

## **BATTERSEA – NOT the “weakest link,” thank you very much!**

An interesting query from one of our guests proffered the perfect opportunity to educate visitors and our valuable clients on the history of Battersea, the burgeoning popularity of the area, relatively low crime rates, and the possibilities of what we could offer, all of which contributed to our enthusiasm towards our choice of location.

Battersea is a developing up-and-coming area, and quite safe. A recent article published in the most reputed newsletter for City bankers says it all: “*WHEN do you know if an area is going up in the world? Normally an influx of luxury hotels and award-winning restaurants should be a good enough sign, but the arrival of the embassy of the world’s most powerful country might just trump those...*” [More: http://www.cityam.com/living/the-americans-are-coming-battersea-and-it%E2%80%99s-no-wonder](http://www.cityam.com/living/the-americans-are-coming-battersea-and-it%E2%80%99s-no-wonder)

The fact it is not directly connected by the Underground has been Battersea’s biggest problem for years. It is for this reason people call it the middle-of-nowhere. To overcome this impediment, we provide complimentary shuttle services to the nearest tube station, Clapham Common Underground, which is a mere 7 minutes away from the hotel and will take you directly to the heart of London.

### **A wee bit of history**

Historically a part of Surrey, the area takes its name from the old village of Battersea, an island settlement established in the river delta of the Falconbrook a river that rises in Tooting Bec Common and flows underground through south London to the River Thames.

The site of the original settlement is marked by St. Mary's Church. William Blake was married, and Benedict Arnold and his wife and daughter are buried in the crypt of the church. Battersea is mentioned in Anglo-Saxon time as *Badrices īeg* = "Badric's Island" and later "Patrisey". As with many former Thames island settlements, Battersea was reclaimed by draining marshland and building culverts for streams.

### **Battersea’s claim to fame – The Battersea Power Station**

An impressive, now disused, art deco edifice designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, built between 1929 and 1939 currently being renovated into a mass entertainment and commercial complex, with dedicated transport links, has become one of the best-known landmarks in London over the last 50 years to enjoy a celebrity status owed to numerous cultural patronages, including the filming of The Beatles’ *Help!* or being used in the cover art of Pink Floyd’s 1977 album *Animals*.

As perfectly described in an article by Peter Swain of the exclusive AMEX Platinum Centurion Magazine:

*“Battersea, with its taut, angular Thames-side architecture, louche gastro-pubs and 80-hectare park, Battersea is becoming one of London’s hottest areas in which to work, live and party.”*

*“...The river is a liquid magnet not only for über-chic high-rise housing but also businesses like Norman Foster’s own internationally acclaimed practice, headquartered next to Albion Riverside.*

*The luxury of a surprisingly calm style of urban living”, as Foster describes the neighbourhood, as well as its “village-like feel”, is also attracting intrepid hoteliers, keen to be in the hospitality vanguard of a burgeoning neighbourhood within sight of Big Ben.*

*Hotels like the 65-room [Rafavel](#), which combines five-star extravagance with an impressively low carbon footprint, located midway between Wandsworth and Battersea bridges; its jazz bar and cigar terrace betoken wicked late-night revelry.”*

*“...Battersea, with the bucolic delights of its park, waterside location and proximity to the gilded byways of SW2 doesn’t suffer from a shortage of ancillary amenities that constrains many similar quarters in their embryonic stages.*

*...To wit, there is fine dining (Chez Bruce, Ransomes Dock or The Butcher and Grill) and fine design, in the man studios that constitute the Imperial Laundry on Warriner Gardens, where Art Deco furniture, Murano glassware and vintage black and white photographs from the likes of the Queen’s cousin, Lord Lichfield, are on offer at Restall Brown and Clennell, Mediterraneo, and Artemis, respectively...”*

Architectural guru, **Stephen Bayley**, on Hotel Rafayel, in The Guardian:

*"...It said south London was the new Left Bank. This caught my attention. Wandsworth Road as the new Boul' Mich? Battersea as a Latin Quarter?"*

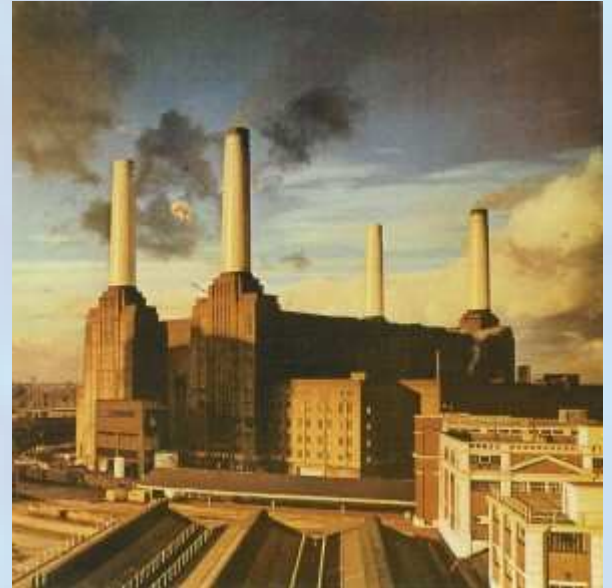
*"... as for glamour, there has certainly been lots of building in the past few years, but it has all been developers' development. This is the equivalent of barrow boys doing fashion. The result is a strange, but perhaps rather wonderful, Ballardian netherworld of vast ziggurats, screaming for attention..."*

*"...Already, people are talking excitedly of the "Nine Elms corridor". And this is the corridor that is going to lead to the new hotel Rafayel. ..."*

*"...But standards in the area will soon rise because the American embassy, apparently convinced that truck bombers do not have satnav, is moving to "more secure" premises on benighted Nine Elms Lane..."*

*...There have been inevitable artistic compromises and political accidents and narrowly avoided emergencies on the way. And Battersea cannot yet be confused with St Germain. But, for once, a developer is determined to do something interesting. At a time when other developers are pondering ugly, non-viable holes in the ground, this is inspirational."*

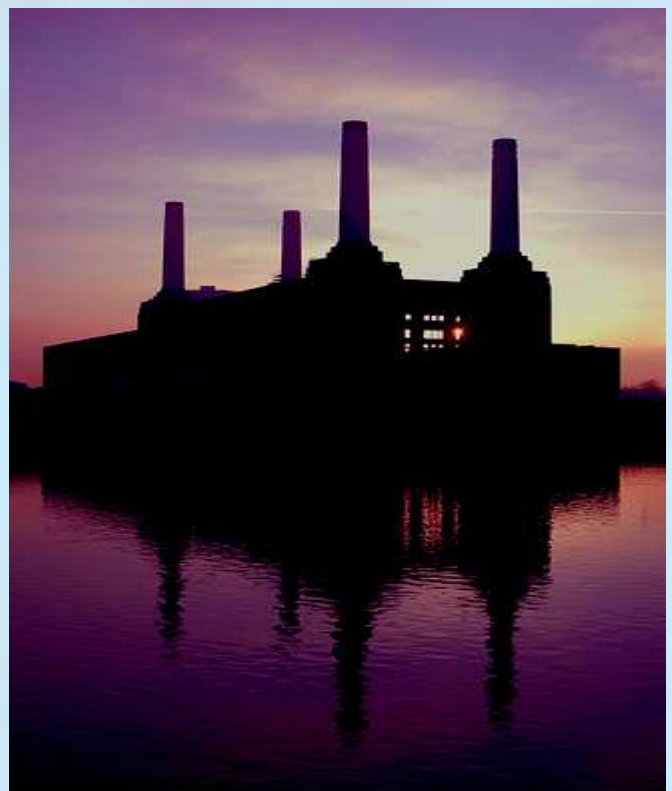
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/architecture/2009/nov/08/architecture-battersea-redevelopment-stephen-bayley>



Courtesy: <http://www.batterseapowerstation.org.uk/floyd/floyd.html>

The story of *Animals* is fascinating: Photographs for the cover were taken in early December 1976. For the photo shoot, an inflatable pink pig, made by the Zeppelin Company, was tethered to one of the southern chimneys. However the pig broke free of its moorings and rose into the flight path of London Heathrow Airport to the astonishment of pilots in approaching planes. The runaway pig was tracked by police helicopters before coming to ground in Kent. Whether the pig escaped, or was released on purpose to increase publicity, is not known, but it certainly adds to the charm of the story!

Courtesy: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/naughton321/72472188/>



More recently on 25<sup>th</sup> February, [Rafayel on the Left Bank](#) was privileged to host the Nike delegation who were in London, in a prelude event to the 2010 World Cup, where Battersea Power Station was the perfect event venue for football players from participating teams during the Nike unveils the new Brazil home and away kit, plus 8 away kits for the other Nike-Sponsored federations appearing at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Courtesy: [http://indepth.news.sky.com/InDepth/topic/Battersea\\_And\\_The\\_Beatles#gall](http://indepth.news.sky.com/InDepth/topic/Battersea_And_The_Beatles#gall)



## Sights and sounds of Battersea

Battersea is part of London on the south bank of the River Thames. Roughly triangular in shape, its northern boundary is the Thames, as it runs first north-east, and then east, before turning north again to pass Westminster.

At its core is Battersea Park, an 83 hectare green space laid out by Sir James Pennethorne between 1846 and 1864 and opened in 1858, and home to a zoo and the London Peace Pagoda,

Clapham Junction, claimed to be the busiest railway station in the United Kingdom and Europe,

The London Heliport, London's busiest heliport, sited on the Thames a half mile due north of Clapham Junction station,

St Mary's Church, Battersea. Benedict Arnold is buried here. There are four spectacular stained glass windows, celebrating Arnold, William Blake, William Curtis and J. M. W. Turner,

New Covent Garden Market, a major fruit and vegetable wholesale market, resited from Covent Garden in 1974 (Also considered by many to be in Nine Elms),

Sir Walter St John's School, now Thomas's day school, was founded in 1700. Parts of the present building date back to 1859,

Price's Candles on York Road, was the largest manufacturers of candles in the UK; now it has been converted into residential flats,

Royal Academy of Dance, containing several studios and associated with the University of Surrey.

## **Famous celebrities**

People who have lived, or currently live, in Battersea:

- Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke
- Harry Hill - comedian
- Bob Geldof
- Pixie Geldof - socialite and model
- Ronnie Biggs - the 'Great Train Robber'
- Freddie Foreman - prominent figure in London's 1960's gangland scene, born in Sheepcote Lane
- Dannii Minogue - musician
- Donald Swann - musician - of 'Flanders and Swann'
- So Solid Crew - musicians
- John O'Farrell - writer
- Gabriel Thomson - stars in *My Family*
- Jack Dee - comedian
- Greg Rusedski - tennis player
- Rick Parfitt - singer with Status Quo
- Johnny Briggs - actor, best known as Mike Baldwin in *Coronation Street*
- Gordon Ramsay - chef
- Vivienne Westwood - fashion designer
- Simon Le Bon - musician
- Buster Merryfield - actor, best known as Uncle Albert in *Only Fools and Horses*
- William Wilberforce - erstwhile campaigner against the slave trade
- Katie Leung - actress, best known as Cho Chang in Harry Potter films.
- Howard Eastman, boxer
- Dervla Kirwan, actress
- Rupert Penry-Jones, actor
- Joely Richardson, actress
- Polly Paulusma, musician

## **Rafayel boasts...**

...that with Battersea's label of being "something of a foodie paradise," our restaurant and bar, Banyan on the Thames and Crystal Bar, are fast joining ranks with the notables and gaining popularity with their "Medit-Asian" cuisine and delectable cocktails.

Read about them

here: <http://www.toptable.com/en-gb/venue/?id=14170> and

here: <http://www.viewlondon.co.uk/pubsandbars/crystal-bar-review-61641.html>

...that our services and amenities, like the River Wellbeing Spa and gym, offer the perfect weekend retreat for families and couples, or business travellers, to enjoy luxury at very affordable prices.

...that the outdoorsy types can take the perfect jog or a rejuvenating walk along the embankment, or a leisurely stroll to stop at any of the inviting little delicatessens and local cafes or some excellent gastropubs!

...of and prides in being a Battersean!

*\*Some references and citations from Wikipedia*