are still open as pubs. In Battersea Church Road the Star and Garter at No. 151, built just after the new church opposite in the 1770s, was de-licensed not long before the First World War, the dilapidated building being used for furniture repairs before demolition. Another early disappearance was the Foresters' Arms on the east side of the High Street (No. 47), de-licensed and derelict in 1914; the Railway Hotel was bombed in the Second World War.¹⁸ The Woodman at 60 Battersea High Street and Original Woodman at 42-44 survive, the latter themed for Gypsy swing jazz as Le QuecumBar and Brasserie. The former Bricklayers' Arms in Battersea Square is a restaurant, and the Greyhound a restaurant-bar, the Bellevue.

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A significant post-war loss was Althorpe House at 155 Battersea Church Road, opposite the church. When surveyed in 1914 it was a house of two and a half storeys over the basement, a peculiarity being its pantiled roof, which had a double hip in the middle. It had been cement-rendered, and when the roof and attic were later taken down and the front railings removed it presented an unprepossessing exterior. But it retained a staircase and chimneypieces of the earlier eighteenth century, and some seventeenth-century panelling which, with the roof, may point to its having been converted in the eighteenth century from a pair.¹⁹

Althorpe House was the last home of the genealogist Arthur Collins, compiler of the *Peerage of England*, who reportedly died there in 1760.²⁰ From the 1820s to the 1850s it was a lunatic asylum, and it was thereafter occasionally used for Vestry meetings before becoming offices in connection with a dye-works. Fire damage and structural defects persuaded the GLC in 1965 that preservation was impractical, and it was demolished.²¹

Development since the Second World War

In the early twenty-first century the former Town remains an indistinct entity, and although Battersea Square remains a focal point reconstruction since the war has done much to break up the coherence of the High Street. From the 1960s deindustrialization transformed the district physically, opening up sites for new building and freeing the wider area from environmental nuisances. Attractive flats, reported *Country Life* in 1974, had recently replaced a ready-mixed concrete plant 'that used to coat the surrounding neighbourhood with a thin layer of cement'.²²

The new development, Valiant House, was begun in 1971. Comprising 104 one and two-bedroom flats in two seven-storey blocks, it covers not only

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the concrete-works site at Valiant Wharf but sites to the north, including that of the River Iron Foundry, latterly part of Morgan Crucible. The architects, Stefan Zins Associates, initially produced a scheme for Hall & Ham River Ltd at Valiant Wharf, proposing ten-storey blocks, but this was refused on appeal in 1970 because of its cliff-like dominance of the riverfront. The final scheme, for the extended site, was carried out not for Hall & Ham River but the builders the J. M. Hill Group, who led the way in exploiting the potential for waterside apartments along the Thames and elsewhere.²³ The buildings, with their expanses of drab brown brick, now seem stolid and understated, but at the time appeared 'imaginative'. Flats had a balcony or bay, some had roof terraces; some came with moorings on the river. Advertisements hinted at a glamorous lifestyle with water-sport. Viewed less enthusiastically some years later, Valiant House was 'luxurious and dismal, a high security complex which afforded views of the river as well as the rubbish tips on Chelsea Reach'. Two well-known and contrasting residents, in the mid-1980s, were the playwright Robert Bolt and the rock musician Rick Parfitt.²⁴

At Valiant Wharf, the late 1950s Ham River House, a four-storey office block fronting Vicarage Crescent, was let to Securicor at a quarter of the rent for offices 'a mile or so away'. The old Town was never going to be a major office location, for from the mid 1960s LCC and GLC policy, broadly supported by the local council, was to replace riverside industry with housing, leaving a strip of public space (the eventual Riverside Walk). Ham River House was demolished in 2005 and rebuilt as flats and offices.²⁵

South of Valiant House, in the late 1960s Wandsworth Council had to purchase Vicarage Wharf, having refused permission for industrial reconstruction. The outcome was a social-housing scheme, the Riverains, 71 Vicarage Crescent, built in 1973–4 for the Rowe Housing Trust, now part of Octavia Housing. Jefferson Sheard & Partners were the architects (Ill. 1.8). The

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interlinked blocks, providing 45 flats of one, two or three bedrooms, are clad in brown brick to harmonize with Valiant House, with slate infill panels.²⁶

North of Valiant House, the flats occupying Old Swan Wharf at 116 Battersea Church Road were built about 1995 to designs by Michael Squire Associates, the site having been vacant since the Old Swan burned down years earlier. Early plans included a pub-restaurant to replace the Old Swan, which had had several incarnations. Until the 1960s it was a large corner pub of three storeys: a rebuilding of 1892 by Thomas Walter Moss, architect. This was replaced in 1962–3 by a lower, detached house in light brick with a pitched roof, suburban or New Town in manner, by the architects Stewart Hendry & Smith for Mann, Crossman & Paulin.²⁷ In 1967–9 this was extended and remodelled by Roy Wilson-Smith, who designed many pubs and restaurants for Watney Mann in the 1960s and 70s. Wilson-Smith, ‘Britain’s leading exponent of kitsch architecture’, was apparently pursuing a Thames barging and lighterage theme, though the chief architectural inspiration seems to have been the weatherboarded net-huts of Margate (Ill. 1.9). Inside, the building was finished with wooden planking; vast floor-to-ceiling windows made the most of the riverside view. Once noted for drag shows, in the late 1970s the Old Swan became a punk rock venue. It had been derelict for some time when it was destroyed by arsonists in 1986.²⁸

Along the High Street, most of the post-war running was made by Battersea Council from the late 1950s with new flats. The south continued to be the main shopping part, though some shops remained at the north end. In 1959 Anthony Jackson’s Foodfare self-service store at Nos 145–147 expanded into No. 149 as a full-blown supermarket, then still a novelty. This eventually became a Tesco, Foodfare having merged with Victor Value and been taken over by the supermarket giant; it is now a restaurant. On the whole, the High Street remained shabby and down-market. It was in no sense fashionable when in the early 1970s the painter John Bellany and print-maker Norman

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Ackroyd set up their studio over a tailor's shop at No. 167, for a 'token' rent. Gentrification and regeneration were, however, already happening north in 'Old Battersea' proper, by 1972 'mixed but rapidly improving as a residential area'.²⁹

The 1970s were transitional years, marked by agitation over the GLC's Althorpe Grove redevelopment, dereliction in the Square, and the again uncertain future of Old Battersea House. Since then new developments have been for housing on the riverside and along the High Street, while in Vicarage Crescent Devonshire House and Old Battersea House have reverted to strictly private residences. At the time of writing (2012), there are plans to pull down the 1960s Castle and put up flats, with an integral pub on the corner of Shuttleworth Road.

BOLINGBROKE HOUSE

Battersea manor house stood north-east of the church on the site now occupied by Montevetro. Most of it was pulled down in the late eighteenth century, leaving the north wing and stables, occupied in connection with the adjoining works (latterly Rank's flourmills) and demolished about 1925. The house is particularly associated with Henry St John, first Viscount Bolingbroke. It was his childhood home, probably his birthplace, and he died there in 1751 after seven years' residence, years of ill-health and decline.³⁰ Both Bolingbroke's grandfather, Sir Walter St John (1622–1708), and father, the first Viscount St John (1652–1742), lived there for much longer periods. The name Bolingbroke House was in use by 1762.³¹

Bolingbroke House was a brick building of late Elizabethan or early Stuart date, replacing a medieval house probably situated further back from the river. Archaeologists in the 1990s found fine ashlar of late medieval to

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early post-medieval date reused in the river wall in front of the site, but whether it was salvaged from this predecessor cannot be determined. Traces of medieval and later outbuildings were found, plus substantial remnants of the late-surviving north wing and considerably less of its southern counterpart. The main central range had been obliterated. The remains suggested a building of perhaps *c.*1600, discrediting Frank Smallwood's theory that the north wing was the solar wing of a hall house of *c.*1400–50.³²

Of the earlier house little is known. An inventory of 1550 mentions the hall, a chamber and the lord's own chamber, a pantry and a malt-house, and six locks 'on divers doors', which in itself does not suggest a particularly large building. The manor of Battersea and Wandsworth had belonged to the Crown since the dissolution of Westminster Abbey in 1540, and was leased for generations to the Rydon family (see vol. 49). The St John connection began with the marriage in 1593 or 1594 of the soldier and future Lord Deputy of Ireland, Oliver St John, to Henry Rydon's bastard daughter and heiress Joan, widow of Thomas Holcroft, servant of Lord Burghley and bailiff of Westminster. Rydon had died in 1591, and in 1592, perhaps with Joan's remarriage in mind, she and Henry's widow Elizabeth obtained an extension of the lease to run for 21 years from 1613.³³

This may have been the occasion for the reconstruction of the house, accounting for its description as beautiful and large ('pulchram et magnam') in the manorial rental for 1604–5. If not then, another pre-1604 date seems likely on the strength of this description. Neither archaeological nor documentary evidence gives strong support to the view that the house was 'more probably' built about 1627 when the manor was sold by Charles I to Oliver St John, by that time elevated to the Irish peerage as Viscount Grandison. He had considered buying it ten years earlier, but had lacked the funds. There is no clear reason for building such a large, expensive house at either time. Joan Rydon was at least 40 when she married St John, and they

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had no children, while by 1627 St John, who had spent little time in Battersea, was nearing 70. With his death in 1630 the property passed to his nephew Sir John St John, first baronet, of Lydiard Tregoze, and hence to Sir John's son Sir Walter, who died at the house in 1708, then to Walter's son Sir Henry, Bolingbroke's father, later Viscount St John.³⁴

Bolingbroke stayed at the house on a visit from exile in 1723, when 'great rejoicings were made', a 'stately bonfire' was burned and villagers treated to a hogshead of ale. Six years later, his younger brother John stayed there with his new wife, when a ball was held with 'numerous Appearance of Nobility and Gentry'. John entertained the Prince of Wales there in 1730, and the prince and his friends made more than one subsequent visit to dine with Viscount St John.³⁵ In his last years Lord St John seems to have spent more time at his house in Albemarle Street, where he died in 1742. He probably neglected the manor house, and Bolingbroke claimed that he had stripped out most of its paintings, replacing good ones with 'some that would scarcely deserve their place in an ale-house'.³⁶

His father dead, Bolingbroke made the manor house his home from 1744. It was 'old and decayed' when he moved in, his wife complaining of 'nos vieilles mureilles ruinées', of cold, and draughty windows and doors. Repairs and improvements were undertaken. 'Bricklayers and carpenters have sheltered me from the inclemency of the season in this old House,' Bolingbroke wrote on 30 May 1745, 'and I will shelter myself from other inclemencys by a sedentary, inactive life in it'.³⁷

From at least 1754 and until after its sale in 1763 to Earl Spencer by Bolingbroke's nephew the second Viscount Bolingbroke, the house was let. Its condition probably deteriorated. Spencer's agent reported in 1769 that rafters over the apartments lately occupied by the vicar William Fraigneau's sisters had fallen in and were to be repaired 'as short and cheap as possible'.³⁸ In

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December 1775 the tenant Thomas Perkins sold up on 'quitting the farming business', and shortly afterwards the house, with some thirty acres of garden and pasture, was let on long lease to Thomas Rhodes, who had agreed to undertake building and other improvements. These presumably included the extension of Church Street across the manor house grounds, and re-routing the northern part of the Bolingbroke House carriage drive to make up Church Lane, as shown on Corris's map (1787). In 1784, when the lease was offered for sale, the manor house itself had been largely demolished and the estate contained 'an immense number of very spacious, substantial, newly erected Buildings, with a Wharf', used for alkali manufacture.³⁹

Eighteenth-century views show the house sketchily and inconsistently, as a plainish building of two floors with cellars and garret (Ill. 1.10). But its original appearance may have been fancier. The elaborated H-shaped footprint shown on the parish map of c.1760 (Ill. 1.2) suggests a house of some ambition. At the south-west corner, a small stone-built wing was probably added in the late seventeenth century for Sir Walter St John's wife Johanna – 'my house', as referred to in her will. In its latter days the north wing was externally nondescript, walls rendered under a hipped slate roof, the windows variously altered; an entrance portico had been added by 1822, a bow window later again.⁴⁰ Neither outside nor in did it offer much clue to the original appearance.

On the face of it the north wing that survived until 1925 preserved much of the interior appearance it had in Bolingbroke's day. The various features spoke of successive phases of work: strapwork ceilings and some panelling of early seventeenth century date, notably in the Cedar Room; a grand staircase of c.1700; panelling of the early eighteenth (Ills 1.12, 13). On chronological grounds, Bolingbroke's father was probably responsible for the staircase, but there is no certainty that it was in its original position.

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In his will, Grandison mentioned 'the roome wainscotted with ceader', apparently the ground-floor room at the end of the north wing, looking out to the Thames, the unusual zig-zag panelling of which was salvaged when the wing was demolished. If the house was built c.1627 it formed part of the original decoration, but there are anomalies in successive references to it, possibly indicating that it was moved or the room altered. The 1990s excavation showed that the hearth in this room was an insertion, while in the adjoining room a pair of corner fireplaces had also been inserted, interrupting some sort of brick drain. The fireplaces were presumably to do with the division of this room into two at one time, but the reason for the earlier drain is unclear.⁴¹

Forty years after Bolingbroke's death, Lysons referred to the cedar-panelled room 'said to have been Lord Bolingbroke's favourite apartment', while in 1804 it was claimed as 'the favourite study of Pope, the scene of many a literary conversation', a story endlessly repeated. Pope was Bolingbroke's first guest at Battersea on his return from exile, but his frequent later visits lasted less than a year before his death.⁴²

The story of Pope's study was almost certainly put about by Thomas Hodgson, the miller who lived in the reduced Bolingbroke House in the 1790s-1820s. He was probably also the source of the often-repeated claim that the house had had forty rooms on each floor: a more reliable impression is given by the assessment for 23 hearths in 1662-74. In 1817 Sir Richard Phillips recounted a visit and conversation with Hodgson, who assured him that the parlour had always been called Pope's Room.⁴³ Phillips described the room as being of 'brown polished oak', with a grate and ornaments of the age of George the First'. Later remarks about the room are equally baffling or confusing. One writer of 1860 stated with confidence that the walls of Pope's room, 'otherwise the "Cedar" or "round" room', could still be seen from the road, adding that they now carried a new roof and could only be

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distinguished from the rest of the building 'by their circular form'. He was probably confused by the stump of the windmill built for Thomas Fowler in 1788 (vol. 49). Three years later, Bolingbroke's biographer Thomas Macknight seems to have visited the house. Besides the staircase, he mentions 'an interesting panelled painting' and chimneypiece with 'finely-carved fruits' above the 'cedar parlour', features apparently gone by 1914. But he was oddly non-committal about the Cedar Room itself, which 'there is some reason to believe, partly remains', according to 'a tradition of the house and neighbourhood'.⁴⁴

W. L. B. Leech, who inspected the house in 1914, found the panelling 'mostly of cedar but restored at an early date with other woods'. Lord Kitchener was contemplating its purchase for his Kent country house Broome Park, just days before his death. In 1922 Hubert de Cronin Hastings found the panelling 'extremely unpleasant ... the red colour of the wood detracts nothing from its ugliness'.⁴⁵ Together with other panelling and the strapwork ceilings it was sold to the dealers Robersons. The cedar panelling and one ceiling found their way to Lane's End, an 'Olde English' manor house at Springfield, Philadelphia, built from 1924 for District Attorney Samuel P. Rotan and his Anglophile wife Allethaire. The house was inspired by Sutton Place near Guildford and incorporated much salvage; the cedar and ceiling were used for the library. After many years in the ownership of the University of Pennsylvania, the house was sold in the late 1990s and has since been drastically remodelled as a private residence.⁴⁶

The Bolingbroke House staircase was salvaged by Rowland Rank and his wife for their new house near Bognor. This house was demolished in 1962, and the remains of the badly vandalized staircase taken by Mrs Rank to Sennicotts, her home near Chichester.⁴⁷

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BATTERSEA SQUARE AREA

Battersea's eponymous square is its historic 'village green', and successive changes of name reflect changes in the character and status of the old Town and Battersea generally. From first mention in 1656 the overseers' records refer to the spot as the Elms or Elm Trees; on Rocque's map ninety years later trees define a triangular island in the irregular open space. Trees on the south side shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1869 were apparently elms, one of them still there in 1925, although dead. Elms notwithstanding, by the late eighteenth century the name had been superseded. When in 1793 the Vestry fixed the annual 'going the bounds', it asked parishioners to gather 'in the Square' at eight o'clock on the appointed morning ready to follow the officers round. Battersea Square' was in use before the end of the century, though the 1838 Tithe map still calls it 'The Square'.⁴⁸ As Battersea became more completely absorbed into London, Battersea Square prevailed. The so-called square remained essentially amorphous, and presumably for this reason in 1875 the Metropolitan Board of Works, 'callous of old associations', abolished the name, renumbering the properties as part of the High Street in odd and even sequences, beginning in what was really Vicarage Road.⁴⁹ But it remained in common use, and a century on 'Battersea Square' became convenient shorthand for the threatened remnants of the old Town and the focus for action by a new breed of conservation-minded local residents.

Battersea Square Conservation Area was designated in 1972, but it was not until the late 1980s that sufficient improvement took place to dispel the long-standing down-on-its-uppers air of the square itself. In 1990 the available open space was paved and bollarded for seating areas. The name Battersea Square was formally readopted, and the properties renumbered: 1-9 on the north side; 10-22 down the east side of the High Street; 23 onwards on the opposite side going towards Vicarage Crescent.

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Preaching at the Elm Trees is recorded in 1657. This was also the site of the parish stocks, mentioned in 1662 but removed to the churchyard in 1811 and supplanted by a pump (Ill. 1.15). A building on the triangular island on the survey of c.1760 was the watch-house, mentioned in 1706 and replaced in 1772 by one on the south side of King Street, beside new almshouses there. The square was no doubt used at least occasionally for open-air meetings, and certainly was by the late nineteenth century. Two thousand reportedly gathered in the square in 1885 for a Conservative rally; in 1886 John Burns chaired a meeting of South London unemployed there, and in 1900 his supporters broke up a Municipal Alliance meeting there.⁵⁰

The **Raven** at 140 Westbridge Road ('Raven Oneforty') is the only building of any antiquity around the square (Ills 1. 15, 18). That 'well-known and good-accustomed Assembly-House and Inn, known by sign of the Black Raven' was central to Battersea life for perhaps a century and a half. It is mentioned in Dibdin's *The Waterman* and was regularly used for parish meetings and inquests. Its superior character is suggested by the advertisement placed in 1772 by the new proprietor John Ross, offering 'a general Assortment of the Choicest Wines, Brandy, Rum, Coffee, Tea, etc' and a 'good Larder'. Ross adds that 'The Fair is kept as usual'.⁵¹

The building is datable on stylistic grounds to the later seventeenth century, and was certainly in existence as the Black Raven by 1701, but has been subject to various alterations. Sash windows may have been introduced to the upper floors as part of alterations made about 1775 when a new 31-year lease was advertised for sale, to commence at Michaelmas the following year.⁵² In 1891 the building, 'propped, worm-eaten, and ruinously old', was extensively reconstructed. The ground floor fronts, in glazed brick, date from that time, and there was probably some rebuilding of the upper parts. Already 'Black Raven' had given way to plain Raven or Old Raven. The work was carried out by Laster & Son, builders, under the direction of William

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Muskett Yetts, architect.⁵³ Before the reconstruction, the Westbridge Road entrance had a bracketed projecting canopy of early eighteenth-century type. The smaller shaped gable on the Battersea Church Road front was already in existence, and seems to date from the mid nineteenth century.

Battersea Square must always have been socially mixed. South of the Raven the east side comprised small houses, as indicated on the map of c.1760; one or two of these, of seventeenth-century date, survived into recent times. There was a 'very ancient' larger house (Ill. 1.16), which became the parish workhouse in 1792. Superseded by a new Union workhouse in 1839, it was occupied in tenements in 1841 as Oxford House, and demolished a few years later.⁵⁴ South of Westbridge Road, the buildings on the east side today are largely the result of nineteenth-century rebuilding, and redevelopment in the 1980s after years of neglect consequent upon their exclusion from the Althorpe Grove development.

On the south side, the building pattern established by the late eighteenth century was a disjointed mixture of small and medium-sized houses. Two adjoining houses belonged to Mary Pritzler of Devonshire House, and were occupied respectively by a grocer, James Hill, and Theophilus Pritzler, a founding director of the Phoenix Fire Assurance Company. They were advertised in 1796 after Mrs Pritzler's death as 'substantial, well-built' houses, with 'extensive sashed Fronts'. Theophilus's house is probably identifiable as the 'handsome uniform brick built residence, distinguished as Albion House' (Ill. 1/17), which was run for some years from about 1810 as a boys' boarding school by John Stenson. His establishment's social character is suggested by the fact that in 1819, having relocated to Beauchamp Place in Chelsea, Stenson hoped to place his son with 'any respectable tradesperson' having a boy to send as his pupil.⁵⁵ Albion House and its neighbour were demolished about 1825, and their sites added to the grounds of Devonshire House.

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Besides the grocer and Pritzler, late eighteenth-century residents of the square included a naval captain, Bartholomew Roberts, who caused an incident at Great Yarmouth in 1796 when, enraged by a reform meeting, he ordered his crew to arrest the speaker, 'Citizen' John Thelwall. A year later, Roberts was dead of fever in the West Indies and his Battersea home was sold up. The square was still occupied by some well-placed families in the nineteenth century. Samuel Archer, who committed suicide there in 1832, was a young man 'of high situation' at the Guardian Insurance Office, living in the square with his independently well-off father.⁵⁶ But by the late 1830s part of the south side was taken up by cottages, and it had ceased to be the good address it had been.

Against the trend, the secluded **Priory** (latterly 28 Battersea High Street) kept caste. A two-storey house, cement-rendered by the early twentieth century, it originated as a tavern or place of entertainment, the Adam and Eve, later called the Grotto, leased in 1761 to William Wyatt, a London stationer. Subsequently it was owned and occupied for many years by John Abbott, whose name presumably gave rise to that of the house.⁵⁷ Nineteenth-century occupants included John Creswell, a member of the Royal Horticultural Society who had a nursery there (1810s-20s); James Goren, solicitor (1830s-50s), and James Peacock, silversmith and jeweller (by 1871). From the 1870s to the 1920s the house was occupied by surgeons, father and son, named Oakman. In 1931 the London County Council compulsorily purchased the one-acre property, so as to let it to Sir Walter St John's School for a playground extension. The school took possession in 1933, and the Priory was demolished.⁵⁸

In the 1860s and 70s there were some twenty shops and businesses around Battersea Square, mostly food shops but also a Post Office, a registry office, and a pawnbroker's, and there were shops here long before, including

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the grocer's on the south side mentioned above and a bread and biscuit bakery, destroyed by fire in 1828. James Cross, the grocer who acquired the former workhouse in 1839 and replaced it with houses and shops about 1845, had for many years run a little bow-fronted shop on part of the site. More shops appeared later in the century. 'Rather quiet for business', noted the Inland Revenue valuer in 1915, apropos shops on the south side, which included dining rooms, a barber's and an upholsterer's.⁵⁹

Today the dominant building on that side is Ship House, comprising (No. 34) the former shop and offices of the Victoria Granaries behind, dating from 1890–2, and (No. 35) the new granary which in 1907 replaced the cottages mentioned above (vol. 49). The oldest is No. 32 adjoining, formerly the Bricklayers' Arms beerhouse (in 1861 the General Garibaldi), probably rebuilt or refronted in the mid nineteenth century.⁶⁰ Cotswold Mews is a late-1980s conversion and redevelopment as shops and business units of the former Cotswold Laundry, originally built c.1914, latterly a plastics factory; the now-remodelled building fronting the square dates from 1937. West of this are five early 1880s shops built for Jesse Nickinson by William and Thomas Saker. Of these, Nos 20 and 22 were run by Caius College Mission in the late 1880s as Gonville House, serving cheap meals.⁶¹

On the north side, the right-angled configuration of Nos 7–9 is shown on Rocque's map, but the present buildings are later. James Bennett, a linen-draper, whose plaques for 'London House' decorate the front, was responsible for the diagonal infilling of the angle in 1866, closing a gateway to a yard and workshops beyond. He may also have rebuilt the adjoining houses to the west (Nos 4–6). The northern building of the corner group, No. 9, replicates No. 7 with its Georgian-style flat window heads and Italianate cornice. Replacing a lower, differently styled building, it was built as part of the redevelopment of 132 Battersea Church Road with flats and business premises in 1980–1. A mansard storey was added to the flats in 1997. Stefan

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Zins Associates were the architects both times. For the rest, the north side of the square (Nos 1–3) is occupied by the flats and offices replacing Ham River House, built following a lengthy planning process concluded in 2006.⁶²

Althorpe Grove Estate

Begun in 1976, the Althorpe Grove Estate came about as a result of the LCC's decision more than ten years earlier to redesignate for housing a small light-industrial zone at the west end of Westbridge Road. In view was an extension to the Somerset Estate, but the form the development took was very different from the three tower blocks reportedly envisaged early on.⁶³ Mixing new-build with rehabilitation and facsimile of mostly unremarkable old buildings, the estate manifested a new respect for established scale and character, and embodied ideas about low-rise housing, perimeter planning and traditional construction, which had gained ground as an alternative to high-rise and system building.

The change of approach came about because of pressure from the Battersea Society, leading to a public inquiry by the Department of the Environment and to the designation of the Battersea Square Conservation Area by Wandsworth Council (then Labour-controlled) in 1972.⁶⁴ The Raven inn, initially to have been part of the clearance area, was of such obvious significance that it was soon reprieved. Further historical ballast was provided by eighteenth-century houses on the south side of Westbridge Road, then part of the Royal Laundry. For the rest, the buildings to be restored or reconstructed were battered mainly commercial premises of Victorian or indeterminate date fronting Battersea Church Road and Battersea High Street. The GLC intended closure and re-routing of the west end of Westbridge Road. Closure of part of Battersea Church Road was also mooted, but

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ultimately the only road closed was the dead-end street that gave the estate its name.

South of Westbridge Road, most of the east side of Battersea Square (then 17–35 Battersea High Street) was to have been brought into the scheme. But in 1971 the owner persuaded the GLC to leave them out, as they were to be renovated or rebuilt; two houses (Nos 23 and 25) had been gone since the war and the standing buildings were dilapidated. Old Battersea Properties Ltd, the new company under whose control they came, failed to do the work and more than a decade on the properties remained an eyesore.⁶⁵

Authorship of Althorpe Grove is attributable chiefly to Nicholas Wood of the GLC Department of Architecture's Housing Branch, who put forward the design and saw the project through as job architect.⁶⁶ A pupil of Sir Leslie Martin, a proponent of perimeter planning, Wood had already put the new thinking into practice at the larger Carey Gardens, Thessaly Road (p. ###).

In its final form, covering about 3½ acres bisected by Westbridge Road, the estate provided 138 dwellings, 18 in rehabilitated buildings, plus a nursery school and old people's clubroom (Ill. 1.1). Besides the Westbridge Road houses, the buildings preserved were 181–183 and 197A Battersea Church Road; 161–163 and part of 165 were rebuilt in facsimile. No. 197A was rehabilitated for commercial use, the rest as housing. In the High Street, the front parts of Nos 37–43 were to have been saved, but in the end the properties were sold and redeveloped privately in the 1980s. The estate was still incomplete in 1981, after it had been transferred to Wandsworth Council. New buildings were put up for sale in batches by Wandsworth as the contractor W. & C. French finished them.⁶⁷

The housing consists of four-storey maisonette blocks and smaller two- and three-storey blocks of flats, faced in yellow brick with flat or mansard

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roofs. The façades are for the most part classically proportioned with sparing use of round arches. Geometrical formality is given by the crescent-shaped maisonette block closing the estate's south end (Althorpe Mews) and an axial paddling pool. The layout sought to give as many residents as possible a river view, whether from their balconies or the communal gardens.

Wood had hoped that the paddling pool would contain frogs and newts. His whimsical approach is further evidenced by some inverted arches under windows – singled out by a staid critic in 1977 as typical GLC 'absurdities' – and above all by the cast-concrete portrait heads which decorate some of the buildings. These quaint features, executed by Wood himself and originally painted by the artist Brian Yale, include Lords Bolingbroke, Nelson and Denning; Sarah Bernhardt and Vanessa Redgrave; the goddess Demeter and William Blake's image of God; and the estate's site agent (Ills 1.21, 22). Yale was responsible for an aluminium weathervane and stained-glass windows for the nursery school.⁶⁸

Rehabilitation as flats of the houses at **129–133 Westbridge Road**, by the GLC Special Works Architect, represented a last chance to salvage something from the ruination of this historic end of Westbridge Road. They are two small houses flanking a larger house with its front set well back (Ill. 1.23). Their building history is far from clear. Investigations made at the time suggested a date in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, perhaps earlier, on the evidence of panelling in the middle house. Deeds and ratebooks showed that the whole property had been sold in 1810, stood empty in 1817–19 and was partly reconstructed, perhaps extensively, by 1820. It appeared that the front of the main house had been set back then, resulting in the fireplaces in the front rooms being tight up against the front wall. The elevational treatment accords with the presumed date of c.1819, but maps show that the middle house was always set back.⁶⁹

BATTERSEA HIGH STREET

Little of old-time Battersea High Street is left. At the north end, in Battersea Square, the Raven inn and some small houses, much reconstructed or wholly rebuilt, suggest something of the historic character. Further south, the east side has been almost entirely rebuilt since the Second World War as far south as the railway, beyond which are remnants of Victorian development. The west side is better preserved. Beyond the former Sir Walter St John's School, an overbearing presence, the mishmash of buildings down to Orville Road retains the unpretentious heterogeneity produced by long history and fragmented ownership. But there is little or nothing earlier than Victorian, and some is recent period pastiche. The pair of low, plain cottages numbered 64A and 66A had yet to be built when the site was sold by Earl Spencer in 1835, and one only is indicated on the 1838 tithe map. The core of the Woodman at No. 60 may be older; the pub has been subject to successive enlargements, but is recognizably the original beer-shop, open by the early 1840s. Its rival the Original Woodman (Nos 42–44, now Le QuecumBar) is also a composite, having been partially rebuilt in 1888, and enlarged and altered after the First World War.⁷⁰

Other buildings in this run include at Nos 54 and 56 a pair of stuccoed Italianate houses probably of the 1860s, replacing or enlarged from a pair of cottages put up for sale by Earl Spencer in 1835. No. 54 was enlarged in 1872 with a bay-fronted extension for the house agent and local registrar William Griffin, whose residence it was. The plainer two-storey houses adjoining at Nos 48–52 (and 46 behind) replaced three houses described as 'pulled down' in 1881. Further south, No. 68, with stabling and outbuildings, was built for a veterinary surgeon, William Cross, in the 1860s; the buildings at the rear were demolished for Restoration Square.⁷¹

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Powrie House on the Vicarage Crescent corner occupies the site of Gosling's Yard, an agglomeration of cottages, stables, workshops and pigsties, plus shops in the High Street which included by the early twentieth century a rag-and-bone shop, fried-fish shop and 'cheap draper'. South of Vicarage Crescent, the tall, plain houses at Nos 88 and 90 are the remnant of a development of the mid-to-late 1840s on the site of a few cottages. The new houses, in the High Street and Green Lane, were occupied typically by labourers and glove-workers. Nos 104 and 106 date from the mid 1880s.⁷²

On the east side, the Castle at No. 115 is a rebuilding for Young & Company of 1964–5, occasioned by the construction of the council flats adjoining. It was designed by William G. Ingram, Son & Archer, a practice with long local connections. The building it replaced was one of Battersea's oldest inns, said to have dated back to 1600 – an unsupported claim recorded in 1913 but absent from the local histories. The name was in use by 1695, when the Poor Rate assessment records that 'Webb at the Castle' had replaced a Mrs Pratt as ratepayer. The building demolished in 1963 was of indeterminate date, possibly seventeenth century behind a later or altered front (Ill. 1.24). As surveyed in 1891, when Youngs acquired the freehold and made alterations, it was of irregular outline, and largely comprised a public bar, taking up its full width, with several fireplaces. A narrow staircase was tucked behind a large corner fireplace; behind the stairs a small parlour also contained a corner fireplace. The cellar had been extended in the 1880s.⁷³

The sign formerly mounted outside, 'rediscovered' and restored in the early 1950s, was made as part of Youngs' embellishments in the 1890s. The 5ft-high semi-circular wooden structure, possibly the work of a provincial fairground carver, was designed to go at the corner of the building and takes the form of a Baroque cartouche framing a mountainside castle in low relief (Ill. 1.25).

The Cedars and other houses

South of Orville Road, No. 108, formerly called The Cedars, is the only survivor of several large houses in the southern part of the High Street. Now part of the Katherine Low Settlement, it is in origin a house of the later 1760s. The first occupant seems to have been John Camden, probably the London sugar-baker of that name, a descendant of the antiquary William Camden. He died there in 1780. About 1851 the house, sketched in 1829 (Ill. 1.26), was partly or wholly rebuilt for William Garrad Baker of May & Baker, the chemical manufacturers, who had just a 21-year lease from the Ponton family, the freeholders.⁷⁴ Set at right-angles to the road, the house retains the eighteenth-century footprint except at the front, which had been set back in the middle. Otherwise, the proportions and arrangement of openings were kept (Ill. 1.27). The façade is of red brick, with cement or stone dressings, the rest being in yellow-grey stocks. Internally, the only significant feature is the mid nineteenth-century staircase, with decorative cast-iron balustrading.

The entrance front formerly looked over a terrace with steps to parterres, shrubbery walks and the cedar-dotted lawns that gave the house its name, in use by 1854. In all there were two acres, much of it taken c.1860 by the West London Extension Railway. The tithe map (1838) shows a simpler layout. At that time the house was occupied by William Cory, founder of the coal merchants William Cory & Sons. Among later residents was George Warriner, an engineer-inventor who, as 'inspector of culinary arrangements' for the army, collaborated with Alexis Soyer to improve military catering.⁷⁵

The Cedars was a family residence until 1879, in which year a Swiss governess there advertised for a situation, offering German, Parisian French, 'very superior' music and references from 'distinguished persons'. In 1880 it opened as a home for 'working gentlewomen' or 'lady students'.⁷⁶ A selling

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point was proximity to Battersea Station, but the venture failed and in 1882 the house was in the possession of Canon J. Erskine Clarke, becoming a clergy house, with a girls' club-house in the garden. (For the subsequent history, see the account of the Katherine Low Settlement in volume 49.)

North of the Cedars, **Grove House** was acquired by Charles Carkesse in 1712 along with the house over the road later called the Retreat. At the time of Thomas Hyles's 1762 survey for Mary Jenner it was in the occupation of Robert Deleroy, later in that of William Holt, a City merchant who had married a wealthy Clapham woman. It was for many years the home of Thomas Stirling, a lawyer from Berwick-on-Tweed and sometime secretary to the 2nd Duke of Northumberland, with whose support he became coroner for West Middlesex in 1816 aged 70. He was still actively in post when he died in 1839. His son Thomas Henry, who also lived at Grove House, was a minor writer on economic and social policy. A working-class mistress, Mary Jones, inherited his fortune. 'Mrs Stirling' (supposedly unhinged by the death of a fiancé on the morning of their wedding), remained at Grove House for many years as a recluse.⁷⁷ The house was demolished in the mid 1880s for the building of Orville Road.

The Retreat and Southlands. Opposite the Cedars, the stuccoed villa Southlands was built about 1837, replacing a house in the same grounds but closer to the road. It was at the earlier house, the Retreat, that Princess Marie-Thérèse, Duchess of Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI, resided in 1815 before returning to France after Napoleon's final defeat. The new house was given the old name and kept it for many years.

The older house was the residence of Charles Carkesse, secretary to the Custom House, who acquired it in 1712 together with Grove House and land in the common field. It was formerly in the ownership of a Lincoln's Inn

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barrister, William Wardour, Clerk of the Pells in the Exchequer in succession to his father Sir Edward. In 1718 Carkesse enlarged the grounds with the acquisition of Bell Acre, which had long belonged to the parish of St Saviour's, Southwark.⁷⁸ Carkesse, who married Mary Hester of Battersea in 1728, died in 1741. When advertised in 1743 the house was described as large and well built, with ancillary buildings including a greenhouse and barn and four-acre grounds laid out 'in the handsomest manner, well stock'd with great variety of the best Wall and other Fruit-Trees'. Little had changed by the time of a survey made in 1762 for the new owner Mary Jenner. This shows a small part to have been Lord Bolingbroke's freehold; in fact, the estate was an assemblage of freehold, copyhold and leasehold ground.⁷⁹

An addition since 1743 was a small house on Archer's Lane (now Shuttleworth Road), possibly built for Sir Francis Haskins Eyles-Stiles, FRS, Navy victualling commissioner, who lived at the main house for a few years. He improved the property and stocked the garden with 300 sorts of plant, but in 1761, being in poor health, sold up and went abroad, dying the following year at Naples.⁸⁰

In 1763 the property was acquired by Thomas Tritton, the new owner of Wandsworth Brewery. His son, the banker John Henry Tritton, sold the estate in 1795 to Joseph Hadfield, silk merchant, of the Manchester firm Hadfield & Company. The occasion for the purchase appears to have been Hadfield's marriage, and he may already have been living there with his father John. Hadfield remained until 1800, when he retired to the Isle of Wight. The house was subsequently occupied by the distiller Joseph Benwell, to whose firm J. H. Tritton was apprenticed, and whose daughter he married.⁸¹

The house had been occupied for several years by Captain William Fulke Greville when the Duchess of Angoulême went there.⁸² Having fled

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France after Napoleon's return in 1815, she spent part of the spring at the French ambassador's house in Marylebone, but was at Battersea by 8 June, when Princess Charlotte's companion Cornelia Knight called, and at the end of the month when the French ambassador visited following Waterloo. In July, John Watlen advertised one of his six-octave oblique pianos, finished in rosewood, just like the one he had delivered 'a few days since' to the duchess at the Retreat, although she was reportedly 'residing at present' with the ambassador. By the end of July she had returned to Paris, her 'petit séjour délicieux' at Battersea over.⁸³

The house was occupied subsequently by William Randall, probably the Nine Elms miller of that name, and after his death in 1828 by Valentine Morris, a wine merchant and orchid enthusiast.⁸⁴ About 1837 the Retreat was rebuilt in a more secluded part of the grounds, the old site being crossed by a driveway to the new house, shown with its twin bay-windows on the tithe map. A description of the 'old mansion' at Southlands College in the 1900s speaks of fittings including Flaxman chimneypieces (sold by the college), so items from the original house may have been reused. In 1844 Morris put his orchids up for sale, and the 'very elegant modern residence' was offered to buy or let, but he was still there when he died in 1848.⁸⁵

His successor was the then Lieut.-Gen. Sir George Pollock, whose victory over the Afghans at Kabul and withdrawal through the Khyber Pass to India had made him a national hero in 1842. Maintaining that he had never yet been in a retreat (which the Khyber adventure technically was), he changed the name of the house to Southlands.⁸⁶

Pollock left after his marriage in 1852 and shortly afterwards Southlands was opened as a military academy by James Sherrat, described in 1860 as 'eminently successful in directing the readings of candidates for Addiscombe, Woolwich and direct commissions in the army'.⁸⁷ Probably there

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was some connection with Pollock. Top cadets at the East India Company's Addiscombe College and later the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich were awarded a gold medal instituted in Pollock's honour, and Sherrat named Pollock (one of the government appointees to the company) among his referees. There were ten teenage pupils resident in 1861.⁸⁸ In 1855 Sherrat opened another school at the Manor House (below), where annual fees of 60–80 guineas contrasted with the 120 guineas for 'private' pupils at Southlands. The course of instruction at the Manor House was similarly devised for the military and Civil Service, and included Hindustani, fortification and surveying. The school was short-lived. The site was required for the West London Extension Railway, and the last pupils were succeeded by workmen building the line in 1861.⁸⁹

Southlands Academy had closed by 1871, when it was sold for use as a teacher-training college (vol. 49). In 1927 the property was bought by Battersea Council for a health centre, baths, library and other activities. The house was destroyed by bombing in 1940, leaving just a wing dating from 1904–5, now Old Library Apartments.

South of Southlands, the **Manor House** was a house of about 1700, with five rooms to a floor, in spacious grounds with a terrace walk commanding 'beautiful prospects of the surrounding rich country'. Sherwood Ramsey confuses it with the seventeenth-century Manor House in East Hill, Wandsworth.⁹⁰ By the 1750s it was in the occupation of the lawyer Philip Worlidge, steward of the 2nd Lord Bolingbroke's Berkshire estates. Worlidge died in 1783, leaving the bulk of the Battersea manorial property he had acquired from Bolingbroke to the latter's half-nephew and heir Frederick St John. A solicitor, Cuthbert Rippon, who built Stanhope Castle in 1798, lived at the Manor House for some time until his death in 1802. His widow and son Cuthbert continued to live there. Following the 1832 Reform Act, the younger

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Rippon became the first MP for Gateshead, as a Radical, but died in obscurity having gone bankrupt. The house was later occupied by the Chartist writer and poet John Watkins, 'one of the most regular and prolific contributors to the Northern Star during its period of greatest influence'. Watkins was there in 1842, but by 1848 had moved to St John's Hill.⁹¹

After the house was demolished, the remnants of the grounds, on either side of the railway, were promoted in 1866 as a building estate. A house of the same name was built on a detached portion fronting the High Street north of the lines, with a builder's yard and houses facing the road. This was probably the work of the builder William Cockell, who was living at the new Manor House in 1870-1.⁹²

Trott Street

Trott Street was laid out by John Trott, an ironmonger and smith with premises in Battersea Square, who bought the site in 1864. It was three or four years before he had raised sufficient funds to begin work, by which time he had moved his business to this part of the High Street. Only two houses had been built by 1870. The greater part of the site was not built up until 1878-9, much of it by the builder Sidney Grist of Orkney Street, with two-storey houses almost all having splayed front bays (Ill. 1.29). Meanwhile in 1874 Trott had sold a large plot at the north end of the new street for the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart. The eastern half of the development survives (1-41 Trott Street and 17-25 Shuttleworth Road); the rest was demolished in the 1960s for council housing.⁹³

Borough Council housing

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Between 1962 and 1967 the east side of the High Street north of the railway was transformed by Battersea Borough Council with a series of housing estates, planning for which went back to at least 1956. But the first council housing in the High Street was Powrie House on the west side, on the Vicarage Crescent corner. Named after a long-serving headmaster of St Mary's School, this was built in 1958–9 by Prestige & Company, probably to the designs of Howes & Jackman.⁹⁴ It is a plain, flat-roofed, four-storey block, with Royal Festival Hall-style concrete balconies.

'Battersea High Street No. 1' followed in 1961–3. This covered run-down property north of Trott Street, stretching east to Granfield Street where some houses were excluded for the future development of Salesian College. The upshot was a group of three buildings: the four-storey maisonette blocks Prichard Court and Humphrey Court, and the twelve-storey Lindsay Court further south, the first to break the street's old scale in the name of 'mixed development'. These buildings were designed by Howes & Jackman and built by A. A. Stuart & Sons.⁹⁵

'Battersea High Street No. 2', comprising the block south and west of Trott Street, was built in 1963–5. Here the Council's Building Works Department was awarded the contract although its bid was not the lowest. The Ministry of Housing and Local Government attempted to veto the arrangement, but relented. The scheme consists of four blocks, akin to their northern counterparts but slightly updated in style and disposed round a long court. The four-storey ranges of Morgan Court, Clancy Court and Coles Court hold the perimeter of the High Street and Trott Street's two arms, while ten-storey Meecham Court overlooks Shuttleworth Road. Howes & Jackman are presumed to have been the architects.⁹⁶

The separately conceived Southlands Estate (1964–7) was bound up with the fate of the former teacher-training college of that name, acquired by

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Battersea Council between the wars and in partial use as a library. A first scheme of about 1960 appears to have envisaged demolishing what remained of it after wartime bombing, and building two 10-storey blocks along with shops, a library, hall and laundry. By 1962 only one high building was planned, of 17 or 18 storeys, with a lower block or blocks. As completed, the T-shaped tower Gaitskell House sits in the centre of the three-sided open space created by the arms of McKiernan Court. Emberton, Tardrew & Partners were retained as architects, with W. V. Zinn as engineer. When Battersea's Building Works Department embarked on the housing in 1964, a new library and hall were still anticipated. These ancillary buildings were postponed pending development of the GLC's proposed 'motorway box', part of which would have followed the railway line next to Southlands down to Clapham Junction. That is probably why the west wing of Southlands survived – to be sold off by Wandsworth Council in the 1990s.⁹⁷ The planning and architectural language of this estate have touches of mid-1960s robustness.

At the south end of the site, the laundry was extended and a garage with a rooftop playground built east of it in 1967. The laundry (2 Shuttleworth Road) was converted to a photographic studio in 1981, and in the late 1990s was refitted for music recording as Sphere Studios. Alterations in 2000–1 included demolition of the water tower over the east end of the building and re-roofing at a higher level. In 2001–2 the long disused garage building was demolished and replaced by Gallagher Court (49 Winders Road), a four-storey block of flats for the Threshold Tenant Trust.⁹⁸

Recent developments

A tide of private residential developments has washed over the High Street since the 1980s, an early scheme being the short run of houses and flats at Nos

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92–102, built by Berkeley Homes about 1987. Most of the site had been cleared for many years. At No. 125, the former public library at Southlands was converted and extended *c.*1996 as the Biblio Building, now Old Library Apartments. On the corner of Simpson Street, the flats comprising the Icon Building at Nos 135–137 were built in 2003, replacing a 1970s Royal Naval Association clubhouse on the site occupied until the war by the Railway Hotel. On the west side of the street, workshops at No. 58 were replaced in the late 1990s by a house and ‘loft’ units (‘The Quad’), with roof terraces.⁹⁹

Opposite the Icon Building, Nos 124–128 (with 2–4 Gwynne Road) comprise a low-budget block of eight flats by Walter Menteth Architects, built in 1998 for the Ujima Housing Association, providing accommodation in part for the disabled. It is built of concrete blocks finished externally with acrylic render over polystyrene insulation, set behind gabion-wall screening (see Ill. 0.21). The planning is symmetrical, with stairs, kitchens and bathrooms on the main axis, living rooms occupying the corners.¹⁰⁰

In Battersea Mews at the rear of No. 165, the two ‘roundhouses’ were built in 2008 to designs by the architects Parritt Leng. Each oval house comprises combined living and kitchen space, with a central staircase to a pair of bedrooms with bathrooms en suite. The exterior brick facing is laid in soldier courses.¹⁰¹

In the northern High Street is Restoration Square, a private scheme of *c.*2000. Its basis was the High Street frontage between the Woodman and Powrie House, and the former St John’s cigar factory of 1875–8 behind (vol. 49). The principal L-shaped factory building was largely demolished leaving most of the north wing and the main chimney, the rest being reconstructed on a larger scale, in the original industrial idiom but with a glazed quadrant in the angle, containing the main entrance and rising to a turret over the lift-shaft and stairs. In the courtyard, three ‘mews’ houses were built. Along the

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High Street, the buildings were variously refurbished or replaced with houses in broadly neo-Georgian style. The architects were the MR Partnership.¹⁰²

ORVILLE ROAD AREA

Orville Road was developed in the mid-1880s on the Grove House estate by H. N. Corsellis. The layout of the intended 'Cedars Road' was drawn up by Joseph Henry Lewry, a builder, but he is not known to have had any further involvement. Though 'Orville Road', offered by the LCC, was approved in 1884, it was changed to Stirling Grove at the request of a member of the public, in memory of the family who had lived there; Orville Road was readopted in 1887. A number of builders were involved: William Kerven of Shepherd's Bush, George Patman of Hammersmith (of Patman & Fotheringham), the Battersea partnership of William Scott and John Deryck (who also built in Spencer Terrace, Green Lane); and John Packe, also of Battersea. The houses, on 99-year leases, were of three storeys without basements, their flat stock-brick fronts with trimmings of red brick and cement or stone; Nos 15–23 Vicarage Crescent are the only survivors. Let by the floor as flats, they immediately took on the established poor character of the vicinity and Orville Road became notorious. In 1899 Charles Booth's survey found it by far the worst street in the whole district west of Battersea Bridge Road, occupied by 'thieves, prostitutes, cadgers, loafers', the few decent residents being men with large families driven there 'in despair of getting rooms elsewhere'.¹⁰³

It soon attracted the attention of social workers, based at Canon Erskine Clarke's clergy house, the Cedars, and from 1906 in the new Cedars Club or Institute adjoining. The mission there foundered after the First World War, when ill-health forced the retirement of its principal, Nesta Lloyd, but in 1921 she passed the baton to a Cambridge University initiative, Christ's

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College Boys' Club, and followed this up in 1923 by introducing the all-female Katherine Low Settlement to the club as its tenant at the Cedars.

All the initial recruits to the boys' club were from Orville Road, which remained the focus throughout its existence. Classes, drill and games, excursions and an annual camp aimed at broadening their outlook, and doing away with 'the sense of injustice which is prevalent among the boys of Battersea'. In 1926 the superintendent H. S. Tyler could boast that Orville Road was 'still rough but not so rough'; three years later that its 'very bad name ... has now almost entirely gone'. But his plan in 1933 for joining up with Battersea Housing Association to recondition the houses came to nothing.¹⁰⁴ Though the club was wound up in the 1950s, the Katherine Low Settlement continues at the same premises, with a much broader agenda and wider catchment area.

In 1933 Katrine Baird Hall was built for the settlement, at 2 Orville Road, a site acquired several years earlier, together with 106 Battersea High Street where a temperance public house was intended. Built in memory of the settlement's first president, it was designed by the architects Constantine & Vernon in a 'moderne' manner, and contained a games hall, club rooms and mezzanine kitchen. It was sold in the early 1990s to Battersea Churches Housing Trust, but was again sold and in the late 1990s became a private house. In 2010 the second floor was extended across the full width of the front.¹⁰⁵

By 1935 Orville Road's redemption was complete, and it was dubbed 'the wonder street' for its efforts in celebrating George V's jubilee.¹⁰⁶ A few years later most of it was bombed flat. Prefabs were erected, surviving until the late 1970s (Ill. 1.30). Two sites were still unredeveloped when the Greater London Council, which then owned them, was abolished, and they were sold for building by the London Residuary Body in 1988. One, on the west side,

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was by that time de facto part of Wandsworth Council's Fred Wells Gardens. It proved impossible to build on for that reason and was in the end compulsorily purchased by the council. Opposite this site, and after several failed schemes, two terraces of five houses, linked by a corner block of four flats and together called St James Court, were built in 1988–90 by St James's Estates PLC. This 'reinterpretation of late Victorian design', as its architect Paul Brookes described it, is characterized by polychromatic brickwork and, unusually for this date, chimneys, which are given a decorative treatment and prominence as part of the street elevations (Ill. 1.31).¹⁰⁷

On the south side of the road, a day nursery of the late 1970s was replaced in 1993 by Imani Mansions (No. 3), a three-storey block by St George Developments Ltd.¹⁰⁸

VICARAGE CRESCENT

Vicarage Crescent came into being in stages. Its southern arm had a separate existence historically as Green Lane, linking the High Street and riverside sites along what is now Lombard Road. The north arm, Vicarage Lane or Road, gave access to four main properties: Lawn House or Cottage, Devonshire House, the vicarage and the Terrace House (Old Battersea House). Beyond the gateway to the Terrace House the road narrowed to a footpath, referred to in 1653 by the vicar, Thomas Temple, as 'comonly called M^{ris} Dubois wydow wharfe' – Mrs Du Bois being the chatelaine of the Terrace House, to which the ground belonged.¹⁰⁹ It led to cottages by the White Hart where it joined up with Green Lane. The Wharf, as it was still called, was widened into a roadway by the Vestry in 1894–5 and incorporated into Vicarage Road, and the foreshore embanked to create Vicarage Gardens. Vicarage Road and Green Lane were united in 1937 as Vicarage Crescent.

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Green Lane was largely undeveloped until the late 1820s, when cottages and workshops were built on the north side, close to the High Street. These adjoined the parish infants' school.¹¹⁰ These buildings were followed in the mid 1840s by a row of houses opposite, and in 1849–50 by St Mary's School further along the south side (vol. 49); houses filled up the rest of the frontage there in the mid 1880s. Meanwhile most of the north side was taken up by the grounds of the Terrace House, occupied from 1840 by St John's College. This ground was built over in the 1930s with Battersea Council's St John's estate.

Remnants of the earlier nineteenth-century development survive at 14–18 Vicarage Crescent. St Mary's School, closed in 1985, was converted to housing in 1987 as Windsor Court. Nos 10 and 12 are later nineteenth-century rebuilds, adjoining which at Nos 6–8 is Laburnum House, the clubhouse of the Battersea Liberal Association, replacing an old temperance or mission hall on the infants' school site. The name comes from the former clubhouse, Laburnham or Laburnum House at 134 Battersea High Street. A few houses east of Windsor Court (15–23) belong to the Grove House estate development of the 1880s; 23 (united with 25) was converted to housing association flats in the early 2000s. The stepped pairs of houses numbered 1–11 were built about 1983 by Crest Homes.¹¹¹

West of Windsor Court, the frontages to Green Lane and Lombard Road were built up with houses in the late 1880s, following the sale of the ground in 1886 by Earl Spencer to the developer H. N. Corsellis, who immediately transferred the Lombard Road part to W. D. Nichols of Lombard Road, a bank manager, who granted the leases there. Most of the Green Lane row (Spencer Terrace, later 31–65 Green Lane) was destroyed in the Second World War. The remainder, with Nichols' houses, survived into the 1970s.¹¹² The sites of these houses, with those of Battersea Stadium and blitzed houses on the west side of Orville Road, now make up Fred Wells Gardens (Ill. 1.30).

Lawn House, so named by 1803, is identifiable as the new house let for 99 years in 1775 by Earl Spencer to Thomas Rhodes. There was previously a house on the site, seemingly that offered to let in 1751 by James Woolner & Company, distillers. With four rooms on a floor, this was a high-class house, its large gardens containing fruit trees, fish-ponds and a riverside terrace with an elm avenue, summer house and alcove. In 1825, the actor Edmund Kean organized a wherry race from Westminster Bridge up to a boat moored at Lawn Cottage, as it then was, and then back to the Red House at Battersea. The occupant, the banker James Esdaile Hammet, was 'a great patron of the rowing fraternity'.¹¹³ Lawn Cottage was let to Robert Miller, barge builder, in 1866, whose firm Nash & Miller was at the property until 1907, when it was acquired by Joseph Rank Ltd for a warehouse and the foreshore reclaimed. The house, lately occupied in part by a foreman but otherwise semi-derelect, was burned out in the 1920s and spent its remaining years as workshops and stores, its walls cut down, roofed in corrugated iron.¹¹⁴ The site is now occupied by the Riverains flats.

Devonshire House

Devonshire House (44 Vicarage Crescent) was built midway through Queen Anne's reign for Joseph Cam of St Clement Eastcheap, citizen and haberdasher, more particularly a haberdasher of hats. The name Devonshire House was probably adopted in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century in honour of the lord of the manor Earl Spencer's daughter – Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the celebrated wearer of hats. It replaced a lesser house, one of a pair, latterly occupied by the widow of John Symball, a brewer, who was living there as far back as 1680. Cam's name replaces Mary Symball's in the rates list for March 1707, and by September 1708 the house had been rebuilt.¹¹⁵

Cam was from Dymock in the Forest of Dean, where he had his 'chief or principal' house, and he owned farms and other property there and near by. In Battersea, he became one of the overseers of the poor. After he died in 1739, aged 65, his widow continued to live at Devonshire House, but had gone by the time of her death in 1752. From the 1760s to her own death in 1791 it was occupied by Mary Pritzler, widow of a German sugar-baker. Later residents included Robert Reynolds, a silk-ribbon manufacturer, 1804–15; and William Conner, 'a well-known surgeon', in the 1840s.¹¹⁶ For many years after this, Devonshire House was owned and occupied by the Condry family: Mrs Charlotte Condry and her son Henry Bollmann Condry were manufacturers locally of chemicals including the antiseptic Condry's Fluid.

In the early 1890s it was acquired by a corn merchant, Augustus Francis Hall, who built the Victoria Granaries in the garden. Hall's firm continued at the site until the Second World War. In the 1950s the house was used mainly as offices and showrooms by Gaston E. Marbaix Ltd, machine-tool makers, who also occupied the former granaries. When the business moved to Basingstoke in 1965, Devonshire House was bought by the Greater London Council with the intention that it should become part of Sir Walter St John's School. This came to pass in 1971 with its opening as a sixth-form centre.¹¹⁷ The school having closed in 1986, the site was disposed of in the early 1990s by the London Residuary Body.

Though it retains the essentials of the original interior layout, together with the original staircase and much panelling, the house has undergone several phases of alteration, adaptation and restoration since the later eighteenth century (Ills 1.32–4). Most obvious are the stuccoing of the front elevation, the lowering of the first-floor front windows to floor level, the addition of ironwork balconies, and the addition or replacement of the entrance portico. None of these changes has been dated exactly. In its original

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brick-faced form, the front elevation probably had raised bands at the floor levels, as on the rear elevation.

Two campaigns of work have brought the building closer to its early eighteenth-century appearance. The first was in the mid 1970s and early 1980s, when the GLC restored the sashes on the front to a Georgian form. The GLC also oversaw restoration of the early eighteenth-century railings and gate, carried out by Richard Quinnell Ltd, as part of its contribution to the 1975 European Architectural Heritage Year. Stripping revealed traces of acanthus leaves and a cloth of estate or similar feature rivetted to the front and back of the overthrow, decorations which had already rusted away when the gateway was sketched a hundred years earlier.¹¹⁸

In 1992–3 Devonshire House was returned to residential use by its new owner, with a programme of restoration and improvements by the Bristol architect Peter J. W. Ware. This included the unpicking of the GLC's adaptation of the house to school purposes, various mainly cosmetic changes such as the restoration of the dormer windows with hipped roofs, and the remodelling of the adjoining garage with a first floor and half-hipped roof. The pièce de résistance was the reinstatement of the long-lost cupola, together with the replacement of the steel railing around the roof flat by a more appropriate wooden balustrade. Ware's designs for these were based on the almost exactly contemporary Eagle House in Mitcham. The old cupola's shape was evident from the surviving octagonal staircase to the roof and mortices cut for the superstructure.¹¹⁹

No. 42, St Mary's House

John Gardnor, vicar of Battersea for thirty years, died at the beginning of 1808 aged 84. He had not yet been buried when Earl Spencer appointed Joseph

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Allen his successor. Gardnor, at least in the early years, was unpopular as a determined pursuer of tithes, and his lack of a degree and 'ungentlemanly' background as a drawing master were held against him. Allen, a confidant of Spencer's, had no such weak spots. He inherited a fine church but a crumbling vicarage, and lost no time in setting about its renovation. Roof, walls, floors and partitions all required partial or complete replacement. A carpenter-joiner, Richard Rattenbury, was dismantling part of the building in March. At £767 11s 1d his final bill was the largest of those of a dozen or so craftsmen and suppliers working on the vicarage. The local builder George Chadwin charged £540 9s 7d for brickwork. Lesser bills came from William Henshall (work including Portland stone chimneypieces) and William Gregory (railings and other ironwork). The building was finished in November, by which time Allen had mortgaged the glebe for precisely £1,157 13s 5d.¹²⁰

This by no means covered the cost, being well below the estimate made by Robert Parnham, who planned and oversaw the rebuilding. The final cost came in at £1,776 17s 2d, including £55 5s for built-in furniture. Spencer described Parnham, of Elizabeth Street (Hans Road) off Hans Place in Chelsea, as 'a skilful and experienced workman or surveyor'. He had been Henry Holland's clerk of works on Drury Lane Theatre,¹²¹ and doubtless owed this commission to Holland, who had worked for Spencer at Spencer House, Althorp and Wimbledon, and on Battersea Bridge; Parnham's estimate was attested before H. Holland, probably the architect's son, then a magistrate.

The result was superficially a new house with a façade of yellow-brown brickwork in the plainest late Georgian manner. But much of the earlier arrangement probably survived (Ills 1.35, 36). There was no basement beyond a small cellar used for laundry and coals, nor any closet or kitchen wing, limitations compounded by the old-fashioned double-pile plan with the

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staircase hall dividing the house into unequal halves. Allen's study occupied a back corner of the ground floor, which was otherwise the servants' realm, and two bedrooms lay behind the dining and drawing rooms on the first. Attic rooms with dormers had been added by 1826, while Allen was still the incumbent, and this floor was later reconstructed as a mansard.¹²² Large clerical households required plenty of bedrooms: Robert Eden (vicar 1835–47) and John Jenkinson (1847–71) each had six children and five servants.

From 1862 Jenkinson lived elsewhere in Battersea (page ###), as did his successor J. Erskine Clarke. The vicarage was let. The occupants in the early 1880s were two spinsters, Marianne and Florence Crofts, with a couple of servants, running a school for 'ladies'.¹²³ From 1887 it was occupied by the Caius College Mission as Caius House. The residence of Dr Edward Wilson the Antarctic explorer, a missionary in 1896–8, is commemorated by a London County Council blue plaque.

Plans in the late 1960s to replace the vicarage with a new building in the churchyard had to be abandoned. The vicarage, with the fire-damaged late Victorian church hall behind, was sold in 1972, and a new vicarage (No. 32) built on part of the garden at the side a couple of years later. Between the old and new vicarages, a block of flats (Brunel Lodge, No. 34), externally modelled on the 1808 house, was built about 1984 for Hunting Gate Homes Ltd of Hitchin.¹²⁴

The vicarage was converted to offices in 1972 for the developers Kingstons (Chalford Property Co. Ltd), by the architect Leslie Szirany. The 'astronomical' cost of restoration (the developers had originally hoped to build a replica instead) was felt to justify the long rear extension that was added. The house was strengthened with reinforced concrete, the mansard reconstructed in steel, the stairs replaced and the cellar infilled. 'St Mary's

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House' was occupied in 1975–8 by the consulting engineers Sir William Halcrow & Partners.¹²⁵

Old Battersea House

A 'welter of balderdash' concerning Battersea's oldest and most famous house was swept away by Frank Smallwood in the 1960s, but its origins are still veiled in some uncertainty.¹²⁶ Its date of building, 1699, was not in doubt. Smallwood's object was to debunk the myth that the house had been built in that year by Sir Walter St John as a golden-wedding gift for his wife, and associated claims including its attribution to Wren. The implication of his work was that the house was built by the naval administrator Samuel Pett. The present account, drawing on information unavailable to Smallwood, suggests that while the house may have been built for Pett it was probably built in 1695–9 and in association with his stepson Abraham Devisscher, who completed the building and took up residence there on Pett's death early in 1699.¹²⁷ Smallwood's detailed analysis of the evidence, and his lengthy exposition of the occupants of the house and its predecessor, are not reprised, but new details are given to illuminate periods where his treatment is relatively sketchy. The story is brought up to date with the rescue of the house in 1930, its thirty-odd years in the hands of Wilhelmina Stirling, and its acquisition, restoration and eventual disposal by the Forbes family.

Old Battersea House was so renamed in 1931 by Mrs Stirling, but historically was called the Terrace House. That name is first recorded in 1810 and was derived from the house's riverside terrace, referred to as such in 1733 but usually called the Wharf.¹²⁸ The house was probably completed in 1699, the date on the sundial on the south elevation, though construction may have been protracted over several years; its arrangement, style and red-brick construction are characteristic of a merchant's or gentleman's country

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residence of that time. It replaced an old house on the same site – described in deeds before and after rebuilding as that ‘Great Messuage of old time called Stanlies’ – and owes its skewed plan to the earlier structure (Ill. 1.37). The bricks forming the foundations are of what Smallwood called ‘Tudor type’, but his reluctance to accept that the foundations rather than just the bricks were reused seems overly cautious. As he pointed out, the sixteen hearths for which the occupiers were assessed for tax in the 1660s ‘approximates closely to the accommodation of the present building’.¹²⁹ This alone might suggest a fairly like-for-like reconstruction.

The rateable yearly value, which had risen in stages from 1695 to £39, fell between March and September 1699, at the supposed time of the rebuilding, to £30, which remained constant for decades. This could be variously explained, but probably points to the house having been built over several years while part of the old one was retained until its completion. Stanleys was part of the Archbishop of York’s estate leased to successive lords of the manor of Battersea and Wandsworth. This had been acquired in the mid fifteenth century by Thomas, Lord Stanley and was transferred by him to Bishop Booth of Durham, subsequently Archbishop of York. The old mansion may have been built for Stanley, or an earlier owner. In 1624 the occupant, named in the poor-rate list (the earliest surviving) as Mr Seeser, was replaced by Peter Du Bois, a London merchant of Huguenot ancestry. With him came his third wife, Mary Friscobaldi, the daughter of a Florentine.

After her husband’s death Mary Du Bois stayed at Stanleys until she died in 1664, though it was a second home and her principal residence remained their house in the City parish of St Bennet Sherehog. When she died the house passed to Mary Otger, a London-Dutch Protestant, her god-daughter and a relation of her husband’s. The executors of her will were Mary Otger’s brother Peter Otger, and Caesar Callendrine, minister of the Dutch congregation at Austin Friars and a substantial legatee. Was there a

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connection with the earlier 'Mr Seeser'? Callendrine had some Battersea connection, for as Smallwood reveals his daughter was christened there in 1646.¹³⁰

Mary Otger lived at the house from 1665 until she died in 1716, briefly as a spinster, then as wife and widow of three husbands: Samuel Devisscher (d.1676), merchant, also London-Dutch; Edmund Long (d.1681), gentleman, a second cousin of Sir Walter St John; and Samuel Pett (d.1699), shipwright and Navy administrator, latterly Comptroller of the Victualling. Shortly before her marriage to Devisscher, Mary Otger put the property in the hands of trustees, but at some point, perhaps on her remarriage, it was transferred to her son Abraham Devisscher, born in 1667.¹³¹

Abraham set up his own household elsewhere in Battersea in 1690, a few years after marrying Grace Webb (a relation of Sir Walter St John).¹³² His mother and Samuel Pett had been at Stanleys for six years when, in 1692, Abraham surrendered his lease to Sir Walter, taking out a new one for 99 years – in itself indicative of intended improvement or rebuilding. Not long before February 1699 Samuel died, and the following year Abraham moved back with his mother; he is last listed on his own in the rates list of March 1700. Where he had been living is not apparent from the alphabetically grouped lists, but it was a property closely comparable to the Terrace House, as it was consistently rated at £30 during his occupancy. In 1701 a 'large' Battersea house, with 'very good' gardens and orchards, was to let, enquirers being directed locally to the Black Raven, or Peter Otger at the Navy Office. Otger, who worked as a clerk on the victualling accounts, was Mary Pett's son-in-law (having married Samuel and Mary's daughter Henrietta Maria shortly after Samuel's death), and almost certainly her nephew. Since it is unlikely that the Terrace House would have been offered for let so soon after building, it may be that this house was the one recently occupied by

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Devisscher: Otger, never a Battersea ratepayer, was presumably handling enquiries for someone else.¹³³

The sundial at Old Battersea House, perhaps the south elevation as a whole, probably marked the building's completion but may also have been prompted by Pett's death. It is inscribed with the conventional motto, from Martial, 'Pereunt et Imputantur' (loosely 'The hours perish, and are set down to our account'). Unsophisticated in design and execution, it contrasts with the accomplished baroque carving of the consoles and friezes over the entrances, features which are more suggestive of the background to the rebuilding of the house. The frieze on the west entrance depicts mathematical instruments and a globe, indicative of navigation and perhaps shipbuilding, relevant specifically to Pett or the wider family's mercantile interests and overseas origins. That on the eastern entrance incorporates a dolphin as its centrepiece, suggesting the sea but also the Devisschers, whose crest was a dolphin.¹³⁴

Whether the house was rebuilt chiefly for Pett or Devisscher, it continued to be occupied by members of the extended family until 1766. Devisscher died before his mother; she was followed as ratepayer by his widow Grace and her son Edmund, Captain Devisscher, who died young but was by then resident at Welwyn. Colonel Daniel Houghton, believed to be a relation of the Petts, lived at the Terrace House from 1728 into the early 1730s, and a later occupant was Benjamin Doggett, whose aunt Elizabeth Doggett was married to Mary Pett's cousin Justus Otger. Doggett was seemingly the father of Catherine Doggett Revett, wife of John Revett of Brandeston Hall, Suffolk. The family connection may have been deeper, for John Revett's first wife was the illegitimate daughter of Sir William Chapman, Bt., Doggett's landlord near York Place after he moved from the Terrace House in 1766.¹³⁵

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In 1775 a new 99-year lease was granted to the wealthy Lambeth businessman Daniel Ponton, who died in 1777. Although his son Thomas put the house up for sale in 1781 (when 'excellent' newly built 'offices of every kind' were mentioned) he remained in occupation until the lease was sold in 1810.¹³⁶ The purchaser was the shipbuilder John Perry of Blackwall Yard, by then retired to Moor Hall near Hatfield. Perry was both father-in-law and brother-in-law to George Green, who came to Blackwall Yard as an apprentice, married Perry's daughter and became a partner in the shipbuilding firm. Mary Perry was George's sister. As an apprentice in the 1780s, Green is said to have commuted daily to Blackwall from Battersea, where he lived with his mother, a member of the Pritzler family, possibly at Devonshire House next door, where the owner was Mrs Mary Pritzler, probably the aunt Pritzler who paid for his apprenticeship.¹³⁷

Changes to Perry's will make clear that the Terrace House was intended as his permanent residence, but he died soon after his purchase in 1810, leaving it to his second wife Mary. In 1812 she made alterations allowing her to let the northern part of the house as a two-bedroom flat, with its own gardens and outbuildings. Her tenant was Joseph Devey junior, possibly the son of a Bankside coal merchant of that name. In 1828 Mary Perry sold her lease to John Shaw Lefevre, then 'very anxious to settle at Battersea' because of his work as agent to Earl Spencer. Lefevre was there for ten years, then moved away because of the bad effects of the river air on his family's health. The house stood empty for a year before he let it to Dr James Kay (Sir James Kay Shuttleworth), then looking to set up his proposed teacher-training college at Battersea.¹³⁸ They knew each other through their work on the Poor Law Commission.

Kay left the Terrace House on marrying in 1842, and it was thereafter the residence of the head of the college (latterly St John's College, whose history is given in volume 49). The situation was complicated when in 1846

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Lefevre got a new lease from Earl Spencer. Attempts by the society to obtain the reversion and buy Lefevre out were rebuffed by him. The question of ownership was only satisfactorily resolved in 1895, long after his death, when the freehold was sold to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in order to guarantee the college's tenure. At the same time, part of the ground was transferred to Battersea Vestry so that Vicarage Road could be extended to Lombard Road, and Vicarage Gardens laid out.¹³⁹

Following the amalgamation in 1923 of the college and St Mark's College, Chelsea, the site became redundant and was put up for sale in 1928. Battersea Council moved to acquire at least part for housing, initially in competition with Battersea Polytechnic, and in 1930 agreed the price of £33,000 for the whole. In sanctioning the necessary loan the LCC stipulated that the council confer with it on the proposed development.¹⁴⁰ Battersea had no thought of retaining the Terrace House, and when pressure built up for its preservation a difficult situation developed, exacerbated by the behaviour of the Office of Works under its First Commissioner, George Lansbury, who had the power to save the house.

A preservation campaign was begun by the headmaster of Sir Walter St John's School, J. G. Taylor, and among the signatories of a leaflet produced in May 1930 were John Burns, Percy Lovell of the London Society, Philip Norman of the London Survey Committee (on which Lovell was also prominent), and A. R. Powys of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).

In the same month, apparently on his own initiative, one of the LCC assistant architects, R. Minton Taylor, submitted to Battersea Council a scheme for developing the site without demolishing the house; its retention would, he thought, involve a reduction of at most twenty dwellings. Though the council was reported 'not unlikely' to adopt his plan, feeling in the Office

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of Works was that the house should nevertheless be scheduled. Lansbury preferred a softer approach, and having discussed Taylor's plan with the mayor of Battersea, the Rev. Alfred Prichard, formed the impression that the Council would go along with it or a comparable scheme. Things were brought to a head early in July when Prichard peremptorily demanded to know 'by the first post on Saturday morning next' whether a preservation order would be issued. Lansbury said it would not, but appealed to him and the council to give 'fair consideration' to Taylor's plan. Battersea now felt safe in going ahead with its own plan involving demolition of the house, and rejected an amendment to Taylor's by which the lost tenements could have been made up. With the Office of Works adamant that it would not go back on its stated position, the house seemed doomed.¹⁴¹

But in September a preservation scheme was submitted to the Minister of Health Arthur Greenwood under a provision of the 1930 Housing Act. The SPCK was ready, on condition of preservation, to return fittings already removed. The SPAB had a workable proposal for the future of the house. The LCC offered twenty dwellings on its Clapham Park estate to Battersea tenants. Greenwood decided that the house should be saved. A Battersea council deputation failed to make any impression; 'surprised and disappointed', it had to accept defeat.¹⁴²

A. M. W. Stirling and her husband Charles were alerted to the plight of the house through Colonel Stirling's friend Dr Dix, formerly principal of St John's College. The childless Stirlings were in their mid-60s and concerned for the future of their respective collections. Hers mainly comprised paintings by her sister Evelyn De Morgan, others by her uncle Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, plus a large collection of William De Morgan pottery; his consisted mostly of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century furniture. Both collections were at their home in Kensington, and they had already determined to present them to a public institution. Barely a month after Greenwood's decision they were

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ready with proposals for the Terrace House, though they had not yet been inside.

Their plan was to take it on at nominal rent for life, with an initial endowment of £1,000 and the future prospect of £10,000 at their deaths. Battersea Council would put the building into structural repair; they would undertake interior refurbishment. They would use the house to display their collections, making it 'an artistic centre for that neighbourhood', an 'asset and a joy to Battersea for ever'.¹⁴³

There was considerable opposition. One councillor said he had never seen 'a more astounding or more amusing proposal put before a municipal council'. But the Stirlings' offer won out over the SPAB's proposal to run the house on business lines as a women's hostel until the cost was paid off and an endowment fund accumulated, when it would be run by the SPAB as a museum or transferred to the National Trust.¹⁴⁴

Refurbishment was carried out under the direction of the architect Walter Godfrey, who served on the trust recently set up to safeguard some Evelyn De Morgan paintings displayed at Leighton House. The work included much stripping away of additions and decorative layers, including bathrooms on the upper landing. In the middle room on the south side (the little drawing room or 'Lady St John's Parlour') were uncovered wooden frames for wall hangings, the remnants of a Chinoiserie scheme, painted in blue with figures, birds and animals. One room was fitted out as the 'St John Room', with portraits and furniture relating to Lord Bolingbroke and his family. The Stirlings took up residence in September 1931.¹⁴⁵

No one can have believed that to place the building in the hands of two elderly people with only the vague promise of an (inadequate) eventual endowment was a satisfactory long-term arrangement. Issues of security and

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safety were not addressed, nor were records kept of visitor numbers. A regime evolved by which the house was open to the public on Monday afternoons, and to societies and groups by appointment for guided tours – five-hour marathons in the early days.

The contents were taken to the country shortly before war was declared in 1939, moved back during the phoney war, out again when the Blitz began, back again in 1942. During the war the house was damaged by blast. Colonel Stirling died in 1948, but the old arrangements, with help from a butler and a gardener, continued more or less until her death in 1965 just before she turned 100. The eccentric ambience found by visitors was captured by Ken Russell in a film for the BBC *Monitor* series in 1961. Along the way, negotiations with the National Trust got nowhere because of the lack of endowment; another failed proposal was that C. G. Bass of Macmillans, Mrs Stirling's publisher, should take over the house and contents after her death.¹⁴⁶

The house in these years was an artistic outpost in hostile territory. Feeling against it remained strong on Battersea Council. Industrial noise and vibration was a continuing annoyance. Cold and rising damp exposed the inadequacy of the refurbishment. The house was such a 'temple of draughts' that the windows had to be sealed up with putty every winter. Dry rot and death-watch beetle struck. The council estate adjoining was a constant cause of anxiety. The surroundings, complained Mrs Stirling in 1958, 'get uglier every day, and one great terror is the children – if the door was inadvertently left open for a few minutes they would inevitably come in and smash everything for the sheer joy of destruction!' As for the garden, already 'they have completely wrecked it, deliberately hacking the statues, etc., to pieces!'¹⁴⁷

Though Mrs Stirling cherished the fanciful history of the house she celebrated in *The Merry Wives of Battersea*, her main concern was her collection. In 1959 help was sought from John Betjeman, who raised the

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matter with the Victorian Society. Betjeman found the house ‘admirably arranged’, if reminiscent of Miss Havisham’s in *Great Expectations*: ‘I did not know there was anywhere left in England where the colour schemes and atmosphere of the William Morris period were so carefully maintained’. But the architectural historian Peter Ferriday, visiting with the society’s secretary Ian Grant, rated the house itself of local distinction only, the contents other than the pottery ‘valueless’ – the furniture ‘horrible’ and Evelyn De Morgan’s paintings of interest to ‘the psychopathologist rather than the art critic’. Although a scheme to secure the collection in perpetuity was devised before Mrs Stirling died, leading to the creation of the De Morgan Foundation in 1967, the deteriorating condition of the house became a major difficulty. Plans were drawn up by Wandsworth Council in 1969 for its conversion to a De Morgan gallery, museum and local history library, and tenders obtained, but the cost proved unaffordable.¹⁴⁸

By the late 1970s the house was vandalised and becoming derelict when it caught the attention of Malcolm Forbes, the publisher of *Forbes Magazine*. A deal was struck with Wandsworth Council by which he agreed to restore the house for the use of the Forbes Foundation and display the De Morgan collection there for twenty years in return for a 99-year lease at a peppercorn rent. Restoration was carried out over several years, under Vernon Gibberd Architects.¹⁴⁹ A large collection of Victorian art and objects, amassed by Forbes with the guidance of his son Christopher, was displayed at the house as well as the De Morgans. A large part was disposed of in 2002 and in 2011 the house and remaining contents were put up for sale. After some years in limbo, the De Morgan collection is now housed at Wandsworth Museum.

St John’s Estate

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Built in 1931–4 on the site of the former St John’s Training College, this estate represents Battersea Borough Council’s main inter-war housing effort. It was not built as the council intended. As it is, the compactly planned blocks overwhelm Old Battersea House, where the college principal had lived. But if the council had had its way, as related above, the house would have been pulled down and its site incorporated into the scheme.

The estate was built under the Borough Surveyor, W. J. Dresden, essentially to the layout devised by the LCC architect R. Minton Taylor, with five five-storey blocks disposed in as nearly symmetrical a layout as the irregular site would permit. In the Borough Council’s original scheme, these were to have comprised three storeys of flats plus two-storey maisonettes to give a total of about 300 dwellings, an overall net density of 61 dwellings to the acre, comparable to the LCC’s East Hill estate in Wandsworth. As completed, there were a total of 272, reduced to 229 under a modernization scheme begun in 1978.¹⁵⁰

The smaller, essentially linear blocks were built first, from 1931: Winfield House, end on to Vicarage Crescent almost opposite Orville Road; and Eaton House, pressing close to the former garden front of Old Battersea House. The more monumental central group followed on from 1932.¹⁵¹ It consisted of the quadrangular Archer House and White House, linked together by the narrow Haythorn House to form two tight internal courts with an open court between (intended by Taylor as a playground), broadening out towards Vicarage Crescent.

Reflecting the authorship of the scheme, the architectural language of the estate follows that devised by the LCC for its walk-up flats of the 1920s, but with longer elevations than the LCC generally allowed. Some extra flourishes were no doubt added by the architect who drew up the detailed designs. This was apparently Henry Hyams, assistant to the Borough

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Engineer T. W. A. Hayward until let go for want of work in 1932. Hyams made the earliest surviving drawings in March and April 1931, and some later ones including those for a transformer house on the estate.¹⁵² The massing is good, and the front to Archer House, conspicuous from Lombard Road, effective. On the show fronts, regular four-storey elevations of red brick with sash windows rise to the cornice; the fifth storey is mostly embedded in the mansard roof, as Taylor envisaged, but brought forward to the front plane in the projecting central features (Ills 1.30, 40). The open balcony access to all the flats is concealed at the backs and within the two courts, which contrive to be quite lively.

In 1978 Wandsworth Council set about the renovation of the estate, which had fallen into dire disrepair, starting with Archer House.¹⁵³ Then in one of the first privatization schemes for public housing, the newly Conservative-controlled council next year decided to sell the estate. The first idea was to refurbish the blocks and sell them to their tenants, but this elicited little or no interest. So the estate was put out to tender as a whole. The buyer, in 1981, was Regalian Properties, whose managing director David Goldstone took the risk of a relatively upmarket refurbishment, 'complete with landscaped courtyards that had once been Saturday night "no go" areas for the local police'. In place of bleak open space was now 'a bright plant-filled piazza with tables, chairs and sun umbrellas'. The architects were Stefan Zins Associates. No families already resident on the estate bought a flat; 80 per cent of those who moved in to what was now called Battersea Village were first-time buyers.¹⁵⁴