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## Great Bus Journeys of the World No 15

The G1 from Battersea to Streatham. Mike Roden goes on a very long tour of South London suburbia



The G1 route starts in the middle of the Shaftesbury Estate on Wickersley Road. The bus is waiting to set off as I arrive, and the driver announces that because of roadworks he will be taking a diversion – missing out Lavender Hill and St John’s Road.

The market gardens of the early nineteenth century were replaced by this estate in the 1870s. Designed by William Austin it was built by the ‘Artizans, Labourers and General Dwelling Company’, supported by the philanthropist Lord Shaftesbury who laid the foundation stone in 1872. Eventually around 1,200 houses were completed, providing healthy and affordable housing for working people.

The roadworks mean we see nothing of Lavender Hill as from Latchmere Road the bus heads down to Clapham Common and then back up to Battersea Rise, where it gets back on track by turning left down Northcote Road.

### Stained glass

I’d been told by a fellow member how circuitous a route this was, and this becomes clear as reaching the end of Northcote Road, we turn left up the largely residential Broomwood Road. Standing out among the Edwardian villas I spot a corner shop called Stained Glass. Marc and Mary Eady have been here at this former dairy shop since 1980. In the late 1980s things took off for them when interest in Victorian architecture surged with people wanting to replace the original stained glass. The Eadys have always kept the business small, generating just enough work for the two of them, and still remain very much hands on.

Back at the Common, the Avenue takes us in the direction of Clapham South station. This is one of eight London Underground stations with a deep-level air-raid shelter underneath. In 1948, the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury carrying 492 Jamaicans who had been encouraged to emigrate by the Colonial Office to help with London’s chronic labour shortage. Accommodation was also in short supply and many of these new arrivals were initially housed in this deep-level shelter. A pleasant welcome to England...

### Oak Lodge

On Nightingale Lane the bus stops near the entrance to Oak Lodge School a residential and day school for boys and girls aged 11–19 who have hearing, speech, language and communication needs. The school was first established by the LCC in 1905 as a boarding school for deaf girls, and concentrated mostly on preparing the pupils for life as servants and domestic workers. In 1968 a new school was opened on the same site. By now deaf children were taking and passing examinations in academic subjects. Oak Lodge today is very different. Twelve of the twenty-five teachers and nine of the fifteen teaching assistants are themselves deaf, more than in any other school for deaf children in Britain.

Crossing Trinity Road a left turn off Burntwood Road takes us through the grounds of the London Golf Centre and into Springfield Hospital, the headquarters of the South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust. This opened in 1840 as the Surrey County Pauper

Lunatic Asylum. It eventually had 83 acres of farmland where male patients were employed to provide food for the institution. When the hospital joined the NHS, the days of the farm were numbered, and by 1955 the land had been disposed of – the golf centre stands on part of it. At its heyday the hospital had 2000 patients but now has fewer than 300 inpatients, in modern accommodation, and there is a greater emphasis on outpatient clinics and support services. Much of the original hospital building is now disused, and various plans have been proposed for their development. That is another story.

The bus waits briefly near the main hospital building and then we head back to Burntwood Lane and pass Burntwood School, first built in the 1950s on land previously belonging to Springfield Hospital. The school which converted to academy status in 2013, is now housed in new buildings, after the completion of a £40m project. The school was a RIBA London award winner earlier this year. It is an impressive complex (see p16).

After a brief visit to St George’s Grove, through many new apartment buildings, many of which have been developed as affordable housing for those working at nearby St George’s Hospital we find ourselves on Garratt Lane passing Streatham Cemetery. This opened in the late nineteenth century to serve the needs of the expanding Tooting and Streatham. In the early part of the 20th century it is estimated that 20 per cent of South London’s burials took place in Streatham Park Cemetery. I haven’t been able to track down any famous (or indeed notorious) inmates of the



**Sights to see: A flowery frontage, Shaftesbury Estate; West Indians in Clapham South deep shelter; Streatham Cemetery; Edward VII, Tooting Broadway; Totterdown Estate when newly built; drinking fountain, Streatham Green**

place, other than the singer Dorothy Squires, who was once married to Roger Moore. Several times bankrupted, she died in 1998.

### Vast

At Fountain Road we take yet another detour from the main road into the vast complex of St George's University Hospital, now one of the largest teaching hospitals in the country. Founded in 1733, its original site was in Lanesborough House at Hyde Park Corner. In 1948, when it became part of the NHS, plans for a new site in Tooting were eventually agreed upon, and the Grove Hospital became part of St George's. A new medical school opened here in 1976, and the Hyde Park site finally closed its doors in 1980. One of its last patients was the novelist Hilary Mantel who has written movingly of her personally devastating treatment there in 1979 for endometriosis. The building still stands and is now the Lanesborough Hotel on the west side of Hyde Park Corner.

The G in G1 stands for George's and this route was specifically created to bring patients to and from this hospital, and it duly drops off a few as we meander through the massive site, and picks up a couple more, before we join the main road, and head down into Tooting. We have not finished yet!

Tooting Broadway Station, with an imposing statue of Edward VII alongside, is a grade II listed station which opened in 1926 and was designed by Charles Holden as part of the extension of the City and South London Railway from Clapham Common to Morden, built by the Underground Electric Railway

Company of London (UERL). It was Holden's first major project for the Underground. These stations are branded with the roundel which had been adopted by UERL, and later became London Transport's logo.

Turning right into Mitcham Road, a long bustling row of shops, takeaways and the occasional pub gives way to the quiet residential suburbia of the rather narrow Church Lane. After a few hundred yards Lessingham Avenue appears on the left. This is part of the Totterdown Estate, one of the first LCC housing estates and is heavily influenced by the Garden City movement. The houses have many Arts and Craft features – big gables, Tudor style chimneys, single and double storey bay windows and a range of door styles and porch designs. 1,229 houses were built in the period 1903 to 1911, but no places of work were built nearby and residents had to rely on the electric trams which ran along Upper Tooting Road to get them to and from work.

### Listed

Eventually we arrive at the main road alongside Tooting Bec Common, passing the Lido on the way. We arrive at Streatham High Road and journey's end approaches as we pass Streatham Green with its distinctive grade II listed drinking fountain designed by William Dyce in 1862.

We reach Streatham Station and though the final stop is another four minutes away I disembark. I have been entertained by south London's suburbs for quite long enough. I started just before ten o'clock, and it is now 11.15. Needless to say I do not use the G1 for my journey home.

I have now travelled the routes of all the buses that have any meaningful connection with Battersea. There is only so much you can say about Lavender Hill, or Falcon Road. However, I am planning a new series of journeys, using (mostly) buses, but sometimes trams or trains. Watch this space.

All the journeys can be found in the online version of *Battersea Matters*.

**19** Battersea Bridge – Finsbury Park *Autumn 2011*

**49** Battersea Rise – White City *Spring 2012*

**344** Clapham Junction – Liverpool Street *Summer 2012*

**170** Victoria – Roehampton *Autumn 2012*

**345** South Kensington – Peckham *Winter 2012*

**87** from Clapham Junction to Aldwych *Spring 2013*

**295** Falcon Road – Ladbrooke Grove *Summer 2013*

**C3** Falcon Road – Earls Court *Winter 2013*

**319** Sloane Square – Streatham Hill *Spring 2014*

**137** Streatham Hill – Oxford Street *Summer 2014*

**337** Battersea Rise to Richmond *Winter 2014*

**35** Battersea Rise – Shoreditch *Spring 2015*

**452** Wandsworth Road – Kensal Rise *Summer 2015*

**G1** Wickersley Road – Streatham

Autumn 2014 was a trip on the **Overground** between Clapham Junction and Clapham Junction via Willesden and Canary Wharf.

\*written by Jenny Sheridan