

SILVER LININGS

1

James Knowles designs for
Park Town estate development

OCTOBER 2021

daab design





Front cover image: historical image of St Philips' street, undated

daab design team in front of the Silverthorne road office

Intro

Silver Linings

Hello, my name is Anais Blehaut, I am an architect and I have been living in the Park Town Estate for 15 years with my partner, Dennis. My son was born here and our puppy recently joined our Silverthorne Road home and design studio.

We founded our architecture practice, daab design, 10 years ago and have since discovered the joy of the estate. Now, I'd love to share its history and opportunities with you, our neighbours.

I have always admired the estate, but lockdown has given me a new appreciation for our local area. Where I used to enjoy discovering new cities and travelling to see my favourite places and friends, my immediate environment became the new "destination", and in that opportunity there I found my pandemic silverlining.

Amongst the graceful designs and well-ordered street layouts, I met fellow architect, James Knowles, that I wish time travel could grant me a coffee with. I applaud his forward-thinking urban vision and admire his enduring passion which is clearly felt throughout Park Town.

Since discovering this inspiring character, I have found that sharing his story has helped me connect with my community, which always leads to new discussions and discoveries' from local writers, historians, or residents' who have been here for decades.

This Silver Linings series has been a passion project over the last year to contribute more than just architecture to our local area, but to highlight the incredible design already instilled in the Park Town estate. We have designed a neighborhood walk, and will release three more editions in this series, including a Park Town estate home maintenance guide to help you get the most from your home. All resources can be found on our website, and I look forward to hearing your stories of the Park Town estate in time to come.

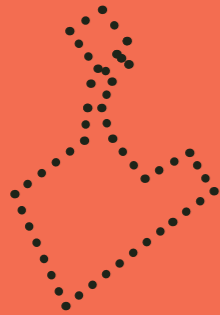
Silver Linings series

In this first edition of the Silver linings series, we are sharing the fascinating History of James Knowles and the Park Town estate in the form of a guided walk. Tread the steps of the brilliant routes others have created before us.

Conservation is an enduring interest in our architecture practice, so in the **second edition** of Silver linings we will share advice and suggest **how to care** for Park Town estate buildings and spaces as we've learnt to do through our projects.

We work regularly on the Park Town estate houses and flats, so in the **third edition**, we will share **alteration and renovation** ideas that our clients have found successful to create a home adapted to their modern needs.

Finally, as the property market continues to fluctuate and put pressure on communities, we will examine potential development **threats**, inappropriate public space proposals, and suggest **alternatives** that serve our local community, in the **fourth issue**.



Keys to read this guide

To help the interpretation of the historic plans, we have dotted out the Park Town Estate boundaries' over all the plans, these were the original boundaries, and have evolved with times.



Unless clearly noted with a north arrow all plans have been oriented conventionally north towards the top

Also in this guide...

Queenstown road is referred to as "Queen's Road", its name till mid-20th century

James Knowles refers to the junior Architect (1831- 1908), son of Sir James Knowles (1806-84), an Architect too!

Some of the names of the men who made the Park Town estate will sound familiar... our local streets names' remind us of their contributions.

Thank you...

Jon Newman for his advice and inspiring books, David Waters for letting me use his evocative map of Battersea in 1835, Neil Robson from The Wandsworth Society for introducing me to Keith Baileys' extensive work on Battersea Estates.

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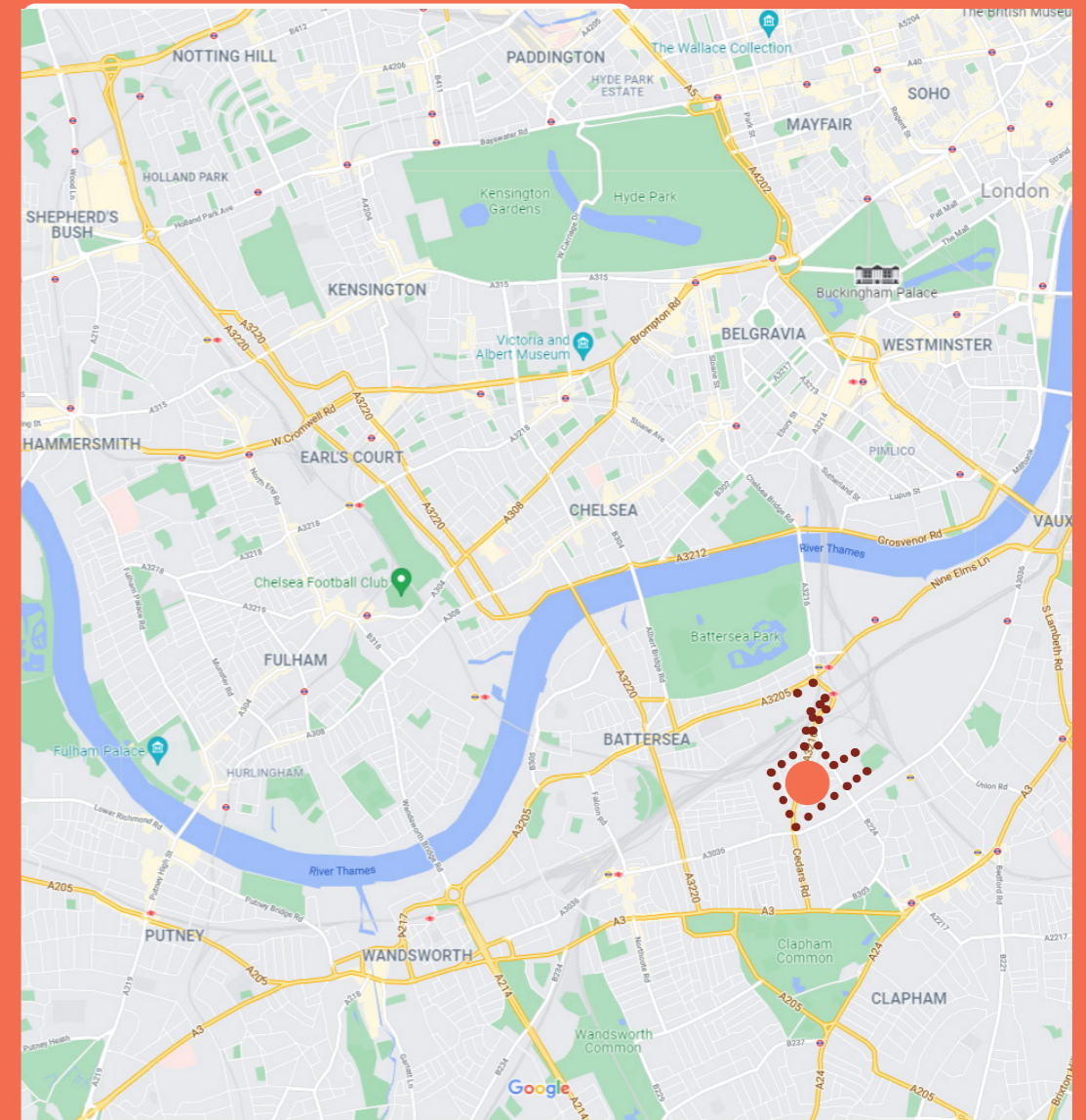
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Location of the Park Town estate on Google maps



James Knowles and the Park Town estate

From the dream of a “Southern Belgravia” to constantly evolving Park Town estate Conservation Area

The Park Town Estate development was the longest, if not the main career project of James Knowles, an architect and editor with a passion for history and literature.

His personal battles to bring to life the diamond shape masterplan that he envisaged as “a Southern Belgravia” are as fascinating as the resilient qualities of his designs.

James Knowles had the vision of a well-conceived new city development with urban rhythm, simple designs and the latest amenities necessary for a community to thrive.

The 1860's might have been too early for Battersea, the landing of the infrastructure power hub of London to take the lead as a utopian residential community. We, inhabitants of the post-pandemic Park Town Estate, are living his vision more than a hundred years after Knowles devoted most of his professional energy to it.

Architects often talk about how architecture shapes communities and society, and how space defines inhabitants' behaviours and relationships. The Park Town Estate shows that a well-conceived neighbourhood can help raise and nurture a strong community.

Wandsworth Council produced the “ParkTown Conservation Area Designation Report” find it here: https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/1668/park_town_caaandms.pdf

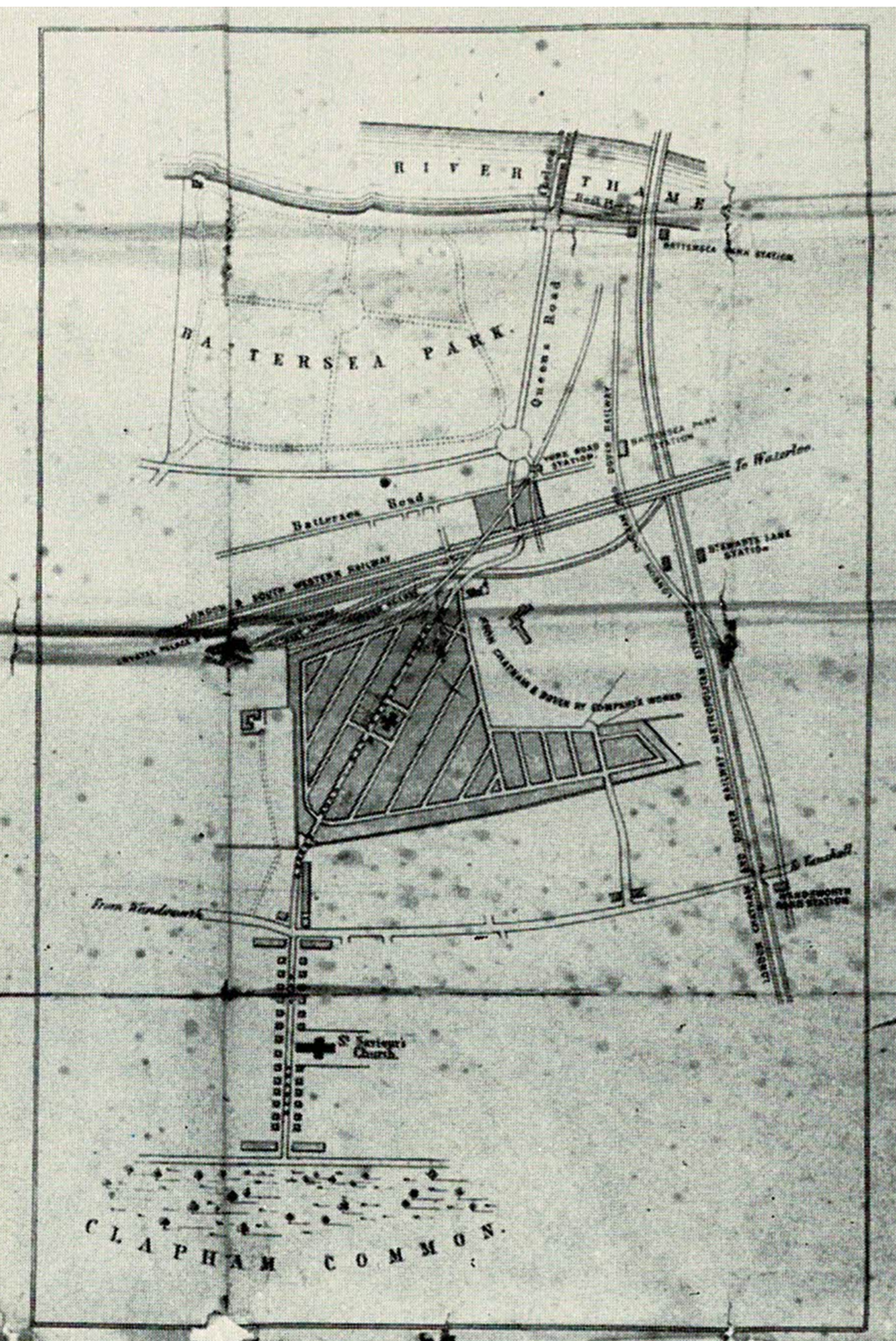
Early in his career, while assisting his father, also an architect, on Clapham projects, Knowles identified the benefits of creating a strong road link between London (Chelsea and Belgravia) and Clapham, already by then a leafy suburb sought after by middle and upper classes. Knowles developed a vision of a development that would not be an infill between the two destinations but have its own urban identity and architectural quality.

Knowles, employed by the developer Philip Flower, designed a full masterplan for the area they had identified together which had to be modified several times to catch up with the railways' mighty expansion and purchasing power towards Victoria Station and Waterloo.

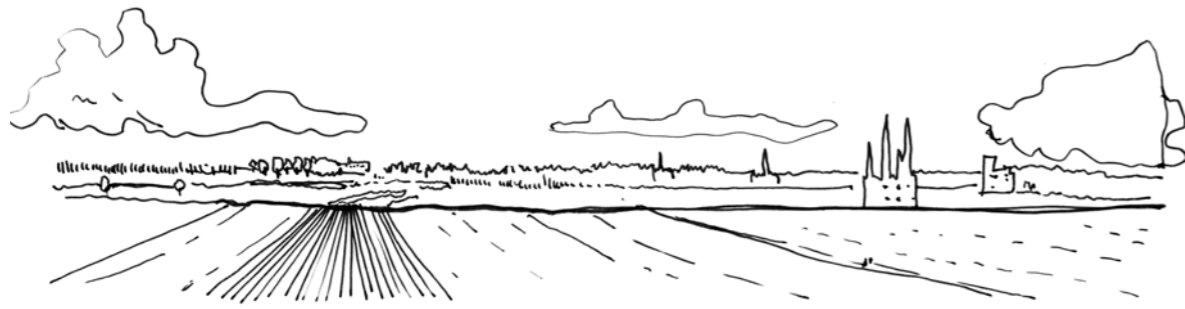
Great ambitions surrounding the purchase of some of the Longhedge farmland by the Crown Estate to create Battersea Park few years before encouraged Knowles in his pursuit to create a neighbourhood that he dreamed of as an elegant and middle class.

Over the 30+ years and three distinct phases that the development stretches on, the ambition for a middle-class development didn't unfold as Knowles and Flower had hoped for, and it became important to provide more modest homes to align with the demand.

The resulting estate is a mix of residential designs ranging from generous one off villas on Queenstown Road to compact single storey cottage flats on the edges of the diamond shape development.



Map of the Parktown Estate, detail of the prospectus c.1865



Before 1834 The city kitchen garden

Before the rail development

The Park Town Estate as we know it today sits on grounds which were part of Longhedge farm, a vegetable, fruit and dairy farm tracing back from 1647.

It lay south of the flood plains and marshes of Battersea Fields, and north of the Heathwall River slopes, dominated by Wandsworth Road, on the boundaries of Wandsworth and Clapham.

These were the times when Battersea produce from the alluvium rich plains, easily transported on the Thames, fed London.

Longhedge farm was between the village of Battersea (West) and Battersea New town (East), which were considered as the "Environs" of London until the late 19th century.

Most of Battersea was not fit land to develop despite proximity to the City; it was prone to flooding as it lay lower than the Thames high tidal point, and lacking road infrastructure.

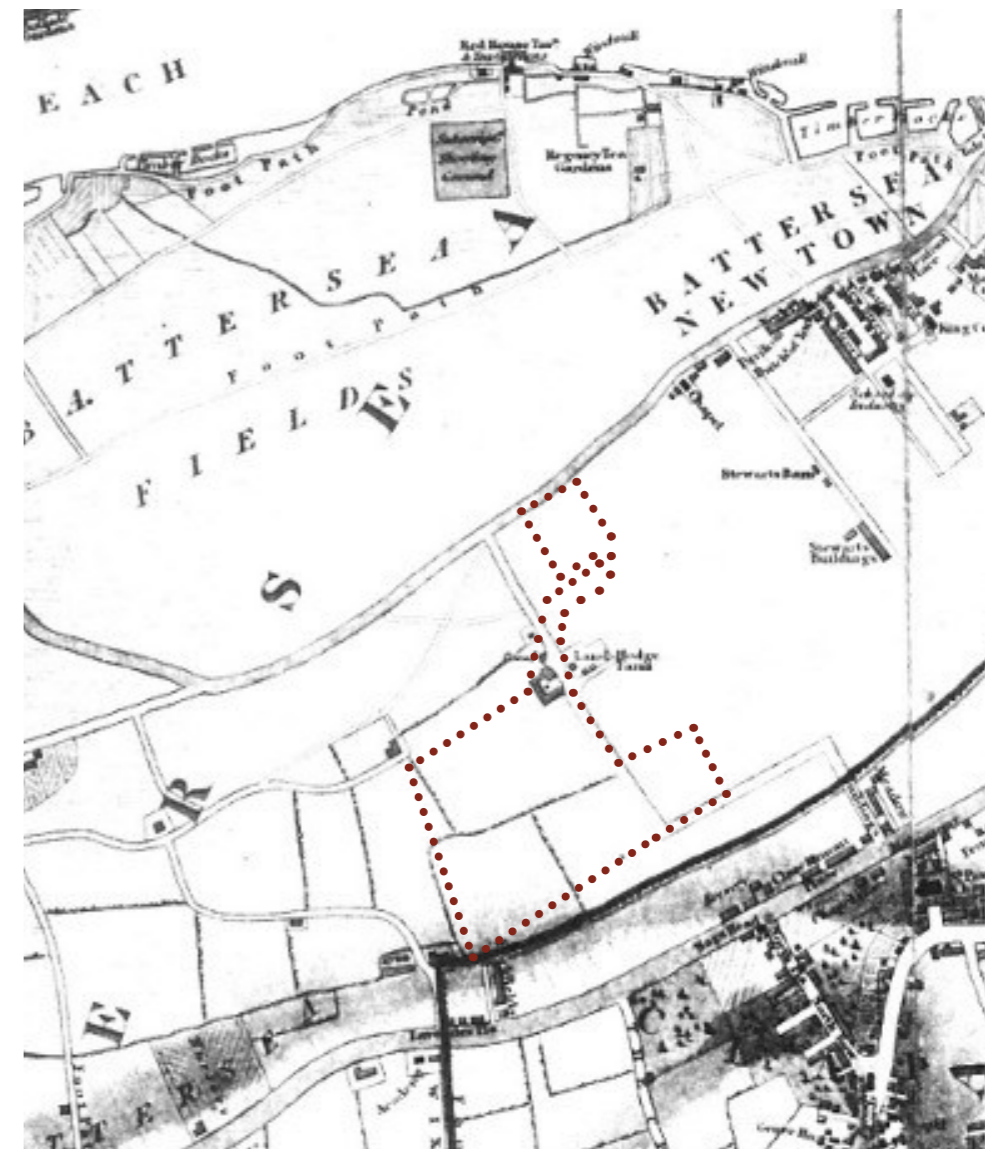
Reaching Clapham from Chelsea was so impractical that it was not recommended to go with a lady! A muddy path would take you up to Clapham Old Town, small village around a church and large estates.

JMW Turner used to refer to the view of Battersea from his Chelsea home as his "Dutch view", low lying flat wet lands and marshes, windmills and a sloping hill in the background....

Quoted by Jon Newman in "The Heathwall, Battersea Buried River"



1801- Section from James Edwards' map from "The Clapham Chronicles"



1829 - A landscape transformed: before - Battersea 1829, from George Cruchley's New Plan of London and its Environs



1834-1863 Railway expansion & urban vision

Railway lines and Queen's Road

The London and Southampton Railway was the first rail company to appear in Battersea in 1835 with its terminus in Nine Elms, followed in the next 30 years by a thrust of competing railway lines development towards Waterloo and Victoria.

"The London Survey" 49 & 50 describes this moment cynically as a "non-Victorian planning" moment, an engineering chaos fuelled by thriving industry progress, commercial eagerness and increasing population.

Battersea was taken over by rail viaducts (in the approach of higher located Victoria), crossing lines and left over "cul de sac" lost spaces that received the name "The Battersea Tangle".

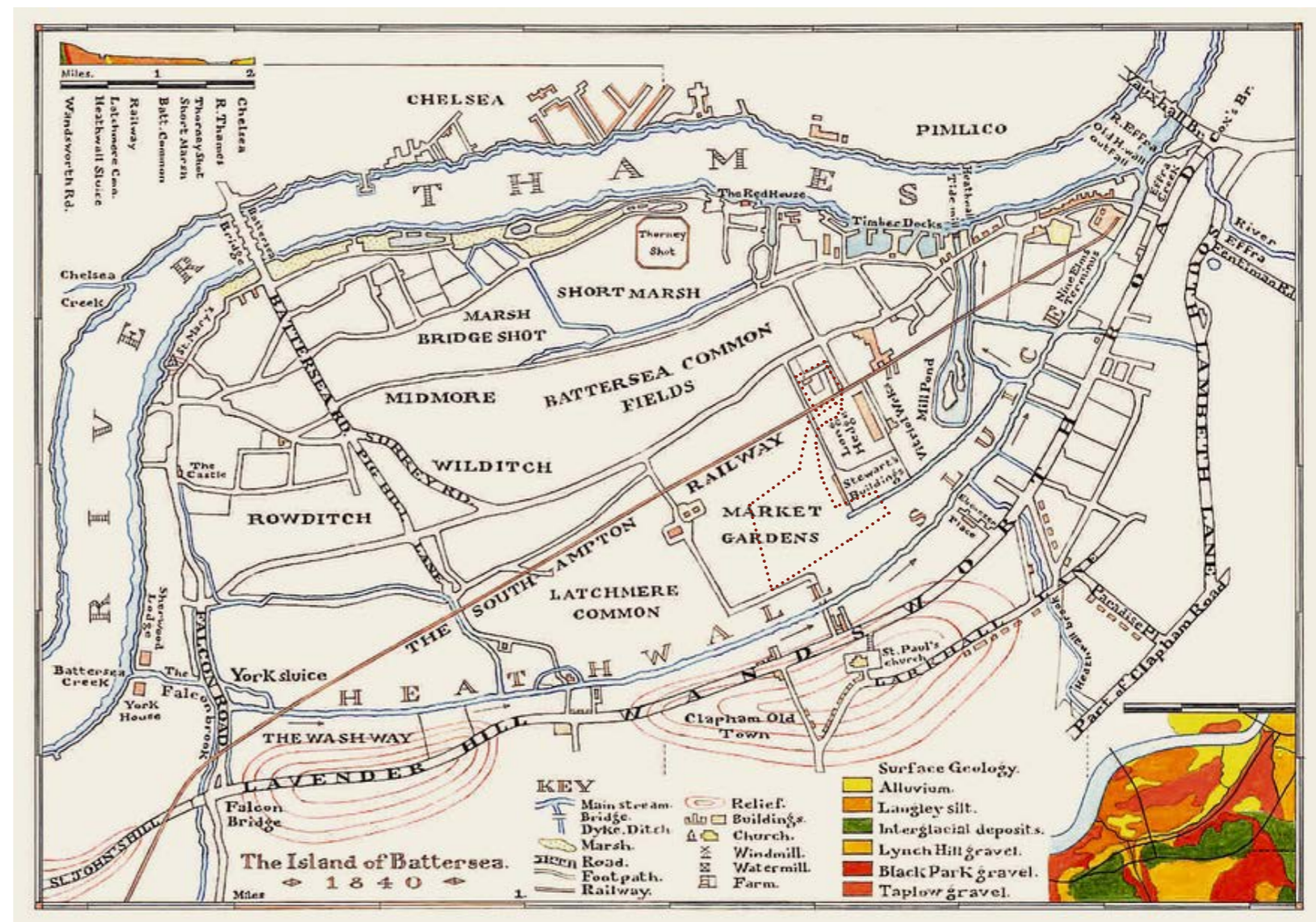
This was made possible by the absence of urban development on the lands below and perhaps the little interest showed City politicians.

Despite the opening of the northern section of Queen's road at the creation of Battersea Park in 1858 it took a further 5 years for Parliament to pass the Extension Act for "The new road".

James Knowles, had designed "the Cedars" at the northern edge of Clapham Common, his father, Sir James Knowles, the Grosvenor Hotel in Victoria, the link was in their mind.

Following Cubitt's vision (1844) the younger campaigned for the road linking Pimlico to Clapham which he conceived as the main artery of a new "Belgravia" he had an urban vision of.

To know more about the battle of the railways to conquer Battersea, read "The Park Town Estate and the Battersea Tangle" by Priscilla Metcalf



1840 Island of Battersea map by David Western in Jon Newman's "The Heathwall, Battersea's Buried River"



1863-1871 Laying out the first houses

Flower & Salting appoint James Knowles

In 1863 James Knowles is officially appointed by the Australian developers Philip Flower and Severin Salting, the race to develop Park Town Estate before the Railways take over the land begins.

Unlike most of the speculative London street developments, Flower & Salting follow the architects' masterplan, aiming to develop a complete estate, with squares, shops, pubs, hotel, school, church and a variety of houses designs.

James Knowles divides his time between the design of the estate and the political and the commercial battle against the Railways growing land appetite.

The development requires several redesigns such as the northern street layouts after a large compulsory purchase by the LBSC railway in 1866.

In 1867 Battersea Park Station opens under the name "York station" and it has changed three times location and building, which illustrates the great agitation of the Railway expansion and little constraints or coherence in their development.

James Knowles Jr is an emblematic figure of Battersea, read his battles for designing the Estate in Patricia Metcalf "James Knowles, Victorian Editor and Architect"

Eclectic hygienist designs

Knowles designs, for what he initially envisages as an upper-class quarter, are simple yet eclectic.

Neo-gothic ivy iron ornament, classical acanthus leaves stucco window panels, Georgian bare brick and vertical proportions co-exist elegantly.

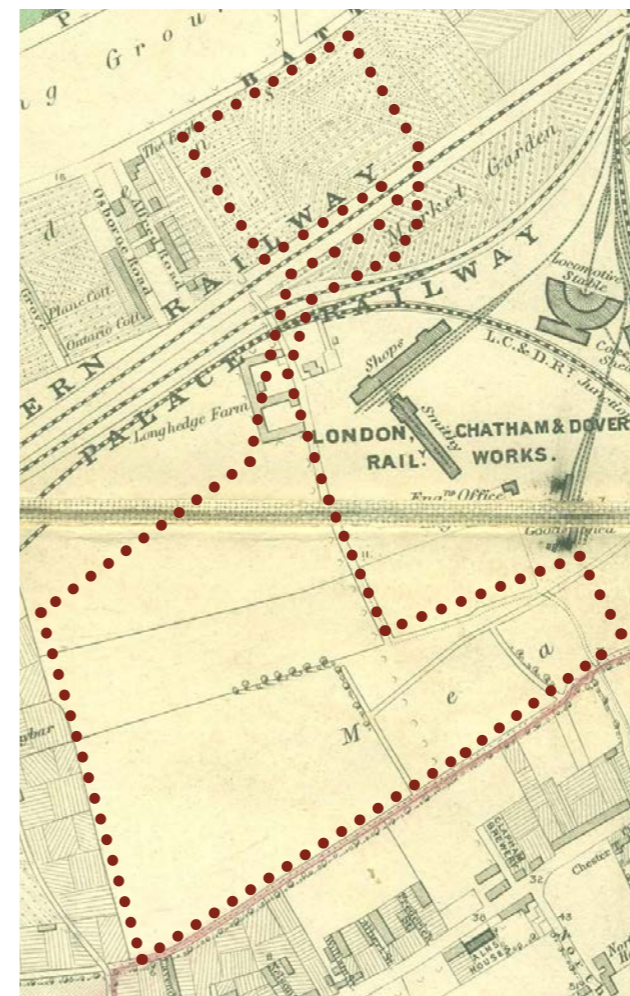
Knowles also design bathrooms, and carefully oriented south west aspects for houses to get the best light, all with gardens.

However, despite their efforts, the developers struggle to lease houses as they hoped.

Amongst other economical obstacles, the development appears too far away from the City centre and the nuisance of the noise and steam of the engines fail to convince high rent tenants.

Very early on, the large single family houses have to be converted in multi-tenancies, mainly for tradesmen, and soon ironically, railway workers.

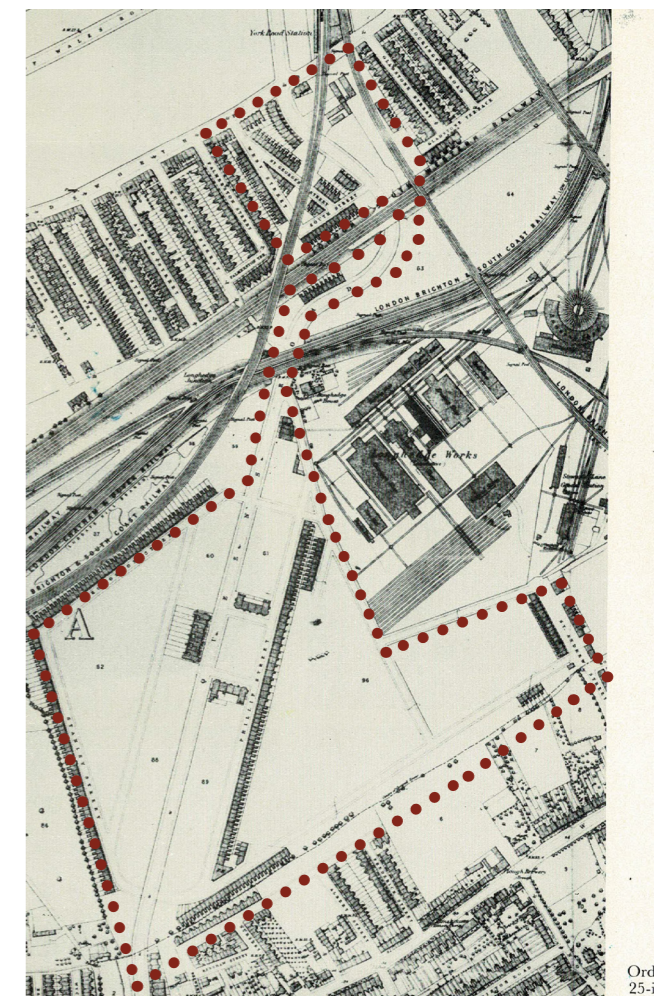
The development which was hoped to be completed in 1872 will take 30 years to be completed.



1862 Stanfords London Map

Infrastructure take over

Longhedge farm acres of unbuild land was the ideal ground to set-up space hungry railway hub



1874 published Ordnance Survey 25-inch London sheet LXV, Surveyed 1869 to 1870

Beginning of development

The layout of Queen's road and St Philips' Square initiate the development.

The northern square shape lost 90 houses after LBSCR compulsory purchase in 1866



1871-1887 Re-adjusting the vision

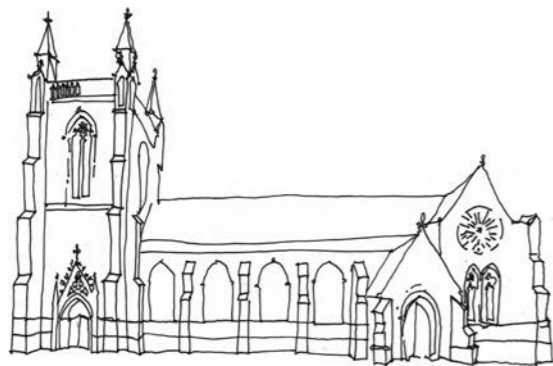
Philip Flower and St Philips' Church

in 1871, St Philips' Church, characteristic of Knowles Sr and Jr neo-gothic style is built finally completing the square at the centre of the composition of the Estate.

A year after, Philip Flower who gave his name to the church died.

During the next 15 years his two sons carried on the development with Knowles, who seem to turn to his social circle to boost his commissions.

In 1880, Knowles' close friend Alfred Tennyson joins Park Town, holding as many as 27 freeholds in the estate including the development "Gate houses" at the junction of Battersea Park road (one of which remains today in very bad shape!)



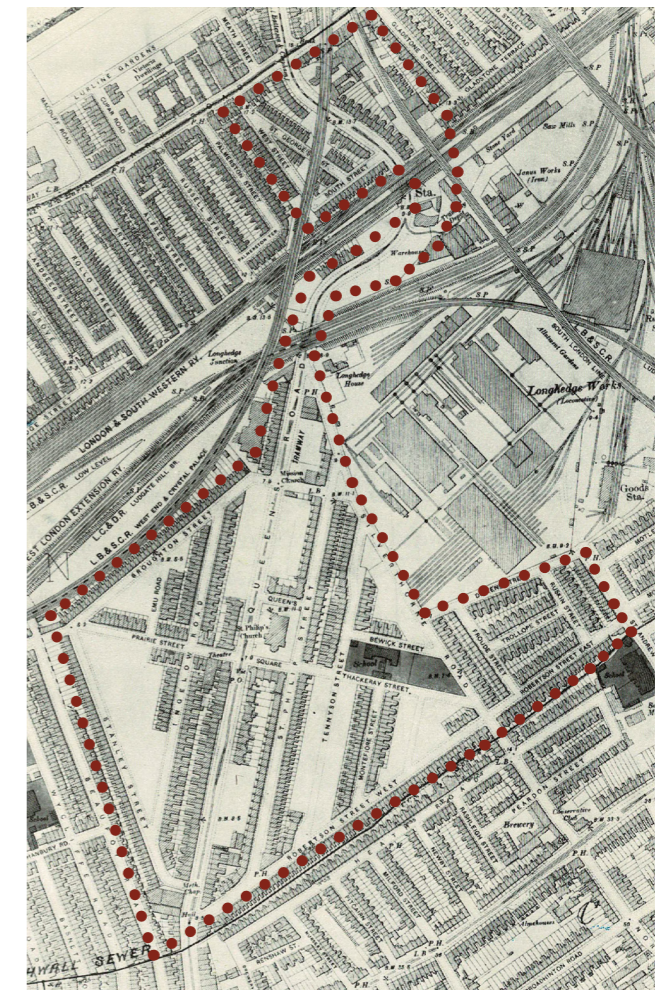
To read more about the Victorian lifestyle visit <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/victorian/daily-life/>

New Designs to match the demand

Other Architects are called in by the Flower sons, such as T. Jekyll and assistant T. Cooper and T.J. Bailey, possibly in hope that fresh designs would appeal to more tenants.

This starts with some very different houses designs in Queenstown road (102 - 120), which still were grand and took some time to lease.

The real change and readjustment of the tenancy offer at the end of the 70s' is the less grand designs built in the estate and the leases offered. The Montefiore Street two storey artisan houses appear.

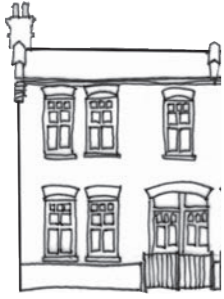


1895 published Ordnance Survey 25-inch London sheet C1, Revised: 1893 to 1894

Also on this map

In 1877 Queen's Road station opens for the London and South Western Railway to Waterloo.

in 1875 Thackeray school is built, deviating for the first time from Knowles plans



1887-1904 Passing on to the next generation

Knowles the Editor

James Knowles' passion for literature and editing kept him also very busy since as early as 1850. By 1877 his periodical "the Nineteenth Century" was very influential and published works by established writers.

In 1887 he officially removed himself from the Park Town Estate and most architectural activities to devote himself to editing.

Coopers' experiments

Cooper is appointed as main surveyor of the estate and experiments designs based on Knowles and Jeckyll ones.

The Tennyson street double fronted narrow house is an example, and the interesting "cottage house flats", where two flats share a facade and have separate doors too.

Cooper also designs a three storey block of flats based on the same design, which will cover most of Queenstown road.

Cooper finalised the estate plan in 1904.

Silverthorne roads' cottage flats were part of the last plots.

To explore the Park Town Estate living conditions in the Victorian era check out the Charles Booth's Poverty Map (1886-1903) at www.layersoflondon.org/map



1903 published Charles Booth Map surveyed 1886 to 1902

Charles Booth's map

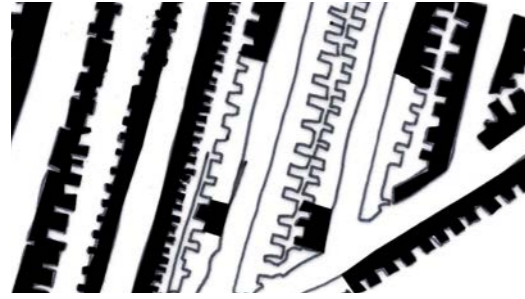
Booth described the relative affluence of the residents of the estate, and also highlighted the sense of community in the estate at the time of the survey



1916 published Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to the mile, revised 1913

Completed 3rd Phase

Final sections of Park Town estate were built, notably Queenstown rd, Silverthorne rd and Gambetta st.



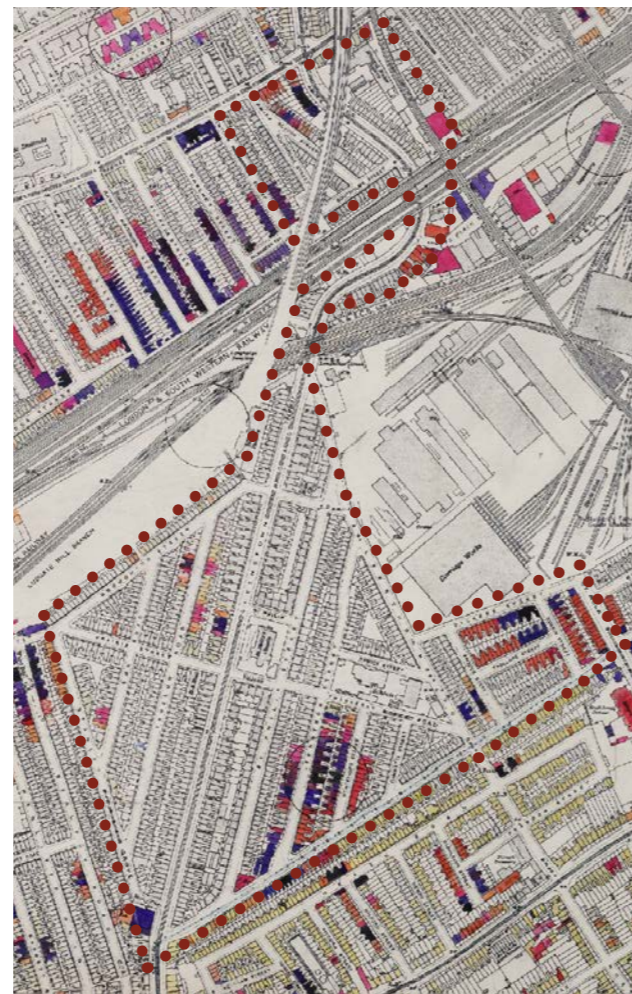
post 1945

After World War Two

After the war damage on Montefiore and Tennyson street, Wandsworth Council rebuilt the infill spaces keeping the scale used in the development, and the layouts of the flats.

Some bomb sites have been transformed to open spaces, providing extra green amenities for residents, such as a playground or a dog garden.

To check out detailed maps of post-war bomb damage in London go to www.layersoflondon.org/map and select the Bombing map, 1939-45 by Thomas Dobson

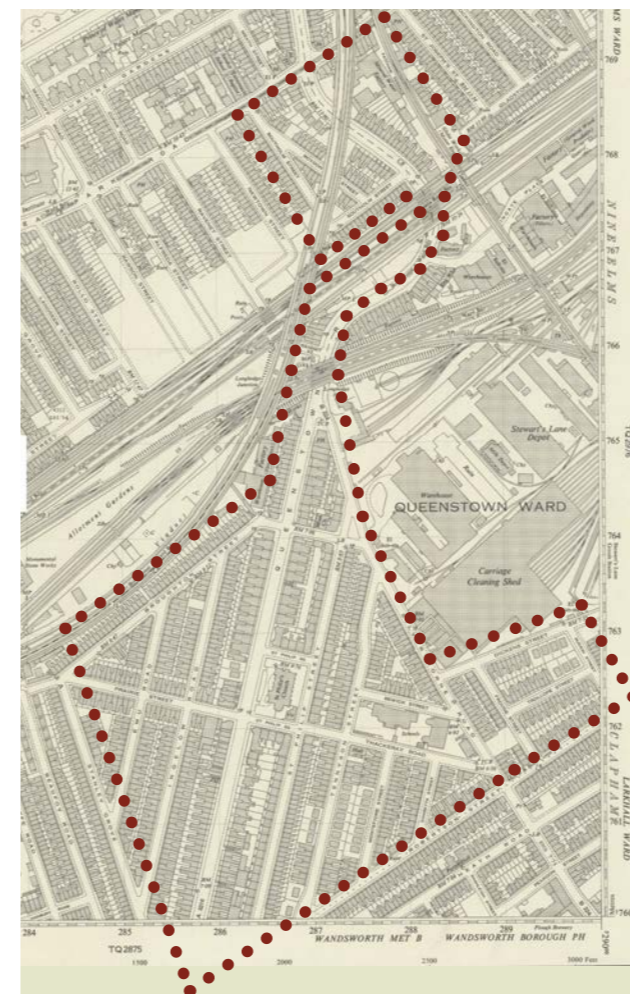


1945 London Bombing Map from "The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps, 1939-1945" book by Laurence Ward

World War Two

Parts of the estate were destroyed in the bombings, especially Tennyson street, Montefiore street and Robertson street.

1950

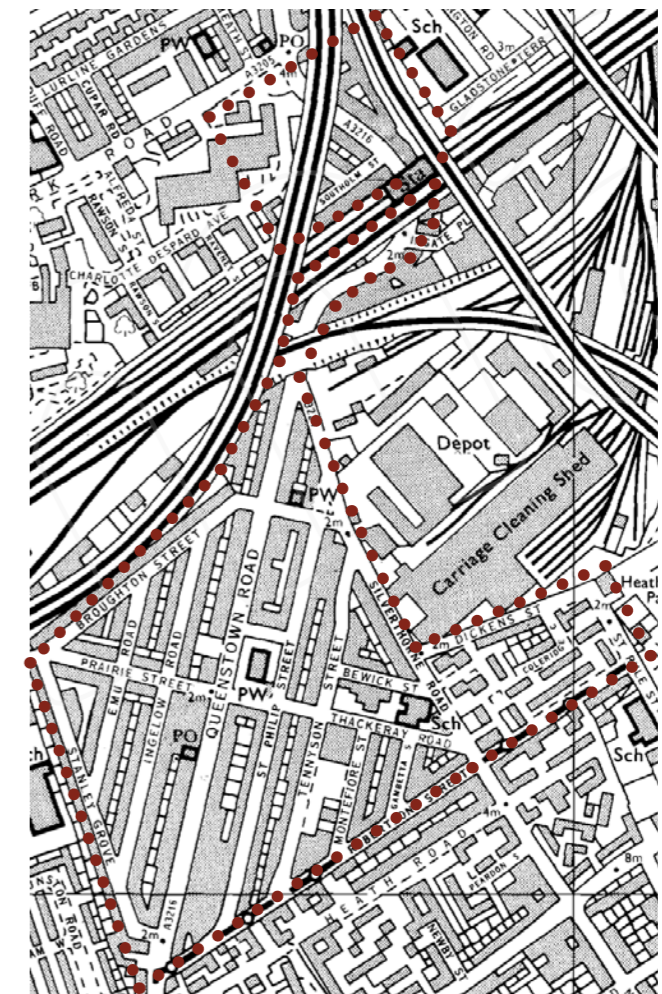


1952 Ordnance Survey, Surveyed 1949 to 1950

After World War Two

Bombed areas of the development were rebuilt, or kept as green spaces.

1980



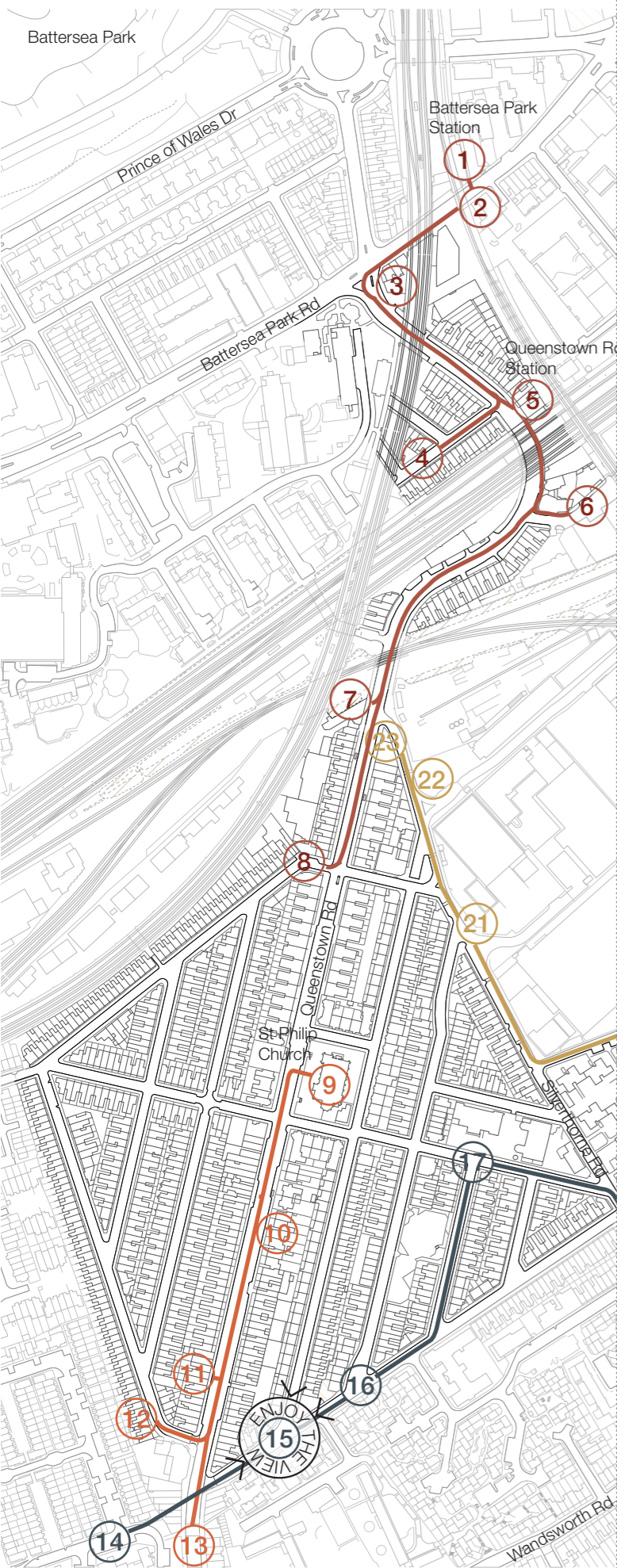
1980 Ordnance Survey

High rise

The northern section of the estate has seen numerous different high rise residential developments after the war.



Northern edge: competing railway lines



1 Battersea Park station GII* and Railway Bridge G2
The grade II* listed rail station was designed by Architect Charles Driver and built by engineer Sir Charles Fox for the London Brighton South Coast Railway and opened in 1867. Framing the station to the left the grade II listed cast iron railway bridge was also opened in 1867; The elevated lines of the Victoria approach supported by arches viaducts highlight Battersea topographical relationship to the North bank of the Thames, below its highest tidal level. It is a good introduction to the historical Battersea, its flood plains and marches.

2 St Josephs' street and The Masons' Arms pub GII
Formerly Gladstone street, its proportions and shop fronts gives an idea of the scale, design and uses of the northern section of Park Town estate. The Mason's Arm GII listed pub is one of the 4 in the estate, unlike the neighbouring Shaftesbury estate which didn't include any public house.

3 Gate houses (locally listed)
173-179 Battersea Park were mirrored by similar houses on the western corner before demolition in the 60s'. They form the northern gateway to the development and were purchased by Alfred Tennyson. The remaining houses today are in extremely poor condition despite their high significance to the local history.

Urban composition and Architecture

9 St Philips' Square and Church
The four elevations formerly named Queen's square, were designed by Knowles as the culmination of the estate in the first phase. The architecture reflects the high expectations of the development with generous proportions, elegant designs and street composition.

10 T. Jeykyl and T. J. Bailey Houses
The houses at 102-120, were designed by the two architects brought in when the development seemed to fail to attract higher rent tenants in the second phase of the development (1871-1887)

11 Shop fronts
Shops, hotels, public houses, theatre, church, and other essential functions of a community are planned and designed by the architect(s). Locally listed no 43 is an almost intact example.

12 Stanley Grove
The almost intact terrace is second part of the western boundary of the estate. It comes in contrast with the Shaftesbury estate development beyond, and its design highlights the focus put on Queenstown road.

4 Southolm street
Formerly south street, it is the oldest remaining terrace designed by Knowles and part of the first phase of the development. The contrast with the adjacent viaducts illustrates the challenges met by the development.

5 Queenstown road station GII
The grade II listed rail station was opened in 1877 for the London and Southwestern Railway.

6 Ingate Place
This unusual street provides access to cul de sac created by the competing lines, originally home to South London Tram horse tram depot.

7 Battersea Tangle
Ravenet street offers a good look out point to intersecting rail lines which created, extraordinary and secluded spaces nicknamed the Battersea Tangle.

8 Broughton Street
Abutting against the LBSCR, Broughton street was part of the first phases of the Park Town development and one of its western boundaries.

13 Other Knowles' works
Wandsworth road southern corner houses and former mews beyond, are outside of the formal original boundary of the estate. They illustrates Knowles presence in Cedars road, which pre-dates the Park Town estate designs and could have motivated his dedication to creating Queenstown road.

Further south, on Clapham common, dominating the lower Battersea plains, Knowles designed in 1860 the Cedars, French roofed houses and flats and a series of villas (four of which remain today) up to Wandsworth road on the former estate.

Southern edge: banks of the buried river

14 Confluence of Heathwall and Holburne Wix' lane and Lavender place opposite have been shaped by the former tributary of the Heathwall, the Holburne, running south-north as are several former tributaries along Wandsworth road.

15 Heathwall valley view
The Heathwall river running west-east parallel and below Wandsworth road formed the island of Battersea. It became the Heathwall ditch and sewer before being covered in 1858 allowing development. The covering was part of Bazalgette mega-drainage project for London. It has shaped the streets and buildings throughout the years, its former valley is still visible.

16 Robertson Street
The street that forms the southern boundary was partially built during the first phase of development. The Heathwall sewer runs in parallel with the street behind the houses.

17 Montefiore Street
The corner Montefiore/ Robertson is an example of late designs by Knowles himself after the houses offer have had to be re-adjusted to suit the local demand.

18 the Heathwall and Heathbrook park
One of the only locations where the Heathwall is audible though a grate is in front of the Heathbrook park. Jon Newman describes in "the Heathwall, Battersea's buried river" how today its presence is still palpable in multiple ways.

19 Arch 32
The rail viaduct running at the back of Heathbrook park was one of the firsts to span over the marshes and the Heathwall when it still was an open river. All arches are filled with small businesses but one, arch 32, providing the

Eastern edge: threats and opportunities

20 Chatham and Dover Railway Sheds
Unusual glimpses through the acres of rail yards taken over century ago reveal fascinating engineering buildings, structures and machines including the heritage collection of steam engines. Huge opportunity for public realm and vibrant spaces are available under complex layers.

21 Silverthorne road and "Between The Lines"
Silverthorne road is the boundary of the estate and the immense underused industrial and infrastructure site that we have described as "Between The Lines" in our masterplan study. Its re-organisation and better connection with the adjacent community is a crucial challenge for the years to come.

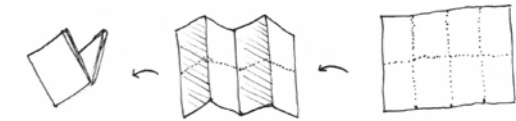
22 Longedge Farm and the concrete plant
Longedge farm dates back from 1647, most of Park Town was build on its land, its building were located at the swan neck shaped part of the estate.

23 The Victoria Pub
Third pub of the estate, it was built during the first phase of development, as a hotel. At the back, the Site manager had his office and flat, overseeing the builders yard. Today it is at the crucial fork between two of the busiest roads to the south.

Tag pictures of your walks with #ParkTownEstateWalk & follow us on Instagram @daabdesign

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our clients.
This map was designed and planned by daab design architects. We use collaboration, inclusivity, and craftsmanship to create the best spaces for



fold your map like this!

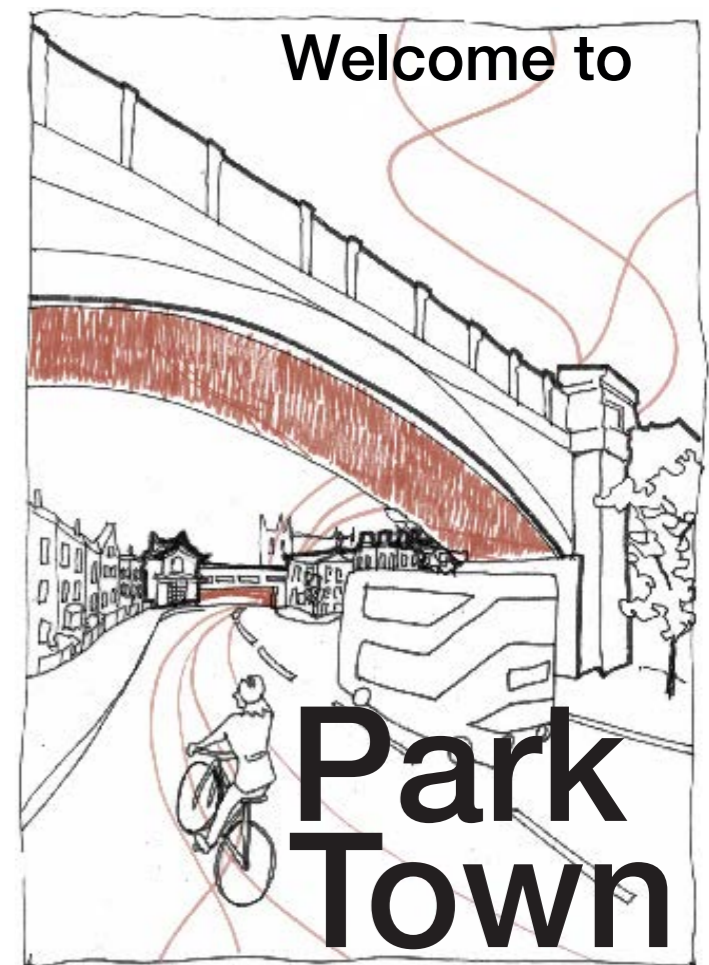
Bus: 137/452/344/44/156/436

Train: Southern Railways
Start and ends at Battersea Park Station

How to get there

This walk highlights the work of Architect and Editor James Knowles between 1857 and 1904, a Victorian development mostly intact today known as the Park Town estate development.
This walk is part of daab design "Silver Linings 1.0", a leaflet series for Park Town estate residents.

About this daab walk



Notes

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

Reference walks

Jon Newman, *The Heathwall, Battersea's Buried River* (1st edn, Oxford: Backwater Books 2019).

Jon Newman, *Battersea Nocturne* (1st edn, London: Thamesis 2017).

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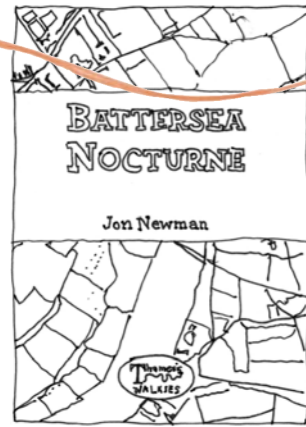
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