

### South of Wandsworth Common

This chapter considers the small district at the southernmost tip of Battersea, where it edges into neighbouring Balham (Ill. 19.1). It is an area of about sixty-five acres, today covered almost entirely by housing, most of it developed between the 1860s and early 1900s on land acquired by the National Freehold Land Society and British Land Company. The new streets were built on ground adjoining – and once part of – Wandsworth Common, and the proximity of this open space has done much to determine the area’s character.

Two early developments of the 1850s also helped shape that character. One was the railway line running to and from Crystal Palace, which cut across the common, dividing the land covered here; a commuter station was added at Wandsworth Common in the late 1860s. The other was the building of an industrial school, subsequently converted to a workhouse, infirmary and eventually a general hospital (St James’s Hospital), which remained an important local facility until its closure and demolition in 1988–92. Both subjects are covered in detail in volume 49 but are touched on here for the central roles they played in the area’s suburban development.

The limits of that area, as defined for the purposes of this chapter, do not follow the old Battersea parish boundary – which bears little relationship to the present topography and in places cuts through the middle of streets and houses – but the more regularized Battersea Borough boundary of 1900–65. In any case, boundaries have little relevance here. The area merges imperceptibly into neighbouring districts, having much in common with the streets between the commons to its north, with Balham to its south-east, and with Upper Tooting to its south and west. Rarely, if at all, is there any sense of connection with Battersea.

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One place of distinct character is Bellevue Road. Slotted between two main north-south traffic routes (Trinity Road and St James's Drive), Bellevue Road has become this little district's high street. Its rows of varied houses, restaurants and specialist shops overlooking the common, and the narrow side-streets of modest two-storey cottages running off it, have a 'London village' atmosphere which differs from the more solidly residential suburban streets east of St James's Drive.

## *Early development*

Before the 1850s this was undeveloped land, forming the southernmost reaches of Wandsworth Common. Later, when its character was changing, the common was remembered wistfully as one of the 'wild spots, where the heather and the furze have bloomed ... and where the sedentary citizen might step off the highway and breathe the unpolluted atmosphere of nature'.<sup>1</sup>

Road improvements began to eat away at this 'beautiful oasis' in the 1820s. Firstly, in 1825 the 2nd Earl Spencer and his fellow Battersea Bridge proprietors persuaded the parish vestry to allow a new 25ft-wide road to be made leading from Trinity Road northwards across the common to join Five Houses Lane (now Bolingbroke Grove), providing a more direct route from Tooting and the south towards their bridge.<sup>2</sup> St James's Drive is the southern part of this road; the northern part, which continued across the common to meet Bolingbroke Grove (roughly opposite Thurleigh Road) was obliterated for the railway in the 1850s. Bellevue Road came two years later, in 1827, connecting Nightingale Lane, and thus Clapham and the districts to its north-east, with Garratt Lane and the south-west. To a large extent both roads followed the routes of old footpaths across the common.<sup>3</sup> But no development followed on, the two roads leading for over twenty years through empty

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waste and furze until the 4th Earl Spencer and his agents, began enclosing and selling off parts of this southern fringe of the common. (Such enclosures provoked a conservation movement, which in 1871 finally secured what was left of the common for public use by Act of Parliament – see vol. 49.)

Building development began in 1850 with the sale by Lord Spencer of twenty acres of the common to the Governors and Directors of the Poor for St James's, Westminster, as the site for an industrial school for that parish's poor children. Influential in the negotiations was the surveyor Charles Lee – a member of both the St James's school committee and the Battersea parish vestry, and an agent of Lord Spencer's to boot; he also designed the school buildings. Lee had suggested that the land could be had at 'a very reasonable rate', given that Spencer was a parishioner of St James's (with a mansion in St James's Place), and he also thought that no tenants or copyholders would protest against the sale. Grazing on the common was now rare, and in any case ample space would still be left for this if required.<sup>4</sup>

Though St James's School was to be the only building here for some time, and might be thought a hindrance to suburban development, those connected with it saw its impact as positive and significant. Writing in 1878, Frederick Crane, a churchwarden of St James's, said the school's presence had brought 'population' to the area, 'changing in the course of a comparatively few years this *out-of-the-way corner of a wild heath* into a piece of singularly eligible suburban building land'. The school had been built facing the Battersea Bridge proprietors' new road, which by the mid 1860s, with the school well-established and houses beginning to emerge opposite, had grown into a 'leading public thoroughfare' and, according to Crane, 'by common consent, as it were', been named St James's Road. (It has been known as St James's Drive since 1940 and is generally referred to here by that name.)<sup>5</sup>

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Only a few years after the school opened in 1851 two more big slices were taken out of the common to accommodate the lines of the West End & Crystal Palace Railway, which opened in 1856. As has been said, north of Bellevue Road, the upper arm of St James's Drive was removed to make way for them, and the railway company also stopped up a new roadway laid out along the St James's school's eastern boundary, which thereafter earned a reputation as an 'abiding place' of gypsies and 'loose characters'. A second unfinished road along the school's southern boundary, connecting with St James's Drive, also became obstructed, by a disgruntled local resident. Both were later sold to the St James's authorities, in 1863.<sup>6</sup>

At first the new railway's 'West End' terminus was a temporary one on the north side of Bellevue Road, which closed in 1858 when the line was extended to Chelsea Bridge. The opening of the present permanent railway station on the south side of the road in 1869 recognized the emergence of this little area as a growing suburb.<sup>7</sup> It is with this post-1860 building development that the rest of this chapter is concerned.

## *Between Bellevue Road and St James's Drive*

This was part of a larger, 20-acre wedge of ground between Trinity Road and St James's Drive enclosed between 1848 and 1853 by Henry McKellar, a wealthy local landowner, to add to his extensive Wandsworth Lodge estate adjoining to the west.<sup>8</sup> It was claimed at the time that McKellar had agreed to take only a small plot, and had appropriated the rest without authority. Here is J. C. Buckmaster, champion and protector of the common, on the subject:

one gentleman had a three-cornered nuisance of five acres conveniently near to his own house. The court leet gave him permission to enclose it, with the distinct understanding it was never to be built upon. The gentleman thanked

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the court leet and “stood glasses round”; in a few days the business of ditching and fencing goes on, and somehow it is not only the three-cornered piece which is enclosed, but another piece by the side of it, four times larger than that which was represented as a nuisance.<sup>9</sup>

There was still nothing but empty fields here in 1863 when McKellar died and this land was sold along with rest of his estate.<sup>10</sup> The chunk between Trinity Road and St James’s Drive, known as McKellar’s Triangle, and two other lots adjoining on the west side of Trinity Road, were acquired by the Liberal-backed National Freehold Land Society and British Land Company to form a new estate. This was intended to attract buyers of small freeholds for house-building (which came with voting rights) from among London’s growing mass of respectable working people, tradesmen and lower middle-class professionals.

Very quickly the British Land Company’s surveyors began laying out new streets: Althorp, Nottingham and Wiseton Roads within the area covered by this chapter; Brodrick and Wandle Roads just outside. Road frontages were divided into house-plots, which were sold at auction in the summer of 1864.<sup>11</sup> Characteristically, these plots were only as big as was required to give the new owners the right to vote – hence the small size of many early houses. However, some buyers seem to have taken multiple plots in order to accommodate larger houses; and as well as the owner-occupiers, small-scale builders took the opportunity to buy up lots in twos, threes and fours, and build short runs of speculative houses.<sup>12</sup>

Three of the earliest buildings, erected in 1864–5, were the Hope Tavern, standing at the apex, opposite the site later taken for the railway station (suggesting that this was already anticipated) – the ideal spot for a pub – and two good-sized double-fronted houses situated some way down the two main roads: White Lodge, at 23 Bellevue Road, and Clifton Villa, now

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111 St James's Drive. The Hope was a three-storey squareish box, with bay windows to its first floor at the front and sides; the single-storey bar extension in front was added subsequently (Ill. 19.2). The two houses were of pale brick, and originally would have shared a similar old-fashioned flat-fronted style; the prominent two-storey bay windows of White Lodge are a later addition, of 1883.<sup>13</sup>

Around these three cornerstones further development followed quickly. Between 1866 and c.1871 much of Bellevue Road filled up, mostly with small two-storey houses and shops, as at Nos 4 & 5 and 6-11, though there was also a large dairy at No. 14. Later infill of the 1870s and 80s introduced considerable variety, for example: the bulkier three-storey red-brick shops at Nos 12 & 13 (1876); a pair of red-brick houses at Nos 18 & 19 (1884), built in the grounds of an earlier house (Churzee Cottage, of 1866), by its owner; and especially the fine group of house, stables and workshop in rubbed red brick, erected in 1887 at No. 16 by Leonard Bottoms, a local builder, for his own use (Ill. 19.3).<sup>14</sup>

Like Bellevue Road, the west side of St James's Drive became built up in the late 1860s, but almost entirely with houses, the only commercial properties here being a shop and later a bank at the corner with Nottingham Road. At first most were smallish semi-detached pairs, such as 1-4 Hope Villas (now Nos 133-139), built c.1865-6 at the north end, beside the pub. Bigger three-storey semis were erected at Nos 115 & 117 in 1869-70 for S. & T. Dunkley, to designs by the architect Frederick Sullivan. Also, the two-storey, double-fronted house in the manner of White Lodge and Clifton Villa was popular here, as at Nos 83 (originally Milford Villa), 89 (Graythorne), 97 (Dalton Villa) and 99 (Woodbine Cottage), all of c.1871. These were often of white brick, with simple but attractive cut or moulded brick decorations (Ill. 19.4). Other examples of this type, more elaborately ornamented, can be found further down St James's Drive, outside the area covered by this

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volume. Bigger houses included the three-storey and basement pair at Nos 85 & 87, of 1871, and a detached residence with a prominent central staircase tower, originally called Bentley House (now No. 91), built in 1879 for George Dempster of Serpentine Lodge in Hyde Park, alongside an earlier development of his, Hyde Park Villas (now Nos 93 & 95).<sup>15</sup>

Most of these St James's Drive houses were given raised ground floors to make the most of the prospect overlooking a small wedge of common land, protected under the 1871 Act, which was well planted with trees to screen the view of the railway lines and platforms beyond.

The first houses in the side-streets between the two main arteries, in Althorp, Wiseton and Nottingham Roads, were generally smaller, often with just a 16ft frontage, and the speculative builder seems to have been a bigger presence here. The regular rows at 6–26 Nottingham Road (of c.1866), 32–44 Althorp Road (c.1867), and 21–39 Wiseton Road (c.1867) are typical examples, all being small, two-storey cottages with two rooms to a floor, characteristic of the type of housing erected around London under the freehold land societies at this time (Ill. 19.5). Smith's Terrace, at 35–47 Althorp Road, of c.1869–70, was a rare attempt at a *palazzo*-style terrace, albeit in a crude, old-fashioned neoclassical style, with the name in a small pediment; the developer was Henry Smith (Ill. 19.6). Later, bigger houses here include Nos 1 & 3 Althorp Road, a pair of three-storey semi-detached villas with barge-boards, erected in 1878 by G. Wallis, a Balham builder.<sup>16</sup> All these side-streets also had a smattering of trade or commercial properties (see *Social and commercial character*, below).

Of later alterations and additions, the most important before the war were the red-brick flats and shops of Bellevue Parade, erected at the corner of Bellevue and Wiseton Roads in 1928 to designs by J. W. Stanley Burmester and G. Whittaker. The modishly flat façade, without bays or projections, was

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not simply a stylistic choice, but was required by the local authorities under the existing building regulations.<sup>17</sup>

## *Between St James's Drive and the railway*

Whilst development was taking off in the mid 1860s on the west side of St James's Drive, the land opposite, behind St James's industrial school, was still a 'park-like' expanse of open fields. With the creation of the Westminster Poor Law Union in 1868, St James's parish hoped to sell the building and its immediate grounds to the new body, but hold on to the surrounding 14½ acres, with a view to speculative development. By then houses were starting to go up to the school's east, in Balham. Here two new roads of c.1864–5 leading off Balham High Road – Balham Park Road and Boundaries (sometimes Boundary) Road – had been brought right up to the eastern limits of the school site, where they ended abruptly. Such a layout can only have been planned in expectation that in time the school's surplus land would be given over to building and these roads continued across it to St James's Drive.<sup>18</sup> In fact Boundaries Road in its original form seems to have been oriented so as to line up with Charles Lee's blocked road to the south of the school.

One consequence of the 1871 Act protecting Wandsworth Common from further encroachment was the increase in value it brought to other potential building land in the vicinity, including the St James's site. As a result, the Local Government Board, which had final authority over the disposition of poor-law property, saw greater gain in selling the land freehold. And so, having been bought from Lord Spencer at £30 an acre, it was sold at auction in 1878 to the British Land Company at a price of £1,000 an acre.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the year plans by Henry Michell, the company's surveyor, for Ouseley Road and the present western sections of Sarsfeld and



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Balham Park Roads had been approved, and by 1879, when a high wall was built around the school and its grounds, house-building on the estate had begun.<sup>20</sup>

As before, on their land west of St James's Drive, the company's activities here were not restricted to Battersea parish, but were to include streets of houses to the east of the St James's site in Streatham parish – in Heslop Road and the eastern arms of Sarsfeld and Balham Park Roads, where it had also bought up land – and subsequently also in Boundaries Road.<sup>21</sup>

Balham Park Road was where building kicked off, in 1879. The houses erected there proved to be something of an anomaly, being generally the biggest and best in the area, and clothed in a distinctive architectural style (Ills 19.7, 8). The developer was a Scottish-born builder, William Kerr of Ramsden Road, Balham. Kerr's houses skirted the common in continuation of an existing roadway to the east (see Ill. 19.1), and at first he intended to lay out forty houses, twenty on either side. But he may have overstretched himself, as he was still finishing off houses here as late as 1885, and in the end built only twenty-nine (Nos 77–103, 82–84 and 98–122), leaving empty plots at Nos 86–96 on the north side, and Nos 65–75 on the south, at the junction with Ouseley Road, where he was also active (below). These were later filled by other builders with standard suburban houses of c.1904–5 during a later phase of development on the estate. Neither did Kerr become involved with the house plots at the road's far western end (at No. 105, and 74–78 St James's Drive, designed by Herbert Bignold, and 80–86 St James's Drive), where the buildings also date from 1904–5.<sup>22</sup>

The generous size of Kerr's houses had not been anticipated by the British Land Company, which had sold him the land in the new road in sixty-three lots, presumably in the expectation of terraced houses being built of some 20ft frontage. But Kerr must have thought that a location so close to the

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common and the new railway station would attract a better class of resident, and increased the plot sizes to 36–39ft of frontage, supporting a far superior type of detached, double-fronted villa.<sup>23</sup>

Each of Kerr's houses was of two storeys, with splayed bays either side of a central entrance; these were generally only of one storey, though a few of the houses on the south side have full-height bays. This allowed for three or four ground-floor rooms to be arranged either side of a central staircase hall, with a kitchen, scullery and WC in a block at the rear, and four bed and dressing rooms on the floor above (Ill. 19.8). A bathroom and second WC were usually tucked into a half-landing between the two main floors.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from their size and planning, the playful, polychromatic façades of Kerr's houses marks them out, and lifts them above the drabness of the surrounding streets. Though a few house fronts are of red brick, white brick is the street's predominant facing material, usually offset with dressings and bands in red, stock and black brick, and decorative string-courses and panels of moulded brick or terracotta. Most of the houses have porticoed entrance porches, and the survival of pierced stone parapets above these and the window bays here and there suggests that the little red-tiled roofs used elsewhere are probably later alterations – perhaps dating from c.1900–10, when a lot of the houses underwent improvement. Kerr must have made his mark locally with this development: a decade later, when he and other builders who had worked on the British Land Company estate were busy building houses farther east, off Balham High Road, they were described as 'well known in the neighbourhood'.<sup>25</sup> Almost identical houses on the west side of Longley Road, in Tooting, must also be by Kerr.

Kerr was also responsible for some of the smaller semis and trios of houses around the corner in Ouseley Road, at Nos 2–22, of 1881–2, tricked out in a simplified version of his Balham Park Road style.<sup>26</sup> Otherwise this road,

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Heslop Road, and Sarsfeld Road to their south followed a standard pattern, with mostly two-storey houses of c.1881–6, faced generally in red or greyish-white brick, with full-height splayed bays and frontages of around 20ft – though these tended to be grouped in semi-detached pairs rather than terraced. Three similarly styled houses at 54–58 St James’s Drive date from the same period. The red-brick group at 9–19 Ouseley Road, of 1883–5, built by Cousins & Harmer of Wandsworth, differs slightly, having a third storey in gables above the two-storey bays. Also, a very large detached three-storey house, named Titchfield, with an attached stable-block, was built in 1881 across several plots at the south end of Ouseley Road by William J. Buchanan of Upper Tooting.<sup>27</sup> Now 44 Ouseley Road, this was commissioned as a residence for John James Evans, a fishmonger in Great Titchfield Street, St Marylebone, hence the house’s name. A second detached villa, Minehead (No. 42A), in a Queen Anne Revival style, was added around 1900 alongside, in the grounds of Titchfield. Both were acquired by the Wandsworth & Clapham Union in 1906 to add to the poor law infirmary about to be erected immediately behind, beside the school, which was by then in use as a branch workhouse.<sup>28</sup> Sarsfeld Road had a greater number of smaller, stock and red-brick terraced cottages at its north-western end, of which Nos 11–17 (part of Sarsfeld Terrace, of c.1882) and Nos 19–29 (c.1884) survive; similar properties occupy the south-eastern end of Heslop Road.

Like Kerr, most of the builders at work in these roads in the 1880s hailed from Balham, Augustus Nixon of Ramsden Road being perhaps the most active, especially in Sarsfeld Road. Others came generally from near by, from Clapham, Upper Tooting or Battersea.<sup>29</sup>

The south-western stretch of Boundaries Road dates from the late 1890s and early 1900s, as part of another British Land Company estate to the south-east of the St James’s site, as far as Upper Tooting Park. At first the very end of the road, where it turns south to join Upper Tooting Park, was known

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separately as Dermot Road, but this was incorporated into Boundaries Road in 1901. Only the west side is covered here: the east side, along with the other streets of this British Land estate – Doyle (now Oswald), Wontner, Hosack, Nevis, Tunley, Rowfant and Marius Roads – is in Balham.<sup>30</sup>

In Boundaries Road nearly all the houses were terraced, there being few semis – though two big pairs at Nos 164 & 166 (by Stanton Bros of Bromley, 1899) and 168 & 170 stand out as obvious exceptions. The traditional two-storey bay-fronted terraces, like those erected by Abel Playle at Nos 152–162, or by Madge & Lewis at Nos 172–186, both of c.1899, differ very little from housing of twenty years earlier. But one marked change was in the provision of cottage-flats, with which this west side of the street was well stocked. One group, at Nos 68–90, built by Thomas Tompkins of Elmfield Road, Balham, has been demolished. But two other good runs survive, at Nos 92–138, and Nos 188–226, both developed by Charles Whillier, a Clapham plumber, in 1899–1901.<sup>31</sup> In terms of their planning, these were typical of London cottage-flats of the early 1900s, each apartment having three rooms, its own kitchen, scullery, bath and WC. Whillier or his designer took some interest in their appearance, enlivening the red-brick fronts with moulded brick panels, bands of paler, moulded terracotta, decorative tiles to the paired entrance porches, and tiled pathways (see Ill. 0.11).

Some of the properties on the north side of Upper Tooting Park date from the same period, including, in the area covered here, the pair of red-brick and roughcast detached five-bedroom villas at Nos 12 & 14 (known originally as Hill Crest and Allerton respectively). These were built in 1901–2 as a speculation for and to designs by the architect William Hunt, who lived locally.<sup>32</sup> Hunt and his son and partner, Edward A. Hunt, who are better known as designers of townhouses and commercial properties in Mayfair, resided at Hill Crest in the early 1900s, shortly after Hunt senior's term of office as Mayor of Wandsworth (1902–3); E. A. Hunt was also responsible for

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the 1930s wing of Wandsworth Town Hall. Both houses were heavily rebuilt around 1950, having suffered bomb damage. Since 1965 No. 14 has been the vicarage to the church of Holy Trinity, Upper Tooting.<sup>33</sup>

The story of the other few houses in this part of Upper Tooting Park is tied to the later history of first-generation buildings at the south end of St James's Drive. This had been built up in the 1860s and 70s with large detached and semi-detached villas in spacious grounds. The biggest of these was 'Ye Tyle House', at the far south end, with a servants' cottage, coach-house and stable in its grounds, which fronted both St James's Drive and Upper Tooting Park. By the mid 1920s the owner and occupant, F. J. Liddington, had decided to embark upon speculative infill development, beginning in 1925 with the four ordinary semis at 4–10 Upper Tooting Park, built by Potterton & Sons of Balham in the grounds of his house. These were followed in 1932 by another row of four at 8–14 St James's Drive, on this occasion designed and built by Fawcett & Co. (Clapham) Ltd. In contrast, these were dressed in an attractive suburban neo-Tudor manner, with dark brick, black-and-white half-timbering, tiled hipped roofs and tall chimneys. Liddington must have sold up soon after, for in 1934–5 Ye Tyle House was demolished for a little estate of terraced and semi-detached houses in the same style (again by Fawcett & Co.) at 2 & 2A Upper Tooting Park, 4 & 6 and 16 St James's Drive, and another eleven in a new cul-de-sac called Appledore Close. Cut off from the hustle and bustle of the two main roads, Appledore Close is a quiet retreat, its well-designed houses grouped pleasantly around a central space (Ill. 19.10). Most of the houses of the Tyle House estate had two ground-floor reception rooms, a kitchen, other services and an integral garage, with three or four bedrooms and a bathroom on the floor above.<sup>34</sup>

The remaining old houses of St James's Drive to the north, at Nos 20–40, were demolished shortly after the war (see *Post-war changes*, below).

## *East of the railway: Ravenslea Road area*

The area south of Nightingale Lane, between the railway and Ravenslea Road, was not built up until the 1890s. It was part of a 15-acre piece of the common sold by Earl Spencer in 1854 to the West London & Crystal Palace Railway Company. This included the site of the present Wandsworth Common Station but otherwise was used principally by the railway company to dig gravel for ballast. The solicitor James Anderson Rose, who acted for the Wandsworth Common Preservation Association and lived near by, contested the railway owners' right to sell this land as surplus when they tried to do so in 1867. After a lawsuit, Rose bought the site from them with the intention of preserving it as an open space. This he was able to do during his lifetime, but shortly after his death in 1890 the land came on the open market. Local preservationists urged the LCC to reunite it with the common, but by the summer of 1894 it had been acquired by the builder-developer Alfred Boon.<sup>35</sup>

Boon's Wandsworth Common estate got under way around 1897–1900, with the construction of houses at 1–15 and 2–14 Wexford Road, followed shortly afterwards by those adjoining at 121–131 Nightingale Lane and 1–9 Mayford Road (1 & 3 now demolished). Many were built under lease from Boon by Abel Playle of Wroughton Road, who had been active earlier in the 'Between the Commons' area to the north. Boon was at the same time busy developing the adjoining Fernside estate, on the east side of Ravenslea Road, in Balham.<sup>36</sup>

These first houses were a mix of detached and semi-detached, varying somewhat in plan-form and exterior detailing, but all generous in size – of three storeys, with big rooms and an average of six or seven bedrooms – and shared the same attractive red-brick late-Victorian free style. There are some particularly fine entrance porches, with tiled surrounds and good stained-

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glass to the doors (Ill. 19.11); those in Mayford and Wexford Roads have granite columns.

While these houses were being finished, Boon's builders were also at work on another row of big three-storey semis, at 1–15 Ravenslea Road, of c.1900–1, though this time in an Old English style with roughcast and half-timbered upper storeys and dormers. The last stretch of frontage here was built up around 1900–2 with smaller, two-storey terraced houses at 17–75 Ravenslea Road, to which more were added at Nos 77–81 (of c.1905), and at 85–89 (of c.1907). Abel Playle was once again prominent among the builders.<sup>37</sup>

## *Post-war changes*

The area suffered some serious damage in World War Two, particularly from two V1 flying bombs, which brought about the demolition of houses at the west end of Sarsfeld Road (Nos 1–9) and also beside St Jude's Church, at 60–80 Sarsfeld Road and 60–90 Boundaries Road. This latter site was utilised after the war for public housing, erected by Battersea Borough Council in 1956–8. Vacant houses at 20–22 St James's Drive, used as an emergency meals station during hostilities, were demolished after the war along with Nos 24–40 adjoining to make room for St James's Close – eight semi-detached houses of 1952, and a three-storey L-shaped block of flats of 1954, again by Battersea Borough Council. One other small area of municipal housing is 1–16 Mayford Close, three blocks of flats of Cornish unit construction, built in 1958–60 for Battersea Council on the site of damaged houses in Mayford Road and adjoining land by Selleck Nicholls & Company. Unusually for this type of post-war temporary housing they retain their original facing of small pre-cast concrete panels (Ill. 19.12).<sup>38</sup>

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Modern commercial architecture is thin on the ground. Two recent developments at the north end of Althorp Road are Bellevue House (by Haverstock Associates, architects) and Althorpe House (by Lynn Davis Architects), both of c.1987–9.<sup>39</sup>

The greatest change in recent years has been the closure of St James's Hospital in 1988, its demolition in 1992, and the use of its site for a modern housing estate, opened in 1995. Originally known as the St James's Estate, this is now generally referred to as Old Hospital Close, after one of the new roads at its centre.<sup>40</sup> It was designed by the architects Phippen Randall & Parkes for the St James' Consortium, a syndicate of local housing associations, and was built by Wimpey Construction at a cost of around £11 million, provided through a combination of Housing Corporation grants and private finance.

As built the estate comprised 236 homes, in a mix of flats and houses, seventy-eight of which were designed for shared ownership, the rest for rent. As befitted the site's long history of welfare, it also included accommodation for those with special needs, an octagonal community building, and a nursing home for twenty-four elderly people (designed by B. Urquhart Associates). The blocks at the centre of the estate, in and around Old Hospital Close, are generally taller, and here the use of red brick is greater. But on St James's Drive the relatively low scale of the various units, the dominant use of stock brick and pitched roofs, and the architects' postmodern interpretation of an Italianate style were all adopted specifically to blend in with the Victorian housing of the surrounding streets, which by then had been designated a Conservation Area.

*Social and business character*



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Development of the British Land Company's first estate here in the 1860s and 70s established a respectable lower middle-class dormitory. Early residents in and around Bellevue and St James's Roads were a consistent mix of junior clerks, tradespeople, shopkeepers, schoolmasters and builders, most of them with young families and perhaps a single resident servant. A few higher-paid professionals, such as stockbrokers and accountants, took to some of the bigger houses of St James's Road.<sup>41</sup> House-names such as Acacia Villa, Ingleside, The Homestead and Fernerei proclaim the middle-class suburban aspirations of the area's builders, developers and residents, and multiple occupation was virtually unknown here. By the mid 1870s Wandsworth Common had become 'alive with nursemaids and children on fine days', and the area could be described as resembling a 'comfortable looking town of respectable inhabitants'.<sup>42</sup> This pattern of occupation was to persist beyond the Second World War.

The later British Land estate east of St James's Road was less aspirational. The double-fronted villas of Balham Park Road were an exception, drawing in a higher tier of middle-class professionals; but elsewhere, in the terraces and semis of Ouseley and Sarsfeld Roads, families of gas engineers, shirtmakers, bootmakers, and commercial travellers were the norm, a few of whom could occasionally afford a young resident maid. In places the proximity of St James's Infirmary, and especially its mortuary and consumptive wards, brought down values, and in these pockets rents were lower and tenancies shorter. And monthly tenancies and cheaper rents could be had in the cottage-flats of Boundaries Road.<sup>43</sup>

At the turn of the century the bigger and more attractive houses of Alfred Boon's estate in and around Ravenslea Road, which commanded rents of £60-£85 per annum, became popular with families of older and retired professionals – engineers, solicitors, merchants, stockbrokers, and master builders – most of whom were in their 50s or 60s. John T. Pilditch, district

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surveyor to Battersea Vestry and Borough, was living at 1 Ravenslea Road in 1901. The smaller houses at the south end of Ravenslea Road were let out in flats.<sup>44</sup>

Residents of note are few and far between. William Kerr's villas in Balham Park Road provide the richest pickings. The comic actor William Hawtrey (brother of the actor and theatre manager Sir Charles Hawtrey), who later became well-known in America through his touring company, lived there at Pendennis (now No. 98) in the 1880s and 90s. At around the same time James William Domoney, an LCC municipal reformer, was residing at Montrose (No. 122); and Herbert Charles Lambert, a well-known Edwardian London silversmith (of Lambert & Company), was at Lena Lodge (No. 77).<sup>45</sup> More recently, the Rt Revd Hugh Montefiore (d.2005) lived at White Lodge, 23 Bellevue Road, both before and after his controversial appointment as Bishop of Birmingham (1978–87).

Like other areas built up under the National Freehold Land Society and British Land Company, this was a working community as well as a commuter suburb. Suitable corner sites were allocated for public houses, such as the Hope on Bellevue Road, and a companion further west, the Surrey Tavern (also of the mid 1860s, just outside the area covered here). As well as the small shops of Bellevue Road (Ill. 19.13) – which were a classic mix of butcher, draper, stationer, grocer, bootmaker and the like – there was from the start a tradition of small local businesses in the nearby side roads. Several builders were based here, and there was a laundry on Wiseton Road, a slaughterhouse in Althorp Road, and two dairies, one on Bellevue Road, another in Althorp Road, where cow-sheds, stabling and coach-houses in the yards were a reminder of the area's semi-rural origins. There was also originally a second row of houses with small shops on the east side of St James's Road, between Sarsfeld Road and St James's Hospital, known as St James's Terrace; this was demolished following war damage.<sup>46</sup>

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Their successors today as the dominant local commercial forces are the ubiquitous estate agents and bar-restaurants of the well-heeled modern inner London suburb, for the area has undergone significant gentrification since the 1970s. Like neighbouring Balham, it attracts the well-off young families of bankers and consultants – a ‘professional and commercial elite’ – spilling further south from Battersea and Clapham in search of more affordable homes. In 2012, a small two-storey cottage of 20ft frontage, such as those built for artisans in Althorp and Wiseton Roads in the mid 1860s at a cost of about £350, could fetch an average of around £1m.<sup>47</sup>