

Nine Elms

Nine Elms is first heard of in 1645–6, when the Battersea churchwardens' accounts mention a brewhouse and a farm of that name. Quite possibly Nine Elms tallied with the medieval sub-manor of Hesse. That too lay in the north-eastern corner of the parish where the Hessewall or Heathwall sewer ran out into the Thames, dividing Battersea from Lambeth. What is certain is that the original Nine Elms was a hamlet at the very tip of Battersea parish, akin to other riverside settlements in Vauxhall near by around the mouth of the Effra stream. Only after about 1850 did the name creep westwards and start referring to the whole low-lying stretch of Battersea from the Lambeth border to Battersea Park. That is how 'Nine Elms' is applied today.

Consequently this chapter covers a district delimited on its west by the railway lines running out of Victoria, and on its south by the borough boundary between Wandsworth and Lambeth, never far north of Wandsworth Road. Though not a small area, it includes little housing. So this chapter deals summarily with developments that have mostly vanished.

The environmental fate of Nine Elms since the 1840s has been hapless. Railways, industry and commerce have made the running, creating structures and spaces of historic and occasionally architectural interest. All except Battersea Power Station have proved ephemeral, as has the humble housing slotted around them. Their legacy has been degradation. At the time of writing it remains to be seen whether the 21st-century regeneration of Nine Elms can do better. This and the industrial history of the area are covered in volume 49.

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Early Nine Elms

The old hamlet of Nine Elms was the first settlement in Battersea travellers from London would encounter, after they branched off from the main road to Wandsworth (a turnpike from 1717) along the lane leading towards Battersea village and crossed the Heathwall brook. For some two hundred yards this lane ran parallel and close to the Thames. Here lay the nucleus of the settlement, after which came another watercourse before Battersea Fields began. Nine Elms was always an industrial community, and river-dependent (see Ill. 4.5). There was a whiting works here by 1649, and leases of the 1730s stipulated extra rents payable if market gardeners and others permitted lime-kilns to be erected. A painting of the waterfront around 1760 by Samuel Scott, deceptively tranquil, shows only timber sheds, a single kiln and ample foliage behind (Ill. 4.2).¹

The name Nine Elms seems to have attached first to a tavern on the south side of the lane with the eponymous elms in front. According to the topographer James Edwards, they had gone by 1801, yet elms seem to have been replanted at the west end of the hamlet in front of the house of the Watson family, whiting and lime manufacturers, where youngish trees were depicted in 1848. Though the tavern disappeared around 1890, a neighbouring row of old-fashioned cottages, latterly 69–79 Nine Elms Lane, one room deep with mansarded and pantiled roofs, survived long enough to be photographed in 1908 before demolition (see Ill. 4.6). Otherwise the old houses hereabouts are known only from sparse descriptions, sale notices and a few drawings. Edwards lists several, starting with Turret House near the parish boundary, some years old by the 1740s and rebuilt after a fire.² The bigger houses stood generally on the north side of the lane and belonged to riverside manufacturers. Here Stephen Le Bas, brewer, agreed in 1757 to build a square, five-bay house next to his malthouse under a lease from Lord

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Bolingbroke (Ill. 4.4). It had marble fireplaces and a 'fine Terras towards the Thames, with a Parapet Wall and Iron Balustrades'. No sooner was it completed than Le Bas was declared bankrupt; his house and effects were auctioned in 1759, while the malthouse went to Samuel Whitbread. Further west lay the handsome Watson house, shown in J. D. Wingfield's watercolour of 1848 as also of five neat bays with a shell hood over the door (Ill. 4.3). It came to be known as Nine Elms House, acquiring the bogus name of Manor House not long before it disappeared around 1880.³

From the late 1790s the so-called Battersea New Town started its faltering development west of the old hamlet, presaging a general increase in activity and population. By the 1820s Nine Elms had grown far enough to be termed a 'village', and gained its own district church, St George's, isolated at first beyond the 'new town' amid the polderland of Battersea Fields.⁴

The core of Nine Elms was mostly manorial freehold land. In the transactions attending the manor's transfer to the first Earl Spencer, it was sold in 1762 for a whopping £6,150 to John Roberts, who had then recently built some sheds and cottages. Roberts had lived at Nine Elms since the 1730s, was described at his death in 1773 as a 'principal dyer to the East India Company' and may have been an army clothing supplier.⁵ Most of the land south of Nine Elms Lane was soon acquired by Daniel Ponton, prominent in Lambeth affairs and already at the time of the manorial sale the promoter of a plan to expand the watercourse at the hamlet's west end into a cut leading to a large millpond. The Ponton holding stretched as far south-west as the present Thessaly Road, and included a farm tenanted in the early nineteenth century by the Matson family. It was on land bought from the Pontons that the London & Southampton Railway (later LSWR) built their Nine Elms terminus, workshops and yards from the 1830s. The property descended through Thomas Ponton senior (d.1821) and junior (d.1853) and hence to the heavily indebted Captain Francis Woodgate, who sold what was left in 1858.⁶

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Seven acres of market garden land south of the lane were separately sold by Roberts to George Wagstaffe, gardener. The fate of this property, known as Heathfield, illustrates Nine Elms' evolution. Wagstaffe, a bachelor, lived here in a farmhouse and cultivated the land, latterly with his nephew William Haward. In 1792 he was robbed at night, he and his servant being tied to their bedsteads. The robbers were caught and hanged, but the trauma deranged Wagstaffe, who was eventually taken to an asylum and died intestate. His elderly sister, Ann Haward, then took over the house and business. In due course they passed in 1830 to Edward Haward, a younger son of William Haward and still described as gardener. He pulled down the old farmstead and built a new Heathfield House by the road.⁷ By then Nine Elms was on the brink of industrial boom. Once the railway opened in 1838, Haward began breaking up the seven acres, first with a few houses on the main road (1841), then with a cul-de-sac called Haward Street, and latterly (1854) by selling the whole property to the London Gas Light Company.⁸ Dwarfed by a gasometer and retort houses, the writing was on the wall for Heathfield House by 1870.

Nine Elms Developed

The remainder of this chapter is arranged in topographical sections, running from east to west. Nearly all the first-built housing here lay south of Nine Elms Lane and Battersea Park Road. Apart from Battersea New Town and its environs, it dated mostly from the 1860s and housed workers in the local industries. Almost all these streets have been obliterated. Council estates, notably the Savona and Patmore Estates, cover some of this former ground, but much housing has been replaced by industrial and commercial property (Ill. 4.1).

PONTON ROAD AREA

This district corresponds roughly with the old Nine Elms. But the eastern end of Nine Elms Lane was realigned northwards in 1970–1, destroying the original pattern of topography.

Haward Street represented the first urbanized extension of the Nine Elms settlement. A score of short-lived houses were built on its east side in the late 1840s, to designs by the architect Richard Bell. Next came a terrace of a dozen houses on Nine Elms Lane east of the old cottages beside the tavern, leased to Frederick Sellar by Thomas Ponton junior just before his death in 1853.⁹ After the Ponton freehold was broken up, a warren of streets was sandwiched from 1862 between the London Gas Light Works, the Nine Elms Brewery, and the LSWR. Everett Street, named after its developer, Samuel Charles Everett, cooper, connected eastwards with Belford (latterly Belfour) Street, Currie Street, Woodgate Street and Ponton Road, laid out by Sellar and J. Purdy working with the surveyor Henry Nixon.¹⁰

This impenetrable area spiralled into slumdom, earning the nickname of the 'island' and the scrutiny of reformers. Charles Booth devoted space to it in 1902, quoting notes taken by Graham Balfour:

The houses are two storey and flush with the pavement ... The streets ... all show the usual signs of squalor in an exaggerated form: broken windows, filthy cracked plaster, dirty ragged children, and drink-sodden women. Several of the children were without shoes and stockings, one girl of about five with nothing on but a shirt (it was summer), and the police say that it is quite common to see the small children running about stark naked.

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The population, in large part Irish, was then already falling under combined pressure from the sanitary authorities and the gasworks, ravenous for space.¹¹

Among efforts at improvement the Thorne brothers, owners of Nine Elms Brewery, sponsored an offshoot of St George's Schools (1870) and built a few cottages and a meeting hall for their workers (1887).¹² The school was superseded by the Ponton Road Board School (1885), and then turned into St James's Mission Church and Hall (see vol. 49). But the notable initiative came from Charlotte Despard, who between 1891 and 1922 ran a club in Currie Street. Following her husband's death, the well-born Despard had been introduced to the district by the Duchess of Albany, patron of the Nine Elms Flower Mission – a ladies' charity which supplied flowers for poor families. She soon developed an altogether bolder policy, living in Nine Elms, running her club with tolerance balanced by 'gentle force', and retreating to Surrey only at weekends. Currie Street, as expanded to premises in Everett Street in 1895, was the second and larger of the Despard Clubs, following from another near by in Wandsworth Road. The experience radicalized her, drawing her into suffragism and activism in Battersea politics, which she combined with unswerving Catholicism. But Booth remarked, 'Mrs. Despard never proselytises, and the representative of the Church of England himself says that if some do adopt her religion it is from admiration of her character'. Despard House, as her Currie Street base became known, was given to Battersea Council in 1922.¹³

In 1932–3 Battersea Council was keen to raze and rehouse the island site, but the London County Council thought it too large for the Borough to manage.¹⁴ It was badly affected by bombing and cleared mostly in the 1960s.

Two large modern blocks of flats in this sector of Nine Elms Lane occupy the shallow northern strip between the road and the Thames. These are Riverside Court (Stefan Zins Associates, architects, 1978–81) and Elm

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Quay Court (John Gill Associates, architects, for Regalian Properties, 1986–8).¹⁵ They are of interest as pioneers of the residential repopulation of the riverside, opening out with balconies towards the water, rather blank towards the noisy road.

ST GEORGE'S AREA

West of the Nine Elms nucleus, the road in the eighteenth century divided beyond Ponton's millpond cut. Nine Elms Lane turned northwards from here back towards the river, roughly along the present line of Cringle Street. The main thoroughfare continued westwards: it was at first called Battersea Road, then Lower Wandsworth Road, and after 1871 Battersea Park Road. Hence the change of name from Nine Elms Lane to Battersea Park Road at this point. On the north side, the Royal Rifleman pub (1858–9) and a few adjacent houses at this junction marked the eastern extremity of Crown purchases of land for Battersea Park during the 1840s.¹⁶

Opposite, a short stretch of the main road was bordered in the years before development by some small fields up to the line of modern Sleaford Street. Most of this was Ponton land, but one acre belonged to the owners of Longhedge Farm before it was bought for St George's (1827–8), Battersea's second parish church. In 1862–70 the isolated church was encompassed by the biggest of four Battersea developments promoted by the speculating solicitor Frederick Haines and his accomplice W. R. Glasier of Glasier & Son, surveyors. It comprised five new streets: Haines, Moat, Tweed, Arden and Cherwell Streets. West of the church Ceylon Street was laid out by J. W. Brooker, architect, on a small freehold belonging to Edward Pain.¹⁷ The only Victorian survival hereabouts is the mutilated 33 Battersea Park Road, built as St George's Vicarage by Messrs Lathey to Ewan Christian's designs in 1862–3 but much extended.¹⁸

SLEAFORD STREET TO STEWART'S ROAD

This sector of land between Battersea Park Road and the main-line railway from Waterloo was formerly occupied by the core of the vanished Battersea New Town, most intriguing of Battersea's early urban developments. Its history as briefly presented here may be supplemented by Keith Bailey's monograph on the subject.¹⁹ Much of the site is now covered by the Savona Estate.

Battersea New Town

Sleaford Street roughly marks the eastern boundary of Longhedge Farm, Battersea's largest agricultural holding. It was on the north-eastern corner of this extensive freehold, sold by Earl Spencer to Philip Worlidge in 1763, that the so-called Battersea New Town sprang up from the 1790s. The first hints of it come in 1786, when John Harrison, farmer, bought 19½ acres here from the trustees of Worlidge's will, with mortgage support from Thomas Ponton. Harrison sold the land on in 1789 to Caleb Smith of St James's. Some building may have started under John Peacock of Southwark, cornfactor, and William Lovell, baker. In 1793, with Lovell slipping into bankruptcy, Williams Bank (Robert Williams senior and junior with John Drury) took the controlling interest and an auction took place, breaking up the budding development into at least 37 lots. A second sale followed in 1795.²⁰

York (later Savona) Street had certainly been laid out by the end of 1792, as doubtless had the parallel New Street (later New Road, now Thessaly Road), along with the first portions of Battersea New Town's smartest asset, a terrace set back from the main road called York Row, sometimes York Place

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or Terrace (see Ill. 4.5). The key building here would have been the Duchess of York pub at the York Street corner, christened in compliment to the Duke of York's marriage in 1791 and predecessor of the present Duchess pub. At the development's south end the east-west Cross (later Ascalon) Street had been at least planned by the time of the sales, promising the semblance of a street grid.²¹

What prompted this urban enterprise on low-lying land remote from Thames bridges is hard to say. But there was a surge in building activity during the 1780s, sufficient to prompt optimists, and a fall after the French wars began in 1793, sufficient to explain Lovell's demise. The sales condemned Battersea New Town to slow and piecemeal development. The speculating surveyor C. T. Cracklow (later author of a book on Surrey churches) was the biggest purchaser, buying over five acres, but his transactions with Williams Bank were not confirmed till 1797–8. By then York Street was proceeding, and York Row, the main-road terrace to the west of the Duchess of York, had extended westwards with eight houses known as the Pavilion, Pavilion Place or Row.²² The whole terrace ran ultimately to nineteen houses, later 101–121 Battersea Park Road. The Duchess of York itself as photographed around 1880 was expansive and stuccoed (Ill. 4.8). The remainder were standard mid-Georgian houses, two windows wide (Ill. 4.7). Some of the western or Pavilion Place houses rose to four storeys and had Coade-stone type keystones over the doors.

Further east William Sleaford, butcher of Southwark, bought a large enough lot in 1796 to build a pair of houses facing the main road and a row of ten behind which started the west side of Sleaford Street. Between here and New Street, a few small independent villas grew up facing the main road with long plots behind, among them 'the flower gardens and beautiful residence of John Patient, Esq'.²³ Some may have dated from 1812–20, when building picked up in the side streets. Eventually the 'town' numbered over 130

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houses, mostly plain two-storey brick boxes. Shops were included, and from 1826 also a charity school in New Street.²⁴

Later artisan housing filled the remaining gaps. In 1848–53 the Patient villa and its garden gave way to Park Terrace facing the main road, with the Park Tavern on the corner with New Road, and Aegis Terrace and Aegis Grove behind. West of York (Savona) Street a larger hole was plugged around 1864–74 by Tidbury, Tidmore, Seldon and Sheldrake Streets, with which went the north side of the existing Cross (Ascalon) Street. Here the bigger of two freeholds belonged to the Lucas family, of whom more is said below.²⁵

The single nineteenth-century survival in this area is the successor to the original Duchess of York, now the Duchess, 101 Battersea Park Road, rebuilt in 1883 for Watneys to designs by C. W. Bovis (Ill. 4.9). It stands for a former plethora of pubs all along Battersea Park Road, strategically sited to slake the thirsts of workers in Thames-side or other industries. In this sector alone the Plough and Harrow (rebuilt in 1866, Charles Bowes, architect), the Park Tavern and the Duchess of York followed one another at successive street corners, with a brewery between the two last. One side of Sleaford Street was formerly derided as Ginbottle Row, while the other was called Soapsuds Bay, presumably because it accommodated laundresses.²⁶

Savona Estate

The core of this housing estate consists of four brick blocks of five-storey flats, Ascalon, Seldon, Thessaly and Wenham (formerly Tidmore) Houses, built by the London County Council from 1938 onwards and disposed round the stub of Savona Street. To this the LCC added in 1960–3 three 11-storey blocks and three lower blocks built from pre-cast units by the patent Reema Construction method. The tall post-war blocks have been demolished while one of the

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lower ones has been recast, leaving only 77–87 and 101–113 Battersea Park Road intact (if violently coloured) as Reema-built ranges.

The first effort to improve housing conditions in this declining district came from Battersea Council, which (using direct labour) built a modest group of two-storey tenements in 1921–2, extant at 10–16 Savona Street.²⁷ In 1935 the LCC took up the cudgels by seeking powers to clear nearly 4½ acres around this nucleus and rebuild in four blocks housing 1,058 people, as opposed to the 834 then living there. The scheme was slightly enlarged later. The builders R. J. Rowley Ltd began work in 1938, using one of the LCC's standard plans for five-storey, balcony-access flats. Only half the blocks had been completed when war broke out.²⁸ They are well-proportioned examples of their type, arranged round open half-courtyards and dignified by hipped, overhanging roofs and sash windows.

In 1957 the LCC resolved to extend the estate first eastwards to the site of Aegis Grove, and then south-westwards and northwards, taking in Tidbury and Tidmore Streets, and the old York Row and Pavilion Place terraces along Battersea Park Road. Aegis Grove (1960–2) became the focus of one of the LCC's experiments in industrialized building, whereby plans were furnished by its Architect's Department and built by Reema Construction Ltd, using a system of load-bearing, storey-height concrete panels for external and cross walls; Felix J. Samuely & Partners were the consulting engineers. A single, balconied 11-storey block was built here behind a lower group of shops and flats at 142–192 Thessaly Road (Ill. 4.10). The other sites followed on using the same system, with two tall blocks (Tidbury and Savona Houses) and two four-storey ones, 77–87 and 101–113 Battersea Park Road (1962–4). Also part of this campaign was Tidbury Court, a group of old people's homes in front of Seldon House.²⁹

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The Savona Estate was transferred by the GLC to Wandsworth Council in April 1971. Soon afterwards Savona Street was closed to through traffic, and in 1978 the older blocks were modernized. Wandsworth Council demolished all three of the tall Reema blocks in 1986. Private housing (Tidbury and Belgrave Courts) was then built upon their sites. In 2009–10 Nos 142–176 Thessaly Road were refurbished, while Nos 178–192 were replaced by a range of shops and flats designed by Lloyd-Thomas Architects.³⁰

Housing development since 2000

Viridian Apartments, a prominent block of flats at 75 Battersea Park Road between Sleaford Street and Thessaly Road was built in 2007–9 on the former site of the John Milton School, just before the Vauxhall–Nine Elms Opportunity Area was designated. It consists of 240 flats around a courtyard designed by Stanford Eatwell & Associates, architects, for Viridian Housing, a subsidiary of Barratt Homes. In 2012 a smaller development on the south side of Ascalon Street against the railway was in course of construction for A2 Dominion Homes.³¹

BETWEEN THESSALY AND STEWART'S ROADS

Hemmed in between New Covent Garden Market and the Stewart's Lane Railway Works, the district south of the main line from Waterloo retains the isolated air which has always beset it since Battersea's railway system was completed. It is dominated today by the Patmore Estate.

Development 1800–1940

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Battersea New Town started as a compact development close to the main road. But it had an early outlier well to the south-west in Stewart's Buildings, a row of eleven houses on part of the block now 44–76 Stewart's Road. Erected before his death in 1803 by James Stewart, freeholder of a dwelling and some garden ground, they were reached by Stewart's Lane (later Road). This ran straight from the main road and connected perpendicularly with the west end of Cross (later Ascalon) Street, suggesting a link with the New Town project.³²

Crutchley's map of 1829 (Ill. 4.5) shows New Street and York Street as both extending beyond Cross Street, in parallel with Stewart's Lane. But the advent of the railway behind Cross Street in the 1830s inhibited progress southwards. A 'school of industry' shown on the map (not always reliable) must have been destroyed if built, and only New Street and Stewart's Lane penetrated the railway embankment. Crutchley shows both petering out to the south; yet on the tithe map of 1838, made after the railway was laid out, the former runs through to Wandsworth Road, if only as 'a lane with a mud bank on both sides'.³³

The first impetus to development here came from the Lucas family. Between about 1801 and his death in 1821 Joseph Lucas of Tooting bought large vacant lots on both sides of the future railway, in part from the Cracklows. His heir John Lucas started streets south of the railway. In 1843 New Street had been sufficiently improved by him and the railway company to become a public right of way through to Wandsworth Road, first as New Road and later as Thessaly Road (Ill. 4.??). In about 1848 Lucas began the stuccoed Sussex Street (later Wadhurst Road) and Sussex Terrace, New Road; Henry Wakeford of Clapham was their main builder and Strethill Oakes Foden (a prolific designer of workhouses) perhaps their architect, as he took one of the new Sussex Street houses. By 1854 Wakeford had failed.³⁴

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John Lucas died in 1852, leaving his nephew James John Seymour Lucas of Westbury on Trym (d.1873) to extend operations. Under this last of the Lucases the new area was consolidated and St George's Schools were built in New Road in 1856–7 to designs by Joseph Peacock, at first fronting open fields. The subsequent streets built here under Peacock's guidance failed to escape banality. These ran between Stewart's and New Roads and consisted of St George's Road, Corunna Road, Porson Street and Power Street, with Patmore Street bisecting them (Ill. 4.12?). Peacock also supervised Tidmore and Tidbury Streets further north (see above). West of Stewart's Road, the north side of Corunna Terrace was developed from 1867 by William Bell of Chelsea on a separate freehold belonging to Benjamin Edgington. To its north was a smaller cul-de-sac, Corunna Place.³⁵

Further south, a small development of c.1861–8 consisting of Acre, Etruria, New John (later John) and William Streets was undertaken by Edward Curnick, builder, on a rectangle adjoining the parish boundary bisected by New Road and owned by John Brooks of Acre Cottage nearby.³⁶ A former pub of c.1890 next to the north-east entrance to Carey Gardens, once numbered 28 Acre Street, is the sole survival here.

Following these initiatives, Stewart's Road (Stewart's Lane till 1880) was driven through to the parish boundary with Clapham and beyond to Wandsworth Road, the continuation being briefly known as Kenneth Road. The original Stewart's Buildings had already been augmented by 1852, when Linford Street, called after James Stewart's longest-lived child Mary Ann Linford, became formalized to its west, with a link at the south end (Seymour Street after 1892).³⁷

With the LSWR and the LCDR constructing large railway works eastwards and westwards respectively, the district became hemmed in by 1870. Only one large tract remained undeveloped. This was seven acres of ill-

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drained former Ponton land, which the LCDR half-acquired in its expansionist phase but abandoned when the company became insolvent. It was let out for grazing, and then squatted by an illiterate, Abraham Fox, who took money from dust contractors for tipping refuse until a cabal of intriguers allegedly working for the LSWR tried to trick him out of possession by threatening him with a long-lost heir and having Fox declared bankrupt.³⁸

Once the skein of resulting court cases in 1872–3 had been unravelled, the land was sold to an experienced Camberwell speculator, Richard Strong, and a Brixton builder, Henry Smallman, who covered it with the usual tissue of small houses on Dashwood, Sterndale (from 1937 Condell) and Stockdale Roads and part of Stewart's Road (Ill. 4.12).³⁹ That left only a small patch of ground either side of New Road, filled in 1880–1 by Mundella Road and the pocket-sized Thessaly Square – the fetching name selected when New Road was again renamed in 1937, becoming Thessaly Road. J. W. Barwell of Croydon was the developer here, to a tight layout by S. Walker, surveyor.⁴⁰

This whole district quickly acquired a poor reputation, second only to the Nine Elms 'island site'. St Andrew's Church on the Strong and Smallman development had perhaps the toughest parish in Battersea. Its vicar attributed a typhoid outbreak of 1884 to poor drains in the locality. To raise morale, there were copious mission rooms, one of which, St Andrew's Mission Hall at the corner of Corunna and New Roads (1908), vestigially survives today at 115 Thessaly Road.⁴¹ Another social institution was the Devas Club for working lads, founded in Stewart's Road by Jocelyn Devas in 1884, now in Stormont Road, Lavender Hill.

By 1939 industry had riddled and degraded the area, and the odour of ripeness for renewal was strong. Perhaps no residential portion of Battersea was worse affected by bombing. Evacuation and drastic clearances took place, and in a curious episode the blitzed ruins round St Andrew's Church were

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decreed a 'designated street-fighting area' in 1943.⁴² All this paved the way for the construction of the post-war Patmore Estate.

Patmore Estate and Carey Gardens

The **Patmore Estate**, comprising originally 854 dwellings and built for the London County Council between 1951 and 1960, mainly to the designs of Morris de Metz, offers needed dignity to this secluded, almost forgotten district. 'You could see the House of Commons from the walkways on the Patmore Estate', reflected John O'Farrell in the 1990s, 'but the people who lived there could not have been further from the government's mind'.⁴³

In December 1946, some 44½ acres around and south of Patmore Street came before the LCC. Most of this land lay in Battersea, but it stretched into two other metropolitan boroughs, Lambeth and Wandsworth (to which the parish of Clapham then belonged), so the LCC was best placed to undertake redevelopment. Twenty acres having already been cleared, the population was only a quarter of what it had been before 1939, but 380 properties were still part-occupied. As industries were embedded in the district, territory for them was mooted from the start, on land partly outside Battersea in the south-west corner of the area, west of Stewart's Road.⁴⁴

In 1949 architects were at last appointed. Responsibility for post-war housing design within the LCC still lay then with the Valuer, not the Architect's Department, and because of pressure of work the future Patmore Estate was one of several large projects contracted out by the Housing Committee. It fell to the firm of de Metz and Birks, probably on the strength of a smaller LCC estate on which they were already engaged, Park View, by Victoria Park, Bethnal Green.⁴⁵

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The scheme brought forward by de Metz and Birks in 1950 for the northern portion of the estate consisted entirely of flats and maisonettes. Following the mixed development principle then advocated by the LCC, the scale varied between three and six storeys. While the higher balcony access flats of Thessaly Road were aligned with the street and the four-storey maisonettes along Wadhurst Road at a conventional right angle, the groups between Patmore Street and Stewart's Road – probably the first to be built – took up the picturesque layout of Park View, incorporating L-shaped ranges at 45 degrees to the roads and one zigzag block, named Stroudley House (Ill. 4.13). The road pattern was recast, Patmore Street being given a twist at its south end to pass round the east side of the rebuilt St George's and St Andrew's Church. Between the blocks there was generous open space.⁴⁶

The northern two-thirds of the estate down to Condell Road, where a group of shops was provided in Martley House, were built between 1951 and 1955 in phases, by Stewart & Partners, Wilson Lovatt & Sons and Tersons Ltd.⁴⁷ The white-painted balconies throughout this earlier portion are made not of concrete but of reinforced tiles. In the large central section the blocks are enlivened by piquant period detailing, including patches of stonework and slanted entrance porches with a fetchingly improvised look, while bulkheads of stairs and lifts thrust up over the flat roofs to break up the block profile (Ills 4.13, 14).

The southern third of the estate had been planned from 1951 but followed on only in 1958–60. It lay largely in Lambeth and comprised development between Thessaly Road (whose southern end was diverted westwards) and Belmore Street. Between them ran a new street, Deeley Road. Here de Metz appears to have been replaced by the reputable Bridgwater, Shephard & Epstein, with construction by the LCC's direct labour force. The underlying language of the earlier portions is adhered to, suggesting that the new architects may just have revised old designs, but the blocks are solidier

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and smoother, with balconies and other details of concrete. Shephard & Epstein were still doing minor work on the estate in 1969.⁴⁸

The Patmore Estate's 28 blocks bear the names of locomotive engineers, in homage to the nearby railway works. Not all have local associations, but Hookham Court, Crampton, Kirtley, Martley and Mills Houses commemorate engineers of the LCDR, Banister, Billington (in error for Billinton), Mansell, Marsh, Morgan and Statham Houses their counterparts on the LBSCR, and Cudworth and Mansell Houses engineers of the South-Eastern Railway. Only Beattie House seems to make the link with the nearby LSWR Works.

The industrial sector of the estate west of Stewart's Road was built up from 1953 onwards.⁴⁹ Buildings interspersed with the blocks of the Patmore Estate and covered in volume 49 include: Sir James Barrie School, Stewart's Road (1951-3); St George's School, Corunna Road (1969); St George's and St Andrew's Church, Patmore Street (1955-6, largely rebuilt 1995-6); and the former Nine Elms Library, Thessaly Road (1963-4, extended 1988), later the Battersea Social Education Centre and now closed. Other social buildings on the estate include the Patmore Children's Centre, Patmore Street (1989), and a community hall, the Yvonne Carr Centre south of Wainwright House in Thessaly Road. Also associated with the Patmore was Stewart's Lodge, an old people's home of 1956-7 designed by A. J. Woodhead of the LCC Architect's Department and situated in Lambeth at 201 Stewart's Road, close to Wandsworth Road. In 2012 it was in course of replacement by a housing development for Henley Homes. In 1990 the St George's Church site was redeveloped to create the house and flats of St George's Close around the rebuilt church (Levitt Bernstein, architects, 1995-6). Beacon House, a small block of 1930s flats on the site of a former Primitive Methodist Chapel at the corner of Thessaly and Condell (formerly Stockdale) Roads, survived the post-war clearances but was rebuilt under the same name in 1994. Its address is now in Deeley Road.⁵⁰

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The Patmore Estate is run today as a co-operative. It is well landscaped and maintained. Even so, in a social audit of North Battersea undertaken in 2006, it ranked below the Doddington and Winstanley Estates in terms of deprivation.⁵¹

Carey Gardens, built by the Greater London Council in the early 1970s between Stewart's and Thessaly Roads south of Condell Road, was an afterthought to the Patmore Estate. It occupies the eleven-acre former site of the Projectile Company. Production continued there till 1964, when the LCC negotiated its purchase. The first layouts, designed by the GLC Architect's Department in 1966–7, promised a scheme typical of that extremist moment in public housing, with four towers of 24 or 26 storeys complemented by lower, system-built ranges, and a four-storey garage block across Stewart's Road, reached by a bridge. By February 1969 a fresh and more humane project of just over 400 dwellings had been substituted, designed within the GLC by Nicholas Wood following the theory of low-rise perimeter planning developed by the Centre for Land Use and Built Form at Cambridge, where Wood had studied under Leslie Martin. In an early deployment of these ideas, continuous blocks of three and four storeys were ranged round the four sides of the site in an inner and outer row, with a perimeter road between them. The flats and maisonettes of the luckier inner row overlook a broad, landscaped open space (Ill. 4.15). A parking garage was supposed to be added beneath this space, but never eventuated. The borough boundary formerly bisected the site, but has been adjusted so that it is now wholly in Wandsworth.⁵²

STEWART'S ROAD TO BATTERSEA PARK STATION

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West of Stewart's Road and the so-called Dogs' Home Bridge, the topography of Battersea Park Road resumes normal urban scale. Along the south side, much of Nos 145–171 is Victorian, while beyond the junction with Prince of Wales Road opposite come the buildings of the former Convent of Notre Dame and St Joseph's Schools before Battersea Park Station is reached. Yet this district is far from unblighted, for it is crossed and cut up by no less than four separate north–south railway lines connecting with Victoria. Between the buildings along Battersea Park Road's southern frontage and the east–west railway from Waterloo which these lines have to traverse, little of older interest survives.

During the years of urbanization, the main road here briefly underwent an aberrant name change. In the 1860s the road as a whole was generally known as Lower Wandsworth Road. But for about ten years the stretch westwards of Stewart's Road (then Lane) as far as Queenstown (then Queen's) Road became York Road – confusingly, since that name was also used for the section of the road much further west, from Falcon Road to Wandsworth. In 1871 the whole thoroughfare up to Falcon Road was renamed Battersea Park Road.

Before development, the south side of the road fronted Longhedge farmland. By the late 1820s there was a scatter of five or six villas here west of Battersea New Town, together with a short-lived chapel. The largest was the first house west of Stewart's Lane, Pavilion Villa or Cottage, which probably dated back to the 1790s and had a long garden down to the future LSWR railway embankment.⁵³ The layout of this railway in the 1830s did little harm to their amenities, but the advent of the second-generation lines on the opposite axis heralded their demise. The first of these new railways was the low-level WELCPR line, laid out in 1857–8 just east of Pavilion Villa. This thrust northwards under the LSWR tracks and (by way of Dogs' Home Bridge) Battersea Park Road, lopping off the top of Stewart's Lane as it

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passed. To its east a new, narrow roadway was formed, now the unsatisfactory north end of Stewart's Road. To its west, the neck of the old road became a cul-de-sac known later as Stewart's Lane West; it is now the north-south leg of Bradmead.

Stewart's Lane West acquired an unusual development of 1851-2, built by John Spink on land owned by Elizabeth Ashley and her executors. Later nicknamed Rabbit Hutch Row, it consisted of two rows of single-storey houses, twenty facing over the railway and four towards the main road with an equally low-rise pub, the (Old) Red House, at the corner. Each house was square in plan, with a central entrance, a shed-like back extension and a long garden (Ill. 4.16). Though not strictly railwaymen's cottages, over a third were occupied by railway families in 1861.⁵⁴

Next westwards, in 1854 the solicitor Frederick Haines bought Pavilion Villa and its grounds in order to promote the first of his four Battersea speculative developments. Here in about 1856-62, with help from his allies the surveyors Glasier & Son, Pavilion Terrace appeared facing the main road (Benjamin Chamberlain, builder) and Havelock Terrace stretching southwards (Henry Matthews, main builder), once again with a pub, the Pavilion Tavern, holding the corner between them.⁵⁵

The Stewart's Lane West cottages were demolished for Battersea Council's Stewart's Lane Estate (1934-6), a set of block dwellings in four ranges.⁵⁶ These in turn succumbed after only forty years along with Havelock Terrace, when Wandsworth Council promoted an estate of small factory units on this whole railway-beleaguered block. Construction took place in stages from around 1977. The Havelock Terrace name survived, but Stewart's Lane West became Bradmead, while an intermediate road, Palmerston Way, was inserted in-between. The one survivor from the Victorian development is the Pavilion pub, still on its old site albeit in rebuilt form.

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The onslaught of the LCDR and LBSCR high-level lines in 1864–7 left Havelock Terrace and Stewart’s Lane West isolated, but did not inhibit development to their west. Taking first the Battersea Park Road frontage, No. 145 survives from a small group of about 1870. Next westwards is the former Nine Elms Police Station, which supplanted the last pair of ribbon-development villas here in 1925. Then comes the present Newton School, whose predecessor the Raywood Street School, replaced two good independent villas and their gardens in 1881.

Nos 151–171 are the remnants of a three-street development started in 1863 by the lawyer-speculators Jesse Nickinson and Richard Prall, with help from local professionals, the surveyor-auctioneer James Griffin and the architect Charles Bowes. It consisted of Gladstone (later St Joseph’s) Street (now obliterated, except for a stub) and Lockington Road, with Gladstone Terrace as a cross-road at the south end. Pagden and Raywood Streets, planned in 1868–9 by the surveyors Messrs. Vigers for John Giles Pilcher, then linked these streets under the LCDR high-level line through to Havelock Terrace (Ill. 4.12). These developments trickled on into the late 1870s.⁵⁷

Photographs of one of these demolished ranges, 2–16 Lockington Road (Ill. 4.17), suggest quite substantial houses with basements, two main storeys and dormers in the roofs, but these streets were always multi-occupied. They were all cleared under a GLC scheme of 1967–8 but never rebuilt, leaving a barren environment hardly alleviated by the two schools here, Newton School and St Mary’s Catholic School. In Gladstone Terrace an office block for Henley Homes was in course of construction in 2012.⁵⁸

The surviving group of shops on the main road, Nos 155–167 (1863), topped by a pediment bearing the name Battersea Park Terrace, is comparatively banal. It is flanked at Nos 151–153 by the stuccoed former Rock

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Tavern, now the Three Bridges, of 1868, and at No. 169 by the Mason's Arms, a sturdy pub of 1863 with a trace of Gothic to the first-floor windows and a charmingly naïve statue of a mason above (Ills 4.18, 19).⁵⁹ Here George Shearing, the blind jazz pianist, first appeared in public at the age of 16.