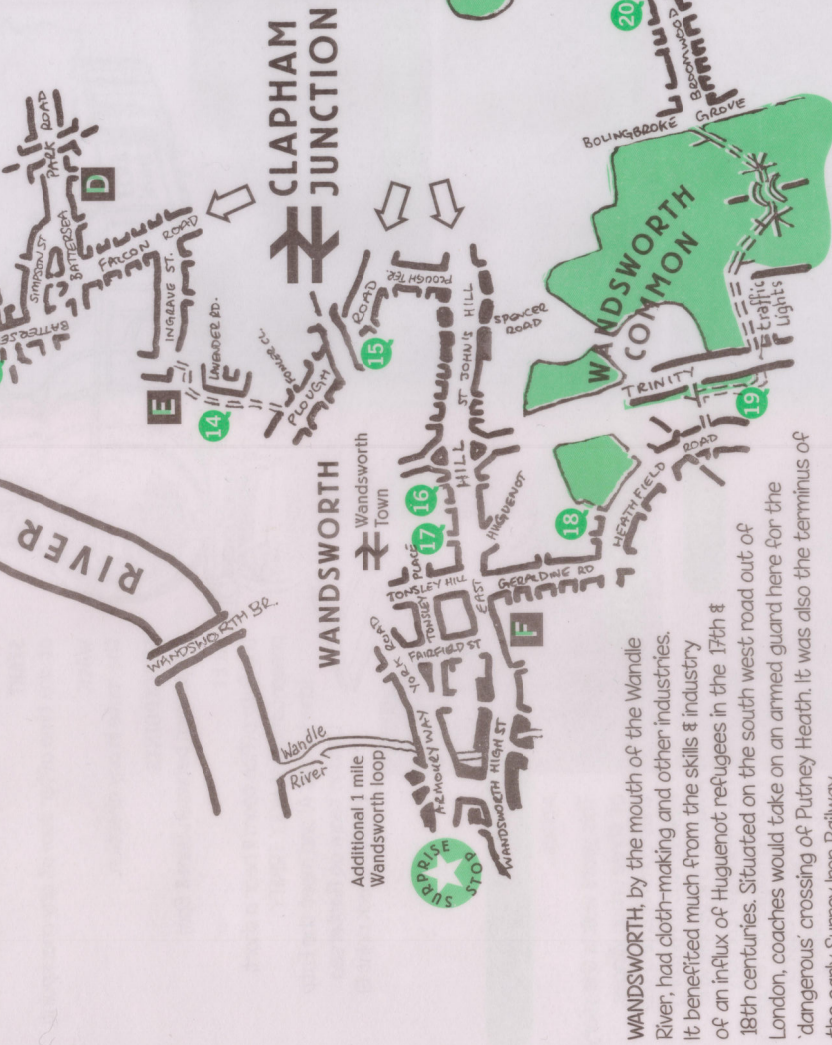


HISTORICAL NOTES

This part of INNER SOUTH WEST LONDON was, until about 1840, predominantly open countryside. It had three separate villages, each with their fields and their own large common - which had fortunately escaped enclosure. Each village had a different character.

CLAPHAM had grown up around the edges of a large central common and was a 'pretty village', the home of some well-to-do and influential commuters. In the Regency age many of these were the Anglican evangelicals known as the Clapham 'sect', including William Wilberforce, who influenced their age profoundly for good.

BATTERSEA was an ancient village of more mixed character, with some industries, on the banks of the Thames. Its large common field (now Battersea Park) was low-lying and subject to flooding, but useful for fattening cattle.



WANDSWORTH, by the mouth of the Wandie River, had cloth-making and other industries. It benefited much from the skills & industry of an influx of Huguenot refugees in the 17th & 18th centuries. Situated on the south west road out of London, coaches would take on an armed guard here for the 'dangerous' crossing of Putney Heath. It was also the terminus of the early Surrey Iron Railway.

CHELSEA, on a favoured south-facing bank of the River, was always a home of the rich. This was the parish of Sir Thomas More & the Sloanes & the Cheynes, etc), see monuments inside the old parish church.

CLAPHAM JUNCTION. Dynamic change began in the 1840's with the opening of the railway depot at Nine Elms - Clapham Junction was officially opened on 1st March 1863. This concentrated all the railway routes from the south and west converging on London, and became the busiest railway junction in the metropolis & probably in the world.

DEVELOPMENT followed from 1850 onwards, with industry along the river & railway and a mass of working-class housing to feed the incessant demand for labour. Later, the growth of office employment in the City and West End resulted in a more suburban development on the higher land to the south.



REDEVELOPMENT. The 1939-45 war brought bombing and destruction, followed by post-war reconstruction. In the 1960's and 1970's there were slum clearance programmes and comprehensive redevelopment (notice the various forms of LCC and GLC housing estates). The 1980's saw a massive decline in working-class jobs. The 1990's have brought 'executive' housing, trade & business centres to the Thames South Bank and gentrification in Battersea. There are also some welcome signs of 'greening' the city.

Map: Cratton Clendenning
Route & notes: Philip West-Kelsey

Fold along dotted lines and slip into plastic folder when walking central section of the route.