# Avonmore ward

**In her concession speech at the Fulham Borough Council elections of 1937, Labour councillor Ethel Rankin - who had switched wards and lost in safely Conservative Baron's Court - predicted that the ward would one day elect Labour councillors.**

In narrow terms, Cllr Rankin was wrong: Baron's Court ward itself never returned Labour councillors. But today the area covered by that ward - either side of Talgarth Road - is represented by Labour councillors.

Baron's Court covered almost all of current Avonmore ward: the area bordered by Talgarth Road in the south, the borough boundary in the east, Hammersmith Road in the north and Edith and Gliddon Roads in the west. The only part not in Baron's Court was the area west of Gliddon Road. It extended south to include the Baron's Court estate and the area east of North End Road that, in those days, were railway sidings for the Lillie Bridge London Transport depot.

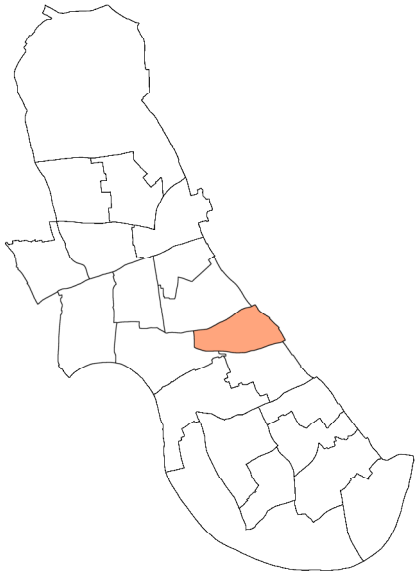
This six-councillor ward always returned Conservatives or whatever title they chose to stand under, and often piled up Conservative majorities that would not have looked out of place in the safest Tory boroughs.

Over 90% voted for Municipal Reform in three elections and over 70% in a further seven. In the two elections following the First World War: 1919 and 1922, they were unopposed.

Avonmore ward was first created in 1964 - in no small part because Talgarth Road had become the A4 - a dual carriageway so busy that it was now a physical boundary that could not credibly be crossed. The Conservatives won with over 60% despite Labour winning the borough by over twenty points. In their 1968 landslide, the Tories came close to 80%, before returning to just under 60% in 1971.

So the key question that needs explaining in respect of Avonmore is: why have the Conservatives lost control of their very safest redoubt in Hammersmith and Fulham? Let's return to that question circuitously.

Avonmore covers the majority of the historic village of North End: one of the founding settlements of what became Fulham.



The village began as a linear settlement on both sides of North End Road, with precious little beyond it other than the fields and market gardens that the Gunter family, principally, cultivated.

If Addison ward is associated with Joseph Addison, Avonmore - though you wouldn't know it from the ward name - is inextricably linked to the Gunter family, and in particular James Gunter; the market gardener, confectioner and property developer.

The Gunter brothers between them accrued a considerable amount of land in wider south Kensington; much of which, like Avonmore, was for the growth of their market garden businesses - though further afield The Boltons and Gunter Grove are examples of their property portfolio. What is now Gliddon Road represented the most westerly extent of their grounds.

The legacy of James Gunter is evident in Avonmore ward: not just Gunterstone Road, but Gwendwr Gardens - one of the few public spaces in the ward, gifted to the parish and laid out by the man himself.

It is a fluke of history but the creation of the London Boroughs in 1900 happened to coincide with the boom in house-building in Fulham. You will find some of those responsible for constructing Fulham serving on the borough council in the early days: Jimmy Nichols: who built the distinctive Lion Houses on the Peterborough

estate in the south, and John Flew: responsible for large sections of Avonmore.

A third of these big developers who worked with Flew: William Gibbs, built much of the Barons Court estate and Queens Club Gardens - perhaps even had the Gibbs Green estate named after him. Gibbs lived in Mornington Avenue, in this ward - though his house was demolished when Fulham Council widened North End Road.

This is incredibly densely packed West Kensington with a wide mix of housing styles; from long streets of huge (often sub-divided) houses like Edith Road, for example, to the sort of ornate red-brick mansion blocks of Fitzgeorge and Fitzjames Avenues, or Bishop Kings Road more typically found in Knightsbridge.

money-lender who, on his death, bestowed £670,000 to a trust specifically for constructing homes for the poor of London. That doesn't sound much in modern terms but at it was equivalent to £30 million in today's money and London - especially what were then its outskirts like Baron's Court - was nothing like as expensive as it is today.

The Trust he founded was able to build eight substantial housing estates in a ring around central London, including two in Fulham: the Lisgar Terrace estate here and the Vanston Place estate in Fulham Broadway.

Immediately south of this estate was The Grange, a rather grand house occupied by the printer and author Samuel Richardson and later the famous Arts and Crafts




There are more modern mansion blocks like the massive North End House towers, and Baron's Keep in Gliddon Road; a horseshoe-shaped 1930s mansion block in the Art Deco ocean liner style, set around a central green.

North End Road divides the eastern and western sides of the ward. The eastern side is more densely packed and contains most of the council and housing association blocks.

The oldest of the estates: the Samuel Lewis Trust buildings in Lisgar Terrace, was built in 1927. Lewis was a

Movement painter Edward Burne Jones. The Grange was still standing after the end of the Second World War but it was dilapidated beyond salvage and so Fulham Borough Council purchased the site to build the Grange and Samuel Richardson estate.

Some of the grounds of the original Grange were retained: the sunken garden in between the two main blocks on the estate. Further blocks are scattered further afield; on both sides of North End Road, in Mornington Avenue and Edith Villas. This is all the Lytton Estate.

FULHAM CHRONICLE FRIDAY DECEMBER 23, 1927

# Baron's Court By-election

## DR. BOKENHAM RETURNED

## No Change and No Excitement

Baron's Court Ward was not excited over the polling at the Fulham Borough Council by-election on Saturday. The ward is the stronghold of the Municipal Reform Party, and the result, generally anticipated, was a victory for the Reform Party's candidate, Dr. T.J. Bokenham.

Even his opponent, Mr Vanderhook, the nominee of the Labour Party, regarded his chances as hopeless, for, to use his own wards, he only allowed himself to stand to give the supporters of his party an opportunity of registering a vote of "no confidence".

This concession will cost the ratepayers approximately £50, the estimated expenses of the election.

The vacancy was caused by the retirement from public duties of Mr. F. Holmes, L.C.C., who was elected under the Municipal Reform banner.

There are 5,960 persons on the electoral roll, and the result was:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dr. Bokenham (MR) | ... | 958 |
| Mr Vanderhook (Lab) | ... | 156 |

Just under 18.75 per cent of the electorate went to the poll.

The by-election was colourless. There were two stations, one at West Kensington Lecture Hall, Challoner Street, and the other at William Street School. Polling was from 8am to 8pm.

### One Every Two Minutes

The Labour candidate with his agent, Mr Turner, was at the West Kensington Lecture Hall just before polling commenced, and within a few minutes of the booth being opened nine electors registered their votes. Matters were quiet all the morning, the average polling being about 30 an hour at each station.

Things livened up after noon, and between 1 and 2 o'clock the votes registered at both stations were 102.

During the afternoon the people of Baron's Court apparently went shopping, for the voting business dropped again, and things were painfully slow - so slow in fact that it was difficult to realise that there was an election in progress. By 7 o'clock over 900 had been to the poll, and balloting became fairly brisk.

Dr. Bokenham and his agent (Captain Parsons) visited both stations during the morning and afternoon. Dr. Bokenham was offered the use of seven or eight cars, and these he kept fully employed. His opponent had the assistance of Dr. Spero's car during the afternoon only.

Dr. Bokenham issued 6,000 addresses and a number of handbills, and his opponent 5,000 addresses. Mr. Vanderhook did not publish any handbills, but he held the only meeting of the election.

### Counting the Votes

The votes were counted the same evening in the Council chamber at the Town Hall. The Town Clerk (Mr. W. Townend) was the Returning Officer, and six clerks counted the votes. Council commenced at 8.20, and was concluded soon after nine o'clock. Dr. Bokenham was accompanied by Mrs. Bokenham, and among his supporters present were his agent (Captain Parsons), Aldermen Clark and Armfield, and Councillors White and Pritchard.

Mr. Vanderhook, with Mrs. Vanderhook, was supported by Mr. Turner, his agent, Mrs. Kenworthy, wife of Commander Kenworthy, M.P., and a resident of Baron's Court ward), Mr. Louis Hill (a Labour ex-Mayor), Councillor Ballantyne, and Mr. Membery (a Fulham Guardian).

The announcement of the result of the ballot was received with mild applause, and Dr. Bokenham's smile, which he had been wearing all the evening, became more expansive.

In proposing the customary vote of thanks to the Returning office and his staff, Dr Bokenham said he appreciated the efficient manner with which the election was carried out. Although he had not been a resident of Fulham long, he had been privileged to take an active part in the representation of the borough.

Mr. Vanderhook had obviously experienced an anxious day and appeared to be relieved the "job was over". In seconding the vote of thanks he said he made no apology for contesting the election. He bowed out of the fight the same way he went in: it was a pleasant and clean fight. He hoped to have the opportunity of placing his call to the electors of Fulham on another occasion.

The Returning Officer, voicing his thanks, said he claimed no reward personally. The expeditious way the election was conducted was due to his efficient staff.

### Candidates on the Results

When interviewed, Mr Vanderhook said the Labour Party was "not the party with the cars".

When Dr. Bokenham's attention was drawn to the difference of the number of cars lent by his supporters and the handicap of Mr. Vanderhook, he said: "Everything is fair except cheating. Why shouldn't we have cars?" Dr. Bokenham added: "I admire the pluck of Mr. Vanderhook."

Virtually all the rest of the eastern side of Avonmore comprises mansion blocks or large town-houses, many with basements. There are 19th-century blocks like those across Hammersmith Road from Olympia: Argyll and Rugby Mansions in Bishop King's Road, and behind them Marcus Garvey Park: the only public open space in Avonmore other than Gwendwr Gardens. Marcus Garvey, the black rights leader who tried to proclaim himself Emperor of Africa even though he was born in the Caribbean, lived in Talgarth Road towards the end of his life.

Avonmore Road is a mix of red-brick and terracotta mansion blocks and town-houses that dog-legs to become the Kensington Village small business centre.

Addison Bridge Place, opposite the West London Line, has a range of housing styles, including black brick Georgian town-houses more typical of Westminster. Harold Laski, the left-wing academic and Labour Party Chairman, of whom Clement Attlee suggested *"a period of silence on your part would be welcome"* lived here. His wife, Frida, served as a Fulham Borough councillor for Lillie ward and he was an Alderman from 1937 to 1949.

The western side of Avonmore - the Gunter side if you will - is somewhat less densely packed, with the five roads built on that estate: Gunterstone, Gwendwr, Glazbury, Trevanion and Edith comprising long terraces of four-storey houses, almost all subdivided.

If this profile had been written at any point prior to 1986 it would describe the second safest Conservative ward in the borough. Avonmore was the one ward the Conservatives never lost, even in 1971, when they returned just two councillors. Avonmore provided the seat of council leader John Putnam until 1986.

Then in 1986 Avonmore deviated. On a 17% swing, Putnam was ousted. Perhaps aptly he was defeated by a future Labour council leader (and Fulham MP) Iain Coleman, along with his partner and another significant councillor of that era, Sally Powell.

Because Labour believed their 1986 gain here was too good to be true, the controversies of the 1986-1990 term such as massive rate rises, the Rate Swaps scandal and the Conservative recapture of Fulham in the 1987 general election, neither councillor defended Avonmore in 1990. Coleman moving south to contest next-door Gibbs Green; Powell moving north to Wormholt; both far more secure.



*Council by-election*

**TWO CANDIDATES CHOSEN FOR BARONS COURT**

**FIRST in the field with candidates for the borough council by-election in Barons Court Ward, caused by the resignation of Cllr. O. V. Michael, were the Conservatives and Liberals.**

At the elections last year all six Conservative candidates in Barons Court Ward were returned with comfortable majorities. Mr. Michael, who was deputy leader of the Opposition on the council, has resigned his seat owing to business reasons.

It is likely that the by-election will take place on December 14.

**CONSERVATIVE**

Conservative candidate is 36-year-old Mr. Desmond Harrington Henri, of Barons Court Road, chairman of Barons Court Ward.

If Mr. Henri wins he will join his uncle, Cllr. V. A. Baron, on the council. A manager with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which organises the motor show, Mr. Henri is

responsible for the maintenance of standard fittings within the motor industry.

At the last election he was one of the six Conservative candidates defeated in the Sands End Ward.

Educated at Glasgow Academy, Mr. Henri served during the war with the Royal Scots Fusiliers, reaching the rank of major. He was an expert on mechanical transport.

He is married and has a daughter.

**LIBERAL**

The Liberal candidate is Mr. Bernard Davis, of Stanwick Mansions, Stanwick Road,

West Kensington, partner in a firm of accountants.

Aged 37, Mr. Davis is hon. treasurer of East Fulham Liberal Association and a member of the executive committee of the Barons Court Liberal organisation.

Mr. Davis has lived in West Kensington for five years. During the war he served with the Royal Army Pay Corps. He is married.

When he was demobilised he joined the British Legion and, as a member of the Clapton branch, helped to institute a scheme to aid returning soldiers. He was instrumental in forming a technical advisory bureau for the purpose of obtaining licences and concessions for ex-soldiers wishing to start in business.

The 1990 result suggests this was the right tactic because the Tories fairly easily regained Avonmore. Of all the surprise Conservative losses of 1986 this was the one that returned to their fold most convincingly.

But this was not to be a return to service as usual. An 8% swing back to Labour in 1994 ousted one of the Conservative incumbents with Labour's Keith Mallinson winning by over 100 (6%) - a larger margin than 1986. This was not an isolated swing: in next door Brook Green it was 10% and produced a similar result: one Labour, one Conservative councillor elected. There was a small swing back to the Tories in Avonmore in 1998, but not enough of one to oust Mallinson who held on by thirteen votes.

Several forces had been at work to produce these much better Labour performances. The W14 postcode area which covers most of this ward has been trending almost as substantially towards Labour over the past three decades as SW6 has travelled in the opposite direction.

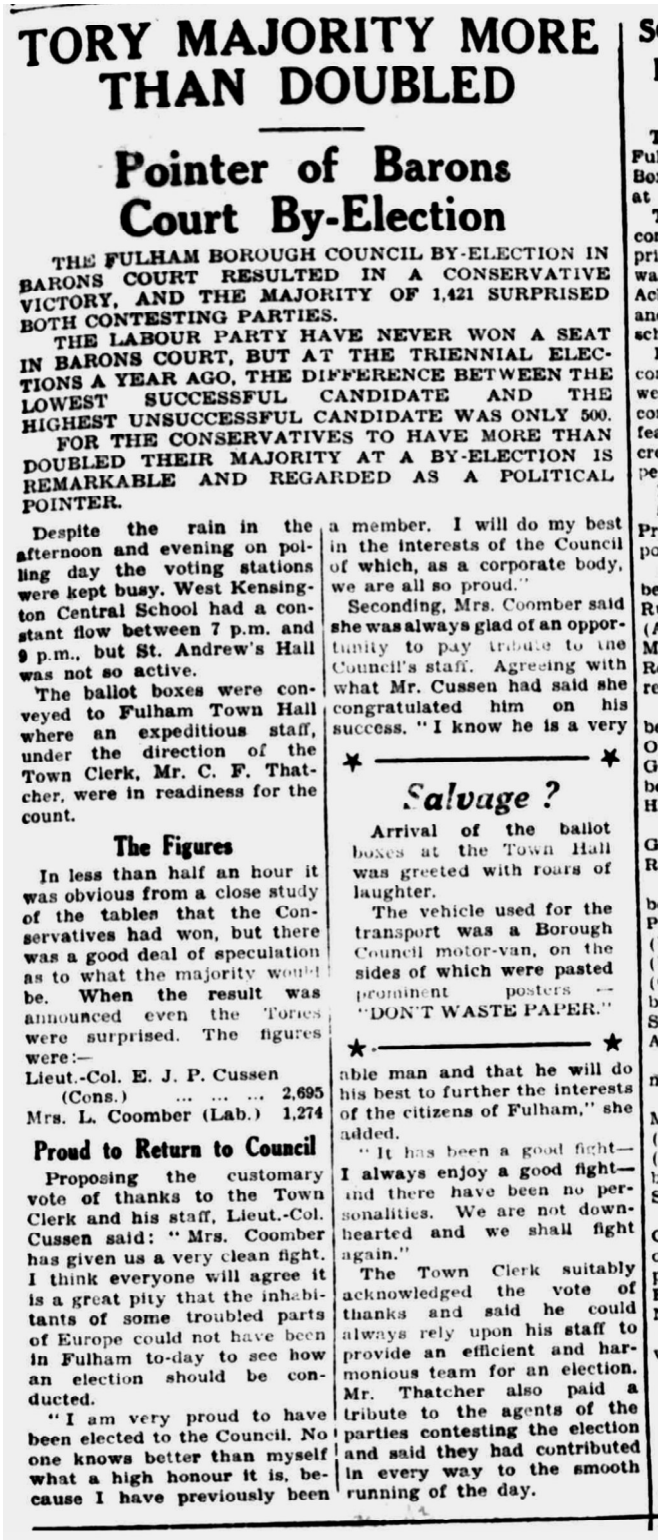
In part that is because a pretty stable, politically engaged affluent, middle class demographic was replaced by a younger, less political and less affluent demographic, especially in the large private-rented sector. Avonmore has also become much less white: it has the largest population of non-British born citizens in the borough.

Perhaps, given that the ward has for decades had two fairly large council and housing association estates, the Conservatives were also flattered by how easily they won. Labour had its own wards and better targets to focus on, and the estates were outvoted by the rest of the ward up until the rest of the ward changed demographically. In a ward that was slyly and slowly trending towards Labour the Fulham parliamentary by-election of April 1986 may have given them sufficient of a boost to offset their lack of organisation for the council elections a month later.

The 2000 electoral review, which required the drawing of 3-councillor wards to enable annual elections, with one councillor elected each year, posed some challenges in this area. Avonmore was nowhere near large enough to justify an extra councillor.

But the physical confines within which the ward lies are considerable. While Hammersmith Road is less significant a road than Talgarth, it is still incredibly busy, ferrying traffic between Hammersmith Broadway and High Street Kensington.

And it is not just the road itself that is formidable: it is lined by substantial buildings - residential and commercial - that further prise apart the communities on either side. And, although this mattered little in practical terms, Avonmore was a Fulham ward, Brook Green a Hammersmith one.



# TORY MAJORITY MORE THAN DOUBLED

## Pointer of Barons Court By-Election

THE FULHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL BY-ELECTION IN BARONS COURT RESULTED IN A CONSERVATIVE VICTORY, AND THE MAJORITY OF 1,421 SURPRISED BOTH CONTESTING PARTIES.

THE LABOUR PARTY HAVE NEVER WON A SEAT IN BARONS COURT, BUT AT THE TRIENNIAL ELECTIONS A YEAR AGO, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LOWEST SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE AND THE HIGHEST UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE WAS ONLY 500.

FOR THE CONSERVATIVES TO HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED THEIR MAJORITY AT A BY-ELECTION IS REMARKABLE AND REGARDED AS A POLITICAL POINTER.

Despite the rain in the afternoon and evening on polling day the voting stations were kept busy. West Kensington Central School had a constant flow between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., but St. Andrew's Hall was not so active.

The ballot boxes were conveyed to Fulham Town Hall where an expeditious staff, under the direction of the Town Clerk, Mr. C. F. Thatcher, were in readiness for the count.

### The Figures

In less than half an hour it was obvious from a close study of the tables that the Conservatives had won, but there was a good deal of speculation as to what the majority would be. When the result was announced even the Tories were surprised. The figures were:—

Lieut.-Col. E. J. P. Cussen (Cons.) ... ... ... 2,695
Mrs. L. Coomber (Lab.) 1,274

### Proud to Return to Council

Proposing the customary vote of thanks to the Town Clerk and his staff, Lieut.-Col. Cussen said: "Mrs. Coomber has given us a very clean fight. I think everyone will agree it is a great pity that the inhabitants of some troubled parts of Europe could not have been in Fulham to-day to see how an election should be conducted.

"I am very proud to have been elected to the Council. No one knows better than myself what a high honour it is, because I have previously been a member. I will do my best in the interests of the Council of which, as a corporate body, we are all so proud."

Seconding, Mrs. Coomber said she was always glad of an opportunity to pay tribute to the Council's staff. Agreeing with what Mr. Cussen had said she congratulated him on his success. "I know he is a very able man and that he will do his best to further the interests of the citizens of Fulham," she added.

"It has been a good fight—I always enjoy a good fight—and there have been no personalities. We are not downhearted and we shall fight again."

The Town Clerk suitably acknowledged the vote of thanks and said he could always rely upon his staff to provide an efficient and harmonious team for an election. Mr. Thatcher also paid a tribute to the agents of the parties contesting the election and said they had contributed in every way to the smooth running of the day.

### Salvage ?

Arrival of the ballot boxes at the Town Hall was greeted with roars of laughter.

The vehicle used for the transport was a Borough Council motor-van, on the sides of which were pasted prominent posters :— "DON'T WASTE PAPER."

# DEATH OF MISS H. A. PACKER

## Accident at Fulham Hospital.

We regret to record the death of Miss Harriott Anne Packer, 28 Auriol-road, West Kensington, who was a member of the Fulham Borough Council from 1923 to 1928.

Miss Packer, who was 75 years of age, had been in failing health for the past twelve months. She passed away in Fulham Hospital on Sunday week.

A daughter of the Rev. J. G. Packer, vicar of St. Peter, Bethnal Green, for 30 years, Miss Packer was one of the first women to graduate at Oxford University. She had a great belief in the ability of women to play their part in national and civic life, and she was associated with the women's suffrage movement. She came to Fulham about 16 years ago, and became Principal of the Queen Elizabeth School for Girls at Auriol-road. Previously she was headmistress of Buxton High School. She was a staunch Conservative and became a prominent member of the East Fulham Conservative and Unionist Association.

### Returned Unopposed in By-Election.

In 1923 Miss Packer was nominated for a vacancy on the Fulham Borough Council for Barons Court Ward at a By-Election, and she was returned unopposed.

Miss Packer was intensely interested in municipal and political matters, and she found plenty of scope for her activities. She was particularly keen on tackling local housing problems, and was actively associated with the launching of the Fulham Housing Association, of which she subsequently became a vice-president. In 1925 Miss Packer was elected a councillor for Barons Court Ward. Her poll of 2,356 votes was the lowest of the six successful Municipal Reform candidates in that ward. Although she did not take a particularly prominent part in Council debates, Miss Packer did a good deal of work behind the scenes as a member of the Public Health, Works and Highways, and Housing Committees.

As a Borough Councillor she had a ready tongue, and often crossed swords with political friend and foe. On one occasion a member of the Council, speaking against the staff appointment of a woman, said that men had to work to keep women. Miss Packer quickly retorted, amid laughter, that it was very often the other way about.

### Defeated as Unofficial Conservative Candidate.

In the 1928 Borough Council election Miss Packer contested Barons Court Ward as an unofficial Conservative, and was defeated. She secured 649 votes—the highest number of votes polled by the seven defeated condidates, of whom six were Labour. This election was notable for the entrance into the political arena of the Fulham Housing Association, which issued a manifesto asking the voters to elect a Council that would be prepared to make the fullest use of the large powers conferred on borough councils, both for building and for remedying insanitary conditions.

The reasons why Miss Packer was not one of the official Conservative candidates in Barons Court at the 1928 election were adequately summed up in an editorial note in the "Fulham Chronicle" at the time. This read:—"Miss Packer has proved herself rather an extreme Conservative in some directions, and certainly very loquacious. Apparently it is thought that a Conservative of a more moderate type is likely to prove more acceptable to the rank and file of the party. Miss Packer prefers, however, to accept the decision of the electors, but she is making it clear that she is still a Conservative. A keen economist, she considers that a Fulham housing scheme could be evolved without placing any further burden on the State or the rate, but there are few members of her party who think likewise."

After her defeat Miss Packer became associated with the National Citizens' Union, serving on the committee. She remained a staunch Conservative, and attended two or three meetings in support of the Hon. W. W. Astor, M.P., at the last Parliamentary election. During her lifetime Miss Packer wrote several books, including novels.

Because there was no serious chance of crossing Talgarth Road, the only way Avonmore could expand were across Hammersmith Road and Gliddon Road: Avonmore and Brook Green ward was created. That said, given that two 2-councillor wards were created that year, it'd have been more logical for Avonmore to have been one of these instead of Palace Riverside.

Avonmore and Brook Green ward had quite opaque boundaries, zigzagging behind houses and across streets: it looked a little like the old fashioned clothes-irons that used to be heated on the hearth before electric steam irons came along.

Politically, though, there would have been very little difference in outcomes however the ward was drawn because the bits of Brook Green that transferred were mixed: the Springvale council estate for example off-setting the gated-off Windsor Way. Plus even more private tenants in the massive Latimer Court block near the Broadway.

The first election of the new 3-councillor ward was won by the Conservatives - a notional gain of two seats but the third by just 39 votes.

Between the 1998 and 2002 contests Keith Mallinson, always a relative outsider in the group, had resigned the Labour whip to sit as an independent. He had previously stood as an Alliance candidate in Ravenscourt and before that was a Conservative Party activist, so this was his fourth political description. Four became five in 2026 when he contested Avonmore in the Green Party interest.

Contesting the ward as an independent in 2002 Mallinson polled 327 votes (11%) - far from embarrassing even though it still placed him last - but a much larger number of votes than the 39 vote majority Cllr Jolyon Neubert (son of former Romford MP Sir Michael Neubert, who was parliamentary candidate for Hammersmith North in 1966) won.

Would Mallinson's absence from the ballot have given that seat to Labour? It's unclear for the simple reason that the Lib Dems only fielded two candidates, maybe to support Mallinson's bid or just because they struggled to find candidates in that election. Mallinson's 327 was in line with the Lib Dem share, so it can't be assumed that his vote came from otherwise Labour supporters - it's more likely he got, in the main, Lib Dem supporters' third votes.

Labour's Daryl Brown, a well-known and popular candidate who would later become a councillor and mayor, finished substantially - 150 votes - ahead of her running mates, so it could also be argued that the Conservatives would have won by more without her presence. But, of course, it's conceivable that 40 more Labour votes could have been found from within Mallinson's 327 and that some of his support came from Labour supporters he had helped as councillor.

Avonmore and Brook Green swung heavily to the Conservatives in 2006, giving them nearly 60% of the vote and majorities of between 738 and 816. But if the Conservatives believed they had fixed whatever glitch had cost them here in the recent past they were mistaken.

In 2010 the Lib Dems won 20% of the vote. All of their advance came at the expense of the Conservatives: Labour remained unchanged at just under 30%. This knocked ten points off the Conservative majority and pulled them just within range in 2014.

The Lib Dems polled over 20% in seven Hammersmith and Fulham wards in 2010 - the council elections that coincided with the *"I agree with Nick"* [Clegg] general election; they were only just below 20% in a further five. This was on a par with their best result in 1982, just after the Liberal SDP Alliance was formed, but this time they won no seats and weren't all that close in any. Because this party is so weak in Hammersmith and Fulham they could do little to build on that decent vote share and so, in 2014, they collapsed again. But the ten percentage points they won from the Conservatives did not return to that party. Instead it went to Labour - and that boost was enough to cost them one seat yet again.

The new councillor, Hannah Barlow, didn't last long: she resigned in 2017 causing a by-election held on general election day. Labour won Hammersmith in the general election by a landslide, and managed an easy by-election hold in Avonmore and Brook Green. Avonmore Residents' Association chairman David Morton won by almost 950 votes or 18%: the biggest Labour win ever.

The 2018 council elections were a re-run of the by-election result with Labour gaining the other two seats - the margin being very slightly narrower but far from close. Joe Carlebach became the second Conservative group leader to be defeated in Avonmore, 32 years after John Putnam was ousted here; and also the first time since 1986 that Labour had held all the seats in the ward.

In the 2019 electoral review Labour seized the chance to undo this chimera of a ward and return to separate Avonmore and Brook Green wards, both with two councillors. Avonmore is the same as it was before with some extra territory to the west of Edith Road. The St Paul's Court private estate, Shortlands and Colet Gardens, the sheltered housing in Watermeadow Lane and the one tower block estate in central Hammersmith, Linacre Court came in, plus the sprawling red brick West London College campus.

When the 2022 elections tested the resurrected Avonmore ward, Labour stormed the ward, taking over 60% of the vote. The Conservatives won just 23%. Look at the difference between the last time Avonmore was contested in 1998, and the 2022 result:

| | Con | Lab | LD |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 23.1 | 61.4 | 15.5 |
| 1998 | 45.6 | 42.4 | 12.0 |

This gave the ward's Labour councillors huge majorities: 36% and 42%; far larger than the Conservatives had won at any time other than their 1968 landslide. Was Avonmore now a safe Labour ward?

To this point there had been a remarkable swing in Avonmore. When the ward was first contested in 1964 it was 51 percentage points more Conservative than the borough was. In 2022, Avonmore was almost 11 points more Labour than the borough - and the borough had just voted Labour by a huge amount. That's a 31% swing to Labour across nearly sixty years and sixteen elections.

Avonmore has changed hugely in the intervening period: much of the Lytton estate hadn't been built at the ward's birth, the ward has become significantly more ethnically and culturally diverse and the political leanings of the huge numbers of private renters have shifted.

This has coupled with, of course, a steep decline in the fortunes of the Conservatives - but their problems here specifically were more than just Brexit, Boris Johnson, or having been in power nationally for fourteen years. The downward trend in the Conservative vote long predates the 2010 general election when they returned to government and continued after they were ousted in 2024.

**Summary of results for Avonmore ward**

| | Con | Lab | LD | Grn | Oths |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1900** | 71.3 | | 28.7 | | |
| **1903** | 64.2 | | 35.8 | | |
| **1905 By** | 62.7 | | 37.3 | | |
| **1906** | 74.1 | | 17.9 | | 8.0 |
| **1909** | 77.7 | | 13.5 | | 8.8 |
| **1909 By** | 2 Unop | | | | |
| **1912** | Unop | | | | |
| **1917 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1919** | Unop | | | | |
| **1922** | 92.9 | 7.1 | | | |
| **1922 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1923 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1925** | 89.3 | 10.7 | | | |
| **1927 By** | 86.0 | 14.0 | | | |
| **1928** | 62.1 | 11.5 | | | |
| **1929 By** | 75.8 | 24.2 | | | |
| **1931** | 94.4 | 5.6 | | | |
| **1931 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1934** | 76.4 | 23.6 | | | |
| **1937** | 74.1 | 25.9 | | | |
| **1937 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1938 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1941 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1943 By** | Unop | | | | |
| **1945** | 58.7 | 41.3 | | | |
| **1946 By** | 67.9 | 32.1 | | | |
| **1949** | 68.6 | 31.4 | | | |
| **1950 By** | 71.8 | 24.4 | 3.8 | | |
| **1953** | 61.4 | 38.6 | | | |
| **1956** | 61.0 | 39.0 | | | |
| **1957 By** | 57.9 | 42.1 | | | |
| **1959** | 63.2 | 36.8 | | | |
| **1962** | 49.3 | 31.5 | 19.1 | | |
| **1964** | 61.1 | 38.9 | | | |
| **1968** | 78.6 | 21.4 | | | |
| **1971** | 58.6 | 41.4 | | | |
| **1974** | 50.2 | 35.6 | 11.3 | | |
| **1978** | 61.7 | 31.6 | | | |
| **1982** | 55.2 | 27.4 | 17.4 | | |
| **1986** | 42.0 | 47.4 | 10.0 | | |
| **1990** | 51.8 | 37.9 | | | |
| **1994** | 42.1 | 44.0 | 13.9 | | |
| **1998** | 45.6 | 42.4 | 12.0 | | |
| **2002** | 41.4 | 34.8 | 12.5 | | |
| **2006** | 56.9 | 29.0 | 14.1 | | |
| **2010** | 46.1 | 29.0 | 21.0 | | |
| **2014** | 43.2 | 40.3 | 9.3 | | |
| **2017 By** | 34.9 | 52.8 | 12.3 | | |
| **2018** | 37.5 | 52.4 | 10.1 | | |
| **2022** | 37.5 | 52.4 | 10.1 | | |
| **2026** | 20.8 | 38.6 | 5.8 | 17.2 | 17.4 |

**Baron's Court ward results: 1900-1962**

**Avonmore and Brook Green ward results: 2002-2022**

For the 2026 council elections, the Conservatives weren't prepared to completely write Avonmore off. They put it in a second tranche of target wards behind Sands End, Walham Green and Brook Green. Trying to regain his former seat was Joe Carlebach, while Keith Mallinson contested the ward for the fourth time, this time for the Greens.

Also standing as an independent was former Labour councillor David Morton, who had been suspended from the party's council group and then decided he was happier as an independent. So: four serving or former Avonmore councillors were on the ballot.

Labour, now back in government and not at all popular, tumbled from their 2022 heights losing 23 percentage points of support. The councillor who polled the second-most amount of votes, new candidate Joe Eaton, won just 35.8% which, in normal times wouldn't have been enough to win with.

But the Conservatives didn't make any progress. In fact they slipped to just 20%. Mallinson as a Green won 17%, Reform polled 8%, David Morton won 8.5% and the Lib Dems came last with just under 6%. So Avonmore is back in that twilight zone: not quite a marginal but with a far from impressive share of the vote. Just less unimpressive than anyone else's.

Some neighbourhoods trend in one direction or another over the long-run and this is especially true of inner city, urban districts like this, with huge churns of population. It would be more remarkable, in fact, if Avonmore's political leanings had not shunted.

The Tories still need Avonmore in their column to win back the council. But they remain a long way adrift: a 9% swing from winning both seats and only beat the Green candidate by 14 votes. That's why it's still very hard to see how they win this borough back.

# Rollcall of Avonmore ward councillors

including Avonmore and Brook Green ward (2002-2022) and Baron's Court ward (1900-1964)

**2022**
- Joe Eaton
- Laura Janes

**2022**
- Laura Janes
- David Morton

**2018**
- Rebecca Harvey
- David Morton
- Fiona Smith

**2017B**
- David Morton

**2014**
- Hannah Barlow
- Joe Carlebach
- Caroline Ffiske

**2010**
- Helen Binmore
- Joe Carlebach
- Robert Iggulden

**2006**
- Will Bethell
- Robert Iggulden
- Alexandra Robson

**2002**
- Will Bethell
- Sian Dawson
- Jolyon Neubert

**1998**
- Sonya Hilton
- Keith Mallinson

**1994**
- Sonya Hilton
- Keith Mallinson

**1990**
- Sonya Hilton
- Julian Muller

**1986**
- Iain Coleman
- Sally Powell

**1982**
- Dominic Grieve
- John Putnam

**1978**
- John Putnam
- John Wylie

**1974**
- John Putnam
- John Wylie

**1971**
- Paul Dwyer
- Reg Simmerson

**1968**
- Harold Brandon-Brightley
- Reg Simmerson

**1964**
- Harold Brandon-Brightley
- John Tagg

**1962**
- Harold Brandon-Brightley
- Francis Fierz
- Laurence Giovene
- Nigel Parkinson
- George Shell
- John Tagg

**1959**
- Victor Arundell
- Kathleen Barton-Wright
- Evelyn Cribb
- Vlad Kopecky
- Richard Strong
- Mary Viney

**1957B**
- Cyril Partington

**1956**
- Edith Clark
- Gladys Cowell
- Robert. Gibbons
- James Harding-Marsh
- Alfred Laver
- Rosemary Longstaff

**1953**
- Gladys Cowell
- Derek Farrant
- Desmond Henri
- Alfred Laver
- Rosemary Longstaff
- Malcolm Nicol

**1949**
- Violet Baron
- Gladys Cowell
- Edward Cussen
- Alfred Laver
- O. Michael
- Malcolm Nicol

**1946B**
- Edward Cussen

**1945**
- Violet Baron
- R. Cockrill
- Alfred Laver
- O. Michael
- Malcolm Nicol
- Christina Sketchley

**1943B**
- Lewis Dew

**1938B**
- Malcolm Nicol

**1937**
- Edward Cussen
- William Davies
- Christina Sketchley
- Walter Soloman
- Jermyn Vincent-Hill
- William White

**1934**
- Thomas Bokenham
- Lewis Dew
- Frederick Flew
- Christina Sketchley
- Gerald Thesiger

**1933B**
- Claude Russell-Brown

**1931**
- Thomas Beckett
- Thomas Bokenham
- Hubert Bowden
- Catherine Fulford
- George Hodge
- William White

**1928**
- Thomas Beckett
- Thomas Bokenham
- Hubert Bowden
- Frederick Flew
- Catherine Fulford
- George Hodge

**1925**
- Frederick Bellenger
- Hubert Bowden
- Frederick Flew
- George Hodge
- Frank Holmes
- Harriet Packer

**1922**
- Thomas Beckett
- Frederick Bellenger
- Frederick Flew
- George Hodge
- Frank Holmes
- John Panes

**1919**
- Thomas Beckett
- Frederick Flew
- George Hodge
- George Keen
- Alan Panes
- Edward Thomas

**1912**
- Thomas Beckett
- Arthur Charleton
- George Keen
- John Nevile
- Edward Thomas
- Job Walbourn

**1909**
- Thomas Beckett
- Edward Easton
- Robert Harris
- George Keen
- Ethelstan Savigney
- Job Walbourn

**1906**
- William Birch
- Edward Easton
- Robert Harris
- George Keen
- Charles Pendlebury
- Job Walbourn

**1903**
- Edward Easton
- Robert Harris
- George Keen
- Charles Pendlebury
- Job Walborn
- William Woods

**1900**
- Edward Easton
- Robert Harris
- Stephen Parker
- Edward Scriven
- Job Walborn
- William Woods