

Park Town and district

Park Town is not typical Battersea. Here alone a large conventional freehold estate, some 68 acres in all, was acquired and built up over forty years from the 1860s in a sustained effort at town-planning (Ill. 5.1). Park Town is unique also in the abundance of its records. For that reason it has elicited a full monograph, Priscilla Metcalf's *The Park Town Estate and the Battersea Tangle* (1978). Miss Metcalf's main interest was James Knowles junior, originator of the project and architect of its early houses. The later phase after Knowles withdrew is less fully covered by her, and so is emphasized in this chapter, which makes no claim to supersede her scrupulous and pithy study.

Though Park Town was capably planned and managed, it never lived up to expectations. Its years of development saw a come-down from first hopes and designs: an estate intended for middle-class leaseholders had to be readjusted towards flats for artisans. Today it remains the least gentrified of Battersea's larger tracts of Victorian housing. The rump of the original holding, around Queenstown Road, is owned by the Peabody Trust, which manages it as social housing.

The reasons for the disappointment are a lesson in the vagaries of location. The kite-like shape of the estate is memorable. Its body, a rhombus or diamond bisected by Queenstown Road, is completed by a shrivelled head at the top, a tail at the bottom and one thick arm stuck out eastwards. When Park Town was conceived, its main road, linking respectable Clapham via the new Chelsea Bridge with the West End's spill-over into Pimlico, seemed to guarantee gentility. That was to reckon without the railways. Not one but three sets of lines and bridges twisted and throttled Queenstown Road's neck, smashed in the head of the development and sundered the link with Battersea

Draft

Park held out by the estate's name. The whole eastern flank was besieged by the London, Chatham & Dover Railway's Longhedge Works, ensuring only further pollution and a demand for artisan housing. As a result St Philip Square at the estate's centre and the adjacent stretches of Queenstown Road failed to attract the middle classes. Today, howling traffic leaves the main road unamenable. It is in more sheltered streets like Ingelow and Emu Roads westwards and Tennyson and Montefiore Streets eastwards that shoots of affluence are furthest forward.

Longhedge Farm

Park Town owes its coherence to the fact that, unlike most developments in Battersea, it was built on a single large freehold. Longhedge Farm, the land in question, stretched far east and west of the area bought for Park Town in 1863, but here lay its heartland. Roger Logan has traced the farm's history back to 1647, when its name is first recorded, and then to the will of Thomas Taylor, dated 1661, mentioning a 'farm and house wherein he then dwelt called Long Hedge ffarme' which was 'held by lease of Sir Walter St John for severall yeares'.¹ The eponymous hedge was indeed lengthy, forming by the 1760s a thousand-yard barrier to the open Battersea Fields along the south side of what is now Battersea Park Road, approximately from Sleaford Street on the east to a line just short of Alfreda Street (opposite Cupar Road) on the west.

On various maps from 1729 the farm was marked as Piddo's Farm – a corruption or error, Logan conjectures, from the name of Nicholas Pether, probably the tenant at this time. Among the many land transactions when Battersea manor passed from the Bolingbrokes to the Spencers, the Longhedge freehold was sold in 1763 to Philip Worlidge, a City lawyer and steward of the Bolingbrokes' estate at Purley, Berkshire. Worlidge probably

Draft

never lived on the property. When he died in 1783 it passed to his heir Richard Worlidge Southby; the farm's tenant was John Harrison, who then in the first alienation bought some 42 north-eastern acres, on part of which Battersea New Town was to be developed (page ##).² Till then, as Corris's map of 1787 shows, the farm covered some 247 acres in 16 different parcels, the largest a 'great field' along most of the northern boundary.

The farm buildings themselves lay where Queenstown and Silverthorne Roads meet today; a range of capacious, U-shaped barns enclosed a yard with, to their east, the farmhouse and an orchard. This arrangement may date from around 1795, when Harrison's speculations failed and he surrendered his lease of 178 acres of farmland along with the freehold he had bought. At that point he had set aside two acres 'contiguous to the Farm' where six new dwellings had been started.³ An auction failed to find a new lessee, so Southby took over the farm and perhaps rebuilt the farmhouse. Compact, tall and plain, of three full storeys and three windows on each of the main sides, it outlasted the farm, became the manager's house for the Longhedge Works of the London, Chatham & Dover Railway (LCDR) and eluded demolition till the 1960s. It stood on the east side of Silverthorne Road near its top, flanked by railway tracks and backed by sidings (Ill. 5.3).

Longhedge Farm remained in the Southby family ownership after his death, the gradually shrinking farmland being let first to Edward Matson (from 1807 to 1850) and then to Bernard Graham. Henry Beaufoy bought a large western portion in 1827, while pieces were taken for the London & South-Western Railway (LSWR) in the 1830s. By 1860 most of the land north of this line had been sold for development, reducing the farm to half its original size. Some 68 acres were to be covered by Park Town, and a slightly smaller area to their east by the Longhedge Works and associated railway undertakings.

The Road from Clapham

Park Town's antecedents go back to the completion of Chelsea Bridge and the opening of Battersea Park in 1858. The bridge, together with the straight road leading to it laid out along the park's eastern flank, refocused Clapham residents' minds on an idea first voiced in the 1830s. That was to connect their suburb with the West End via a direct thoroughfare in place of the dog-legged, ill-lit lane which travellers were obliged to take through Battersea en route to the river. An influential committee – including Sir Charles Barry before his death in 1860 – pressed this upon the Wandsworth Board of Works, at first without conclusion.

Any such road through Battersea was bound to traverse Longhedge Farm, as did the existing lane. The farm's tenant, Bernard Graham, sat on the local Board of Works and naturally objected. But fresh railway developments (detailed in volume 49) now supervened. In 1857–8 the West End of London & Crystal Palace Railway (WELCPR), soon absorbed into the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway (LBSCR), was laid out at ground level just south of the LSWR, creating a dangerous obstacle across the old lane. Then in 1860 the London & Chatham Dover Railway (LCDR) obtained powers for yet another line, coming up from Clapham and Wandsworth Road and slashing through the east side of the farm. Next year the LCDR agreed to buy 62 acres from the Southby trustees for their Longhedge Works. The company also promised the Clapham committee to 'reserve and appropriate gratuitously for public purposes' a strip of sixty feet over their ground.⁴ This implies that the route then favoured for the road was the natural one from Clapham village, up North Street and along the line of what is now Silverthorne Road.

But a final deal with the slippery LCDR could not be secured, and the path alongside their works was soon 'in a very dreadful state; you cannot take

Draft

a female with you with any comfort'.⁵ So an alternative route further west, promoted by local interests not represented on the committee, won out. This started with the redevelopment of The Cedars, a villa facing Clapham Common, with a garden stretching right down to Wandsworth Road. In 1860 its absentee owner, Alexander Jones, teamed up with two Clapham residents, a builder, Henry Harris, and the 29-year-old architect James Knowles junior, to lay out Cedars Road through the property. It was to be lined with detached villas, dignified with a church (St Saviour's, Clapham) and crowned by two mighty French-roofed terraces facing the common, all designed by Knowles. The terraces, 43-52 Clapham Common North Side, are almost all that remains of this scheme. Their grandeur hints that Knowles saw them already as the southern termination of a new processional route running north to Chelsea Bridge in continuation of Cedars Road.

To achieve that, Knowles needed to negotiate with the Southby trustees and their surveyor, Charles Lee, who had long been a promoter of the road from Clapham, and to persuade an investor-developer to buy the remnant of Longhedge Farm. The figure he identified was William Woodgate, a solicitor who shared a staircase with him in Gray's Inn. Woodgate was already in 1861 employing Knowles on a speculation in Sydenham, to which the Thatched House Club, St James's Street, was soon added. He took the bait, and Lee fell in with the plan, hatched by April 1862. By the end of the year the Clapham committee had accepted the revised line for the road, if ratified by a parish meeting.

But Woodgate had overstretched himself. An entrepreneur with a deeper pocket now entered the picture. This was the merchant Philip William Flower, who had been employing Knowles's father, James Knowles senior, also an architect, to extend his house at Furzedown, Tooting. In January 1863 Flower put down the deposit on the price of the land needed, totalling £15,333 15s. Most was Longhedge land, but a connecting strip in Clapham, between

Draft

the Heathwall sewer and Cedars Road, had to be bought from the Beaufoy family, along with a leasehold interest. The deal depended on a Parliamentary Bill authorizing the road's creation. This, the Queen's Road, Battersea, Extension Act, passed in June 1863; the projection of the road accompanying the Act was surveyed and drawn out by Charles Lee for the Southby trustees, still then the owners. The sale to Woodgate and Flower of a broad 17-acre strip along the line of the road, and a square of almost eight acres north of the railways, ensued.⁶

Woodgate now fell out of the scheme. To share the risk, Flower brought in his business associate Severin Kanute Salting. It was to Flower and Salting that the remaining 43 acres south of the railways were conveyed in January 1864. Then Salting died in 1865, to be succeeded by his sons George and William Severin Salting. The Saltings were junior partners in the Park Town development, having an interest only in the 'joint estate' as opposed to the 'personal estate', which belonged exclusively to the Flower family. The division was not a simple topographical one, and the managers themselves sometimes made mistakes as to whether a given property belonged to the joint or personal estate. What was never in doubt was that the Flowers ran the show.

The Flowers

The Flowers originated from Feltwell, Norfolk: a loyalty to Norfolk is recurrent in their later history. Philip William Flower (1810–72) came from a branch which had moved to London, where his father John is listed in directories as a ribbon and silk manufacturer. His elder brother, John Wickham Flower (1807–73), was a solicitor whose firm, initially Flower & Nussey, transacted the legal business for the Park Town estate. He and Philip married first cousins who were sisters, so their children were doubly

Draft

connected. J. W. Flower's son, Wickham Flower (1835–1904), also a solicitor, was his uncle's right-hand man during Park Town's early years, and maintained a close interest in Battersea and the other business and property affairs of his younger cousins after their father's death. P. W. Flower was twice married, but only the six surviving children of his first marriage – five sons and one daughter – had an interest in the Battersea property. Of these the two oldest, Cyril Flower, first Lord Battersea (1843–1907), and Arthur Flower (1847–1911) were actively involved in the estate. Formally, their family interest was administered after 1872 by the executors of P. W. Flower, acting on the children's behalf.⁷

Philip Flower's fortune originated with the trading merchants Marsden & Flower, set up around 1835 and uniting the Flowers in London with Thomas Marsden in New South Wales. In 1838 Philip and his younger brother Horace (1818–99) went out to Sydney. After Marsden died in 1841, the Australian end was reconstructed with S. K. Salting, a Danish citizen resident in Sydney, as Flower, Salting & Company, traders in wool and other commodities. Horace Flower stayed in Australia, but around 1842 Philip returned and founded P. W. Flower & Company, the Moorgate-based firm through which the British end of the Flower interests, including the Battersea estate, continued to be managed after his death. Despite the brevity of Philip Flower's stay, Australia lay at the root of his dynasty's wealth, as of the Saltings'. That is reflected in the names of the Park Town streets. Emu Road and Prairie Street date from the younger generation's time, but Priscilla Metcalf traced the link also in earlier choices of name like Broughton Street (after W. G. Broughton, Bishop of Australia during Philip Flower's years there); Robertson Street (after Sir John Robertson, prime minister of New South Wales when the estate was being laid out; and, less certainly, Stanley Grove (perhaps called after Captain Owen Stanley, explorer of New Guinea).⁸

Draft

Park Town represented just one of Philip Flower's property investments. Besides over fifty acres in Tooting, he owned more than one Thames wharf or quay; Weavers Hall in the City; a half share with his older brother in two sets of offices off the Strand; a Surrey farm; and various Australian interests. To this was added in 1867 a major share in Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, where high-class flats (now demolished) were designed by Knowles junior, and in a large site opposite where further flats were intended. Albert Mansions took up almost as much day-to-day time and trouble to manage as Battersea.⁹ Commercially, the Flower empire stretched to coffee plantations in Mysore, and shares in the London Joint-Stock Bank.

Queenstown Road and the railways

Work on laying out roads started in August 1863, directly after the passing of the relevant Act. Queen's Road itself (from 1939 Queenstown Road, the name used for the rest of this chapter) was paid for by Flower, but S. K. Salting also contributed to the first two side roads, so inaugurating the joint financing of Park Town. Knowles was thoroughly involved in these infrastructural activities, warning Flower that 'a constant supervision is very necessary in making roads – as the amount of material is otherwise not put on'. A clerk of works was duly appointed to watch the contractor, J. Hare, but did not last long. September saw Knowles racing ahead with the first buildings ('it is so very important to build something at once'): two 'lodging houses' in the northernmost sector nearest Battersea Park, put up by James McLachlan and known as East and West Villas. The idea seems to have been to lodge building workmen in them and lease them later.¹⁰

At this point Flower and Knowles hit an intractable obstacle in the shape of yet further railway plans. The LCDR and LBSCR, dissatisfied with the first arrangement of their lines in northern Battersea, hired Sir Charles Fox

Draft

in 1862 to devise a fresh high-level layout improving access to their bridge across to Victoria. This scheme was to disrupt the agreed line of Queenstown Road and permanently blight the northern third of the estate. Even if its configuration was undecided when the road bill went through Parliament, it was anticipated and explicitly alluded to. Yet Flower and Knowles did not wait to gather Fox's intentions before fixing their plans for the northern part of Park Town. Perhaps by making a fully fledged design they hoped for higher compensation from the railway companies. Knowles may also have been motivated by competitiveness, and deceived himself that the high-level scheme was never going to happen.¹¹

At the least, communication broke down. Under the Act, the roadmakers were entitled to lay out the section of Queenstown Road crossing the railways from November 1863. On the third day their equipment was removed during the lunch hour by LCDR workmen or, as Knowles excitedly reported to Flower, 'large bodies of armed men ... drove us off by force from the ground – destroying what we had begun'. On the fifth the site was permanently barricaded off. The LCDR's excuse was that the promoters had been offered a 'deviation road' under Fox's plan in September but failed to negotiate. The dispute went to law, with Wickham Flower representing his uncle, away on a prolonged Italian holiday. Under a compromise, the railway companies got their way in return for large payments to Flower. The top of Queenstown Road was forced into a tighter swan's-neck twist, and an extra crossing (the northernmost) was thrown over it. On the other hand its gradients were eased because all three railways – the LCDR, the LSWR and the LBSCR – were now raised well above road level. Of the three new over-bridges projected, only the LSWR's had to be paid for by the Park Town proprietors. This was built by Henry Grissell, unlike the other road bridges, which were designed by Fox's firm. All have since been reconstructed.¹²

Draft

Retailing this saga to Flower, Knowles made the best of things: 'we wished for nothing better than to get the road upon the level provided it would cost us nothing ... I think you would have enjoyed the excitement of the fight with the Companies, especially if you could have known how satisfactorily it was to conclude'. There would be 'more bother with the companies', Knowles predicted, but he was more than ever convinced 'that all the profit I have anticipated from the first – and probably more – is to be made out of the estate'.¹³

J. T. Knowles and the estate layout

'Park Town' is first so called in Knowles's correspondence in March 1864. It appears also on an undated lithograph issued for prospective lessees and builders. As the signatory and point of contact on this document, Knowles was clearly in the driving seat; the freeholders are not named. It shows the layout of the estate with the railway lines as they were before Fox's scheme received assent later that year (Ill. 5.4).

North of the railways, where work was just starting round the original two 'villas', what turned out therefore to be a half-chimerical layout is shown. East, West and South Streets hold the edges of a nine-acre square of land, with St George's Street and North Street squeezed between, either side of the last agonized twist of Queenstown Road as it straightens up to meet Battersea Park Road. It is not a generous arrangement; every available inch is destined for bricks and mortar.

South of the railways the distinctive Park Town diamond appears – a logical consequence of driving Queenstown Road from the south-west to the north-east corner of the residual farmland. Here again the layout is tight. Terraces alone seem anticipated, in contrast to the spacious Cedars Road

Draft

villas to the south. Long parallel roads, best represented today by St Philip Street, flank the main thoroughfare. To maximize accommodation, Knowles has drawn roads all round the periphery, meeting intermediate ones at angles productive of sharp and awkward corner plots. In the south-west position, the border roads are given a sweep where they meet Queenstown Road, but the crescents suggested by such a feature are absent. Just two short stub cross-roads are shown. The only focus is the future St Philip (originally Queen's) Square, with its 'site for church parsonage & schools'. Another label, 'drinking fountain' at the corner of the future Robertson Street and Silverthorne Road, intimates that the outlying eastern arm of the estate was earmarked for artisan housing, for which the LCDR's Longhedge Works were already setting a demand.

Despite his limitations in the arts of town-planning, Knowles was an architect of range and resource who designed with individuality. The 1864 lithograph also includes elevations (but not plans) of two house-types, of either eight or six rooms. These were to be the staple in Park Town's first development phase. The 1860s were a decade of transition for the larger London house. Like many contemporaries, Knowles was not yet ready to abandon the brick-and-stucco Italian terrace tradition, but he tricked it out with picturesque touches worked out in previous projects ranging from the Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria, to the houses of Cedars Road and Clapham Common. All these designs share a penchant for ornamental window spandrels, pierced or cast, and a reluctance to hide roof profiles behind a curbing parapet.

The Park Town prototypes compromised between the Cedars Road villas, explicitly suburban with their hipped and overhung roofs, and the bastard-classical terraces then still rising over the river in Pimlico. Battersea in 1864 had yet to find its character. Knowles signalled its intermediacy by giving both his types eaves cornices and visible roofs, except where the eight-

Draft

room houses held corners, where they rose to a full attic. Ornamental spandrel panels appear above all the first-floor windows and recur at ground-floor level on the six-room houses, which also have little hoods over the doors. These smaller houses lack basements, while in the few specimens of the eight-room type built, as at 131–149 and 297–305 Queenstown Road, the terraces are raised higher than the lithograph shows, so that the basement becomes virtually the ground storey (Ill. 5.5). No doubt this was partly a reaction to Battersea's bad drainage, a persistent problem for Park Town. But it marks out the designs as an advance upon the normal London middle-class arrangement of the 1860s. Not that the houses were big. All frontages were just two windows wide, while the back extensions were minimal. The packed layout, tight plots and unadventurous plans suggest that he and Flower never anticipated an exalted class of demand.

North of the railways

Systematic development began at the end of 1863 with the eight-acre square north of the railways and closest to Battersea Park. Agreements were promptly concluded on favourable terms with two sets of builders for covering this whole territory. Then the Fox scheme for the high-level railway lines passed into law in Summer 1864. Though Knowles, as he told Flower, had been 'almost constantly in the Committee room watching carefully', the consequences were disastrous. The projected LBSCR lines smashed through the square from one corner to the other. As was the railway companies' wont, they requisitioned more property than they needed. So a tight but coherent development fractured into amputated odds and ends. East of the Queenstown Road frontages, only one row survived, eight houses called Brighton (later Patcham) Terrace, pathetically close to the railway viaduct and accessible only down a lane off Battersea Park Road and then through an arch (Ill. 5.6).¹⁴ Queenstown Road itself and St George's Street were bisected, and

Draft

West Street was curtailed. Though this western side of the development was largely completed, its value must have slumped. Most of it survived until it succumbed in the 1960s to the Newtown section of the Doddington Estate. Today only Southolm Street (consisting of the former South Street plus one end of St George's Street) remains to perpetuate the spectacle of shabby terraces overwhelmed by looming railway arches (Ill. 5.7).

To add to the proprietors' woes, they had difficulty with both their undertakers. First on the scene were Edward Muspratt and John Mill Gowman. Under agreements of December 1863 and February 1864 they agreed to take all the northern sites delineated on Knowles's map except for the main road frontages, amounting to 136 plots. The existing East and West Villas were also leased to them short-term in June 1864.¹⁵

Edward Muspratt aspired the highest of the Park Town builders and fell the furthest. From a clothworking family in Heytesbury, Wiltshire, but a joiner by trade, he was in London by 1851, then aged 28. On his first appearance in Park Town his address is given as Victoria Terrace, Battersea Bridge Road. His partner Gowman is described as of Gillingham Street, Pimlico, and it was in Pimlico that two of Muspratt's children were born.¹⁶ He must have had plausibility, for both Flower and Knowles made efforts to help him when he fell into difficulties.

At first things went well. Muspratt & Gowman had fifteen houses advanced by March 1864, and although the LBSCR intervention slashed their total from 136 to 67, most of the houses in West Street and St George's Street were leased to them or their nominees in 1866–8. The survivors, 14–40 Southolm Street (mostly along one side of what was once South Street, but ten formerly in St George's Street), are all of the standard Knowlesian six-room house-type. Only a few were taken far enough by Muspratt for leases to be granted. By October 1866 he and Gowman had parted company, and soon

Draft

afterwards Muspratt was in deepening trouble with his commitments south of the railways.¹⁷

The other early undertaker in this northern sector was John Froud, builder, who agreed in July 1864 to build up the two main frontages to Battersea Park Road and Queenstown Road with 74 houses over three years. The specification survives: the fronts were to be faced in white Suffolk bricks and tuck-pointed, and the houses equipped with cesspools until Park Town was connected to the Metropolitan Board of Works' low-level sewer. Flower was empowered to supply Froud with bricks and other building materials, whose cost would be repaid when the houses were finished and the 99-year leases granted. Froud was described as of Hyde Grove, Battersea, but he had recently been building in Holland Park, when he was said to be from Shepherd's Bush. The Queenstown Road houses were of the eight-room type, while facing Battersea Park Road were nineteen six-room houses with shops, known as Park Terrace (Ill. 5.8).¹⁸

John Froud died in March 1865, with little progress made. By then the railways had upset everything, so a revised agreement made with Benjamin Froud was for 24 houses only. He received an extension of time in exchange for a deposit, pledging to get half a million bricks on the ground that summer and the houses roofed in. Though he missed the target, a year later he had finished most of them. Benjamin Froud was doubtless the Wandsworth Common builder of that name declared bankrupt in 1868. At Park Town he had an interesting backer, George Herring, racing tipster and financier.¹⁹ Herring received the leases for most of the houses, and as the provider of Froud's deposit took on his own account a group of three with shops at the south-east corner of Battersea Park Road and Queenstown Road, built by Charles Fish to designs adapted from Knowles's by a neighbour of Herring's in Welbeck Street, the architect Christopher Eales. The remnants of this group, originally Park Terrace East, are the present 177-179 Battersea Park Road, for

Draft

Priscilla Metcalf the 'sentinel pair at the northern entry to the estate'. Eales also worked on other houses in Benjamin Froud's take, including the only other survivors of his enterprise, the eight-roomed 297–305 Queenstown Road.²⁰

In 1871 Philip Flower sold the ground rents of all the Froud and Herring properties as an investment to Alfred Tennyson. Knowles had contracted a friendship with the laureate, leading to a gradual change of career and his transformation into a magazine editor. Tennyson also bought the leases, negotiated through Eales, but disposed of all his interests in 1882. Flower's willingness to sell shows that the district north of the railways was already seen as marginal to the Park Town estate before his death. Further freehold sales of property in these streets took place in 1881.²¹

South of the railways, 1865–71

Riding high, Edward Muspratt in October 1865 offered to take the whole of the Queenstown Road frontage all the way from the southernmost railway bridge to the Heathwall sewer, including all four sides of the central square. 'You could scarcely have a more reliable man for carrying out the most important section of the whole enterprize', Knowles counselled Flower. Some 250 houses were involved, he estimated, with a potential annual rent of over £1,800. The agreement that December was followed by a separate deal of September 1866 covering the angle between Queenstown and Silverthorne Roads. Here Muspratt undertook to build the Victoria Hotel, the attached Victoria Terrace, and stables behind.²² The hope was to complete this great scheme by 1872.

Little of it ever happened. In the summer of 1866 Muspratt made a start with ten eight-roomed houses facing the square, at first Church Terrace, later

Draft

131–149 Queenstown Road (Ill. 5.5); the southern five of these were leased to Knowles, on Flower's insistence, in 1869.²³ He next took up the three sides of St Philip (then Queen's) Square (Ill. 5.9). After only desultory progress Knowles promised to urge Muspratt to 'show more activity ... we have nothing but his own word for his exertions hitherto'. None of these large houses got far enough to be leased; they had to be finished by the Estate and taken under direct management. Muspratt did earn the lease of the Victoria Hotel (166 Queenstown Road) in 1869, temporarily installing his brother Theodore and family, but the only two adjoining houses completed (162 & 164) were let on short term. That was as much as he could manage.²⁴

The causes of his failure are not far to seek. The collapse of the bankers Overend, Gurney in June 1866 precipitated a credit crisis engulfing many builders beside the wildly over-extended Muspratt. A contract for Knowles's St Stephen's, Clapham Park, did not help. Mortgages piled up on top of advances for materials and wages, until a grand total of £27,704 was owing to Flower, who took possession of most of Muspratt's properties in January 1870. That autumn he was declared bankrupt. In 1871 he was acting as clerk of works for W. E. Nesfield at Kinmel Park, but two years later he may have been living again in St George's Street.²⁵

Park Town's central diamond therefore began with a disaster. The aspiration for a phalanx of middle-class family houses in the square and along the main road was tied up with the Muspratt gambit, and could not be recovered. St Philip Square itself became a shadowland of multi-occupation and short-term tenancies, until most houses were formally converted into flats in the 1890s. Muspratt's failure forced the proprietors to become housing managers, 'a position which was never originally contemplated', W. S. Salting later remarked.²⁶

Draft

The setback was not total. Other builders, large and small, weathered the storm, raising from 1867 an impressive 181 of Knowles's six-roomed houses, west of Queenstown Road on one side each of Broughton Street and Stanley Grove (then Street), and eastwards all along the east side of St Philip Street (Ill. 5.15) and at the top of Tennyson Street (the first Park Town street to receive a literary name). All these houses survive. They show up on the first Ordnance Survey as necklaces in isolation, together with Muspratt's fragments and some scattered developments that have gone: a longer and a shorter row starting the south side of Robertson Street; a few houses along both sides of St Andrew (today St Rule) Street, at the estate's eastern extremity (Ill. 5.11); and ten houses known as Queen's Crescent on the sector of Queenstown Road between the LBSCR and LSWR lines. From these marginalia just one building remains: the former Shaftesbury public house at the angle of Dickens Street and St Rule Street, damaged but with Knowlesian ornamentation over the first-floor windows. To these must be added two developments on the short Clapham section at the south end of Park Town: Cedars Terrace, now 2-26 Queenstown Road; and 648-650 Wandsworth Road on the corner to its south, since demolished (Ill. 5.13).

Much the largest builders in this phase were the partners Robert Lacy and James Flexman, who by two agreements of 1867 undertook to build most of the north side of Broughton Street (40 houses), the south ends of Stanley Grove (32 houses) and of St Philip Street (29 houses, plus the Queen's Hotel, now the Queen's Arms, at the Robertson Street corner), and the now-demolished range along the south side of Robertson Street at its west end (29 houses). Lacy & Flexman described themselves in 1867 as builders of Oakley Crescent, Chelsea, but the London-born Lacy had spent a recent spell in Illinois; Flexman came from Essex. Like Muspratt, they operated on a system of advances made to them by Flower & Company, which were supposed to be gradually paid back as they sold leases on completed houses. But shortly after accepting terms for the Robertson Street houses in June 1868 they too came to

Draft

grief, and had to compound with their creditors. This led to difficulties and delays in finishing their houses; Lacy & Flexman received or assigned long leases for only a minority, the rest being let on short tenancies. In 1870 Flower took the creditors to court, claiming that the partners owed him over £20,000 on loans. But they did not disappear. In 1871 Lacy was living at Cedars Terrace, and Flexman, who acted for a time as the creditors' manager and receiver of rents, was in Stanley Grove, where work dribbled on well into the 1870s.²⁷

Under agreements of 1867–8 wiser operators opted for smaller takes of between six and twelve houses: such were George Bugbee (Stanley Grove); George Garrood (Broughton Street); Henry Garrood (Stanley Grove); Thomas Hannagan (St Philip Street); Edward Titcomb (St Philip Street and Tennyson Street); Frederick John Titcomb (Stanley Grove); James Wootton (Stanley Grove); and William Young (Broughton Street). A fair proportion of these houses earned long leases.²⁸

These long runs of six-room houses look remarkably smooth and coherent; no break in the white-brick elevations is discernible between 'takes'. The 1,350-foot length of St Philip Street's eastern front, for example, has a flat-faced, almost un-British uniformity. There are just a few departures from the standard Knowles types. The houses started by Muspratt along the square's east side, 41–63 St Philip Street, are three windows wide with central porches and have higher storeys (Ill. 5.14); two were demolished when Thackeray Road was taken into the square's south-east corner, altering the original plan and breaking the enfilade of terraces. The gabled houses at 31–40 Stanley Grove, on Lacy & Flexman's take, are a curiosity. They have the air of compromised builders' designs. The bay windows at the ends, otherwise absent from early Park Town, and the recurrence of the decorative window spandrels five times on each house, defy rational explanation. Other buildings out of the normal run but doubtless from Knowles's hand are the two large

Draft

pubs, the Victoria and the Queen's Arms. The latter boasts the cast-iron decorative window-heads he reserved for his richer designs.

But the egregious exception is Cedars Terrace, now 2–26 Queenstown Road, built under an agreement of April 1867 with two Greenwich builders, Thomas Linton Priddle and William Murcott Harding. The corner houses with shops at 648–650 Wandsworth Road belonged to the same agreement and followed Knowles's normal idiom, but the terrace departs wildly and puzzlingly from his known secular mode of design, suggesting a separate architect. It is coarsely Gothic in style, with panels of small-scale stone carving showing deer amidst foliage. No long leases were granted, and after a history of short tenancies shops were added along the front in the 1880s.²⁹

The 1871 census presents a harsh picture of all the efforts in Park Town thus far. No street could boast a predominance of single-family occupation. A few houses at the top and bottom of St Philip Street were tenanted as envisaged. But the large majority were in multiple occupation, with a strong contingent of building tradesmen, many no doubt still working on the houses, and railwaymen. Half of Church Terrace was sparsely tenanted, the other half seemingly not yet habitable, while apart from the lone presence of John Hall, the vicar of St Philip's and his family, the square is referred to only by a laconic '9 houses to let'. The streets north of the railways and the eastern outlier of St Andrew Street were no different; all looked scrappily and provisionally inhabited.³⁰

Nevertheless in 1870 according to the *South London Press* Park Town's fortunes were looking up: 'some hundred of large and valuable houses have stood tenantless for two or three years, but of late a population has been gradually immigrating'. This notice accompanied the consecration of the appropriately named St Philip's Church. Built at the centre of the square and culminating the first phase of the estate, it was designed by Knowles, as was

Draft

to be expected, but in the contrasting Gothic style, de rigueur for Victorian churches. With Hall already installed, No. 1 St Philip Square was sold as a vicarage to go with it in 1872.³¹

The younger Flowers and Park Town's Aesthetic moment

In February 1872 Philip Flower died aged 61. Little fresh building activity was then taking place in Park Town. The main heirs to their father's Battersea interests were Cyril and Arthur Flower, bachelors of 28 and 24 respectively. Able and fast young men, they were grounded in the family business, but sociable, busy and spoilt. Neither was without curiosity or conscience about Park Town, but it was marginal to their lives. Cyril Flower, who now took the lead, could be dashing and decisive, but lacked tact and concentration. In 1901, for instance, his estate manager forwarded a deferential letter from the local branch of the bricklayers' union, pointing out that bricklayers working at Park Town were paid below the local union rate. 'It seems to me an arbitrary interference', was Flower's response, before continuing peremptorily: 'I want as much money end of this month as ever I can have to pay for a piece of land'.³²

In 1877 the handsome Flower married a rich wife, Constance de Rothschild. In her memoirs, she remarks that she 'was disappointed that we did not settle down in Battersea amongst the working classes. I suggested making a "House Beautiful" in that region, allowing of close intercourse with and better knowledge of the men and women whose paths were so different from mine, and consequently so imperfectly understood by me ... But it was not to be'. Indeed her mother, Lady Louisa de Rothschild, showed more interest in Park Town.³³ Cyril Flower used the Rothschild connection to launch into politics, serving as a Liberal MP and enjoying minor government

Draft

appointments until 1892, when he was ennobled as Lord Battersea of Battersea and Overstrand.

The younger Flowers dabbled in Aestheticism. Wickham Flower, married to an amateur painter and friendly with Whistler, employed Norman Shaw to build him Old Swan House on Chelsea Embankment, William Morris's firm to decorate it, and Philip Webb to restore and extend Great Tangle Manor. Cyril Flower was also a keen builder; in his wife's words, 'his ideas on architecture were always too big for the spaces where we made our homes'.³⁴ His art patronage ranged from the Norwich painter Frederick Sandys through Burne-Jones, Watts, Tissot, Millais and Alfred Gilbert to the young Edwin Lutyens, who refashioned the Batterseas' Norfolk seaside retreat, The Pleasaunce, Overstrand (1897–9). The only such figure to impinge on Park Town was the Norfolk-bred architect-decorator Thomas Jeckyll.

Knowles, nurtured in an earlier cultural milieu, did not take to the younger Flowers. As the author of the Park Town scheme, he naturally felt proprietorial. He had a logical, business-like mind, a wide range of skills and a meticulous eye for detail, but could be assertive and dogmatic. A *froideur* clearly developed between him and Cyril Flower. But Knowles earned good fees from Park Town and knew on which side his bread was buttered. So he was scrupulous in maintaining the formalities expected between a Victorian estate surveyor and landowner. Only after he was long settled in his second career as an editor did he resign his connection with Park Town at the end of 1887.

The estate record is poor for the earlier 1870s. But it seems that Cyril Flower, dissatisfied with Knowles's architecture, invited Jeckyll in 1874 to alter the interiors of his family's portion of Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, and to make some new house designs for private-estate sections of Park Town.³⁵ Knowles remained overall surveyor, and continued to handle

Draft

architectural business for the joint estate shared between the Flowers and the Saltings. But his grip upon the whole loosened.

Thomas Jeckyll (1827–81) was some four years older than Knowles and an experienced architect in his native Norfolk, but a different kettle of fish. His reputation rests on his decorative designs and a few daringly aesthetic interiors. In 1876 he had in progress a scheme for Cyril Flower's flat in Albert Mansions and the famous Peacock Room for F. R. Leyland (before Whistler overlaid it with peacocks). Jeckyll's career collapsed when he became insane late that year and withdrew to Norwich, never to recover.³⁶

Jeckyll had never before designed complete buildings in London. His brief seems to have been to create two new house-types: an artisan's cottage in terraces, deployed along the west side of St Philip Street; and a middle-class pair for the east side of Queenstown Road south of the square. Both embodied Jeckyll's response to the Queen Anne style then coming into vogue in London, and are described in more detail below. A taste of Jeckyll's volatile temper may be gleaned from the one remaining letter in his aesthetic hand among the Park Town papers. It excoriates the 'incompetence or rascality' of the builder's foreman, and explains he has had to have the villas 'greatly taken down and rebuilt, at Mr Holland's cost'.³⁷

These were Jeckyll's last buildings; soon enough he passed from Battersea like a fading meteor. In 1879 there was a flurry of interest in Bedford Park, probably on a hint of Cyril Flower's, yet aestheticism was not again ventured at Park Town. All the same, Jeckyll left behind him two assistants, Zephaniah King and J. S. Cooper, who continued to feature in Park Town's story. Cooper, very different from his master, was to take over from Knowles and give the architectural lead in completing the estate. It was he who scouted the Bedford Park idea, with typical circumspection: 'I went to Bedford Park Estate, and like the Houses but they will be found expensive in a few years

Draft

time to maintain and paint externally. A modification would answer best for Battersea but keep this opinion of mine to yourself or it may go secondhand to headquarters'.³⁸

Building resumes, 1872–9

When building restarted from 1872, it began on joint-estate land at the eastern edge of the property: in today's terms, an area east of St Rule Street obliterated in the 1960s for the open space of Heathbrook Park. Here Knowles, uncontested, laid out ninety close-packed houses on frontages facing the cranked U of Motley Street, with a tiny cul-de-sac, Motley Place, behind. The name presumably honours John Lothrop Motley, the American historian of the Dutch Republic and sometime envoy to Britain, who was living in England at that date.

These were standard working-class dwellings on two storeys with back extensions and minimal yards. Building such houses for rent followed logically from recent disappointments and this land's location near the LCDR's works. But it marked a departure from Philip Flower's policies. The Estate now resorted perforce to direct letting and management, which entailed also paying for and supervising construction and maintaining the houses afterwards. A medley of small builders participated, named as William Baker (6 houses); Charles Massey (12); Mercer and Warwick (19); Edward Parsons (10); Jonathan Parsons (21); Simpson & Baker (10); G. N. Street (3); and Taylor & Parsons (9). The total cost of creating the Motley Street development between 1872 and 1876 was estimated at £21,616. At average weekly rents of 10s 6d to 11s 6d, the houses brought in over £2,000 annually. So they would have paid for themselves in about a dozen years, allowing for road-making, maintenance and rent collection. But such housing was a continual burden, and Motley Street was marginal to Park Town. Already in

Draft

1878 the proprietors had decided to sell it off. After tortuous negotiations which saw the price drop from £35,000 to £30,000, a deal was made with the Land and House Property Corporation in 1882. In 1900 Motley Street's southern arm was renamed Chalmers Street.³⁹

As Motley Street neared completion, activity picked up on the private estate, notably along the west side of St Philip Street, where Jeckyll's artisan cottages offered a perhaps costly reproach to Knowles's six-room terraces opposite. These ranges look almost provocatively provincial: demure houses in two tones of brick with Georgian-style sash windows, they are a rare five bays or some 30 feet in width. Shallow in plan so as to leave deep garden plots for the future Queenstown Road houses behind, they consisted of just two front-facing rooms on each floor, the kitchen and scullery being consigned to separate lean-to extensions either side of the stairs (Ills 5.16, 17).⁴⁰ The prototype group, built by Thomas Holland of Kensington in 1876, was probably the present Nos 34–40 in the southern portion of St Philip Street, behind the villas Jeckyll and Holland were also building in Queenstown Road.

After Jeckyll's collapse Holland built four more cottages (42–48) in 1876–7 under J. S. Cooper's supervision. A second Kensington builder, Walter Nash, completed this long row (50–74) before moving on to the sector of St Philip Street north of the square. Cyril Flower toyed with deepening the plans of the northern cottages and reducing their frontage, but the moment passed and they were built the same. Cooper was constantly after Nash for slackness and sloppiness: 'I regret that I should have spoken of you in praise to Mr Flower you certainly do not carry out your work anything like as creditable as Mr Holland'.⁴¹ Yet Nash built all the cottages in the northern sector except for the shops at the Broughton Street corner (10 & 12), for which Zephaniah King made a design in 1878–9 built by C. S. Merrett (Ill. 5.18). The south end (76–

Draft

84), prettily curved, was finished off by a third builder, S. Robson, in 1879–80, again to an adapted design by King (Ill. 5.20).⁴²

By 1875 it had been agreed to make the first major divergence from the estate plan and lay out Thackeray Road (at first Street) and Bewick Street as cross streets east of St Philip Square, breaking up the long parallels of Knowles's diagram. Projecting Thackeray Road into the square meant demolishing two of Muspratt's discredited three-bay houses. The first arrival hereabouts was the Tennyson Street Board School (vol. 49), usurping the role of a church school designed by Knowles that never proceeded beyond tenders in 1873.⁴³

East of these streets, the projection of Silverthorne Road southwards to Wandsworth Road, opening up the natural connection with Clapham via North Street, was planned in 1869 as the adjacent Heath Estate got off the mark.⁴⁴ In 1876 Knowles submitted a scheme for extending the Motley Street enclave westwards to cover the ground between Silverthorne Road and St Andrew (now St Rule) Street south of the LCDR's Longhedge Works with some 110–120 houses. The road south of the works became Dickens Street; the new streets were christened Ruskin (briefly first Cleveland, then Dobell) and Trollope Streets – literary names chosen by Cyril Flower on the Tennyson Street model. The smart builders Holland & Hannen, then working at Albert Mansions, tendered exorbitant prices for building the whole, so the project devolved to smaller firms. S. Lewis of Hammersmith started the largest take, then defaulted; he was superseded by the local builder G. N. Street, who built or completed 38 houses on the south side of Robertson Street and eight in Trollope Street (1877–9); he was also being employed at this time to convert some of the St Philip Square houses into flats, to plans by Zephaniah King. Others with smaller tallies were Charles Massey, C. S. Merrett, Edward Parsons, and Robson & Company. This development's western edge, facing Silverthorne Road and backing on the new Froude Street, followed later. All

Draft

these houses were taken on directly by the Estate. They have been demolished and replaced with council housing.⁴⁵

In only one place can the fruits of this phase in Knowles's labours still be seen. That is in Queenstown Road north of the LSWR line, where in 1876–7 gaps were filled in with Nos 307–313 on the west side (Charles Massey, builder) and the longer Nos 230–268 opposite, known as East Terrace (William Baker, builder).⁴⁶ These two-tone brick houses resemble those in Ruskin Street, having single-storey bays and rusticated separating strips. The only features linking them with Knowles's earlier houses are the deep eaves brackets to the overhanging roofs, giving way sometimes to straight gables (Ill. 5.21). Next to the railway, Nos 230 & 232 were later demolished for extensions of Queenstown (then Queen's) Road Station. The original station here had been added as an intermediate stop on the LSWR line only in 1877, just as the terrace was built, confirming the accrual in local population.

Just five pairs of semi-detached houses, originally Queen's Road Villas, now 102–120 Queenstown Road, show Park Town trying to make headway with the hope of larger middle-class houses along the main road. Here alone is the spirit of Bedford Park perceptible. The first two pairs, Nos 114–120 (Ills 5.22, 23), built speculatively for the estate by Thomas Holland in 1875–6, belong to Jeckyll's brief intersection with Park Town. These villas are more in tune with real Queen Anne houses than most neo-Queen Anne architecture of the 1870s; the closest equivalents are some Hampstead houses by Batterbury & Huxley. They have the same expansive width and bricky tones as the St Philip Street cottages, but are enriched with high hipped roofs, deep coves, big dormers and tall chimneys, gathered into a dramatic central stack on Nos 118–120. Vigour is imparted by advancing the quoins and window dressings slightly from the wall plane. Nos 114–116, with broader frontages than Nos 118–120, were perhaps thought of as a superior type to repeat if a demand for such houses could be provoked. Exceptionally for London houses, the backs

Draft

are as finished as the fronts, and similar in elevation. In the gardens are or were small separate structures which may have been laundry rooms. All four houses were very early converted into flats. Jeckyll's original plans are known only for Nos 118–120, and show squareish rooms with corner fireplaces served by the single grand chimneystack (Ill. 5.24).⁴⁷

Better documented are Nos 102–112 further south. In June 1879 Thomas Jerram Bailey, assistant architect to the School Board for London, applied to build 5 Queen's Road Villas for himself, paired with No. 6, a speculation by the Norfolk-born builder James Howes: these are the present Nos 112 and 110 respectively. The 34-year-old Bailey was at this time E. R. Robson's chief assistant for the plethora of London board schools then erecting, including Tennyson Street School nearby. So he was at home with the Queen Anne style, and Cyril Flower approved his elevation with a few alterations (Ills 5.26). While Bailey's house is reported as built by J. T. McCulloch and Howes's naturally by himself, the two builders shared a Kennington address.⁴⁸

This pair along with its southern neighbours, Nos 102–108 (Ills 5.27, 28), built by Howes and presumably also designed by Bailey, give a sense of his personal style before he took over from Robson at the School Board in the 1880s. All six challenge the repose of the Jeckyll houses. Nos 110–112 are asymmetrical; Bailey's own house rises to a straight gable and has a first-floor drawing room balcony over a coving incised with sunflower patterns, whereas its southern counterpart compensates for plainer fenestration with a large window thrusting through the eaves. Originally, Bailey's home appears to have had a dwarf front wall with fancy iron railing.⁴⁹ At Nos 106–108 front gables are eschewed and the elevation stops at a deep plaster cornice. But the stilted arches supporting sinuous first-floor balconies and the swooping side gables and party walls prefigure the 'go' of the later board schools. Nos 102–104 are coarser, with crowning shaped gables.

Draft

It was at James Howes's instance that these two southernmost pairs were added in 1879–81.⁵⁰ Though a small operator, he had made a good impression and was willing to spend up to £1,200 on each pair, offering the class of house which the Estate had long hoped to see. He was also employed by Cooper on Cedars Cottages, a pair opposite Cedars Terrace. In addition, Howes took on 22 smaller houses on the joint estate in Montefiore Street, just then opening up east of Tennyson Street, along with 7–9 Robertson Street adjacent.

It soon emerged that the renewed effort to woo the middle classes was not working. The 1881 census shows only three of the ten Queen's Road Villas inhabited. A doctor was at No. 114, Bailey in No. 112 and Howes in No. 110; the rest were empty.⁵¹ That June, Knowles reported on Howes's plight: he had 'got somewhat beyond his depth and absolutely needs help to keep him above water ... he is "mortally" harassed – his uniform honesty and integrity in the business transactions on the Estate houses will stand him in stead'. Unable to complete the Montefiore Street houses, Howes fled, then returned only to fail. The job, he wrote, had 'ended as other works on the estate have done – disastrously'. Just after the Queenstown Road villas were surrendered to the proprietors for letting in December 1882, the estate manager was writing: 'I was shocked and grieved at the news of Mr Howes' decease'. In time Bailey exited to Clapham and then Norwood, confirming the rout of the Park Town middle classes.⁵²

Managing the estate

Under Philip Flower there had been little formal estate management. Flower, Nussey & Company did the legal business; Knowles oversaw the development strategy and negotiated with builders; and a clerk of works,

Draft

Charles Merrett, looked after buildings and roads. A confidential man of business, James Gould, in post from at least 1871 until his death in 1893, ran the day-to-day paperwork and decision-making from Flower & Company's Moorgate Street office with calm and competence. He lived first at Addlestone, later at South Norwood, and sometimes looked in at Battersea on his way to or from the City.⁵³

The build-up of Park Town naturally made for more business. But what most changed things was the unanticipated switch to direct renting. Rent collectors and maintenance staff were needed, and the progress of builders had to be organized and watched, as not only the ground but the houses remained the everyday responsibility of the proprietors. All this prompted reforms in 1877-8, with the management of builders and contracts as a priority. By May 1877 J. S. Cooper had been installed at Albert Mansions with a brief covering the maintenance and letting of the flats there for the Flowers, looking after construction on the private estate over the river in Battersea, and managing brick supplies. Around then W. F. Mackenzie was installed in a makeshift office at 3 St Philip's Cottages North (now 28 St Philip Street) as something between a superior clerk of works and a local manager. Mackenzie proved paranoid, scenting conspiracies and fraud everywhere among builders, and had to be fired. He was superseded by Peter Chapman, a long-serving foreman to the builders George Smith & Company. Finally in the summer of 1878 J. Melville Curtis was appointed local estate manager, a role he retained until 1901.⁵⁴

Curtis moved in 1879 into a new estate office added by Zephaniah King on the flank of 18 St Philip Square, where it stayed until it closed almost a hundred years later.⁵⁵ Things now settled down. Ordinary business was transacted between Curtis and Gould, who acted as the conduit to the Flowers and the Saltings. Legal matters continued to be processed through Flower, Nussey & Company, while design, construction and maintenance

Draft

drew in layers of experts: Knowles, Cooper, Chapman or Fox and Tyso, the estate's two senior workmen.

At first Curtis waxed sententious, preaching to Gould about the need for firmness:

in the management of an important Estate as ours...I am proud of the work and enthusiastic to leave marks of good work in the management believing profit will follow to the Proprietors by bringing the tenants into cleanliness and the keeping of their houses tidy.

A more relaxed tone soon settled in, with exchanges between Curtis and Gould on sundry issues. Baby farms, for instance, Curtis thought not 'the most eligible inducement for people of respectability'; Gould replied, 'If it were my Estate I would have if possible one or two creches i.e. houses taken by respectable women to receive and take care *for the day* only of children whose parents both go out to work'.

Laundries too created a potential nuisance, but Gould thought two or three, paying an increased rental, 'a desideratum for the better tenants' convenience'. Curtis wanted to employ ex-policemen to make Sunday patrols, 'as reports of the serious annoyance and disturbance which take place on the Sabbath are current'. There were discussions on rent-collecting methods, Gould insisting on a 'street system'; and Curtis reported the optimism aroused by the freeing of the Thames bridges from tolls in May 1879, an event celebrated on the south side with bunting and wine, partly paid for by the Park Town Estate.⁵⁶

On the community side, part of the ground floor of 18 St Philip Square was converted into a tenants' club in 1879, with reading rooms, Windsor chairs, a good bagatelle table and, to Curtis's regret, beer. At an inaugural

Draft

concert held in the crammed Tennyson Street School, the Hon. Alick Yorke, a crony of the Cyril Flowers, sang comic songs: 'social distinctions and proprieties collapsed[,] everybody so tickled', Curtis reported. He was less sure about a proposed 'harmony meeting' at the Park Town Club every Saturday evening, but pleased to note that the first paper read there was on 'George Stephenson and Engineering' – betraying the tenants' railway affiliations.⁵⁷

The realities of Battersea meant that the estate could not be run just as a money-making business. The Flowers had a pedantic streak; in 1884 Curtis was instructed to send round pamphlets on cholera to the many houses 'where Closets are not inside with Cisterns directly over'. But they and the Saltings were not uncharitable, Arthur Flower in particular having a tender conscience. Once Cyril Flower had been ennobled, he was inundated with requests to be patron of Battersea charities, to subsidise poor children's summer outings to the countryside, and the like. To pleas for money he mostly agreed, while leaving it to the estate staff how much to give.⁵⁸

During Curtis's early years there are regular references to winter distress. Over two days in December 1879 he gave away (with Cyril Flower's permission) 79 tickets entitling recipients to bread and soup.⁵⁹ Distraints for rent and evictions were common, but mercy might be shown. A note from Curtis to Gould brings home the harshness of unskilled lives:

Old Wright the labourer, recently ill, is now incapacitated from further work on the estate, he has been here some years, and like all his class is nearly destitute – he contemplates taking to a greengrocer's barrow with a pony – trusting to his knowledge of the tenants for the chances of a business – the Pony will cost £4, and I think I may suggest that the Proprs would be doing a real charity by assisting this, the oldest workman on their Estate to a means of livelihood.⁶⁰

Draft

The owners' engagement with their estate was uneven. Cyril and Arthur Flower made unpredictable descents on Battersea between their West End and country-house engagements; W. S. Salting also showed up sometimes, his brother George seemingly never. The weekly Wednesday meetings were at first probably held at Moorgate Street or Albert Mansions. As part of the reforms, they transferred to Battersea in 1878. Attendance by the proprietors remained uncertain; not unusually, none turned up, delaying a transaction with a builder waiting cap in hand for interview. No minutes seem to have been taken, and indeed the Park Town archive is devoid of this commonest of records.⁶¹

Before the shift in venue Knowles sometimes made officials suit his convenience at his flat in Albert Mansions, causing resentment. He was reluctant to attend the regular Battersea meetings, but after a strong letter from Arthur Flower promised to send his assistant, George Robson.⁶² This signalled Knowles's growing detachment from Park Town. In 1879 he sold his leasehold interest in 131–139 Queenstown Road to the Estate – at a loss, so he claimed to Gould. Despite his editorial commitments, he remained assiduously attentive to strategic issues of estate layout and road construction until he resigned in 1887. But supervising construction on the joint estate seems to have fallen largely to Robson, who may well have designed the later buildings that appeared over Knowles's signature.

The role of J. S. Cooper

James Smith Cooper's ascent in the Park Town hierarchy was gradual. He was perhaps a surveyor by background, providing the ballast lacking in the mercurial Thomas Jeckyll. In his mid thirties when he was engaged by the Flowers in the 1870s, he lived with his mother at Bishops Stortford, and had a brother who worked as an interior decorator until his early death. Punctilious,

Draft

occasionally prissy, Cooper lacked social confidence. When T. J. Bailey tried to tip him a guinea for his care and courtesy in preparing documentation for his house, he reported the attempted *douceur* officiously to Gould; and though once inveigled into going to the Derby, he vowed he would never do so again. He could certainly be demanding of builders. A shrewd local operator, Walter Peacock, judged him 'too over bearing and hard', while a newcomer complained: 'I am afraid of every bit of work I do being condemned, I have not yet got used to what you require'.⁶³

Following Jeekyll's abrupt departure, his older assistant, Zephaniah King, picked up the left-over design tasks, finishing the cottages along St Philip Street and converting the houses in the square, while the younger Cooper undertook supervision. But from 1878 King built up his own practice and gradually gave up Park Town work, leaving Cooper with wider opportunities. As an architect Cooper was practical, neat but not imaginative, and flexible as to whether he designed buildings himself or supervised and improved others' efforts. He was devoted to Jeekyll's memory. He regularly specified Barnard & Bishop chimneypieces, no doubt those designed by Jeekyll, and occasionally flaunted a monogram in the latter's Japanese style (as did King). Cooper was also sedulously loyal to the Flowers, as ten surviving volumes of his copy-letters attest. If he never acquired their private prestige jobs, they paid him a regular salary.

At first Cooper only supervised buildings on the private estate, and managed the supply of bricks. Hints in dealings with the Frouds and Muspratt suggest that Philip Flower as freeholder had furnished builders with materials. Cooper's correspondence shows that the Park Town builders of the 1870s, working for cash not the reward of leasehold property, depended on the estate for their bricks. Thus could the Flowers control the quality of materials and ensure that builders did not run short during the summer building season. They were not obliged to use the company's bricks,

Draft

but seem usually to have done so, unless supplies failed or were of inferior quality. It was Cooper's task to order from the brickworks, using two suppliers, Eastwood & Company, and H. Millichamp & Company, who liaised with brickmakers in northern Kent. He arranged for barges to deliver to wharves at Nine Elms, where the cargo was checked over and then carted to builders' sites or to two central dumps, next to the square or to the Tennyson Street School. Bricks would then be doled out and accounted for against the builders' charges to the estate. The rapid fluctuations in price had to be borne in mind, as these could work sometimes in favour of storage but sometimes against.

Thus in May 1877 Cooper informs G. N. Street that 34,000 stocks have arrived on the barge *Kate* at Victoria Wharf and been delivered to his site in the square; £89 5s is set against the builder's bill to Flower & Co. for the work. He adds that a further 44,000 grissels (inferior to stocks) are on their way and can be had for 42s per thousand 'alongside', i.e. at the wharf, or plus a cartage charge of 5s 6d if delivered to his site. Grissels, he warns, are not permitted on the joint estate, and cannot be used at Robertson Street. Next month, four freights have not yet arrived from Eastwoods, and Cooper tells Edward Parsons that if he is short he can have 35–36,000 from the numbered stacks in the enclosure by the school. For these bricks Gould deducts 15% from the regular certificates of work completed by Parsons. There are frequent rows about quality. Cooper rejects one freight from Eastwoods ('It appears to me that you send the best bricks to your favoured customers and to us the refuse'), but the suppliers say that as the bricks have been removed from the barge they are no longer their responsibility. This is eventually patched up and Cooper orders half a million more bricks. In a second dispute, he asks advice from S. Taprell Holland of Holland & Hannen, who sends their chief foreman bricklayer to inspect a cargo and corroborate Cooper's suspicions. Later Cooper tries to circumvent the dealers by going to Sittingbourne and

Draft

ordering bricks directly, but suppliers there cannot fill his order, so he is thrown back on the merchants.⁶⁴

Cooper's letter-books offer rare glimpses of decision-making in the lower echelons of the Victorian building process. As the Flowers were building to rent, their agents took more upon themselves than they would have done with speculating builders. The fullest record concerns the short-lived Cedars Cottages, built by James Howes for the estate in 1880–1 to Cooper's own designs. He first sends Howes a tracing for the elevations, followed by a half-inch detail drawing and then details of various mouldings – for the string course, brick pediment and pilaster capitals. The plan is not referred to. But in sending a full-size drawing for the stair newel, Cooper mentions that he is thinking of adding a small stair out of the scullery in the larger cottage, to be treated as an extra. He next designs a chimneypiece, but worries about the cost of ranges and promises Howes to look for a cheap one in the City 'unless you can send me a circular of something you think will do'. At the painting stage Cooper specifies colours and finishes – green for the outside doors and for the best bedrooms, but red for the woodwork of the hall and landing, and different styles of graining for the living room and kitchen. But this specification is not followed, and a spat between Cooper and Curtis arises when on the latter's say-so one of the entrance doors is grained, not painted. Cedars Cottages may have been exceptional (one of the pair was tenanted by Cyril Flower's butler). But the private estate's engagement with interiors at this time is confirmed by a note of 1877 from Cooper to Walter Nash asking him to 'please send your pattern books here at once', no doubt so that Cooper or perhaps Cyril Flower can choose wallpapers for the first of Nash's St Philip Street cottages.⁶⁵

Cedars Cottages is a rare example of Cooper making a new design during his earlier Park Town years. More frequently he amended others' designs. Builders' plans had often to be changed to comply with the district

Draft

surveyor's or the Estate's own demands, while angular corner sites, in which Park Town abounded, often required individual treatment. After Knowles's resignation W. S. Salting thought there might be no need for an estate architect, 'considering the houses are built very much on one plan'. But Cooper was retained from 1888, and had a marked effect on Park Town's later development, as will next be seen.⁶⁶

Development completed, 1880–1910

Better management coincided with stabler building conditions in Battersea during the 1880s and 90s. So Park Town progressed with the usual fits and starts, but not the wrenches that had marred its early fortunes. The results were less distinctive than the architecture of Knowles's prime, but more suitable.

In 1880 there were still few buildings along Queenstown Road south of the railways. The triangle to its east was further forward than its western counterpart, as St Philip Street had been completed, but it was also larger, so equal ground remained to cover on both sides. Beyond Silverthorne Road, the estate's outlying portion was almost full, and the easternmost section (Motley Street) was being disposed of. Several roads did not yet exist.

First off the mark was Montefiore Street, named after Constance Flower's nonagenarian great-uncle, Sir Moses Montefiore. This and its neighbour Gambetta Street, honouring the French radical statesman Léon Gambetta, were confirmed in 1879 despite some hankering after the name Rossetti. Short parallel streets between Thackeray Road and Robertson Street, they completed the layout east of Queenstown Road.⁶⁷ Montefiore Street pioneered the two-storey artisan street typical of the estate's later years. Its west side, designed by Knowles or Robson (Ill. 5.29), was the scene of James

Draft

Howes' débâcle in 1881, leaving the opposite flank to be added mainly in 1884 by the brothers Arthur and Walter Peacock (Ill. 5.30). Gambetta Street's construction followed much later, from 1898.⁶⁸

West of Queenstown Road there was still enough empty ground for Croggon & Company's iron tent, 200ft by 120ft, to be raised for six weeks during the 'Clapham' leg of Moody and Sankey's London revivalist mission in 1884. Not until mid-1886 did Knowles apply to form Prairie Street, Ingelow and Emu Roads (first suggested as Lowell Street, Gladstone Road and Flower Street). The plain houses that filled up the ground belied these names, blending flavours of genteel literature and the outback.⁶⁹

The challenge of the early 1880s was Queenstown Road itself. Though the Wesleyans built a spanking chapel near its south end in 1881–2, and a humbler congregation put up a non-denominational church near the Broughton Street corner, the wealthier classes stayed aloof. After the advent of trams in 1881, the Estate reconciled itself to duller development with plenty of shops. Two reliable builders did much to further that aim.

The more famous name is Holloway Brothers, later national and international contractors.⁷⁰ There were five Holloway brothers, children of a Wiltshire builder who had moved to London. The oldest, James Holloway, set up in 1875, soon basing himself at Marmion Road, Lavender Hill, and amassing speculative and contract work. When his younger brothers Thomas and Henry Holloway asked to become partners, James declined. So in 1882 they started their own firm, took a site on the west side of Queenstown Road south of the railways and built themselves well-equipped premises known as the Victoria Works (Ill. 5.31); the front buildings survive as Nos 233–235. Southwards from here down to Broughton Street they added Victoria Place, now 195–231 Queenstown Road, a range of nine-room houses.⁷¹ Behind this three-storey terrace at 1A–E Broughton Street stands the remnant of the first

Draft

large factory to appear on the estate, King's Bread and Biscuit Company's works of 1882–3, later enlarged.

Holloways went on to inaugurate the new western streets with some small houses at 1–17 Prairie Street (1886–7). They also added shops in front of the unsuccessful Cedars Terrace to Zephaniah King's designs.⁷² Unlike Victoria Place, both of these jobs were undertaken directly for the estate, not as leasehold speculations. Holloway Brothers built no further in Park Town, as they dropped ordinary house-building after James Holloway died of typhoid in 1889 and they inherited his contracting interests. Rapid expansion followed, until the firm moved away to Belvedere Road, Lambeth, in 1899. During their Battersea years, all the Holloways were pillars of the Queen's Road Methodist Church—built by brother James. Henry Holloway, the driving force behind Holloway Brothers and later knighted, lived at 6 Queen's Road Villas (110 Queenstown Road) and took upon himself some tasks of local poor relief.⁷³

The other significant builder was Walter Peacock, one of three Essex-born brothers with a range of interests in Brixton, Clapham (where he lived) and Battersea. After providing some small houses on the Beaufoy estate adjacent to Park Town (1880–3), Peacock eased into the district where the estates converged south of Stanley Grove. South of the Methodist Church he built the shops of Brook Terrace, now 29–41 Queenstown Road (1882–3), while on the narrow strip next south (beyond the Battersea boundary) he incorporated the two Cedars Cottages into Queen's Terrace (1883), now replaced by open space. North of Stanley Grove, under an agreement of April 1885 Peacock started Hartington Terrace (so named by Cyril Flower), a parade of seven shops with a pub at the south end and stabling and workshops behind. Another builder continued the run to match in 1888, so completing the present 43–65 Queenstown Road.⁷⁴ Across the road, Peacock took land north of Cedars Terrace and the Heathwall sewer to build Nos 28–34 (1884).

Draft

Beyond these houses Knowles's layout was changed at his suggestion, allowing Robertson Street to debouch into Queenstown Road in a straight line, instead of curving to align with Stanley Grove opposite.⁷⁵ Peacock and his brother Arthur also built in Montefiore Street, mentioned above. Of his later activities more will be said below.

During the 1880s takers were coming forward with alacrity, and it became possible to revert to leasing. 'There are so many builders now enquiring about the land ... I had two more builders here yesterday afternoon', wrote Knowles (or perhaps George Robson) to Gould in April 1887. All were vetted, yet many still failed, by not taking up their agreements or by walking away leaving sites half-complete. That happened in 1885 with thirteen houses started by one H. E. Bailey in Silverthorne Road, leaving the Estate to take on the works, roofing in those near completion, buying in doors and window frames from one of the Peacocks and even, if Curtis's suggestion was followed, replanning those hardly started.⁷⁶

The advances the Estate regularly made were not enough, according to one referee: 'from my knowledge of builders in general ... there is not one in a hundred that can carry out satisfactorily the building of houses with only 50% advance'. Yet builders now often returned for fresh takes. Between about 1889 and 1902, for instance, the loose associates Arthur Edgar Balls and Horace Hubbard were both building at Park Town almost continuously on the leasehold system. Payments in advance still obtained, but were now treated as mortgage charges on the builder.⁷⁷

The great change of the 1880s was in the type of dwellings built. From early in that decade conventional houses were proving harder to let, as Battersea filled up with similar artisan dwellings. Local supply now exceeded demand, noted Curtis: 'the influx of fresh inhabitants from over the water (particularly) are but as units to the number of houses which have been built

Draft

in the district within the past two or three years'. Knowles attributed the problem to rent rises such as were imposed in Motley Street before it was sold, and to an experiment in letting houses by the quarter, not the week. But Curtis thought the accommodation to blame; unlike many new houses near by, Motley Street had no first-floor sculleries (a concession to the reality of multi-occupation), no bathrooms and no Venetian blinds, while access to the scullery possessing the only tap was external.⁷⁸ Pressure came to bear on Knowles to provide bathrooms for Montefiore Street, but he stoutly resisted:

It is not as if the houses were generally in one occupation they are as you know in such cases ... divided into two tenancies. The Bath room therefore must either be shared between the tenants – or given over to the tenants of 3 rooms. In either case I believe the result would be very unsatisfactory ... the Baths would be perpetually out of order – and likely to injure the premises – the high pressure hot water boiler would frequently burst and might give rise to bad accidents – and the whole thing would entail a constant outlay for repairs ... Why not build a separate Bath establishment on the estate if (which I doubt) baths are of much importance to it?⁷⁹

The baths question was tossed about for some years, to drop in 1887 when it turned out that the Battersea Vestry meditated substantial baths of its own. Meanwhile the bath-less Montefiore Street houses had not let well. In the later, Peacock-built houses in that street, probably planned by Cooper, there were kitchens and sculleries on both floors, acknowledging that each address housed separate upper and lower flats, though served by a single front door.⁸⁰ For a while this semblance of a standard two-storey house was maintained, for instance along the northern stretch of Ingelow Road, most of Prairie Street and the north side of Bewick Street. Some such houses were builder's designs of unknown internal arrangement, but drawings for the upper west side of Ingelow Road (1888–92) show that here too Cooper was producing or adapting a version of this 'cottage flat' type, whereby two flats pretend to be a single house.⁸¹

Once Cooper took over as surveyor to the whole estate from 1888 he began experimenting with buildings that were candidly cottage flats. For Daniel Thompson's ground in Tennyson Street he immediately sketched out a shallow, double-fronted plan like that adopted by Jeckyll in St Philip Street, only with one dwelling per floor (Ill. 5.33). It was not built, though the pairs Nos 56–57 & 58–59 come close.⁸² To the south, at Nos 38–51, Cooper next came up with what was to become the standard cottage-flat arrangement for deeper plots (Ill. 5.34). The fronts have a recessed porch for the two doors, and a slight bay-like projection with two windows (Ill. 5.35). Inside, the back extension is deep enough to end in an extra bedroom on ground level, while in the upper flat a child's bedroom is squeezed over the door. There were alternatives, as at 39–63 Robertson Street (1888–9), where the builder, F. C. Green, was allowed a clumsy adaptation of the normal house-type complete with pinched bay window.⁸³

After 1890 this austere type, varied slightly according to the builder, dominated the minor streets. It had its first big outing under Walter Peacock in the southern stretch of Ingelow Road (Nos 55–117), going on to be the staple of Emu Road, Gambetta Street, the southern end of Tennyson Street and elsewhere. Horace Hubbard put up the best part of a hundred of these flatted houses between 1897 and 1902. Other builders' plans often needed vetting. As late as 1901 Cooper sententiously notes of W. H. Atkinson's plans for six houses in Emu Road, a street almost wholly of cottage flats with these standard fronts: 'I called his attention to one or two serious faults which he fully saw. My plan was then shown him and he wishes to build on this plan'.⁸⁴ Cooper also had to devise 'specials' for the many corner or left-over plots imposed by Park Town's diagonals. A good example is the short block at 55–61 Broughton Street (1894–5), where the type is adapted to an awkwardly shallow triangle.

Draft

Flats were by no means confined to this two-storey cottage type. Hitherto the Estate had hoped intermittently that the middle-class market would pick up and that the St Philip Square houses, part-converted in the 1870s, could be taken back into single tenancies. By 1890 that hope had expired. Cooper now devised permanent conversions of the big Knowles houses here and in Church Terrace opposite (131–149 Queenstown Road). On the main road flank of 28–35 St Philip Square, a whole new block of flats at the back was appended in 1895. Around this time Cooper claimed to have converted thirty such houses into workmen's dwellings, as they were candidly called; even Queen's Road Villas were not exempt.⁸⁵

Building along Queenstown Road after 1890 was also exclusively in flats (or flats over shops). At first sight these three-storey ranges look different from the cottage flats, but they follow a similar pattern with an added storey and adjusted plan. The square bays project further than in the back streets, and are stopped off above the first floor with capped roofs or balustrades. The balustraded ranges (Nos 67–107 on the west side and 50–98 and 174–218 on the east) seem all to be due to Walter Peacock, whose architect or draughtsman cheered up their elevations with jolly detailing. Nos 67–107, then numbered as continuing Hartington Terrace, were leased by Peacock in 1893 to various takers, ten of them to David Reid, an engineer from Liverpool.⁸⁶

Plainer, later ranges in Queenstown Road on a similar elevational pattern are Nos 122–142 and 146–162 on the east side and 151–173 and 239–247 on the west, mostly built by A. E. Balls to designs by the local architect Herbert Bignold. The prototype was Nos 122–142 Queenstown Road, originally Ingate Terrace (1899). Shops had been considered here, but Arthur Flower endorsed Cooper's view that 'Queen's Road is not at present fully ripe for building shops, and it may not be for some years to come'. The range consists of eight units or houses of six flats each, each unit being leased to

Draft

Balls as it was finished. An arch in the centre led through to a yard reserved for his operations. Once he had finished Ingate Terrace, Balls moved across the road to 151–173 (Newland Terrace) opposite, and then back to 146–162 (Victoria Terrace), whose south end was finished off by a different builder in 1903.⁸⁷

By 1904, forty years after it had been started, Park Town was all but complete; among the last dwellings were a range on the west side of Silverthorne Road, some infills in the western sector, and a row of outliers at the top of Beaufoy Road's east side (now demolished). In acknowledgement a fresh estate plan was drawn by Cooper.⁸⁸ Despite the difficulties its core had turned out to be a distinct, disciplined entity. But it was far from a coherent freehold estate, for by then sales had bitten into its fabric. The episodic auctions of properties north of the railways, the sale of outlying Motley Street, and the disposals of various parcels for railway-widening were not of great moment. What changed things was the Estate's willingness to sell to almost any builder willing and able to buy.

Probably this policy began with the spendthrift Cyril Flower. In 1887 an exchange of views took place after the Battersea builder Alfred Boon asked to buy a block of joint estate land west of Ingelow Road. Flower was keen to sell ('I say get the best price we can'), but W. S. Salting disagreed ('My own belief is that it is a mistake to sell freehold land in the heart of the estate, especially as builders seem to be coming forward now with offers to build on the leasehold'). The offer was rejected. But as Arthur Flower pointed out, nothing prevented the Flowers selling pieces of the private estate. That they soon started to do, with Walter Peacock and the Holloway brothers first in the queue.⁸⁹ Peacock in particular bought whenever he could, before or after building. In this way several chunks were taken out of the estate.

Draft

So by 1900 Park Town was by no means entirely uniform. Many parcels along Queenstown Road had been alienated; others were held under long leases issued to non-residents, reassigned as the years went by; on others, tenants rented their small dwellings directly from the Estate. Around the railways an accumulation of industries had grown up. A few, like the biscuit factory next to Holloways' works, or the cranky premises of the army cap-makers R. Z. Bloomfield & Company at 220 Queenstown Road (1889-90) lay on the estate, but others belonged to neighbouring freeholds, notably the so-called Milford Estate of the builders J. M. Macey & Son off Ingate Place, developed commercially from about 1878. Here a Salvation Army hall and a depot for the South London Tramways Company were overshadowed in 1900-3 by the towering Hampton's Depository.⁹⁰ Along the eastern boundary, the Longhedge railway works were starting to decline, but still employed many Park Towners.

On the social side, the Park Town (later Queen's) Theatre facing Prairie Street was a short-lived local attraction between 1886 and 1896. The Tennyson Street School underwent a big expansion eastwards in 1900-1, while the purposes of St Philip's parish were furthered by a mission hall at the south-east corner of Tennyson Street and Thackeray Road in 1894-5.⁹¹ This, the last of the Battersea church-related commissions by William White, has now gone (see vol. 49).

The 1901 census shows that though Park Town had recovered from its shaky start, it had not sloughed off its humble destiny. The converted flats of St Philip Square, for instance, housed plenty of white-collar workers, but most were mere clerks. Manual workmen still abounded, and if building tradesmen were less prominent, railway employees were as common as ever. The new flatted dwellings reduced but did not stamp out multi-occupation. In Gambetta Street, new in 1901, the cottage flats were largely confined to a single family with at most one boarder. Here some modern skilled trades had

Draft

joined the railwaymen, bricklayers and carpenters: a typewriter machine foreman, a refrigerator engineer and an electrical instrument maker. Around this time Charles Booth's investigators were impressed by the management and condition of the estate, which they linked with Shaftesbury Park to its west as 'a kind of social fortress' within barbarian Battersea.⁹²

Park Town since 1914

Like Battersea as a whole, Park Town peacefully and shabbily declined between the wars. In 1922 a partition of the joint estate took place, the Flower interests in both this and the private estate having descended to the heirs of Arthur Flower, since his brother Cyril had no children. All the properties that fell by this settlement to the Salting heirs, W. S. Salting's widow Millicent and daughter Lady Binning, were promptly sold, leaving the Flower Trust in possession of the rump.⁹³

When the Second World War broke out, Park Town was much as it had been at the start of the First. Given the railways' proximity, it escaped with light bomb damage. The worst was on the west side of Montefiore Street and the south end of Tennyson Street, where three ranges were holed irreparably (see Ill. 0.15). In 1950 the London County Council took advantage of this rent in the fabric to propose an open space of nearly four acres running from St Philip Street to Montefiore Street in one direction and from Robertson Street to Thackeray Road in the other. As neither Clapham Common nor Battersea Park was far distant, and as further open spaces were envisaged on the Motley Street site and on Queen's Terrace, at the bottom of Queenstown Road, the Estate's consultants, Edwin Evans & Sons, robustly opposed the plan. Most of it was dropped, but on the bombed site itself Montefiore Gardens was created. Heathbrook Park, however, obliterated the slums of Motley Street and the east side of St Rule Street, while a scrappy space opened

Draft

up between Queenstown and Beaufoy Roads opposite Cedars Terrace. A pocket park appeared also on a minor bomb-site at 141–147 Queenstown Road, fragmenting the hapless Church Terrace.⁹⁴

Apart from some council housing, new building since the Second World War has consisted mainly of unmemorable replacements and infills. The two council estates, at opposite extremities of the original Park Town entity, are of wholly different character. Most of the remnants north of the LBSCR line, notably the shops along Battersea Park Road west of Queenstown Road and the top end of St George's Street, disappeared in the late 1960s for the easternmost section of the Doddington and Rollo Estates (pages ##, ##).

A quieter treatment was accorded to the Dickens Street, Silverthorne Road, Robertson Street and St Rule Street rectangle. What is known as the Robertson Street Estate, replacing Froude, Ruskin and Trollope Streets, began with Battersea Council infill developments on minor bombed sites, some three-storey flats at 42–48 Silverthorne Road (1951–2), and two terraces, the present 10–15 Dickens Street and 30–35 Coleridge Close (1962–3).⁹⁵ In 1967 Wandsworth Council voted to redevelop the rest of the block. The scheme came forward in 1970 to designs by in-house architects under Wandsworth's Director of Development; houses covered most of the ground, while flats (named Scott Court after Sir Walter Scott, continuing the literary names of the district) lay towards Silverthorne Road. The planning favoured the village intimacy and broken-up frontages then in vogue, access to front doors being mainly from the internal Coleridge Close and Radcliffe Path. The pitch-roofed houses updated the earlier terraces, substituting large red bricks for the previous standard buff ones. The estate was constructed by Wandsworth's Building Works Department in 1972–5, amidst contractual difficulties.⁹⁶

The whole of Robertson Street's south side was transferred from Battersea to Clapham in 1900 (and hence after 1965 to Lambeth). Here

Draft

demolitions of 1860s Park Town houses took place, the whole of the west end giving way in the 1970s to part of Lambeth Council's Heath Road Estate.

In 1976 the Park Town Estate controlled 423 properties out of some 1,300 dwellings that had been built. That decade saw a trickle of freehold sales, mainly under the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act. The Flower Trust now decided to throw in the sponge, and put up the surviving freeholds for auction at the end of 1978. After consultation with Wandsworth Council they were sold by private treaty to the Peabody Trust in January 1979 for £3.2 million, with the proviso that the estate would be preserved as an entity and tenancies protected. Much modernization has since taken place, but the social and physical integrity of Park Town has been maintained by the new owners. Apart from the shops at Queenstown Road's south end, where the opening of a short-lived fish restaurant in 1999 inaugurated a trend, at the time of writing signs of contemporary consumer culture remain few.⁹⁷

Gonsalva Road area

This postscript to Park Town covers a small, lowly and demolished development on an independent freehold beyond the estate's eastern boundary. This was the Gonsalva Road area, built around 1879–84 on a thin rectangle running north-west to south-east between the Motley Street houses and a branch of the LBSCR line as it approached Factory Junction, north of Wandsworth Road. While most of this land was in Battersea, its south end lay in Clapham parish. Its freehold at the time of construction was owned by Emma Elsdon, wife of a middling Clapham builder, William Elsdon, suggesting that it had been bought for development.⁹⁸

The layout consisted of a shallow U-shaped road with an elongated base (Ill. 5.37), called Gonsalva Road after a Spanish noble family for reasons

Draft

now lost, and Portslade Road, alongside the railway and therefore with houses on one side alone. The whole was accessible only from Wandsworth Road, as the Park Town proprietors declined access to their land through Motley Place, where a wall blocked the stub street made out of Gonsalva Road in that hope. The houses seem to have been entirely standard ones (Ill. 5.38). Of some 120, about 55 were built by William Merrifield, the next biggest contributor being George Bentley.⁹⁹ Following resolutions by the London County Council in 1962, the whole area was purchased and demolished. The northern or Battersea end of the ground became the eastern portion of Heathbrook Park, while the southern end is covered by part of the Westbury Estate. Portslade Road survives as a long cul-de-sac against the railway; Gonsalva Road was abolished, though a portion of its roadway survives.¹⁰⁰