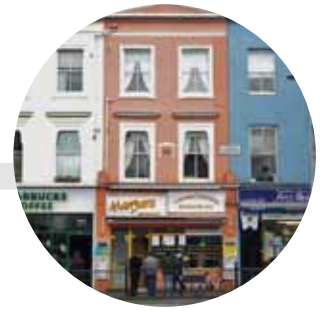


---

# Great Bus Journeys of the World No 17

Mike Roden heads north on the 328 to Golders Green



Today my trip begins with a brisk walk over Battersea Bridge, and up Beaufort Street to Kings Road. The bus stop is on Limerston Street, a short walk to the left. The 328 bus is about to set off on its epic journey, and at twenty past ten on a rather grey May morning, I'm on my way.

This part of Chelsea is called Worlds End, apparently named after the pub we pass on the left. It has been here since the mid-1600s, though the current Grade II listed building dates from 1897 and has had its ups and downs lately.

## Masterplan

After a quick detour round Thames Water's long-running road works we're get back on track and join Finborough Road. This is part of the Pettward estate built by the family of that name (originally from Putney) who purchased Finborough Hall near Stowmarket in Suffolk at the end of the eighteenth century.

I've covered this part of the journey in my piece about the C3 route in the winter 2013 edition of *Battersea Matters*, but I'll just mention the Finborough Theatre again above the pub at the junction with Ifield Street. This small theatre with a huge reputation is well worth a visit.

This area is still under the shadow of the controversial Earls Court masterplan for a 'new district for London'. But opponents have noticed encouraging signs that the new mayor Sadiq Khan does not share his predecessor's enthusiasm for the scheme.

After a long wait at Cromwell Road we head past the giant Tesco store and take a brief diversion through

upmarket residential streets before heading north again on Earls Court Road. On the right the jaunty young lady on The Princess Victoria's sign reveals a lot more leg than would have been appropriate when the place was opened in 1830. Here you are promised an authentic Spanish dining experience within a traditional Kensington pub...

As the bus turns onto Kensington High Street I spot the new home of the Design Museum – their planned move last year from Shad Thames to the site of the former Commonwealth Institute has been postponed until November.

We join a slow convoy of buses and pass Stafford Court where a blue plaque commemorates the singer Alma Cogan ('the girl with the giggle in her voice') who died in 1966 of ovarian cancer. She was only 34. The ground floor flat she shared with her widowed mother was often the venue for celebrity-strewn parties, with regular guests including Princess Margaret, Noel Coward, Audrey Hepburn and Frankie Vaughan

## Roman roads

Turning up Kensington Church Street past St Mary Abbots Church we're now following part of the route for my trip on the 452 bus to Kensal Green (*Battersea Matters* Summer 2015). We head uphill along a twisting lane that long ago joined the Roman roads from Bath and Oxford to the City of London and now takes us to Notting Hill Gate, where the bus turns up Pembridge Road past the award-winning Gate Theatre. Further on there is a parade of 'alternative shops' – retro clothing, Japanese prints,

militaria. Very 1960s.

We pass Westbourne Park Station and under Westway. Looking down I see the somewhat murky waters of the Grand Union Canal which starts in London and 137 miles and 166 locks later ends in Birmingham.

## Corbyn

After Harrow Road we head up Elgin Avenue. What looks like any well-maintained council housing estate has a dramatic history. In the early 1970s the sheer volume of derelict homes gave rise to a high profile squatting campaign, involving such figures as housing campaigner Piers Corbyn (Jeremy's older brother) and punk legend Joe Strummer of the Clash, who began his musical career in the nearby Chippenham Hotel.

By 1988 Westminster City Council (led by Dame Shirley Porter) adopted the policy of selling vacant flats to private developers rather than letting them. Protests grew and led to another influx of squatters breaking into sealed properties.

Eventually a local action group promoting resident control forged an uneasy alliance with the council and with their financial assistance demolished two tower blocks and replaced them with low rise homes. Twenty years on the estate is regarded by many as a model for community ownership of estates.

Headed for Kilburn we pass Paddington Recreation Ground which owes its existence to the persistence of one man. In 1887, acting for the local cricket club, R M Beachcroft bought nine acres of land, then rented an adjacent eleven acres and raised a relief fund to pay for the creation of an



**Sights to see: The Finborough Theatre; Alma Cogan's house, Pembridge Road (photo Robin Sones); St Augustine's Church, Kilburn; Marie Lloyd's grave, Hampstead Cemetery; statuary, Golders Green Crematorium**

athletics and cycling track, providing work for many local unemployed men in a time of recession.

Up ahead the skyline is dominated by the vast spire of St Augustine's Church. This Grade I listed building is affectionately known as the 'cathedral of north London' although despite its Victorian Gothic vastness and the ornate interior decoration it is merely a parish church. The bus forges on uphill towards Kilburn High Road, once an ancient Celtic trackway which was eventually paved over by the Romans and became famous as Watling Street. Now it is more prosaically known as the A5.

**Well**

Kilburn grew up on the banks of a stream called the Kilbourne known today as the Westbourne (one of London's 'lost' rivers) which flows – mostly underground – to the Thames. In the early nineteenth century the village was briefly famous as a place to take the waters from a local well with supposed healing properties, but its main development took place from the 1880s onward.

We're about half way through the town getting occasional glimpses down into the valley when the bus takes a right turn up Quex road. This curious name is a legacy of the Powell-Cotton family of Quex Park in Birchington, Kent who owned and developed much of the land round here.

On we go towards West Hampstead. This was once a tiny hamlet known as West End with two or three houses, but the railway and the people it brought in its wake changed all that, and the housing

estates spread ever outwards. We cross several sets of railway lines, witness to the fact that the town has three stations close to each other, serving the Overground, the Jubilee Line, and Thameslink.

**Short Brothers**

Heading out into the posher suburbs things speed up a bit and we're quickly passing Hampstead Cemetery. This opened in 1876 and now has no new burial spaces available. It has two Grade II listed mortuary chapels, which have been restored with the help of Heritage Lottery money. I finally find a Battersea connection when I later read that Eustace and Horace, two of the Short Brothers who founded their Aeronautic Works on Queenstown Road are buried here. Their companions include comic writer Alan Coren, Joseph Lister, who introduced clean surgery, and music hall star Marie Lloyd.

We're high up on Childs Hill now, which is nearly 260 feet above sea level. In 1808 the optical telegraph station located here became one of a line of telegraph stations stretching from the Admiralty to Great Yarmouth, part of Britain's national defences against French invasion.

Journey's end beckons. Golders Green has been here since the thirteenth century, taking its name from Godyere, a local family, but it is essentially a late Victorian suburban development. The large Jewish community took root here after Hitler's rise to power, and by the 1950s, the Jewish population had more than doubled. There are around fifty kosher restaurants and eateries,

and more than forty synagogues in the area.

One Golders Green claim to fame which cannot be ignored is its Italianate 'celebrity crematorium'. Kingsley Amis, T S Eliot, Sigmund Freud, Marc Bolan. Ivor Novello, Michael Foot, Amy Winehouse and Keith Moon were all cremated here.

And so at about five minutes to noon the bus finally reaches Golders Green Station and I disembark. It's a long way from Kings Road, Chelsea. Now for the pleasures of the Northern Line...

**The Battersea Society**

**Chair** Sara Milne

chair@batterseasociety.org.uk

**Secretary** Harvey Heath

secretary@batterseasociety.org.uk

**Committee Chairs**

**Planning** Liz Walton

planning@batterseasociety.org.uk

**Open Spaces** Peter Warburton

openspaces@batterseasociety.org.uk

**Events**

events@batterseasociety.org.uk

**General enquiries**

information@batterseasociety.org.uk

**Website**

batterseasociety.org.uk

Registered charity no.1103560