

# ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN VICTORIAN LONDON: SOME EXAMPLES FROM BATTERSEA

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This paper examines the processes of suburban development in Battersea, a representative south London parish, whose population in the 19th century increased by more than 160,000. The aim is to illustrate at local level some of the ways in which previously undeveloped land was covered by serried ranks of terraced houses in only eighty years.

Apart from the pioneering work of H. J. Dyos on Camberwell<sup>1</sup>, there have been few studies of the evolution of suburban building in London, although recent volumes of the Survey of London go some way to rectifying this omission<sup>2</sup>. There were in excess of 140 building estates in 19th century Battersea, and attention can only be paid here to a limited sample. Two examples of detailed case-studies, together with a more general treatment of the southern part of the parish have already been published<sup>3</sup>, and these will not be considered again here.

The first part of the paper examines briefly the sources available for the study of suburban development, followed by an attempt to produce a typology of methods of development which may have a wider application across London suburbia. The last part contains two case studies of estate developers at work—William Willmer Pocock who used land in Battersea as a brickfield from 1845 until 1880, and progressively laid the land out for building once the brickearth had been removed, and Alfred Heaver, a builder-

turned-developer who was responsible for large parts of the townspace of central Battersea between 1880 and 1900, as well as substantial estates in other south London suburbs.

The sources for identifying the landowners, developers and builders of 19th-century suburbia are many and varied<sup>4</sup>. For the initial stages there may be auction and other sale particulars. In areas such as Battersea where development did not really begin until 1840, the Tithe Map and Apportionment (in this case dating from 1838–9) make a useful datum for the landscape and landownership patterns as they were. Even in 1840, Battersea possessed a considerable acreage of open fields, whose strips and furlongs conditioned the pattern of many later developments<sup>5</sup>. After 1856, the minutes of the Metropolitan Board of Works record applications for laying out new streets, continued after 1889 in the London County Council minutes. The records of the Wandsworth District Board of Works (1856–88), Battersea Metropolitan Vestry (1889–1900) and Battersea Borough Council (1901–) also contain much useful information about developers and builders. Especially valuable are the detailed plans of houses and drainage layouts which survive from the 1870s<sup>6</sup>.

The years of compulsory purchase for redevelopment after 1945 have ensured the survival of many house deeds in several archives. Initial leases and building

agreements, mortgages and abstracts of title all provide invaluable information for piecing together the mosaic of individuals involved in the process of converting fields into houses.

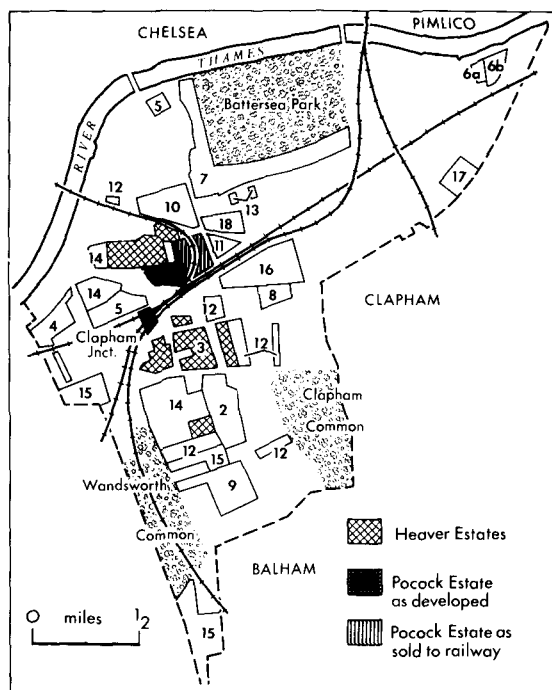


Fig. 1 Estate Development: Plan of Estates mentioned in text.

2. Webb's Heaver Park—1881.
3. Tom Taylor—1881
4. Carter—1845
5. Howey—1864
- 6a. Haward—1842
- 6b. Ponton—1863
7. Crown—1873–90
8. P'Anson—1867
9. Elms/Broomwood—1880
10. Colestown—1863/1878
11. Harefield—1870
12. Corsellis—1884ff.
13. Boon and Wigg—mid-60s
14. Conservative Land Society—1858–78
15. National Freehold Land Society—1853–80
16. Shaftesbury Park—1872
17. Wandsworth Road—1874
18. Battersea Borough Council—1902

Information on the actual building process comes mainly from the District Surveyors' Returns, which survive for the period 1845–52 and from 1871 onwards. These detail the builder and owner, together with the location and number of storeys. The gap between 1853 and 1870, which unfortunately includes a peak of building activity in the late 1860s, can be filled in part from the local rate assessments, albeit at quarterly or six-monthly intervals, and the applications made by builders to the District Board of Works, not all of which were built. Rate books are also useful for analysing turnover rates, owner occupancy and property values<sup>7</sup>.

First-hand accounts by those involved in building London suburbia are extremely rare, and the unpublished autobiographical 'Memoir' of W. W. Pocock gives many fascinating insights into business and personal relationships<sup>8</sup>.

Housebuilding in England since the 18th century has, like the economy at large, proceeded in a cyclical fashion, with marked peaks and troughs. The output of houses under a purely capitalist system such as pertained almost without exception down to 1914 was as much a function of capital availability and the willingness to take risks as it was of the balance between supply and demand for housing. In London the interval between peaks of building activity in the 19th century was fifteen to twenty years. In Battersea there were peaks in 1848–52, 1865–9, 1879–82 and 1897–1900, during which about 800, 3600, 4700 and 950 houses respectively were completed, 40% of all houses built between 1840 and 1914. Troughs were associated with a shortage of capital for building, during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s, and following the collapse of several financial houses in the late-1860s. Apart from the last, which occurred when most of Battersea had been built upon, the intensity of each peak of building activity

Period	Houses Built	Annual Average	Total*	Population†
1841-5	176	35.2	1310	6617
1846-50	674	134.8	1984	
1851-5	403	80.6	2387	10560
1856-60	842	168.4	3229	
1861-5	2074	414.8	5303	19600
1866-70	4002	800.4	9305	
1871-5	2098	419.6	11403	54016
1876-80	4612	922.4	16015	
1881-5	4056	811.2	20071	107262
1886-90	2231	446.2	22302	
1891-5‡	1635	327.0	23937	149558
1896-1900‡	1114	222.8	25051	
1901-5‡	736	147.2	25787	168907
1906-10‡	302	60.4	26089	
Total	24955	356.5		+162290

\*Includes 1134 houses built before 1841.

†Population in Census 1841, 1851, etc.

‡Totals after 1891 include an unspecified number of flats.

Sources: District Surveyors' Returns 1845-52/71-1910; Battersea Poor Rate Books 1888-1876.

Fig. 2. Estate Development: Housebuilding in Battersea 1840-1910

was progressively greater than its predecessor. Fig. 2 summarises the pattern of housebuilding for each five-year period from 1840 to 1910.

Similar trends in building are apparent in nearby Camberwell, and observation of house styles and the pattern of approval of new streets suggests that they are valid for wide areas of suburban London.

During the 1870s and 1880s, almost 100,000 people migrated to Battersea or were born in the parish, but the speculative developers and builders managed to keep pace with demand, despite the inevitable lead-lag situation caused by the building cycle. The average number of persons per inhabited house increased from 6.3 in 1861 to 7.2 in 1891 and 1901, but this was the period in which the number of living rooms in the average suburban terraced house increased by at least one<sup>9</sup>. The chronic crowding of inner London, which much exercised contemporaries was not found in the new suburbs, although there were pockets of

overcrowding in Battersea where fifteen or more could be crammed into a four-roomed house.

Before 1840, most new houses in Battersea were accretions around existing settlement nuclei, such as the Village or Nine Elms, or infilling in back gardens and spaces left by earlier generations. The first green-field development was Battersea New Town, which started in 1792 during the boom years of the war with France, but which was not completed for eighty years<sup>10</sup>. Much 18th- and early 19th-century building in Battersea was in the form of villas and mansions for wealthy Londoners, especially around the margins of the two commons, where high gravel terraces provided both a healthy site and wide-ranging views<sup>11</sup>.

By 1910, 141 building estates had been squeezed into this parish of less than 2200 acres (of which large parts were occupied by open spaces, industries and a dense network of railway lines with their associated stations, goods yards and works).

Period	New Estates	% Estates	Total Houses*	% Houses	Hos./Estate
Pre-1840	4	2.8	1024	4.2	256
1841-50	13	9.2 (12.0)	1174	4.8 (9.0)	90
1851-60	14	9.9 (21.9)	1686	6.9 (15.9)	120
1861-70	52	36.9 (58.8)	7820	32.3 (48.2)	150
1871-80	22	15.6 (74.4)	7251	29.8 (78.0)	330
1881-90	18	12.8 (87.2)	3152	13.0 (91.0)	175
1891-1900	12	8.5 (95.7)	1463	6.0 (97.0)	122
1901-10	6	4.3 (100)	733	3.0 (100)	122
Total	141		24303†		172

\*Includes all houses on estates commenced during the relevant decade, irrespective of the date built.

†The difference between this figure and that in Fig. 2 reflects houses built pre-1841 and infilling after 1840 outside the 141 estates.

Sources: MBW/LCC Minutes 1856-1910; Deeds, Plans and Rate Books in Wandsworth Local History Collection, Battersea Library; Deeds in Greater London Record Office and Minet Library; Ordnance Survey 25-inch and 5-ft. plans 1866-70 and 1893-6.

Fig. 3. Estate Development: Battersea Building Estates

The sequence of development is summarised in Fig. 3.

Only three estates contained more than 1,000 houses. Two—the Crown Estate round Battersea Park (Fig. 1; No. 7) and Shaftesbury Park—commenced in the 1870s and inflate the average size for that decade. The overall average of 172 houses per estate conceals the fact that 62 estates had less than one hundred houses, and a further 36 had between 100 and 200, accounting for three-quarters of all developments. It is these which are the typical elements in the jigsaw of Victorian Battersea.

Although estates with up to 100 houses account for half of the total, they contain only 17% of the houses. The importance of the medium-sized estates (151-500 houses) is shown by the fact that even though they account for only 25% of developments, they contain 40% of the houses. Large estates (500 or more houses) account for less than 6% of developments, but almost one-third of the houses. The pattern of housing estate development in 19th-century Battersea may be likened to a mosaic, comprised of dozens of small, piecemeal schemes with little or no overall planning, either by

Houses/Estate	Estates	% Estates	Houses	% Houses	Hos./Estate
1-50	25	17.7	849	3.5	34
51-100	47	33.3	3354	13.8	71
101-150	26	18.4	3212	13.2	124
151-200	10	7.1	1672	6.9	167
201-250	8	5.7	1871	7.7	234
251-300	7	5.0	1953	8.0	279
301-400	4	2.8	1375	5.7	344
401-500	6	4.3	2712	11.1	452
501-1000	5	3.5	3190	13.1	638
1000+	3	2.1	4115	16.9	1372
Total	141	100	24303	100	172

Fig. 4. Estate Development: Size of Battersea Building Estates

developers or local government. Discounting the large areas of the parish given over to other land-uses, the average size of estate was barely 10–12 acres.

Estate development may take a variety of forms and no general model has yet been formulated against which the Battersea experience can be tested. Any typology must therefore be tentative, since it is based on so few examples. One attempt at a classification of estate development processes was made by H. J. Dyos. This identified four principal ways in which land could be developed for building in Camberwell<sup>12</sup>.

1. Landowner acting on own account, using sub-contractors for building;
2. Landowner making a contract with one or more builders, the houses then being sold or leased (no examples in Camberwell);
3. Landowner leasing land, either in one lot or piecemeal to builders, land societies or housing companies, subject to covenants contained in a building agreement. In many cases the lessees subcontracted the building, especially if the lease was an investment;
4. Outright sale, in which the landowner had several options—
  - a) sale in exchange for a perpetual rent charge
  - b) sale to an estate development company
  - c) sale direct to builders, either in a lot or piecemeal.

The first three of these techniques reserved control of the estate in the hands of the landowner, who received ground rents for the duration of the lease (usually 80 or 99 years) and the reversion of the property at its conclusion for rack-renting or profitable redevelopment<sup>13</sup>. The fourth method trades-off long-term potential against short-term capital gain, often in a rising land market before values have reached their highest point. It is free from

the risks attendant upon development, however, the progress of which was often protracted and far from smooth.

Applying this framework to Battersea, insofar as the sources allow the exact method of development to be identified, the following pattern appears:

Type 1 — 7 estates  
2 — 2  
3 — 106  
4b — 14

The predominance of Type 3 reflects a fairly standardised system of estate development by building agreement, but whether an estate should be placed here or in Type 4c required a judgement to be made about the term “landowner”. If the pre-urban owner of the land is meant, for example in the Tithe Apportionment (1839), then most Battersea estates would be of Type 4c, because they had been sold by the original owners before development began. If, however, the owner at the time of development is intended, then these estates do belong to Type 3.

Since four-fifths of Battersea estates come into a single category in this scheme, it is preferable to develop a classification based on the individual or organisation responsible for initiating development. This produces five major types, together with a residual category reflecting a lack of data for actually identifying those responsible for development or their occupation. Further problems arise from the fact that members of different professions could be associated with a single estate, and the impetus for building could come from one or more sources. For example, the Croft and Harefield Estates, laid out in the early 1870s could have been placed in a category of estates on surplus railway land, instead of locating them in the architect/surveyor and solicitor/lawyer categories respectively. Type 1 estates have been restricted to those developed by the owner at the time of the Tithe

Type	Developed By	No. Estates (%)
1	Original landowner (see above):	
	1a Resident in Battersea	24 (17.0)
	1b Absentee	13 (9.2)
		37 (26.2)
2	Secondary owner:	
	2a Architect/Surveyor	40 (28.4)
	2b Solicitor/Lawyer	7 (5.0)
	2c Estate Developer/Speculator	14 (9.9)
	2d Individual Builder	19 (13.4)
		80 (66.7)
3	(Freehold) Land Companies	9 (6.8)
4	Industrial/Improved Dwellings Cos.	4 (2.8)
5	Local Authority	2 (1.4)
6	Others (unspecified)	9 (6.4)
		141 (100)

Fig. 5. Estate Development: Estate Development Classification

Apportionment (1839), or where the owner had been in possession for at least five–ten years prior to the onset of building. In many cases, information is more readily available on the men who laid out the estates than on the actual owners, and it is difficult to allocate them precisely to Type 1 or 2.

The predominance of Type 2 estates reflects the fact that most Battersea landowners appear not to have developed their land directly. From the sale of Earl Spencer's freehold lands in 1835/6 to that of estates such as Tom Taylor's at Lavender Sweep in 1881 (Fig. 1; No. 3), there seems to have been a lack of interest in the benefits of building development on the part of local landowners. The Whiting estate in St. John's Road in the heart of the new Clapham Junction commercial centre escaped the attentions of the builder until 1904, reputedly because of the great wealth of its long-time owner, Matthew Whiting<sup>14</sup>. Some examples of Type 1 estates might be considered marginal, for example the Carter Estate in York Road<sup>15</sup>. Although it was in the hands of this family of market gardeners in 1839, they had only bought the freehold a few

years previously in the Spencer sale (Fig. 1; No. 4). It is impossible to say whether or not Earl Spencer would have commenced development here at this time. Although building began in 1839, it was not completed until about 1870, spanning two peaks of the building cycle.

The case of William Howey, another market gardener who bought land from Earl Spencer is more clear-cut, because development did not happen until 1864, when George Todd, an ubiquitous local surveyor, laid out two estates for 530 houses (Fig. 1; No. 5)<sup>16</sup>. At the other end of the scale, the Haward family, who had owned land at Nine Elms since at least 1747 (Fig. 1; No. 6a) built 42 houses in Haward Street during the boom of the 1840s<sup>17</sup>. In contrast, their neighbour Thomas Ponton did not lay out the residue of his land for building until 1863 (Fig. 1; No. 6b), by which time it had been surrounded by railway yards and a gasworks<sup>18</sup>. There is no simple, straightforward model of developments of Type 1. The catalysts for converting existing land uses into bricks and mortar were many and varied, and it is not always apparent from the surviving documents

which was relevant in any given case. It seems, however, to be a reasonable generalisation on the available evidence that Battersea landowners did not act spontaneously, even when neighbouring estates were being built upon and the tide of suburban expansion was clearly irreversible. Many were absentees, and may therefore have lacked precise knowledge of development opportunities, even if they wished to make a profit from the land. The assumption that London spread inexorably outwards, absorbing villages and fields in a steady progression from the centre does not stand up at the local level. There were too many variables in the development equation for this to have been the case.

Type 2a estates include all those where architects or surveyors were responsible for laying out an estate for building having purchased it from the previous owner, rather than acting on behalf of clients (but note what was said earlier about possible ambiguities in surviving sources). Some clearly had inside knowledge of land likely to come on the market. Edward I'Anson, a well-known city architect and District Surveyor for Clapham and South Battersea, developed an estate off Lavender Hill (Fig. 1; No. 8) from 1867<sup>19</sup>. Some of the largest estates are of this type, for example the Elms Estate (Fig. 1; No. 9) laid out by Messrs Hammack & Lambert of Bishopsgate in 1880 (679 houses), and Jesse Nickinson's Colestown Estate of 1878–80 (Fig. 1; No. 10) (390 houses)<sup>20</sup>. A small-scale example is Bagley Street (111 houses), laid out in 1867 by W. R. Glasier & Son, surveyors of Charing Cross, who had previously acted for other landowners in the Battersea Park Road area from about 1850<sup>21</sup>.

Members of the various legal professions were naturally involved in all stages of the development process, and sometimes bought land for building them-

selves. Evan Hare, a Putney solicitor, created the Harefield Estate (Fig. 1; No. 11) (160 houses) in 1870 on land sold off as surplus by the West London Extension Railway, having previously acted for an estate in Bolingbroke Grove in the mid-1860s<sup>22</sup>.

Altogether grander in scale were the activities of the Corsellis family after 1880. Although Henry Nicholas Corsellis usually appears in the granting of approval for new streets and in the leases to builders, much of the initiative came from Alexander, a Wandsworth solicitor, who was also Clerk to the Wandsworth District Board of Works, to the local Guardians and at one stage to Battersea Vestry, making him uniquely well-placed to gauge the best time for development. Most of their estates lay in central Battersea, between Lavender Hill and Clapham Common (Fig. 1; No. 12), and were built up after 1885 when the grounds of large mansions were sold off. The Corsellis often worked with John and Walter Stanbury, the former an architect who produced plans for the estates, the latter a substantial builder who put up many of the houses<sup>23</sup>.

Type 2c estates include those developed by classic Victorian entrepreneurs, who made their money by the astute purchase and development of land in the suburbs and often made a significant contribution to today's townscape. They often began as builders, who amassed capital to buy land. Some, like Edward Yates in Camberwell, remained in building<sup>24</sup>. Others, like Alfred Heaver whose career is discussed in more detail below, no longer built, even on their own estates. He was responsible for six of the ten Type 2c estates in Battersea, as well as others elsewhere in south and south-west London.

In the case of Type 2d estates individual builders were responsible for development, usually erecting most of the

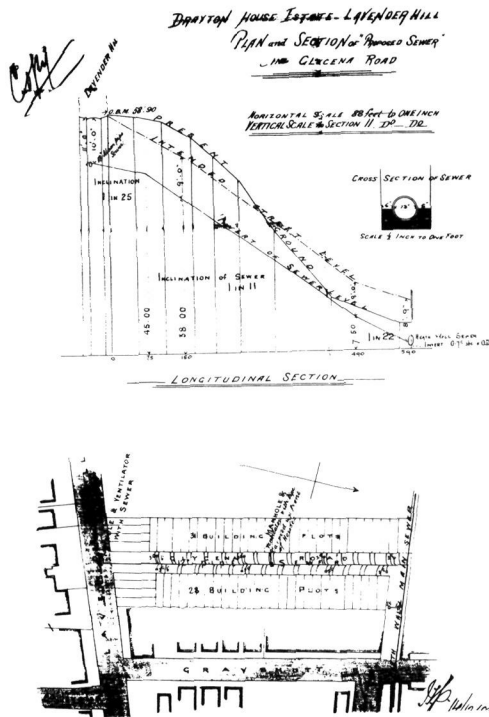


Fig. 6 Estate Development: Plan and section for Glycena Road, Drayton House Estate c. 1884.

houses themselves. The capital cost of laying out streets and drains tended to limit the size of these estates to a single street. In 1849–50, Jacob Hart from Bethnal Green developed Hart Street on the eastern fringe of Battersea village and retired to live on the proceeds of this and other local property<sup>25</sup>. Henry John Hunt had several small estates in north Battersea after 1860, and built most of the houses, for instance Doddington Grove<sup>26</sup>. Other examples (Fig. 1; No. 13) are John Boon (Warsill Street, 1866, 38 houses) and Marsh Wigg (Chesney Street, 1869, 55 houses). Many of these estates were on parts of the recently-enclosed open fields of Battersea and the grouping of small numbers of strips leading off the pre-existing Battersea Park Road provided ideal conditions for this kind of estate<sup>27</sup>.

The Conservative and National Freehold Land Societies were both active in Battersea between 1855 and 1880. The former had three estates (Fig. 1; No. 14) with 1200 houses, the latter four (Fig. 1; No. 15) with 660 houses (two of which extended into Balham). The idea behind the societies was to increase the number of voters by selling freehold plots on such estates. Purchasers in Battersea included London tradesmen, country clergymen and spinsters (who were not, of course, able to vote at that time). Some builders bought plots direct from the society, but it was more usual for them to be contracted to erect houses by the new freeholders. Despite the conditions laid out in the sale prospectuses,<sup>28</sup> such estates were characterised by extremely heterogeneous building styles, as each new owner built or contracted with builders for a short run of houses. The much

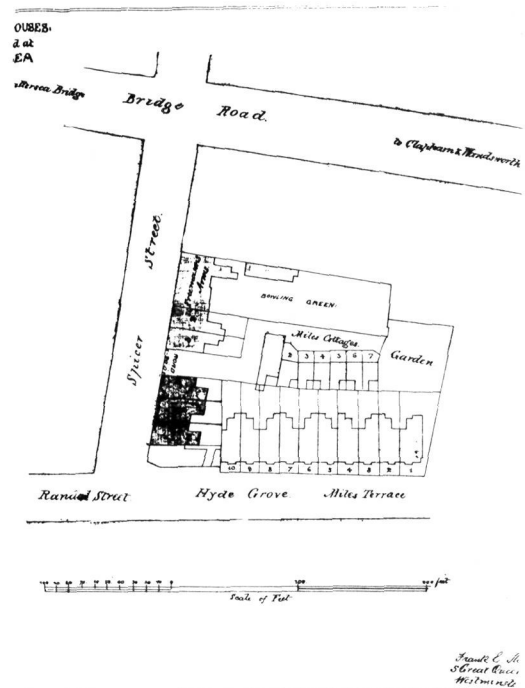


Fig. 7 Estate Development: Plans for houses in Spicer Street, Battersea c. 1870.



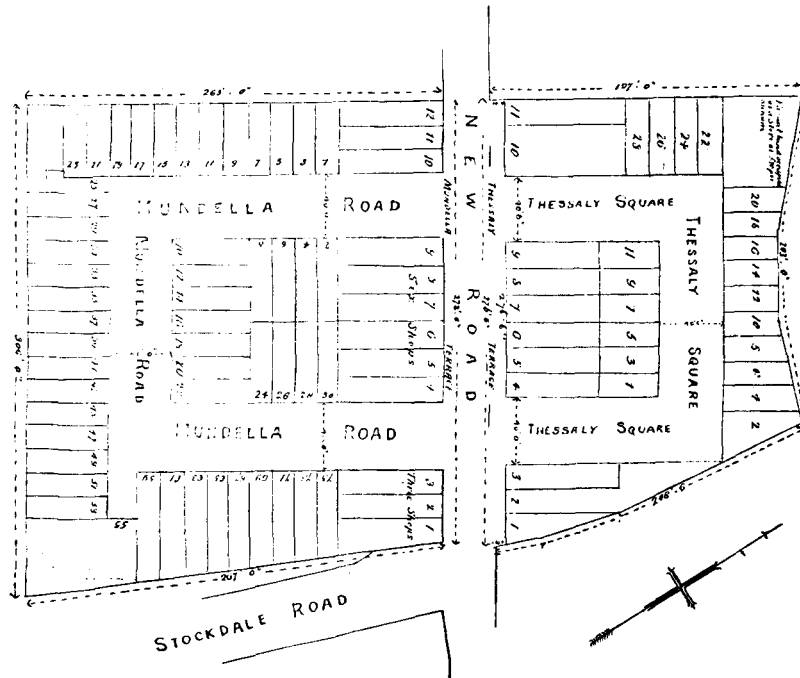


Fig. 8 Estate Development: Building plots, House and Land Investment Trust Estate c. 1887.

smaller National Industrial Land and Lands Allotment Companies also had estates in Battersea, totalling only 180 houses.

Another example of the application of corporate initiative to the suburban building process is the work of the artisans' dwellings companies, whose objective was to make a reasonable rate of return out of the provision of improved homes for the working classes<sup>29</sup>. They are best known for their inner city blocks of flats, but a typical example was erected on the Crown Estate, Battersea Park Road, in 1877 by the Metropolitan Artizans and Labourers Dwellings Association, providing 188 tenements of one to four rooms renting at 2s 6d–9s per week. Later information shows that the great majority of the occupants came from the higher echelons of the working classes, those with regular, well-paid jobs such as railway workers

and policemen, rather than from the really poor. In this Victoria Dwellings were typical of such developments elsewhere in London<sup>30</sup>.

More characteristic of the suburban building of such companies was the Shaftesbury Park estate (Fig. 1; No. 16) of the Artizans, Labourers and General Dwellings Company (1872–7). The two-storey cottage was used to provide skilled artisans with improved conditions, foreshadowing the type of estate built by the London County Council after 1900. The ALGDCo. was started by William Austin, a local carpenter, in 1867. Its first houses were built off Battersea Park Road<sup>31</sup>. The company soon attracted the attention of those seeking to improve working-class living conditions, and in 1871 purchased a large area of market garden ground south of the railways to Waterloo and Victoria. The building boom of the late

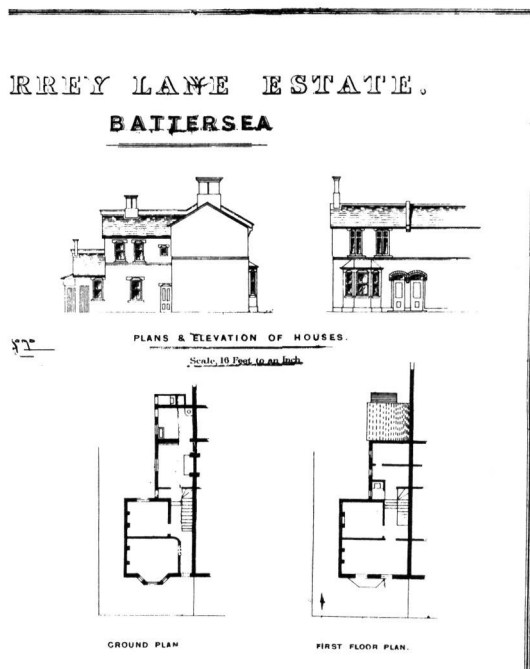


Fig. 9 Estate Development: Surrey Lane Estate, plan and elevation, 1877.

1860s was all but finished, and few houses were being built locally. The company built by direct labour, using a small range of designs by its architect, Robert Austin, using red and black bricks and 'gothic' embellishments to relieve the monotony of more than 1200 houses. The foundation stone was laid by Disraeli, and the enterprise was soon dubbed 'Workmen's City'<sup>32</sup>. A few shops were provided, but the promised community facilities failed to appear in most cases, and public houses were strictly forbidden. Two Board schools were built on the estate, and these, together with a small block of Peabody Trust flats, provide some relief to the local skyline.

The ALDGCo, developed large estates elsewhere in London, at Queens Park and Noel Park, but also erected a few houses in Garfield Road, south of Lavender Hill

in the 1880s<sup>33</sup>. The House Investment Company developed an estate (Fig. 1; No. 17) of almost 300 houses off Wandsworth Road in 1874 on land sold as surplus by the London, Chatham & Dover Railway. The architect was W. Adams Murphy of Camberwell<sup>34</sup>.

The smallest type of estate appeared last, right at the end of the century. There had been earlier pressure for local authority involvement in the provision of decent working-class housing, but basic attitudes and the generally adequate quality of suburban housing delayed this until the 1890s. In 1889, Battersea had been separated from the Wandsworth District Board of Works as a Metropolitan Vestry, which, like the contemporary L.C.C., favoured municipal enterprise in various fields. It used powers under the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890, and built some maisonettes behind the new Town Hall by 1898. The first major development did not, however, come until Battersea had become a Metropolitan Borough in 1901. The former Latchmere Common, latterly used as allotments, was largely covered with an estate (Fig. 1; No. 18) of 315 two-storey tenements in 1902–4<sup>35</sup>. Some smaller flats, specifically aimed at the lower-paid were built near the Town Hall in 1904. These developments were, of course, only the harbingers of large-scale municipal housing after 1919, when many of the oldest houses in Battersea were cleared as unfit, a process which lasted with interruptions until the early 1980s.

This section is concerned with a more detailed examination of the processes of development on the estates of William Willmer Pocock, a single entity built up between 1850 and 1880, and of Alfred Heaver, a series of developments spanning the last two decades of the century. They are examples of Type 2a and 2c estates, respectively, and atypical insofar

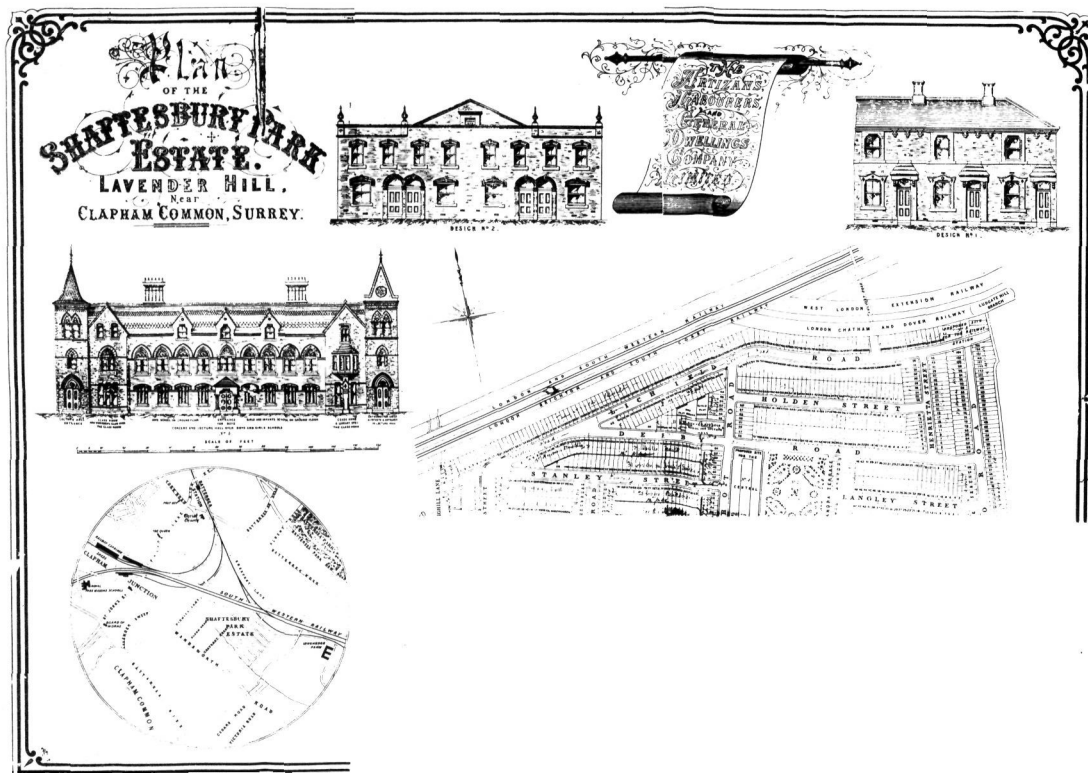


Fig. 10 Estate Development: Plans and Elevations for Shaftesbury Park Estate, Artizans, Labourers and General Dwellings Company, 1872.

as there is more information than usual for piecing together their history.

Pocock's estate had its origins in a brickfield off Falcon Lane in 1845, a time of great building activity in London which caused a shortage of bricks<sup>36</sup>. W. W. Pocock was an architect by profession, but began to develop this land for building in the early 1850s when he purchased a further  $7\frac{1}{4}$  acres from Thomas Carter, a local market gardener, for £2550 (£330/acre). Most of the estate was given over to two- and three-storey terraces, but there were semi-detached villas in the earliest phase (1850–5) in Falcon Lane and Falcon Grove. It took until 1882 for the land to be fully covered, however, with most activity during the cyclical peaks 1865–9

and 1878–82. Leases were generally for eighty years at ground rents of £4–5 for 16ft plots<sup>37</sup>. Despite being developed by an architect, there is little stylistic pretention or uniformity on the estate. What there is owes more to the fact that John Pearson and Edward Newman, both local builders, erected substantial numbers of the houses, originally having two of the streets named after them.

One reason for the slow rate of building was the need to exhaust the brickearth, a process equally affected by the ups and downs of building activity. Pocock estimated that he made £500 clear profit annually for minimal outlay on labour and machinery. The last of the land was backfilled in 1882 and sold to the School

Board for London. As part of the development process, Pocock advanced bricks and money at 5% to builders, and calculated that he cleared £30–40,000 on these twelve acres. In his own words, ‘in helping others, I helped myself’, a fitting epitaph for any successful Victorian entrepreneur!<sup>38</sup>

The career of Alfred Heaver (1841–1901) made a significant impact, not only on the Battersea townscape, but further afield. Born in Lambeth, he began as an ordinary carpenter-turned-builder, appearing in Battersea in 1869 in partnership with Edward Coates, an association that lasted until his death<sup>39</sup>. Until 1875, Heaver remained a small-scale builder, but soon thereafter began to buy land for development. The source of the capital for this sudden change is unknown, for although he remarried about this time, his new wife was the daughter of a Lambeth tradesman<sup>40</sup>. The scale of his operations soon increased, with new estates being developed almost annually from 1879:

Estate	Date	Houses
Belleville Road	1878	105
Falcon Park	1879	679
Fulham Park	1880	405
Heaver Park (2)	1881	resold
Lavender Sweep	1881	414
Rose Park, Tooting	1883	192
Trinity Road, Tooting	1884	103
Shrubbery	1885	52
St. Johns Park	1885	225
Chestnuts	1887	78
Hyde Park Estate, Fulham	c1887	388
Balham	1888/92	1262
Hoyle Road, Tooting	1895	253
Totterdown, Tooting	1898	263
Total		4419

Sources: MBW/LCC Minutes; District Surveyors' Returns; OS 25in Plans.

Fig. 11. Estate Development: Estates Developed by Alfred Heaver 1878–1898

Alfred Heaver and various members of his family were responsible for building at least 800 of these houses, many of them on the Balham and Tooting estates in the 1890s. Although the ground rents would have made Heaver a wealthy man, he did not retain them all, selling off whole blocks of property on the earlier developments to finance land purchases, street and sewer construction on the later ones. The Prudential Insurance Company bought three parcels: St Johns Hill Park (1886–90), £47,610; Chestnuts (1888–91), £30,917; Shrubbery (1888–94), £23,653. These sales raised more than £100,000 capital over eight years. At the time of his murder by his brother-in-law in August 1901, Heaver's estate was valued in excess of £600,000<sup>41</sup>.

Two surveyors were regularly used by Heaver. William Poole of Battersea had originally worked for the Conservative Land Society, and may well have introduced the idea of estate development to his client. Charles Bentley, of London and Wandsworth, was also an architect, and worked for other developers in Battersea between 1880 and 1900. The similar style of the houses on many of Heaver's estates is noteworthy and probably reflects his ideas, together with those of his surveyors. Between about 1888 and 1890 there was a change in this basic style, reflecting the transmission of the new 'Queen Anne' ideas to the realms of mass housing<sup>42</sup>.

Alfred Heaver not only provided houses for upwards of 20,000 people, but provided a distinctive stamp on large parts of central Battersea and adjacent suburbs. Many of the estates were located on the suburban frontier of the time, with the sale particulars stressing the proximity of railways and tramways. For example, Fulham Park was laid out next to the new Parsons Green station of the District Railway in 1880, many of the Battersea estates were within ten minutes' walk of

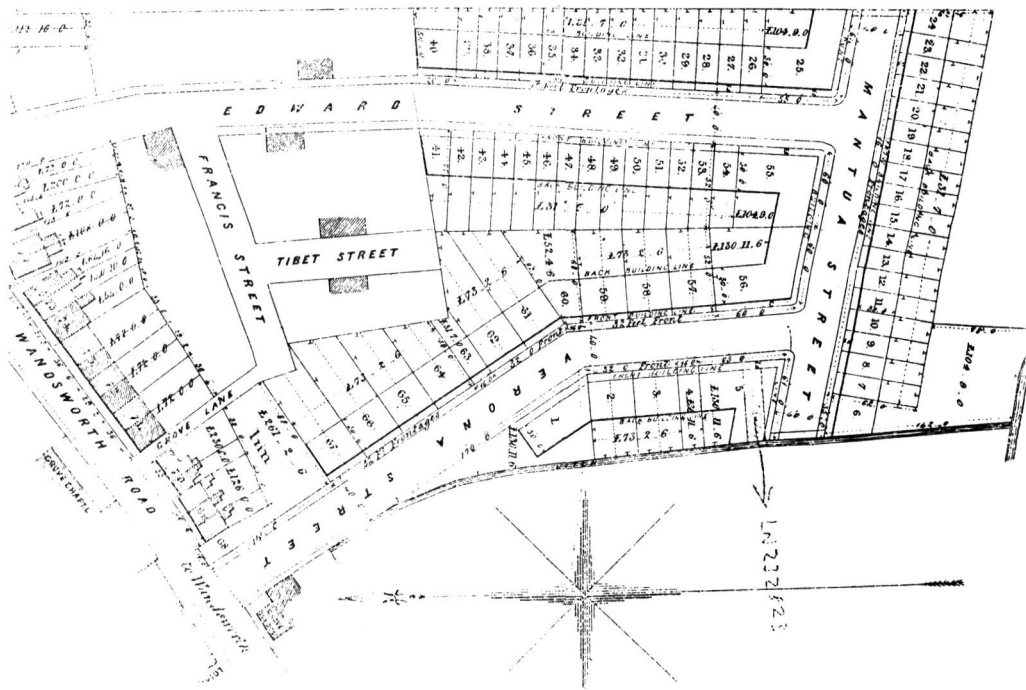


Fig. 12 Estate Development: Plan of Conservation Land Society's first Battersea Estate, c.1858,

Clapham Junction, while those in Tooting lay close to the terminus of the tramway to Westminster and Southwark, the first to be electrified by the L.C.C. in 1903. Unfortunately, Census data enabling one to identify the occupations of his tenants and the incidence of commuting to central London are not yet available. Many would undoubtedly have worked in the burgeoning suburban shopping centres. Indeed, Clapham Junction largely owes its present form to Heaver's developments of the mid-1880s.

Several points emerge from this necessarily brief discussion of estate development in Battersea, suggesting avenues for future research, and also indications of the processes involved in the creation of suburbia which may have wider applicability across London. The first concerns the role of architects/surveyors, solicitors and professional developers as catalysts

in the onset of building. Although original landowners could, and did, take advantage of the prospects for capital gain from development, it seems in Battersea at least that they often did nothing until approached by one or more of these agents. Often, indeed, it seems that the initiation of the land-conversion process only began on the death of an owner, for example, William Howey, Thomas Cubitt and Tom Taylor, none of whose estates in the area were built upon until the property was in the hands of their trustees.

The second point to note is how the rate of building-estate formation accelerated during peaks in the building cycle. Between 1845 and 1852 seventeen estates were begun, between 1863 and 1869 thirty-nine, and between 1878 and 1882, twenty, accounting for more than half of all developments in the period 1840–1914.

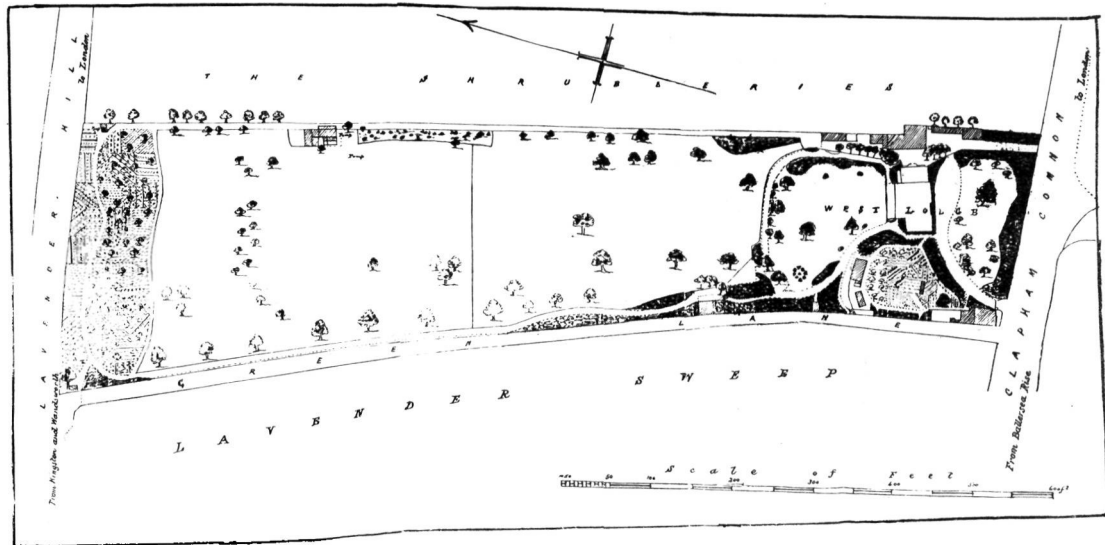


Fig. 13 Estate Development: Sale plan of West Lodge Estate (now Altenburg Gardens) 1881.

Just as capital was available for house-building during these periods, so landowners would have been aware of the potential benefits arising from laying out land for building. The lure of quick profits was often not weighed against the time taken for an estate to come to maturity in terms of ground rents and sales, however, with the result that many estates commenced in years of feverish activity were not completed for decades. Development did not, of course, proceed in a succession of circles at ever-increasing distances from central London, although that was the overall effect. Any landowner who was reluctant to develop, or who missed the opportunity presented by periods of peak activity, might well find his land surrounded by houses and losing its amenity value. A good example is the Fownes Estate in Falcon Road, which was surrounded by earlier developments by the time it was sold to Alfred Heaver in 1879, the previous owners taking their glove-making business to Worcester. Similarly, the grounds of the large houses which fringed the north and west sides of

Clapham Common progressively succumbed to the developer and builder once the first had gone in 1868, although it took forty years to complete the process.

The role of the railway in suburban development has been the subject of much debate<sup>43</sup>. By 1870, Battersea was crisscrossed by a dense network of lines, together with acres of stations, goods yards, sidings and works, and it is the employment opportunities presented by these facilities which made the greatest impact on the local economy and society. There was no company housing in the area, comparable with that at Swindon, Crewe or Wolverton, and this fuelled the demand for artisan housing in the Nine Elms area and around Clapham Junction, especially after 1860. The evidence of the 1871 and 1881 Censuses is decidedly against Battersea being the home of early City commuters, most wage-earners worked locally, walking to work. Only after 1885, when estates were developed in central and south Battersea remote from local employment and offering accommodation suitable for the burgeoning lower middle

classes, can it be said that the existence of local railways and tramways influenced the course of development. The move of clerks and shop assistants to such areas owed as much to the provision of more workmen's fares, rising real incomes and shorter working hours<sup>44</sup>.

Fourthly, the freehold land and improved dwellings companies played a significant role in the development of Battersea. Although they only account for thirteen estates (9%), these include one-fifth of houses built in the area after 1840, and were even more significant between 1855 and 1880. There is, however, an interesting contrast between the appearance of the two sorts of estate. The sale of small freehold plots and subsequent plethora of builders involved meant that despite restrictive covenants, freehold land company estates lack visual cohesion, and often declined socially. Conversely, the dwellings' companies, often with their own architects, were able to impose uniformity, but at the same time relieve monotony by using subtle stylistic variations. They also managed to preserve the social tone of their estates.

Fifthly, it is worth considering whether the classification used here reflects in any way the type of housing on an estate, in other words, whether certain origins produce similar types of housing. The predominantly working-class character of Battersea housing meant that most estates were designed with that market in mind, evolving very slowly in terms of style as the century progressed. Few estates began with consciously middle-class aspirations, for example Brussels Road and Park Town, the second of which was soon surrounded by a cat's-cradle of railway lines which soon dashed the hopes of the developers<sup>45</sup>.

A random sample of 10% of heads of household in Battersea in the Censuses of 1851, 1861 and 1871 shows that 75%,

80% and 82% respectively came into Armstrong's classes III, IV and V, broadly equivalent to the working classes<sup>46</sup>. Taking the skilled artisan element of his class III, the proportions were 24%, 28% and 38% respectively, and evidence for the late-1880s suggests that the pattern changed little throughout the late 19th century. In view of this overwhelming social bias, it is clear that estate owners and developers had a vested interest in providing the kind of houses which would let most readily to wage-earners bringing in not more than £2 per week. Only after 1885 was there a move towards the kind of house which the lower middle-classes would find appealing, with a boxroom for their maids-of-all-work. Also at this time, Battersea Park began to be ringed with blocks of mansion flats, a far cry from nearby Victoria Dwellings.

The use of restrictive covenants signally failed to halt the decline of many estates, although there could be wide variations over small areas. There do not seem to have been any one-class ghettos in Victorian Battersea, or occupational clustering<sup>47</sup>. Some estates declined into true slums by 1900, for example Carpenter Street and the Ponton Estate, Nine Elms<sup>48</sup>.

The estimated rental value of houses in 1839, 1861 and 1871 are shown below, confirming the bias towards the lower end of the social scale, irrespective of the method of estate development.

Rental (£)	1839		1861		1871	
	Houses	%	Houses	%	Houses	%
5-10	422	45	1241	38	2280	26
11-15	183	20	984	30	2826	32
16-20	70	8	370	15	1549	18
>21	254	27	534	17	2072	24

Source: Battersea Poor Rate Assessments Sept. 1839, May 1861, Nov. 1871 (WLHC).

Fig. 14. Estate Development: Battersea: Estimated Rental Values, 1839-1871

Despite the rapid growth in the number of houses and the increase in average size over the period, two-thirds were always assessed as being worth £15 or less per annum in rent (approximately 6/- per week, or 3/- for one floor). Between 1840 and 1870, 1,800 houses were built with estimated rentals between 2/6 and 4/- per week, and 2,200 valued at 4-8/- per week. Most of the premises assessed at £20 and above were shops or public houses, rather than villas or more substantial residences, and hence identified with working-class estates.

Finally, it must be stressed that the classification scheme discussed earlier has not been refined by testing in other London suburbs, where the sample of building estates runs into thousands. It would seem that the great landed proprietors and institutions which have been the subject of previous studies (for example the Dukes of Bedford, the Grosvenors, Eton College and Thomas Cubitt<sup>49</sup>) were not typical of the average suburb, although there were exceptions, such as the Dulwich College estate in Camberwell. In Battersea, landownership was much more fragmented and developers rarely had as much as twenty acres to build on. The vast majority of estates were smaller than this, averaging only 170 houses. Almost 1200 builders were involved, the vast majority of whom came from within a five-mile radius. Research is currently taking place into this topic, but space precludes any detailed treatment here.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I should like to thank Tony Shaw, Local History Librarian, London Borough of Wandsworth, for providing copies of plans from which figs. 6-10, 12 and 13 were produced.

#### NOTES

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9. Typical figures for the number of living rooms are: c. 1800 four; c. 1850 five and c. 1900 five-seven; see also S. Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (1982), esp. chaps. 11 and 12.
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20. WLHC Plans 909, 1056; MSS 1095.
21. WLHC 1005, 1029, 1040; Plans 364.
22. WLHC Plans 84; MSS 1044.
23. WLHC Plans 943, 974, 1091, 1316; MSS 1052, 1059, 1312.
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26. WLHC Plans 513; MBW and WDBW Minutes *passim*.
27. Cf. R. M. Pritchard, *Housing and the spatial structure of the city* (Cambridge, 1976).
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32. *South London Press*, 10 Aug. 1872; 8 Nov. 1873.
33. WLHC plans 826.
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37. WLHC MSS 1302; GLRO C/70/1075-6, 329, 386.
38. Pocock, III, 86.
39. Wandsworth DBW minutes 14 July 1869; PRD RG10/703; Heaver's will dated 22 March 1898. Coates became the manager of Heaver's building operations.
40. Heaver married (1) Isabella Luetchford, daughter of John, a Lambeth baker on 2 Feb. 1863, she died 24 June 1874; (2) Patience Luetchford, her sister, on 26 July 1875.
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