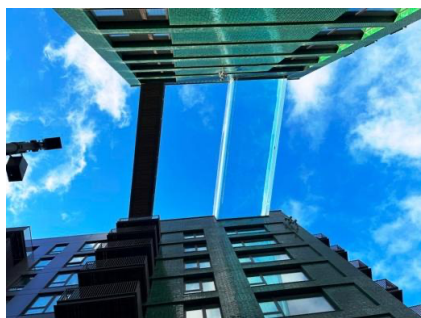


U3A Bikers
Three Boroughs ride
Friday 16th January 2025

For the first ride of 2025 I chose a route through three of the London boroughs nearest to home, Wandsworth, Lambert and Southwark, with several places of interest along the way. Group photo taken, we set out from Brockwell to Loughborough Junction to Hackford Road across Clapham Road to Albert Square. On a corner of Wilkinson Street we stopped to look at a memorial to the Tradescants who were gardeners and botanists in the 17th century. They worked in a garden hereabouts that was the property of King Charles I.



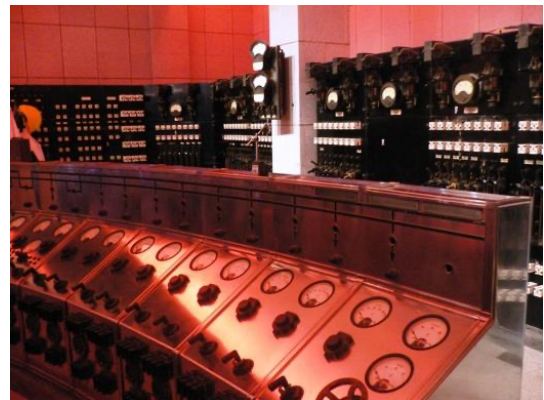
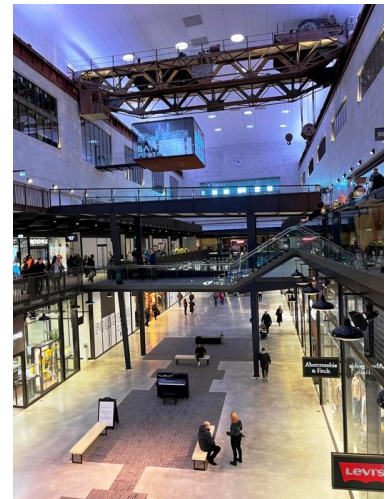
By minor roads, and after crossing South Lambeth Road, we passed Nine Elms Underground Station. The path took us along a pedestrian path between boards brightly painted in the theme of Covent Garden Fruit Market, then under the arches of the main railway line from Waterloo to Clapham Junction to Embassy Gardens. Above us was the unique Sky Pool, claiming to be the world's first "floating" swimming pool, and bridging a gap between two high-rise apartment buildings. The heated pool is suspended 115 feet above the ground. Its total length is 82 feet with the middle 45 feet section suspended. The publication *Architectural Digest* reports that the pool is believed to be the "world's largest single piece of load-bearing acrylic". The acrylic frame weighs 50 tonnes; it is 8 inches thick with a 12-inch thick base and is nearly 10 feet deep, resting on a hidden steel frame.



Turning the corner we were at the American Embassy, with a line of visa applicants queuing outside. The press has reported that *the interiors are “stunning”*. Rather than a slick and hard-edged high rise building, the embassy exterior is given a “soft and pillow-like” feel by the plastic polymer veils that drape three sides of the building and which enhances its energy efficiency. Then, bizarrely, across the road there is a sculpture of a severed foot, just a bit too graphic. None of us could think why this should be titled “Modern marriage”.

After a short stretch along Nine Elms Lane we crossed to the Thames path and on turning a corner we saw the immense wall of brick that is Battersea Power Station, Turbine Hall B.

Once in inside the Hall we could fully appreciate its size. Still in place is the huge gantry crane, running on rails on each side and spanning the space. This would have been able to lift the immense turbines that were here. There would have been three turbines in each hall, fed with steam from boilers. The turbines in the two halls supplied electricity for one fifth of the needs of London in the late 1950’s and 1960’s.



Midway along on the Upper Ground level is the Turbine Control Room B which overlooks the Hall itself. The Control Room has been incorporated into a cocktail bar. Here we could see close-up the Control Room’s original dials, control desks and switchgear racks. These have all been restored to their former glory, the industrial design and the stainless-steel control desks typical of the 1950’s. Continuing the walk-about, we visited the Turbine Hall A which was completed in 1935; this too has a Control Panel but it is hardly visible, set high above us, and not open to the public. This hall is built in the *art deco* style of the 1930’s. There is a YouTube tour including Control Room A with Tony Robinson available to view, see the NOTES).

By the main entrance there is a small exhibition documenting the appearance of the power station during the period it was operating. It also show the re-development of the site since Power Station A and B were closed down (in 1975 and 1978, respectively). This station also had the highest thermal efficiency of any power station in the country for the first twelve years of its operation.

Leaving the Power Station we headed for the Pear Tree Café in Battersea Park, very busy, so coffee was taken outside, well wrapped up. Then on through Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in Lambeth to the site of the **Daulton Pottery**.

This spectacular building, constructed for the Daulton Pottery between 1876-1877, is a mix of polychromatic brickwork and terracotta decoration. It was designed with a basement for storage, a highly enriched corner porch for the entrance to the offices, and a showroom on the first floor. The frieze above the porch is a representation of an early pottery room, with examples of their vases, and said to include a depiction of Mr Doulton in his studio.



The tour continued with a visit to “Graffiti Tunnel” in an arch beneath the railway line serving Waterloo station. Heading along the Cut our final stop was the Turkish restaurant *Ev*, off Blackfriars Bridge Road, for lunch.

Riders: Andrew Burke. Brian Heatley, Caroline Strallen. Gerry Gavigan, Gisela Robinson, Jane Andrew. John Clements.. Mark Stones. Martin Dale. Patrick Mulhern. Peter J LeVoir, Roman Bednarz, Tacey Kobayashi.

Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia

Photos and Report: John Clements, 8th February 2025

NOTES: Battersea Power Station is a decommissioned Grade II* listed coal-fired power station built by the London Power Company (LPC). The architects included Giles Gilbert Scott (who designed Bankside power station, and the red telephone boxes). The power station is one of the world's largest brick buildings and notable for its original Art Deco interior fittings and decor. The two power stations were built in two stages in a single building. Battersea A Power Station (1929-1935) and, on the eastern side, Battersea B Power Station (built 1937-1955; construction was delayed by WW2). Battersea B was built to a similar design, creating a symmetrical building with the well-known four-chimney structure.

After the construction of the Battersea B the generating capacity of the power station made it the third largest generating site in the UK . It supplied a fifth of London's electricity needs; the rest was supplied by smaller generating stations. It was also the most thermally efficient power station in the world when it opened.

The power station consumed one million tons of coal annually. After the end of World War II, the LPC used the waste heat from the boiler condensates to supply 1600 council homes in Pimlico by piping the water under the river. By 1983 both power stations had been decommissioned. The building remained empty until 2014, during which time it fell into near ruin. Various plans were proposed for its use before eventually an agreement was made with a Malaysian company to develop the site with residences, restaurants and bars, office space, shops and entertainment venues and offices.

The building and site are now owned by a consortium of Malaysian investors.

If you would like a virtual tour around the control rooms with Tony Robinson then go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1hzuXTRsO-o>

Daulton Pottery.

From the 16th century to the mid 20th century, the riverside district of Lambeth was a hub of industry. In 1570, two Antwerp potters settled in Lambeth and started trading. They were believed to be the first maker of what became known as Lambeth Delftware. Many Delft potters followed and settled in Lambeth, as well as Southwark and Vauxhall during the 17th centuries. These small potteries soon helped Lambeth establish its reputation as the centre of the industry, with many springing up on Lambeth High Street. The potteries made various designs of earthenware, although pharmaceutical containers and accessories were prevalent. One prominent business was James Stiff & Son's Pottery, which was established in 1751. Located on a two acre site on the High Street, it was one of the largest potteries in London and employed 200 people, had 14 kilns and had its own dock on the River Thames until 1913. The founder of what would become the Royal Doulton brand, John Doulton (1793-1873), started his career as an apprentice to John Dwight's Fulham Manufacturing Company from 1805-1812. He invested his life savings of £100 in the pottery, which traded as Jones, Watts & Doulton from 1815. The company specialised in salt glaze stoneware, making bottles, jugs and jars. They acquired a large pottery on the High Street in 1826, expanding their business to making glazed sewer pipes. By 1834, they were employing 12 men working across two kilns at 28 Lambeth High Street. Fortunately for Doulton & Watts, demands for glazed pipes rose dramatically in the 1830s-1840s as the sewer system was built.

For further information

<https://www.ianvisits.co.uk/articles/a-victorian-marvel-royal-doultons-lambeths-headquarters-65232/>

<https://www.thepotteries.org/potters/doulton.htm>

https://www.daltondatabank.org/Chronicles/Royal_Doulton.htm