

Lavender Sweep Area

Lavender Sweep today presents as countless other Battersea streets of three-up, three-down terraced houses of the 1880s. Its origins, though, lie a century earlier, its distinctive crescent layout the creation of Peter James Bennett, a developer of the 1780s. Though the five rus-in-urbe villas he built there have gone, the outlines of their spacious grounds between Lavender Hill and Battersea Rise, running west to St John's Road and east to Lavender Walk, can still be traced in the streets laid out by his Victorian successors. Immediately east of Bennett's estate were two even larger villas, begun in the 1770s on another landholding: West Lodge (also demolished) and the Shrubbery, the only one of this area's old houses to survive. From the 1860s they too lost their long gardens to denser housing. These Georgian estates and their subsequent redevelopment form the subject of this chapter (Ills 14.1, 2).

Altenburg Gardens, the first of the speculative builders' houses to go up, in the 1860s, perhaps enhanced the old-world charm of the earlier villas and their wealthy mercantile owners as much as they threatened it. They were very large suburban dwellings in a classical style, aimed at a high class of tenant, in an area still noted for its sylvan character. But behind this advance guard a very different and breathless wave of development came in the 1880s – dense terraces aimed at the lower-middle and working classes. Only the double-fronted houses of Lavender Gardens, built in the grounds of the Shrubbery, suggested any social ambition. All this was emblematic of the southwards shift in Battersea's centre of gravity, culminating in the 1890s in a succession of new public buildings and shopping parades on Lavender Hill, which became Battersea's de facto high street.

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However, within barely twenty years the pattern of house-occupation here had changed yet again and the social standing had tumbled further. The large new middle-class houses of the 1880s had, by the turn of the century, generally fallen into multiple-occupation as flats and lodging houses. And the smaller houses in the streets around Lavender Sweep, predominantly home to single families when new, increasingly were let out in floors to two, or sometimes three households.¹ Builders responded in the early 1900s by erecting purpose-built flats in Barnard Road, on the site of one of the last remaining villas, where roomier apartments and self-containment attracted a better class of resident.

Since then the conversion of houses to flats – particularly in the streets either side of Lavender Walk, where gardens are small – has continued. Conversely, some of the vast houses of Lavender Gardens, in multiple-occupation for a century or more, have recently been turned back into single-family homes as part of the area's return to fashion.

Villa developments, 1770s–80s

Thinly populated before the mid eighteenth century and far removed from Battersea village and the riverside, this area as it became developed was, like other parts of Battersea parish around the common, generally regarded as an offshoot of Clapham. But even before the late-Georgian villa-building boom, there was a small genteel presence here. Advertisements of the 1720s mention two brick houses 'pleasantly seated' on the common's north side, and another 'small house' near by at Washingham Lane, with stabling and a chaise-house.²

The acquisition by the 1st Earl Spencer of Battersea manor in 1763 and his immediate disposal of large portions beside the common for building attracted new and wealthy settlers. The great majority were City men, attracted by the common's

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rural environs, open outlook and convenient location. In 1764 Robert Lovelace, a partner in Child's Bank, paid Spencer £3,500 for around 72 acres of land split between the north and west sides of Clapham Common.³ The smaller tranche on the north side – fields of some thirteen acres known as West Furlongs and Furzzey Close – adjoined Isaac Akerman's Sister Houses of the 1750s and this proximity contributed to disagreement and a court case. Lovelace claimed to have made his purchase in order to safeguard the view from the very large house he was building for himself opposite, on the common's west side (page ##). Akerman countered that he, too, had expected to take possession of this land, where he had staked a claim of sorts by building a hovel or cow-house. In the end Lovelace must have prevailed, for when most of the ground here was cleared of what little fabric there was in the 1770s, it was for the building by Lovelace of two large, speculative villas in copious grounds – the Shrubbery and West Lodge.⁴

The Shrubbery

The grand Italianate mansion known since the 1860s as the Shrubbery once presented a very different face to the world. Today it is a large house in a small garden, hemmed in by later buildings. When first erected it was a smallish but 'genteel' house, with a coach-house, stables and out-buildings, and a 7-acre garden that stretched from Clapham Common to Lavender Hill – a 'rural situation, environed with trees'. In those days the house's only immediate neighbours were Akerman's Sister Houses to the east and an older 'small neat dwelling', about 20ft square, on the common further west.⁵

Construction of the house seems to have taken place in the late 1770s. Its first certain occupant was Richard Jackson, perhaps the East Smithfield distiller of that name, in residence by 1781. When he died in 1792 and his lease was sold, there were five 'good' bedrooms, two dressing rooms, two 'comfortable' parlours as well as a kitchen, pantry, wash-house and cellars. This equates to the central part of the south

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range of the house today, where eighteenth-century basement walls confirm the villa's early footprint (Ill. 14.3). An oval roof-light in the central first-floor room, surrounded by a frieze of bucrania and swags, probably marks the position of the original staircase hall.⁶

The next long-term occupant was Isaac Railton (1794–c.1807), a Cheapside linen draper originally from Cumberland, where he held property, and who felt himself of sufficient prominence to have his portrait painted by John Opie, the Cornish wild man. He may also have been the Isaac Railton who in December 1792 was on the special jury that outlawed Thomas Paine as author of the *Rights of Man*.⁷ Railton had been Lovelace's tenant since 1787 in the 'small neat dwelling' near by. After Lovelace's death in 1796, Railton acquired the freehold to both houses, living at what became the Shrubbery and letting the smaller one to a series of short-term tenants. Three of his four children were born at here (including the architect William Railton, designer of Nelson's column), and Railton extended the house considerably in 1805 with a bay to either side – marked by the large windows at either end of the south elevation (Ill. 14.4) – as well as a large square addition on the north or garden side, later removed. (A service stair west of this probably dates from the same period.)⁸ Rooms at the front of the house retain doors, doorcases and fire surrounds that appear to date from Railton's improvements.

Railton left shortly afterwards for Mayfair, and the newly extended house attracted an owner of stature: George Scholey, a City hop merchant and distiller, originally from Sandal, near Wakefield, who in 1805 had become an Alderman of Dowgate Ward, where he owned the Old Swan in Upper Thames Street; he was Lord Mayor in 1812–13. Prior to his move here in 1807, Scholey had been living further east on the common at a more modest villa (see page #). An alderman 'of the old school, industrious, precise, affluent, hospitable, and a Tory', Scholey was also, like many Claphamites, a supporter of various more-or-less evangelical causes, including the Philanthropic Society.⁹

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Worth £120,000 at his death in 1839, Scholey was said to be an 'economical liver' and appears to have made no substantial changes to the house, which was next inhabited by his son and heir William Stephenson Scholey, a bachelor barrister.¹⁰ After Scholey junior's departure in 1843, the house was occupied by the Balham builder John Loat, of the extended family of builders and building craftsmen active in Clapham, Balham and Wandsworth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Loat was there to make some extensive additions for the next wealthy resident, John Humphery, in advance of his arrival in 1845. These included an enfiladed suite of three grand reception rooms on the north (garden) front – a dining room, circular drawing room and state drawing room, together nearly 100ft in length – the central one with a double-height bow to its exterior, embellished with giant-order Corinthian half-columns (Ill. 14.5). Behind these Loat also inserted a new principal staircase, opening off a grand central hall. The hall is topped with a saucer dome, open in its centre to a galleried hall above, lit by a hexagonal cupola, all decorated in and out with vigorously modelled Italianate plasterwork and stucco typical of the era (Ills 14.6, 7). Humphery celebrated with a 'great dance' at the house to mark its completion. His family were to retain ownership for the next forty years.¹¹

No architect for this phase of work has come to light, though the designer may have been Loat, who is known to have styled himself 'architect' on occasion. But, whoever it was, his opulent enhancements were entirely appropriate for a man of Humphery's standing. He was another City man, MP for Southwark ('a stanch [sic] and consistent Reformer'), and a tallow chandler and wharfinger, who had inherited Hay's Wharf on Tooley Street in 1838. He was also another Lord Mayor (in 1842–3).¹²

On Humphery's death in September 1863 the Shrubbery passed to a trustee body for the benefit of his eleven children, several of whom were still minors.¹³ The new tenant, once Mrs Humphery had moved out in 1864, was Michael Spartali, a prominent figure in London's tight-knit Greek community (later Greek Consul General). He and his family had business interests in shipping, commodity trading

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and finance, with branches in Marseilles and Alexandria. Spartali's artistic daughters Marie and Christina were 'discovered' by Whistler and Rossetti at the Tulse Hill house of another Greek merchant, Alexander Ionides.¹⁴

Spartali entertained his daughter's artistic friends, collected still-lives by Fantin-Latour, and decorated his home on the Isle of Wight in the Aesthetic taste; but his political interests always trumped his artistic ones. The painter Charles Hallé recalled meeting both Giuseppe Mazzini and Alexander Herzen on visits to Spartali at Clapham Common.¹⁵ The sale of the Shrubbery's furnishings after Spartali's bankruptcy in 1885 suggests a more conventional 'luxe' European taste, consistent with the house's status as the magnate's principal London home. A riotous marble fireplace surviving in one of the grand north reception rooms (another was stolen in 1985) probably dates from his time. There were also Old Master paintings, carved oak furniture, tortoiseshell and bühl cabinets, a pietra dura mantel clock, large chandeliers and 'gasaliers', a Spanish mahogany bookcase, and much more. The poisonous novelist Vernon Lee had called the Shrubbery 'the great ostentatious, Jewy house of the Spartolos [sic]'. W. M. Rossetti (whose own house Lee found 'grimy, filthy, aesthetic') called it, more kindly, 'handsome, showy'.¹⁶

Certainly all this fits its description as an 'Italianate mansion' when auctioned that year. As well as Humphery's 'lofty suite' of 'richly decorated' reception rooms, there was on the ground floor a second dining room and billiard room, either side of the entrance hall and vestibule, as well as a library and conservatory. The first floor had nine principal bedrooms, three dressing rooms, two bathrooms, a boudoir and morning room, with the second floor given over to servants' accommodation. To the west, stabling adjoined that of the neighbouring mansion, West Lodge (see below). Following the sale Spartali left for a presumably penurious retirement on the Isle of Wight, where he died aged 95 in 1914, leaving just £265 12s.¹⁷

According to the auctioneer, the Shrubbery's site offered 'a most valuable buildings speculation', and the estate was indeed acquired in 1885 by a builder-

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developer, Alfred Heaver, who laid out Lavender Gardens in the grounds (see below). The house itself was to have been pulled down, but instead was sold that December along with the 'neat dwelling' (home to a succession of gardeners, coachmen and housemaids since the 1840s), which by then had been separated from the Shrubbery by Lavender Gardens.¹⁸ The buyer was the Rev. Francis Henry Baring, of the banking family, a sometime incumbent of St Matthew's, Rush Hill Road, who resided at the Shrubbery for a few years, 'using the large rooms for classes and the like'. Baring had intended to establish a church here, but instead took off to good works in India, whereupon the Vicar of Battersea, Canon Erskine Clarke, bought the house and moved his Vicarage School here in 1887. The 'neat dwelling' was sold around 1893 to Sydney Stern, owner of West Lodge and its gardens. He thereby acquired the whole Clapham Common frontage between Altenburg and Lavender Gardens and soon developed it with 117–122 Clapham Common North Side (see below).¹⁹

Erskine Clarke and a fellow cleric, the evangelically minded G. Martin Claris, the new vicar of St Matthew's, had in mind a new church close to the streets of houses then going up off Clapham Common. In 1895 Erskine Clarke sold Martin Claris the Shrubbery's front garden, and his new church of St Barnabas was erected there in 1897–8, eclipsing entirely the house's view of the common and severing any hopes of a return to private use. Most of what remained of the Shrubbery's back garden was sold for development as 14–30 Lavender Gardens in 1902 (see below).²⁰

In 1911–12 the now much-denuded house was divided in two by the Westminster builders F. C. Hoskins & Company, the south half becoming St Barnabas's Vicarage, the north its parish hall.²¹ In 1928–9 a new vicarage was built in the grounds (12 Lavender Gardens, since demolished), leaving only a sliver of garden on the Shrubbery's north side. Although by 1949 permission had been given for its conversion to a 'home for old and infirm lady-folk', the old mansion remained in use as a parish hall for nearly 40 years, with the first floor divided into two flats. An application by the church to demolish it was refused in 1969, and when it was

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finally sold to a developer in 1985 was in 'a very dilapidated state'. It was converted to sixteen flats in 1988–9 for Calibre Building Ltd.²²

West Lodge (demolished)

Immediately west of the Shrubbery, and with a similar genesis as part of Robert Lovelace's estate, there stood until the 1890s a villa known as West Lodge, its name perhaps commemorating the West Furlongs field on which it was built, probably in the 1770s.²³ Its site is now taken up by housing in Altenburg Gardens.

Until around 1805 West Lodge was 'a small pleasant white house', probably very similar to the Shrubbery in its original form. A John Phillips was Lovelace's tenant here from 1773 (when the house appears to have been new-built) until 1785, when he was succeeded by Joseph Barlow, possibly the City merchant and member of the Fishmongers' Company of that name (d.1798). When Barlow left West Lodge in 1796, he held a sale of contents which, as well as 'capital pier glasses, library bookcases and an eight-day clock by Dutton', included 'melon frames, a stack of hay and a milch cow' – a mix of modern comforts and bucolic self-sufficiency typical of a mini-estate on Clapham Common in the late eighteenth century. Barlow was replaced by George Goldsmid, of the Anglo-Dutch family of bankers and bullion dealers, and a prominent member of the Great Synagogue since the 1760s.²⁴

When Goldsmid left in 1804 the freehold of the house was acquired by William Holme, whose identity is uncertain; he may have been the Borough ironmonger of that name, or perhaps an Upper Thames Street distiller (of Holme, Wilson & Sewell). West Lodge doubled in size when Holme moved in, and possibly it was rebuilt for him by the architect and landscape designer Humphry Repton.²⁵ Undated coloured drawings by Repton survive for the north and south fronts of a house 'to be built on Clapham Common by William Holme' (Ill. 14.8). These show two principal storeys over a basement, the south front heavily windowed to take in

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views of the common; a carriage arch to the side gave access to a rear coach-yard. The main entrance, marked by a portico of twinned Ionic columns between shallow projecting bays with floor-to-ceiling windows, was on the garden or north front. It is uncertain if this Repton design was ever executed; if it was, the arched carriage bay with room over, linking house and stable, was probably not built.

Holme's successor in 1814 was John Rapp, a naturalized Swiss merchant, dealing since at least 1789 in indigo, among other things. He was to remain at West Lodge until his death in 1834. After Rapp came John Nixon, a retired City corn factor. In Nixon's time the house had a circular drive in front and a formal lawn with walkways on the west side centred on a detached glasshouse. Nixon died in 1841, leaving West Lodge to his daughter Margaret and son-in-law Dr Thomas Robert Jefferson.²⁶ They added a turret to the stable building, which sparked a confrontation with Edward I'Anson, the Clapham district surveyor, who seems to have been personally insulted by Jefferson and gave his fee to charity, 'to prevent the possibility of a sordid motive being imputed'.²⁷ Around this time no fewer than 25 people were living in West Lodge and its service buildings. The Jeffersons sold the house in 1845 to Robert Buttemer, a silk and later bill broker of Copthall Court, who died at an advanced age in 1853.²⁸

The last owner of the West Lodge estate before it was broken up was Charles Sumner, a county court judge, son of the evangelical Bishop of Winchester, and a cousin of the Wilberforces. Sumner acquired the house in 1857 from Buttemer's widow, another distant relative.²⁹ In 1860, during Sumner's residence of Sumner, several additions were made, including a substantial wing on the west side of the house, balancing that on the east, and a two-storey brick lodge at the south-west corner of the grounds.³⁰

Then in 1867 Sumner sold West Lodge to the builders Hiscox & Williams, who laid out a new street, Altenburg Gardens, in its grounds (see below). A description of the house at this time evokes a style of Clapham Common villa then

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on the brink of extinction. Accommodation included eleven bedrooms, day and night nursery, drawing room (with French windows opening onto a terrace and grounds), dining room, morning room, library, boudoir and two staircases. All the principal rooms had gas, there was hot and cold water to all floors, and there were stables, coach-houses, a walled kitchen garden, grapery and hot-houses.³¹

Its west wall now hard up against the new road and its garden reduced to a mere acre, West Lodge was hereafter let to a ricketty series of tenants. The first (resident c.1868–77) was J. W. Dixon, a retired wholesale oilman, bankrupted in 1876 when he lost money in a failed mining company.³² He was followed, briefly, by James Pryor, manager at the Lombard Deposit Bank, twice charged and acquitted in 1878 with forgery, embezzlement, and the theft of some spoons. Next came George Henry Lee (c.1878–86), retired from running his well-known eponymous department store in Liverpool. It was in 1882 during Lee's tenancy that the freehold of the whole West Lodge estate – including the house and Altenburg Gardens – was acquired from Hiscox by Sydney James Stern, a rich City financier and later Liberal MP (from 1895 Baron Wandsworth).³³

West Lodge's final tenant from 1886, before the builders moved in, was its most improbable and glamorous. The 1891 census records Henry J. Raymond, an American aged 47, living there 'on [his] own means' with his English wife Louisa Boljohn, their two small children and an array of her unmarried siblings. 'Raymond' was in fact the nom-de-plume of the crack thief Adam Worth, who is remembered for having stolen Gainsborough's portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and kept and travelled with it for his own pleasure for twenty years before ransoming it back to the art dealers Agnews for \$25,000. Worth's undying fame, though, rests on his status as Arthur Conan Doyle's inspiration for Moriarty, 'the Napoleon of Crime', Sherlock Holmes's nemesis. Erskine Clarke recalled seeing his wife and children in the garden, 'with a donkey with panniers, quite a picture of Arcadian innocence'; nevertheless the house was under almost permanent police observation and was raided on at least one occasion. Worth was finally caught, stealing bonds at

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the railway station in Liège in October 1892, and wound up in a pauper's grave at Highgate in 1902. His capture appears to have marked the end for West Lodge. After him came the builder W. A. Jewell, who demolished the house in 1894 for more houses at the bottom end of Altenburg Gardens (Nos 4–24).³⁴

The entrance lodge built by Sumner was marooned in 1867 by the creation of Altenburg Gardens. It was eventually sold and demolished for the building of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in 1895.³⁵

The Lavender Sweep villas

The western boundary of the West Lodge estate was marked by a footpath linking Battersea Rise to Lavender Hill. Described by Robert Lovelace in 1764 as a 'new lane' flanking the edge of his property, it has been known since 1914 as Lavender Walk, and now separates the back gardens of houses in Eccles Road from those in Altenburg Gardens. Previously it was Green Lane or, according to Canon Clarke, Cut-throat Lane, a corruption, in his view, of 'Cut-through Lane'.³⁶

On the Altenburg Gardens side, Lavender Walk retains large portions at its south end of what is probably the wall erected by Lovelace in the 1760s to enclose the West Lodge estate (above). It also formed the eastern boundary of an adjoining property, probably acquired freehold from Lord Spencer in 1764 by Philip Milloway, a Hamburg merchant, trading in German textiles.³⁷ This land's other boundaries equate in modern terms to Lavender Hill, Battersea Rise and St John's Road. During Milloway's time there were three cottages here, as well as 'sundry buildings, a small messuage, and a substantial modern brick dwelling house'. In 1786 the estate was acquired by Peter James Bennett, another City cloth merchant. By the time of Corris's survey of 1787, Bennett had laid out the distinctive 'circular road' now known as Lavender Sweep.³⁸

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The name Lavender Sweep is not found until about 1814. Beforehand it was sometimes known, among other things, as Lavender Place, but that name then came into use for a much less salubrious terrace at the east end of Lavender Hill (page #), presumably prompting the change of name. It was a rare piece of town planning in late eighteenth-century Battersea. The crescent form was prevalent across London's suburbia of the period – the Paragons of New Kent Road and Blackheath being among several leading examples. But the general tendency was for it to accommodate houses in rows; nowhere else was it seen at such a grandiose scale, as an approach road for large residences dotted about a picturesque landscape. By the time Bennett died in February 1793 he had presided over the erection of five new houses here: three detached villas to the west of the Sweep, a semi-detached pair to its east (see Ill. 14.2).³⁹ Bennett himself lived in one on the west side: probably that at the centre, later known as Lavender Lodge. The following paragraphs chart the history of those five principal houses and some cottages added by later residents, as well as of older buildings that remained from Milloway's day. All are now long demolished, save for one eighteenth-century house on Battersea Rise (No. 68A), now greatly altered as a pentecostal church.

One of the first of the new villas to go up was **John Beaumont's house**, occupying the north-western quarter of the estate. It appears to have been built by Bennett especially for Beaumont, a Quaker pharmaceutical chemist from Pontefract, and partner since 1776 of Thomas Corbyn, the 'Quaker Pope'.⁴⁰ Beaumont was installed in the house by January 1788, when his younger daughter Sarah was born there. He paid Bennett £2,200 for the freehold of the house and land, later described as two fields and an orchard, and may also have helped finance the development, as an inventory of his property compiled a few weeks before his death in 1794 included £1,200 to 'widow Bennett on mortgage'. By the time of Bennett's death in 1793, Beaumont had also bought an adjoining strip of land to the west, beside St John's Road (i.e., the narrow site later occupied by Arding & Hobbs), where there were already two smaller dwellings and a coach-house. These he improved and let to tenants.⁴¹

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Beaumont's house changed little over the ninety or so years of its existence. It was described as a 'comfortable square villa, prettily situated with its back to the Sweep', it had a north façade with a pair of bows to take in views of the grounds and the open land beyond Lavender Hill, where stood a row of 'splendid old elms'.⁴² There was a modest service wing to its east and outhouses to its south-west, next to St John's Road. After the death of Beaumont's widow in 1796 their children were taken care of elsewhere and the house was rented out, remaining in the family's ownership until 1866.⁴³

Later occupants included: Bartholomew Rudd, barrister and Yorkshire landowner (c.1796–1801); John Ravenhill junior, City banker (1822–8); Robert Wells Eyles, Ludgate Hill haberdasher (1828–35); and Williams Hicks, a wholesale grocer of Mincing Lane. In 1854 Hicks was succeeded by the Battersea miller Thomas Dives, who later acquired the freehold from the Beaumonts. Although he did little to the house itself, Dives demolished one of the older dwellings on St John's Road and incorporated the strip of ground there into his garden. He also added a small lodge and new entrance from St John's Road.⁴⁴

Dives died in January 1880 and his estate was sold a year later.⁴⁵ The house itself survived another fifteen years as the builders' office for Alfred Heaver's development of Ilminster Gardens and Beauchamp Road in its grounds. Arguably it survives still. Canon Erskine Clarke claimed that when the Welsh Chapel was built on its site in 1896–7 the builder merely gutted the house and encased it in red brick, removing only the north-front bows. The unusual thickness of the chapel's walls tends to support this claim.⁴⁶

Immediately south of John Beaumont's house was a broad field-strip running east-west from the centre of Lavender Sweep to St John's Road. Here stood **Lavender Lodge**, one of only two of Bennett's villas for which a photograph survives (Ill. 14.10). It shows the garden (east) front as lower and wider than Bennett's other

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houses. The plain pedimented gable was off-centre, suggesting the want of an architect, and possibly an adaptation of an older building: indeed it is likely this was Philip Milloway's own house, described as 'new built' in 1786 and visible on Corris's map of 1787. The occupant after Bennett's death was Robert Winter (1794–1812), who apparently extended the house considerably in 1805, probably adding the modish blind-arcaded windows to the ground floor and the south wing (almost hidden by foliage in the photograph), which did not quite balance the existing service wing. Later occupants here included Samuel Chatfield (1817–21), a Tower Hill wine merchant. But Lavender Lodge was unusual in having a single family in residence from 1821, when it was bought by Matthew Whiting senior (d.1871), a Surrey JP and son of Ratcliff sugar-refiners, until 1903, when his youngest son, Noel, died.⁴⁷

Whiting later acquired land at the corner of Battersea Rise and St John's Road from William Mellersh, the neighbouring owner (see below), adding most of it to his garden. Whiting's three sons spent their whole lives in the area, but only Noel remained at Lavender Lodge. He was obliged to petition Parliament in 1895 to forestall an attempt by the London School Board – or 'the secret conclave of Collectivist land grabbers' in Percy Thornton's memorable phrase – to purchase his house compulsorily for a Board School. Noel Whiting's success allowed him to remain in his 'beautiful, old-fashioned house' for the remainder of his life. But the speculative builders were also circling. The numbering of Lavender Sweep as it evolved at the end of his garden had been left with a gap in its sequence, on the presumption that Lavender Lodge would not long survive its elderly owner. And so it proved to be, Barnard Road being laid out through its gardens in 1904–5 (see below).⁴⁸

South of Lavender Lodge, the last principal house on this west side – generally known after its final and most celebrated resident as **Tom Taylor's house** – started off like Bennett's others: high and compact, of three storeys, rectangular on plan, with a full-height bow on the shorter south front. The longer

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west front overlooked the grounds, and a short drive from Lavender Sweep led to the main entrance on the east front; a stable and coach-house stood close by on the north boundary.

Its first occupant was John Thomas Atkyns, later of Huntercombe House, Bucks (resident *c.*1794–1804), who was followed by a series of short-term tenants, of whom James Barclay (*c.*1804–8) seems to have built the first of the house's many extensions. Robert Saunders (1818–27), another City man, gave his interest in the house to his daughter Mary on her marriage in 1827 to John Kirton Gilliat, of a family of bankers and America merchants. Saunders then moved to another house on the common, as did the Gilliat's in 1835, a pattern of domestic musical chairs that was repeated several times in the middle years of the century at Lavender Sweep.⁴⁹ The American politician and divine James Milnor met the Gilliat's at a dinner in Clapham given by the bookseller John Hatchard, and spent the night at Lavender Sweep in May 1830. A memoir based on his diaries captures the seclusion and affluent piety of early nineteenth-century Clapham Common:

I took a walk through Mr. Gilliat's beautiful grounds; and being soon joined by him, our conversation took a direction in consonance with the evidences of divine beneficence exhibited in the charming scene before us... Our conversation was reluctantly ended by the announcement of breakfast; before which, however, I read and commented on one of the Psalms, and prayed with the assembled family.⁵⁰

After the Gilliat's this house was acquired, though never lived in, by William Mellersh, merchant, who since 1818 had owned the land and several buildings at the east corner of Battersea Rise and St John's Road, including his own small villa (an aggrandizement of a cottage of the 1750s, now 68A Battersea Rise), and, to its east, a semi-detached pair of the 1770s (later known as Tower Cottage and Cubbington Cottage, see Ill. 14.2). Mellersh also owned a row of small cottages fronting St John's Road, as well as a field on its west side (see also Chapter 15).⁵¹

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Perhaps because of its proximity to the common, and consequent desirability, this seems to have been the most extended of the Sweep's villas, especially by Thomas Grissell, its owner following Mellersh's death in 1841. Grissell was a well-known major contractor, in partnership until 1846 with his cousin, Samuel Morton Peto. Grissell added a cottage in the grounds and extended the house four times during his tenure (in 1843–50), probably adding the three-storey north wing, and extending the drawing room, which now opened into a shallow conservatory running along the rear of the house, supported on an iron colonnade (Ill. 14.11).⁵²

Thus newly enhanced, the house attracted the attention of John Benjamin Graham, a Scots upholsterer who, through a bold speculation in the Burra Burra copper mines of South Australia, where he had lived since the late 1830s, had become very wealthy indeed.⁵³ Having married unexpectedly on a return visit to London in 1849, he was on the lookout for a suitable house for his growing family and finally settled on Grissell's house.

Graham extended the house before moving in, with a billiard room on its north-west side, 30ft by 20ft, built by Reading Watts of Belgravia, and joined to the conservatory by an unusual flight of steps within a glazed, sloping passageway. New piggeries and forcing pits were added to the hameau-style mini-farm behind the lodge at the south-eastern tip of the Sweep, as well as a laundry. Graham's background in furnishing is reflected in his diaries, where dozens of shopping trips are recorded before he moved in. These netted '4 colossal figures for the new room which will be the admiration of the place'. He was interested in advancements in domestic comforts, too, noting 'we are having the Gass laid on which makes a fine mess'; the gas lights in some rooms were held by figures in 'Nitches'. Graham was also keen on horticulture, employing two gardeners full-time.⁵⁴

The Grahams found their fellow Clapham Common residents 'a very friendly sett of people' and attended a ball at Matthew Whiting's house next door in May 1851, shortly after moving in.⁵⁵ Reading Watts later built Graham a magnificent

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detached 42ft conservatory to the north-west of the house, with semi-circular ends rather in the manner of Richard Turner's Palm House at Kew, reached by a tiled and glazed passage (Ill. 14.11). But Graham stayed only a little over three years. In 1854 he sold a 21-year lease to Augustus Sillem, a South America merchant who had grown up on the west side of the common with his German émigré parents (page #). Sillem left in August 1858 when Graham sold the house to its final occupant, Tom Taylor.⁵⁶

Taylor's residence saw a change of pace for the house. He was a well-known figure, a prolific journalist and dramatist, editor of *Punch* from 1874 and author of more than thirty burlesques and melodramas, including *Our American Cousin*, the play President Lincoln was watching in 1865 when he was assassinated. Ellen Terry, who remembered the Sweep with 'horse-chestnut blossoms strewing the drive and making it look like a tessellated pavement', called Taylor's a 'house of call for everyone of note', from politicians, including Mazzini, to artists and actors, all presided over by Taylor himself dressed in 'black-silk knee-breeches and velvet cutaway coat'.⁵⁷

Taylor added a large study 'to his own design'. A visitor in the 1870s found every wall in the house, even in the bathrooms, covered with pictures; a pet owl perched on a bust of Minerva; and a dining room 'where Lambeth Faience and Venetian glass abound'.⁵⁸

Taylor died suddenly in July 1880. When the property was put up for sale in October, although the house and its well-timbered grounds were commended by the auctioneer, it was the 1,200ft of frontage to Lavender Sweep and Battersea Rise that were the pull. It was bought by the builder Frederick Snelling, who laid out Limburg, Hafer and Hauberk Roads on the site (see below). A few years later, when Taylor's friend the actor John Coleman went to look for the house, he found that 'not a stone remains ... and the demon jerry-builder reigns triumphant'.⁵⁹

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On the east side of Lavender Sweep, the two semi-detached houses built by Bennett were something of an oddity. They, too, were tall and compact, with three main rooms on each of three floors, plus attics, and backed on to one another with a staggered party wall – two interlocking T-shapes, allowing the main frontages to take in views, either to Clapham Common or over the river to the north (Ill. 14.2). Yet each enjoyed more land than any of the larger houses to the west of the Sweep. Bennett may have intended originally to build much larger houses, or perhaps more: a report in 1787 when he had laid out the Sweep but had yet to build suggests that eight houses were projected.⁶⁰

Smaller families, retired couples and widows took to this pair. The first occupant of the northern semi (till 1811) was Samuel Croughton, like Bennett a linen-draper of Friday Street and so possibly a business associate. His successor in 1814, John Eccles, was a warehouseman of Upper Berkeley Street. He and his son Charles owned the house, and lived in it on and off for nearly seven decades, otherwise letting it to tenants; these included the banker George Lewis Hollingsworth (1820s) and Eustratio Ralli, a refugee from the massacres on the island of Chios (1840s).⁶¹ In 1869, perhaps inspired by the Hiscox & Williams' development at Altenburg Gardens, Charles Eccles applied successfully, via his architect E. S. Carr, to the Metropolitan Board of Works to make a new road from Lavender Sweep through his grounds on which to build houses. But he took this no further, selling up in 1881.⁶²

The house with the southerly outlook to the common was perhaps the more desirable. Resident here by 1796 was James Broadhurst, a Great Tower Street sugar broker. A later lessee in mid century was Harriet Dealtry, widow of Dr Dealtry, vicar of Clapham, and mother-in-law twice over to Henry Sykes Thornton. The two semi-detached houses were sold as one lot in February 1881, and Parma Crescent and Eccles Road were laid out on the site.⁶³

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Redevelopment since 1880

Altenburg Gardens

Although as early as 1845 an advert for West Lodge thought it worthwhile to draw attention to its 'considerable building frontage' to Lavender Hill, it was more than 20 years before any such development occurred.⁶⁴ The builders Joseph William Hiscox and James & Samuel Williams were pioneers in this district in 1867 when they bought the West Lodge estate following Charles Sumner's departure. Their experience then was largely as public-works contractors, their first partnership having been formed only in 1866 to build the Falcon Brook sewer; though the Williams brothers had been building houses in Notting Hill some years earlier. It is not clear why the name Altenburg was chosen for their development: Lavender Gardens appears on an undated plan of the street, but the MBW preferred Altenburg Gardens (approved in March 1868), presumably for its uniqueness. As a road name it is still unique – globally, not just in London.⁶⁵

First to be built were the five houses on the east corner fronting Lavender Hill, known as Altenburg Terrace, complete by the end of 1868.⁶⁶ Now 245–253 Lavender Hill, these three-storey and basement houses are of stock brick with a little red-brick trim and a bold, bracketed eaves cornice. As well as canted bays to the front (at ground and basement level), they also had rear bays, taking in the open views of 1868. Occupants of the 1870s–80s included Hiscox himself, a railway company secretary, a solicitor and a retired army officer, most of them with two house-servants. In 1888 the freehold of No. 5 (now 253) was bought by the auctioneer Edwin Evans, whose firm still owns it. He altered the frontage, adding a full-height bay, perhaps to match those in the later, western half of Altenburg Terrace (at 255–263 Lavender Hill, below).⁶⁷

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The villas that Hiscox & Williams built in Altenburg Gardens itself were far grander than the houses of the terrace (Ills 14.13–15). Tall and bulky, of three storeys over a raised basement, their asymmetrical frontages incorporated a wide flight of steps and a pilastered entrance porch to one side, a projecting gabled bay with a semi-circular ground-floor window to the other. Their Graeco-Italianate style is reminiscent of larger London houses of the 1840s and 50s, with bold cement detailing, such as the Doric entablature below the upper storeys. Studded front doors add to the effect. Inside, a hall and inner hall led to a drawing room at the front and a dining room to the rear, which in some houses opened through a shallow conservatory into the walled gardens.⁶⁸ A service entrance was provided via steps at the left boundary wall, in a recessed bay that linked these otherwise detached houses into a quasi-terrace.

Hiscox and the Williamses dissolved their partnership in 1873, by which time fifteen villas had been erected on the east side of Altenburg Gardens, partly funded by a mortgage from a City solicitor, Charles Ford. Hiscox, a local resident and vestryman, claimed to have supervised most of the building. The breakdown in professional relations brought a Chancery case which dragged on for four years. At issue was the value of their respective shares in the partnership (with Hiscox accused of using partnership materials and labour on a development of his own in Brockley); but the case also throws valuable light on the design process which brought these houses into being. James Williams reported that before deciding their exact size and style, estate plans by two architects – William King of Canonbury Park North, assisted by William Smith of Copthall Court in the City – had been submitted to the MBW. For the buildings themselves, though, plans and particulars of houses ‘in different localities’ were obtained, the idea being that the partnership would then choose those most applicable. Altenburg Terrace was built from plans seen by James Williams, while the Altenburg Gardens villas were built ‘in a similar manner to some near Putney’, seen by Hiscox and the Williamses, for which Hiscox later obtained plans from the builder.⁶⁹

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Hiscox, although he claimed the designs were based on houses he had seen in Wandsworth, did not essentially dispute this collaborative, accretive approach to the design of the Altenburg Gardens houses, which cannot be said to be ‘by’ anyone, although architects were involved. William Smith later claimed that the Altenburg Terrace houses were largely his work.⁷⁰

In court the Williamses complained that, despite a large workforce (many of whom were Hiscox’s family and friends), fifteen houses in five years was a poor crop. Hiscox countered that progress was slow because the houses did not let as quickly as they were built. Certainly by the spring of 1871, when eleven were finished, only the two nearest the common had bona fide tenants, the rest being occupied by building workers, or empty. Things soon picked up, though. The Vicar of Battersea, John Erskine Clarke moved into No. 40 in 1872, and was to stay thirty years. Other early settlers included the painter Marie Spartali and her husband, the American journalist and photographer William J. Stillman, who moved into No. 44 in 1874, in what Stillman called ‘that then delightful neighbourhood’. The house backed on to the garden of the Shrubbery, Marie’s parental home.⁷¹

This social tone was largely sustained in Altenburg Gardens over the next fifteen years or so. Occupants were mostly comfortable City and professional men – e.g. a solicitor, actuary, corn factor, bank manager, medical officer of health – with a few leading manufacturers or tradesmen. A household of six or seven remained the average, but the number of servants per house declined from three to two. Most strikingly, by 1891 four houses were unoccupied, suggesting some reluctance among this class of tenant to move to an area that had been built up drastically in the past decade.⁷²

Change also affected the houses’ ownership. In 1882 Sydney James Stern (later Baron Wandsworth), in possession of a family banking fortune, bought the West Lodge estate from Hiscox for around £55,000.⁷³ At the time the west side of Altenburg Gardens was still undeveloped, but over the next decade only its

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Lavender Hill frontage was tackled, Stern building five houses there in 1883, named and numbered as a continuation of Altenburg Terrace, to the designs of his friend and surveyor, Benjamin (or Benoni) T. L. Thomson. Built by George Ugle, they were similar in accommodation to their neighbours, if less refined, with double-height bays, a modish frieze with terracotta rosettes, and a balustraded parapet. Altenburg Terrace was renumbered in toto in 1886 as 245–263 Lavender Hill, and shop-fronts added to the eastern half in 1893 to the designs of Henry Wakeford.⁷⁴

Stern's reluctance to build immediately on the west side of Altenburg Gardens was possibly due to his personal wealth – he had no need to wring the full value from the land – but it was perhaps also an attempt to sustain the tone of the existing east-side villas with their open outlook over what remained of the West Lodge gardens. However, building was intensifying all around, and difficulties in letting such big houses may have led to the radical decision in 1897 to convert twelve of the villas into flats, one per floor, at the same time probably enlarging the linking service wings. A police station had opened at Lavender Hill in 1896 and by 1901 six of the basement flats housed police constables.⁷⁵

In 1897 the School Board for London, having failed to secure Lavender Lodge, announced its intention to build an elementary school on vacant land on the west side of Altenburg Gardens.⁷⁶ This was not proceeded with, perhaps because the site was too shallow, but in any case by then plans for more housing here were already in train. First, in 1894, came 117–122 (consec.) Clapham Common North Side, a terrace of six large houses filling the frontage between Altenburg Gardens and Lavender Gardens, including the site of the eighteenth-century 'neat dwelling'. Their developer (and probable designer) was again B. T. L. Thomson. Next came St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, erected in 1895–6 at the south end of the west side of Altenburg Gardens. And then in 1895–1900 the west side of the street and the remaining gaps on the east side (now Nos 4–24), where West Lodge and its garden had stood, were built up with terraced houses, mostly by William Edwin Kerven, on 99-year leases from Stern. The work of the surveyor Henry Adair Rawlins, these

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differed greatly in size and style from the 1860s neoclassical villas, being of red brick, paired with triplet windows in square bays rising to a gable, and balconettes over the front doors. The style was to be repeated by Kerven a few years later in Lavender Gardens (see below and Ill. 14.23).⁷⁷

The occupants of the new, smaller houses were a mix of tradesmen and clerks. More than two-thirds had no servant, while several had boarders. The presence near by of the Shakespeare and Grand Theatres perhaps accounts for several performers: 'My Fancy', a dancer married to Harry Bawn, co-proprietor of the Grand, was briefly at No. 18 in 1899, when the house was also known as My Fancy.⁷⁸ Later residents included Charles Edward Whiffen, 'artist-craftsman in Bronze, Marble, Alabaster, Stone, Wood and decorated Compo', at No. 89 from about 1901 to his death in 1929. Early on he built a top-lit studio to the designs of Herbert Bignold, architect, in his garden, opening on to Lavender Walk, which survives; there he worked on smaller-scale architectural and religious statuary, including much work for the Church of The Immaculate Conception, Farm Street. The builder Horace Hubbard also built himself a surviving workshop with a chimney, also by Bignold, in his garden at 79 Altenburg Gardens, in 1899.⁷⁹

At the north end of Altenburg Gardens, the site behind Battersea Library, between No. 119 and Lavender Walk, was developed in 1898–1910 with a courtyard of commercial bakery buildings for Isaac Stanley & Company. Access to what is now known as Bakery Place is via a cartway through No. 119, which is a variant on Kerven's adjoining houses, with an inset porch surmounted with a distinctive fin-de-siècle pediment, and a date tablet supported on dwarf columns, in a style suggestive of Herbert Bignold (Ill. 14.16, 17). It has two doors, one to a first-floor flat, another through to a rear office that adjoined the main bakehouse. The bakery and stable buildings were converted to offices and showrooms in 1990. Tradition has it that deep scores on the Lavender Walk brickwork were made with pennies by children waiting outside for bread.⁸⁰

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Perhaps because of the difficulties in the Hiscox & Williams partnership and in letting the houses, two plots on the east side south of No. 40 remained vacant for more than forty years. On one the Roman Catholic Church of St Vincent de Paul was built in 1912, while on the other garages were built from the 1920s, augmented in 1991 by a block of eight flats at 42 Altenburg Gardens, in a ham-fisted simulacrum of the 1860s villas, with crude detailing and distorted proportions. The northernmost 1860s villa (No. 62) was replaced in 1925 by a telephone exchange, which was extended in 1949 over the sites of the two adjoining villas and their gardens; the original exchange was rebuilt in 1971 (see vol. 49). Other redevelopments include a three-storey block of bomb-damage replacement flats at No. 28 (by Battersea Borough Council, 1958), and bland 1980s private flats tacked on to No. 30, adjoining.⁸¹

Lavender Gardens

Although Alfred Heaver bought the Shrubbery estate in June 1885 following Michael Spartali's bankruptcy, it was two years before any houses were begun. Meanwhile his architect Charles J. Bentley had laid out the grounds with a new road parallel with Altenburg Gardens. Their first suggestion for a name, Shrubbery Road, was rejected by the MBW as in use elsewhere. Alternatives of Galena and Culmstock Roads did not find favour with Heaver, and his suggestion Malone Road was settled upon in August, only to be changed, despite the MBW's initial objections, at the bidding of Erskine Clarke to Lavender Gardens, on the grounds that it was 'a name which connects it with the adjoining district' and was 'acceptable to the GPO'. Building finally got under way at the end of 1887.⁸²

The houses were built by four builders: Heaver; his younger brother, John; James Stone of Walthamstow; and Thomas & Company of Lavender Hill (formerly of Gunnersbury). Most of these houses were typical of Heaver, though bigger than his standard terraced housing, and no doubt were designed in collaboration to some

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degree with his usual architects C. J. Bentley and W. C. Poole. Typically each house would have had three ground-floor reception rooms (including a bay-windowed breakfast room at the rear) and a kitchen, scullery and WCs, with two floors of bedrooms, bathroom, dressing room and another WC (Ill. 14.19). Characteristic bands of nailhead and other moulded decoration run across the elevations, now unhappily picked out in white paint. The most appealing features are the lively rubbed-brick gablets and aprons, vigorous compositions of writhing vegetation, and occasional fauna, all individual, which sit rather oddly with the production-line architecture (Ills 14.20, 21). The planning though not the style was to be repeated by Heaver in the 1890s at the large estate in the Bedford Hill area of Balham for which he is best known.⁸³

The three houses built by Thomas & Company (Nos 29–33), though identical in layout, have more architectural panache, with rubbed-brick Queen Anne detailing, in the form of scrolls, aprons and a frieze, in place of Heaver's endless nailhead (Ill. 14.22). They were almost certainly designed by the architect Frederick Wheeler, whose work in Sudbrooke Road and Queen's Parade, Lavender Hill (also for Thomas & Company) features similar details (pages #, #).⁸⁴

The first houses sold were those put up by James Stone, and advertised in 1888 at £850 for 99-year leases, or to let at £90 a year. They had drawing, dining and morning rooms, eight bedrooms and a bathroom with hot and cold water, and were still being advertised in 1890. All except the three Thomas & Co. houses and some of the others on shallower plots near the common have a tradesman's entrance recessed to the right-hand side, giving direct access to a rear kitchen. Heaver added another house on the east side in 1893–4 (No. 64), with the more overt Queen Anne features he was then using in Balham.⁸⁵

The house at No. 49 was built in 1888 by Heaver for the baker Isaac Stanley, who in 1903 also built the adjoining Nos 51 & 53, which he ran as a restaurant, Masonic hall and bar. This was renamed in the 1950s as the Cornet of Horse (later

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just the Cornet) in honour of the local resident G. A. Henty, being the title of one of his books. This corner of Lavender Gardens and 235–239 Lavender Hill alongside remained in Stanley & Company's ownership until the 1950s.⁸⁶ Maria Kempinska, founder of the Jongleurs comedy chain, opened her first club in Stanley's Masonic Hall in 1983, closing in 2009. The building is currently a gastropub with a hall above.

Further development occurred in 1902–3 when William Kerven, who had built much of Altenburg Gardens in the late 1890s, built nine houses at Nos 14–30 on land bought by Walter Morgan Willcocks from St Barnabas's Church; they are identical to those he had built in Altenburg Gardens.⁸⁷

From the beginning Lavender Gardens was a varied street socially, supporting professionals and bureaucrats (a naval architect, civil engineer, chartered accountant, solicitor, War Office clerk and stockbroker) as well as leading tradesmen and manufacturers (a wine and spirit dealer, builders, and George Stevens, the billiard-table manufacturer). There were also writers, artists and musicians, including: Maurice Comerford, founder of *The Stage* (No. 25); Fanny Aiken Kortright, 'sensation novelist' and anti-suffragist (No. 52); and G. A. Henty, the popular author (No. 33). Henty was attracted by the common as an exercise ground for his five dogs, which in his later years he supervised from a tricycle.⁸⁸ The local politician John Burns moved to No. 37 in 1906, seeking an extra room in which to receive visitors and sufficient accommodation for his many books, only to move again to the much grander Alverstoke on Clapham Common in 1914 (page #).⁸⁹

But by the turn of the century, though many of the upper tradesmen remained, most of the more affluent City and professional men had gone. Multiple occupation was on the rise, as was the number of resident lodgers and boarders; one house, No. 46, had been converted to a boarding house. By 1911 only a handful of houses were not in multiple occupation or had any servants. Physical subdivision of the larger houses into flats in acknowledgment of this social reality had begun by 1916 when Heaver's company made 'alterations for flats' at No. 44. By 1921 the

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church authorities at St Barnabas's at the end of the road were reporting that the large houses were 'now all changed into flats'.⁹⁰

In 1928–9 a new vicarage was built on part of the Shrubbery's garden south of No. 14, for the incumbent of St Barnabas. No. 12 Lavender Gardens, as it was known, was a Germanic-looking building three bays wide, the centre bay rising to three storeys. It was demolished in 2008 when the church redeveloped the site with a pair of terraced houses and a larger new vicarage, designed by Oliver West and John Scott, architects. The style is a Fuzzy-Felt interpretation of Kerven's adjoining terrace, with simple shapes of render and red brick. Opposite, on a garage site behind 117 Clapham Common North Side, is a five-bedroom house (No. 1A), built to the designs of Barrington J. Minton, architect, with double-height canted bays to east and south frontages that uncannily ape the Heaver style of 1 Lavender Gardens on to which it was grafted in 1998–9.⁹¹

Nothing better signifies Battersea's rebranding in the 1980s as 'South Chelsea' than the occupation of a first-floor flat at 40 Lavender Gardens by Sarah Ferguson for a few years before her marriage to Prince Andrew in 1986. That was an omen for the reconversion back into single houses of several of the large properties hitherto given over to flats.⁹²

Lavender Sweep east side and adjoining roads

The sale together of the two semi-detached houses on the east side of Lavender Sweep in January 1881 freed up nearly eight acres of land for building.⁹³ The buyers were Thomas Ingram, Battersea's most productive developer, and James John Brown, one of his occasional partners. The estate's awkward shape largely determined the road layout, devised for them by the architect William Newton Dunn, a regular associate of Ingram's. After some discussion and revision, Dunn finally planned a new north–south street (named **Eccles Road** after a former

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occupant of one of the demolished houses), running parallel with Lavender Walk between Battersea Rise and Lavender Hill, and linked at both ends to a new crescent (**Parma Crescent**), which echoed the curve of Lavender Sweep. This had been agreed by October 1881.⁹⁴

Although Ingram and Brown laid out the estate, they built none of its 240 houses. At least sixteen builders were involved. This is the archetypal 1880s Battersea development with long, mesmerizingly unbroken terraces of paired two-storey houses (some have three-storey back extensions) with double-height canted bays – Ingram and Brown’s layout made for plots that were too small to support anything taller (Ill. 14.24). The materials are the usual stock (or very occasionally white or red) brick with moulded stone decorations; 22–35 and 69–76 Eccles Road, built by John Ashford, have porticoes (Ill. 14.25). George Frost’s twenty-eight houses at 27–52 Parma Crescent and 58 & 59 Eccles Road copied exactly the ‘Heaven manner’ in the rhythm of their matching brick shallow-curved door and window-heads. One of these, 52 Parma Crescent, is an example of the more unusual layout resulting from the odd plot shapes at the intersection of curve and straight, as are 58 & 59 Eccles Road, double-fronted to make up for their shallow plot. The acute inner corners of Eccles Road (at Nos 60–61 and 91) had shops from the first, such as a grocer’s or dairy. Ingram and Brown did not wait until the houses were up before realizing their investment, selling the ground rents in September 1882 to the Corporation of Rochester for £65,000.⁹⁵

Lavender Sweep west side and adjoining roads

Also under way in 1881 was the redevelopment of Tom Taylor’s house and gardens, the first of the old Lavender Sweep estates to be snapped up at auction, in 1880. The buyer was the builder Frederick Snelling, whose architect C. J. Bentley retained the curving line of the Sweep, widening and transforming it into just another suburban road. The south entrance lodge and gates were removed and three new short streets

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constructed: the L-shaped **Limburg Road; Hafer Road;** and the tiny **Hauberk Road**, connecting Hafer Road with Lavender Sweep but since expunged following war damage.⁹⁶

Snelling had retired by 1881 and so it fell to other builders to construct the housing in these streets and the new frontage to Battersea Rise, all largely complete by the end of 1883. Alfred Bussell in 1881–2 built up the corner site at 34–40 Limburg Road, 10–16 Hafer Road and 54–60 Lavender Sweep with characteristic two-storey brick houses, featuring double-height canted bays and off-the-shelf cast-stone details; No. 54 was his home for more than forty years. Bussell also built the six houses at 5–15 Limburg Road in 1883, after the site had been abandoned by Daniel Pitt, and probably completed the three-storey houses also begun by Pitt at Nos 20–32.⁹⁷

In 1882 the Battersea Rise frontage between Lavender Sweep and Hafer Road was filled with large stock and red-brick three-storey houses. Originally known as Catherston House and Terrace (Nos 8–48), these were the work of the Cornish builder William Williams of Balham Hill. Williams also added Nos 50–62, of red brick with canted corners, west of Hafer Road, in 1883, as well as 1–15 Hafer Road; both runs have round-headed windows or doorheads enlivened by simple piecrust detail. The similar houses at 2–14 Limburg Road, again by Williams, are more fancifully decorated with human and animal figures to the door surrounds. Most old-fashioned of all were the stock-brick houses with copious cast-stone decoration built by the Lambeth builder John Miller: of these 2 Hafer Road, with bargeboards, and 62–66 Lavender Sweep survive. The final piece in the jigsaw was the similar but simpler terrace at 70–84 Lavender Sweep built by Henry Keen. For his own shallow, double-fronted house at the end (No. 84), Keen salvaged a wooden portico, door-surround and fanlight from Tom Taylor's house; the fanlight and surround still survive inside a stone porch insisted upon by Metropolitan Board of Works in 1883.⁹⁸

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Snelling must also have acquired the Battersea Rise frontage between Eccles Road and Lavender Walk from the owners of the adjoining estate (see below), as it was he who in 1883 built the little trio of houses and shops there at Nos 2–6, to designs by Bentley: an agreeable symmetrical composition in red brick with a central bay and canted corners with pediments.⁹⁹

The last of this portion of the Battersea Rise frontage to be built up was that between Limburg Road and St John's Road – the site of William Mellersh's two eighteenth-century cottages. Tower Cottage was demolished around 1901 and replaced by a tall block of commercial property at Nos 64–66. Designed by the architect George Ernest Nield, this asymmetrical composition includes a deeply projecting corbelled cornice, double-height bay, steep gable and corner cupola (perhaps making the most of the canted corner imposed by the LCC) – altogether an unusual design for Battersea (Ill. 14.26). Cubbington (later Tullymet) Cottage survived until around 1910; a temperance billiard hall was built on its site in 1922 (see vol. 49).¹⁰⁰

With the exception of William Williams's Battersea Rise houses there was little expectation that the buildings here would attract anything other than multiple occupancy; and so it proved. Many of the Battersea Rise houses were converted to shop use by the early twentieth century – partly because No 36–48 had to sacrifice their shallow front gardens to road-widening in 1901. But Nos 8–16, next to Lavender Sweep, retained theirs and have remained residential.

Bussell had left two plots vacant at the north-west corner of Limburg Road in anticipation of an extension into St John's Road when the adjoining Lavender Lodge estate was sold. But this did not happen and so in 1906 he added two houses (Nos 17 & 19), the only concession to twenty-five years of architectural change being the pert mini-pediments over the ground-floor bay windows.

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Almost simultaneous with the laying out of Tom Taylor's estate was Alfred Heaver's redevelopment of John Beaumont's villa and gardens, last occupied by Thomas Dives. Heaver's career as a builder and developer was then undergoing the step-change that transformed him into a major local player.

His surveyor W. C. Poole laid out the six acres of grounds with an L-shaped road, **Beauchamp Road**, running east from a widened St John's Road before turning north. Originally it was intended to continue this road into Lavender Sweep, but instead it was given a sharper turn to open into Lavender Hill. (Until 1891 this north-south portion of Beauchamp Road was separately named as Bleisho Road.) Poole also laid out a second, short north-south road connecting Beauchamp Road to Lavender Hill. This was at first called Bullen Road, changed to Dives Road by 1887 after its former inhabitant; but in that year local residents, 'so much chaffed about Dives and Lazarus' (i.e. the biblical parable of the rich man and poor beggar), successfully petitioned the MBW for another change of name, to **Ilminster Gardens**. Dives' house survived for a while as Heaver's estate office, prior to its rebuilding as a Welsh Chapel.¹⁰¹

An array of local builders put up the houses, probably to Poole's designs; sold on 99-year leases at ground rents of £6 to £8 a year, their annual rents amounted to around £45.¹⁰² On its east-west stretch, the south side of Beauchamp Road (Nos 31-67) became a cliff of standard Heaver-style three-storey white-brick houses, with double-height canted bays, all erected by the Plymouth-born carpenter turned builder John Wyatt. The doorways have spindly detached columns and shallow brick doorheads typical of Heaver (Ill. 14.27). It took Wyatt three years to complete these nineteen houses, a slow progress replicated elsewhere on the estate and indicative of the sudden downturn in the building trade. Wyatt lived at No. 63 for several years. In the north-south stretch (Bleisho Road), Fred Bailey built a terrace of double-fronted houses (now Nos 23-29) with single-storey square and double-storey canted bays – a departure from the Heaver norm, in part caused by the shallowness of the site, abutting Lavender Sweep to the rear.¹⁰³

Much of the rest of the estate was built by the Cornish-born uncle and nephew William and John Rowe. John built all of Ilminster Gardens, of which Nos 1–15 and 29–37 survive. Here the Heaver manner was modified, with leafy round-headed doorheads and capitals to the flanking columns – a style that was followed by William Rowe on the west side of Bleisho Road (now 10–26 Beauchamp Road), and also by Thomas Gregory, another major Battersea builder, on the east side (now Nos 5–21). This latter terrace included several houses due to have been built by Bailey, who then failed. The relatively uniform appearance of the estate suggests that Heaver's controlling role as developer included the supply of builders' materials.¹⁰⁴

It was also John Rowe who in 1882–3 built the large old-fashioned range of houses at 273–313 Lavender Hill, between Lavender Sweep and Ilminster Gardens (today only Nos 299–313 survive). With Dives' house rebuilt as a Welsh Chapel, its architect, Griffith Davies, also built 'in-keeping' houses at 28 & 30 Beauchamp Road, and a small two-storey chapel-keeper's house round the corner at No 32, replaced by an extension to the chapel in 1924.¹⁰⁵

The St John's Road frontage north of Beauchamp Road is largely discussed in Chapter 15 (page #) and the whole block in volume 49, in the context of its development by Arding & Hobbs. Nos 2–18 Ilminster Gardens were replaced in 1896–8 and 1906 by warehousing for Arding & Hobbs, with staff dormitories above; it was here that a disastrous fire started in 1909. The whole of 273–313 Lavender Hill was equipped with shopfronts beginning in the later 1880s, with the exception of No. 273, the triangular house at the junction with Lavender Sweep, for many years a doctor's surgery. The proximity of Arding & Hobbs probably accounted for the high proportion of related businesses, especially tailors and drapers, in this stretch of Lavender Hill, with an admixture of restaurants to feed the shoppers. In one of these shops, Minnis's at No. 309, a fire caused by a naked flame in a window decorated with pampas grass led to the deaths of two draper's assistants in December 1891. The coroner found that twenty-two young women had been working in the premises

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as assistants or upstairs in millinery and dressmaking departments at the time of the fire and escape from the building was made more difficult as one of the two staircases had been removed. The shop at No. 311 became the Junction Picture Palace in 1910, although it did not survive the First World War.¹⁰⁶

Heaver did not keep the Dives' estate for long, selling the freehold of his 145 houses to the Prudential Assurance Company between 1883 and 1887 for a shade under £30,000. Although the Prudential sold off the freeholds gradually, it still owned thirty-six houses here and part of the Arding & Hobbs site in the mid 1950s.¹⁰⁷

The final piece of the jigsaw on the west side of Lavender Sweep, Lavender Lodge, survived among the new terraces in anachronistic splendour until 1904, when it was sold to the local builder William Henry George, son and son-in-law of two prodigious Battersea builders, James George and John Rowe. He constructed a straightforward east-west side-street, **Barnard Road**, through the middle of the site from St John's Road to Lavender Sweep.¹⁰⁸

The plot was too shallow for two roads of small terraced houses but lavishly deep for one: hence the unusual, very long purpose-built cottage flats that went up there in 1904–5. Their double-height bayed rear extensions were designed to pass muster as main frontages to Limburg Road, laid out twenty years earlier (Ill. 14.28). George's surveyor (and presumably the designer of the houses) was the minor Catholic architect J. C. Radford, who had been Putney District Surveyor for the Wandsworth District Board of Works before its demise in 1900. The deep site allowed the flats to have five rooms each, with French windows in a bay opening on to the garden at ground floor level, or to a roof terrace above; and at nearly 1,000 sq. ft they were larger than many Battersea houses (Ill. 14.29). Nearly all were in two-storey pairs, though Nos 2–12 were of three storeys, as were the short rows George also built at 32–46 Lavender Sweep, flanking the road's entrance.¹⁰⁹

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At the same time the adjoining frontage at 49–85 St John's Road was finally completed with rows of shops and a mews behind (Barnard Mews), built by Jones Bros. The northern mews and 49 St John's Road have since been rebuilt as part of the continuing expansion of the Marks & Spencer store there (vol. 49).¹¹⁰

Wartime damage was severe on the west side of the Sweep, at both ends. A V1 rocket landed in front of 281 Lavender Hill in August 1944, killing 28. The whole block at 273–297 Lavender Hill and 1–3 Beauchamp Road was demolished and replaced by Battersea Borough Council in 1954–6 with Pavilion Chambers, shops with flats over, named after the destroyed cinema opposite (Ill. 14.30), and the plainer three-storey Lavenham House adjoining in Beauchamp Road. Ten years later 2–8 Beauchamp Road and 17–27 Ilminster Gardens, also war-damage sites, were filled as a valedictory act by the Council with two small plain blocks faced in light-brown brick with 'Scandinavian' white-wood trim, the former on stilts over a car-park. Bomb damage also paid to 2–8 Barnard Road, and No. 10 was rebuilt in 1955 for the same reason. The plot opposite, on the south side, had been left unoccupied until a shed-like garage was built there in 1919, later augmented with a twin-towered entrance in the mid-1930s. It, too, was rebuilt plainly after the war. This garage had an unexpected role in the 1960s as one of MI5's 'more notorious surveillance offices', revealed when two Soviet trade delegates were expelled from Britain having been apprehended in Barnard Road spying on the 'garage', perhaps alerted to its real function by a 50ft rooftop aerial. It was demolished in 1999 and replaced by seventeen flats at Nos 1–7, designed by Storeys Design & Planning Services of Farnham for Antler Homes in a pastiche of W. H. George's paired Edwardian flats alongside.¹¹¹

At the Sweep's south end, prefabs for several years occupied the clearance site at Hauberk and Hafer Roads until Battersea Borough Council in 1955–7 built two unobtrusive blocks of flats and maisonettes there (now 68–72 Lavender Sweep and 4–8 Hafer Road), finally obliterating any trace of Hauberk Road. Limburg Road received an addition in 1996 when new houses were erected at its south-west end

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(Nos 1, 1A & 3) as part of the redevelopment of the temperance billiard hall at 66 Battersea Rise (by Assael Architecture). Of stock brick, in a distinctive but agreeable post-modern manner, their scale is in keeping with the rest of the street. More recent changes include eight large houses at 22–36 Ilminster Gardens, on the site of a former Arding & Hobbs carpet warehouse, and an adjoining apartment block at 60 Beauchamp Road (Latitude Architects for Persimmon Homes). The restrained buff brick and glass house-fronts, with shallow double-height bays, are intended as a visual bridge between the commercial style of the Arding & Hobbs back premises and the Victorian houses of Ilminster Gardens.¹¹²