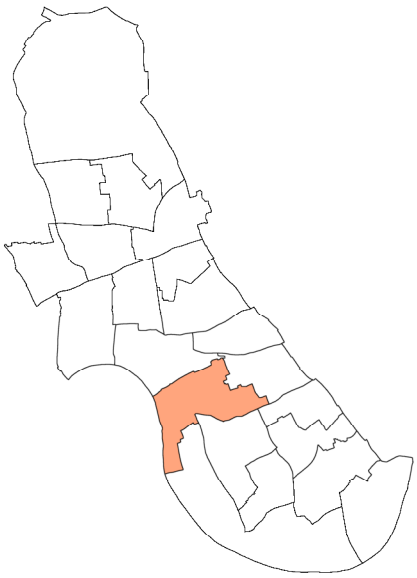
Fulham Reach

Many believe that Fulham is pertains only to the SW6 postal district, south of Lillie Road. In fact the borough of Fulham predated postcodes and reached up into the W6 area almost as far north as Talgarth Road. It is essentially this area that Fulham Reach ward covers.



Fulham Reach was created in 2002, built around nearly all of Margravine ward: the area between Fulham Palace Road in the west and Queen's Club in the east.

Margravine was named after the Margravine of Brandenburgh, whose estate covered the area the new Fulham Reach development and Frank Banfield Park lies within. Queen Caroline lived in Brandenburgh House - not the hostel built for nurses that stands on Fulham Palace Road, but a grander villa nearer the Thames. Lord Melcombe, for whom the nearby primary school was named, also owned the land for a time.

Margravine is important in local Labour Party history: it was the first ward - in 1903 - in either Fulham or Hammersmith to elect Labour councillors; Emanuel Honey and John Bancroft. Later William Banfield represented the ward. He went on to be a Trade Union leader and MP whose son (Frank) and daughter-in-law (Doris) also became councillors.

Unsurprisingly, given this early support for the party, Margravine was Labour's best ward in Fulham. That may not say much in the context of their weakening position towards the end of the 20th Century but the Conservatives rarely bothered contesting it seriously. Even in their 1968 disaster Labour still held two of the three seats In Margravine.

The original Margravine was somewhat similar to the current version of Fulham Reach in that it reached across Fulham Palace Road to take in just over half of what became the Crabtree estate (in 1900 this was just Crabtree Farm) and the roads and factories immediately north; from Parfrey Street to Chancellors Road. In the east it stopped about half way through what is now the Bayonne estate but back then was a tight bunch of run-down streets leading from Lillie Road to Greyhound Road.

This was not an affluent part of Fulham, far from the market gardens that typified Fulham town and Parson's Green. Before Charing Cross Hospital was built, the Fulham and Hammersmith Union Workhouse occupied the site - just about the only provision the state made back then for Fulham's itinerant poor. Workhouses tended not to get built in affluent neighbourhoods.

Surrounding the workhouse were very tightly-packed terraces of cottages, many with the barest amount of outdoor space: the Bayonne estate, and several of the blocks within it are named after the streets - alleyways really - that were cleared to make way for it. These streets were interspersed with laundries (hence Laundry Road) and small factories and workshops.

The famous Charles Booth poverty map, drawn very slightly before the borough was founded and reproduced over the page, colour-coded the affluence or deprivation of every street in inner London. It shows several of Margravine's streets coloured dark or light blue: the poorest neighbourhoods. These areas include the land upon which the Field Road council estate now stands and Lurgan Avenue, which ran to the north of Aspenlea Road: where the tower blocks that house Charing Cross workers stand today.

Much of the rest of the area is shaded brown, which Booth classified as "mixed - some comfortable, others poor." The only road marked "well to do" - the wealthiest of Booth's classifications with bright red shading - is Margravine Gardens.

This was an almost uniformly working class ward and that was why Labour was competitive here from the outset. Nonetheless, the party's struggles: first to establish dominance over the Liberals/Progressives and then to challenge the Conservatives/Municipal Reform for power locally, meant that it wasn't until the Great Depression that the party could rely on Margravine.



The Booth povery map showing the Margravine area

This period also saw some of the party's epic lows: the taint of the Russian Revolution and thereafter the traumatising split caused by the Ramsay MacDonald-led National Government.

Of the twenty eight elections (not counting by-elections) fought in Margravine from 1900 to 1998, Labour returned councillors in twenty-two of them.

Margravine's Labour lean was made even stronger by the building of council housing. The first blocks: William Morris House in Margravine Road, and Mary MacArthur and Holman Hunt Houses - either side of the Queen's Club - were followed in the early 1960s by Cox and Horton Houses. Muscal - named after the field the block was built on and later still Chelmsford Close and St Alban's Terrace completed the Field Road estate, with the Matthews Hall community centre opposite Gastein Road and the Pear Tree pub just behind.

The very last estate the Greater London Council ever built, the Bayonne, opened in the early 1980s, covering a huge square bordered by Greyhound Road, Humbolt Road, Lillie Road and Everington Street. The Bayonne also provided a nursery school, some private housing on the western side of the estate: Abbey Gardens, Spencer Walk and Crammond Close, and something desperately lacking in the Margravine area: open parkland.

When the two boroughs amalgamated and wards were redrawn prior to 1964, Margravine lost its riverside extent and was pared back to Fulham Palace Road. The side it lost - the Crabtree estate side - was by no means poor territory for Labour in the 1960s.

This was still the Fulham of industrial wharves, the massive, grim- looking Manbre and Garton sugar factory and the Chancellors Distillery. But the Crabtree estate

So far very little excitement has been evinced over the by-election in the Margravine Ward for a member of the Fulham Borough Council, in place of ex-Councillor Cooper. The three candidates nominated - Messrs. W.H. Pritchard (Moderate), J. Prouse (Labour), and L.R. Hill (Communist) - are going to the poll, which takes place on Saturday next, December 17th, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. It is expected that the Returning Officer, (Mr J.P. Shuter, the Town Clerk), will declare the result about 9.30pm the same evening. One peculiarity about the contest is that for borough council purposes there are more women electors in the ward than men electors. The reason for this is that only those who furnish rooms or are householders are eligible to vote in local elections. This rules out a large number of men voters who, as lodgers in furnished rooms, are entitled to vote at Parliamentary elections, when the male voters are in the majority. Both Mr Pritchard and Mr Prouse got their election addresses in the hands of the voters during the week-end. Each claim to have been the first to have accomplished this important item in electioneering, but the two ran so close together that it would be better to put it down as a dead heat. The workers for Mr. Hill, the Communist, were still busy getting out his address on Tuesday.

In his address Mr Pritchard lays stress on the fact that he has lived in the ward over 36 years. He supports Trade Union conditions of labour and wages, and is opposed to municipal trading, as being unfair to the local tradesmen, and he is also against municipal direct labour, as this removes the element of competition. An important statement he makes is one in which he regrets that the Fulham Labour majority on the Fulham Council turned down the Government scheme for finding work for the unemployed, as it would have been a useful means of providing improvements at less than the cost price to the ratepayers. Mr Pritchard points out that he has been a member of the Fulham Board of Guardians since April 1919. The arrangements in connection with Mr Pritchard's candidature are being supervised by Mr W.J. Langley, agent to the West Fulham Conservative Association. Meetings on behalf of Mr Pritchard have been held by the Peoples' League but chief reliance is laid on the personal canvass of the ward, in which great help is being rendered by a band of women. On the whole, Mr Pritchard's chances are rather rosy. The streets in the vicinity of his committee room display a good sprinkling of his election cards. It is felt that a split in the Labour vote, caused through the presence of the Communist candidate, will just allow Mr Pritchard to creep to the head of the poll.

"A lot of the women voters want to know what it's all about," remarked one of the supporters of Mr J. Prouse, the Labour candidate. "We find that they are not much concerned about the election, but when we get them to talk, the women are keen in support of our man." This seems very hopeful for the chances of the organised Labour candidate. Like the Moderate candidate, Mr Prouse is not having any meetings but is relying on the door to door visit. Yesterday, a large portion of the ward had been canvassed, and the Labour workers were extremely well satisfied with the look of things. The district at the back of the Infirmary is expected to poll well for Mr. Prouse. His workers look down their election noses, so to speak, at the presence of the third candidates, Mr Hill. "The votes Mr. Hill gets are what we would have in the ordinary way," rather gloomily stated one of the prominent workers, "but we are buoyed up from the fact that we have an excellent candidate in Mr. Prouse. Another thing which stimulates us is that at the last Guardians election the Labour candidate, Miss Gilbert, was only defeated by about 26 votes by Mr Crowne. We think we shall succeed in pulling more than this number over to our side, as this election is causing more excitement than did the Guardians election."

It will be a close thing between Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Prouse. If anything lets down Mr. Pritchard it will be the apathy of the middle classes. There is a feeling among the Labour workers that the Moderates are not showing a united front. If this is so a dangerous shoal may shipwreck their chances of success. As far as can be gathered, however, there is little ground for this fear being realised, but canvassers quickly feel the pulse of the electors, and the Moderates may find there is something in it after all.

In his election address, Mr Prouse claims credit for the Labour party for introducing the Bag Wash. This may be a boomerang, however, as electors still remember the expensive litigation it led to: indeed the Borough Council has not yet finished with this matter, which has been reopened in the Law Courts. Perhaps Mr. Prouse will find that he has done himself no good in waving the Bag Wash flag. He mentions that the Labour Party are about to promote a scheme for the conversion of the casual wards in Margravine Road into slipper baths. What about the expense? Again, another item he advocates, the free wiring of working-class dwellings for electric lighting, will be another luxury which many ratepayers will object to, as possibly leading to higher rents. Candidly, is the time ripe for more fancy schemes? Some think that similar glorious enterprises at the public expense, with extravagant outlay of public funds, is that has caused Fulham to be in about £10,000 for the relief of boroughs who spent money too freely.

Mr Hill, the Communist, is utilising the manifesto from headquarters as his election address. This openly based on class war - workers v. the privileged class. We are afraid that with the example before the electors this appeal to hatred will be a damp squib. Moreover, the Communists are confessed supporters of the Poplar gang who, with others, squandered public money recklessly, indirectly leading to Fulham adding over 4d. in the £ to the rate to pay off these outside boroughs' debts. This will not appeal to the thrifty people in Margravine ward. It is because Fulham Labour leaders repudiated the action of the Poplar gang that has persuaded the Communists to run Mr. Hill as a candidate.

This is the first time the Communists have run a candidate in Fulham, It will puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer to understand the attitude of Communists and Labour in this Fulham by-election. The Communist candidate, for instance, is bitterly opposed by Mr. Hanson, the local leader of the extreme section of the Communists. He turned up at one of Mr. Hill's open-air meetings and went for the speaker hip and thigh. It is, therefore, a nice pickle, and we should not be surprised if the electors washed their hands completely of this section. If there is a heavy poll the Moderates are hopeful of winning. Fulham has room for improvement in the matter of voting. At the last Borough Council election only about 25 per cent went to the poll.

was built for the wealthier working and affluent professional classes, so it was by no means as solid for Labour as Margravine east of Fulham Palace Road. That despite the fact that, by leaving behind Brandenburgh House, the Margravine title became a little misapplied.

From 1937 - the year Labour gained control of Fulham council for the rest of its existence, the party won Margravine with over 70% of the vote seven times, over 60% a further six times, and in every other case with more than half the vote - even 1968, when the ward split 50.6% Labour to 49.4% Conservative.

Margravine was also the only ward in the borough contested by someone who would go on to be leader of a major party, even if it was in opposition during the Blair years. In a double 1985 Margravine by-election, Iain Duncan-Smith was one of the two losing candidates (the other, Simon Burns, also went on to become a long-serving MP for Chelmsford).

Margaret Ingram - one of the Labour victors in that by-election - died three years later creating another Margravine by-election in 1988. Labour's candidate was called Tony Hastings and the party ran a surreal campaign attempting to win a majority of 1066 votes: their red and white window bills simply read "Hastings 1066". They didn't get anywhere close to that majority on a low turnout summer by-election with polling day beset by torrential rain, but at least Hastings won with more than 1,066 votes (he got 1,091). 1091 apparently marked the first recording of a major tornado sweeping through London. This by-election did not qualify as a repeat of that.

That is a brief guide to the history of Margravine. But Margravine is only the core of Fulham Reach ward. The ward almost survived the electoral review of 2000 because, despite insisting that all wards be drawn large enough to accommodate three councillors, the Commission then kept Margravine with two councillors at draft stage for no other reason than they wanted a 2-member ward in Fulham to balance Hammersmith's College Park & Old Oak. In turn they proposed that Palace ward expand to include all of Crabtree. The Crabtree ward of 1964 to 1978 did include all of the Bishops Park estate down to Putney Bridge, but not Hurlingham, almost two miles from one end to the other.

Labour fought hard instead for the Fulham Reach we, more or less, have today, though given how the ward ended up voting in 2002, they'd have been one councillor better off if Margravine had been kept. Except that, even though they lost two of its seats that year it was still a competitive ward they could expect to win back. That initial proposal of a 3-councillor Palace ward would never have been won by Labour.

Fulham Reach was almost all of Margravine - just a couple of northern streets transferred to Hammersmith Broadway. Bolted on to it came the northern half of Crabtree ward: the area between Fulham Palace Road and the Thames. This area is mostly the Crabtree estate: a patchwork of nine distinctive streets built in the 1930s whose houses originally sold for £285.

One of the political features of the Crabtree estate is that, while the majority of houses occupied by couples tend to vote Conservative, interspersed among them are some fairly large families - often immigrant families - who tend to be Labour supporting, so the balance of the estate is much more even than a straightforward tot-up would suppose.

A small amount of public housing on this side of Fulham Palace Road transferred too: Keir Hardie House opposite the hospital, Cobb's Hall and, next door, the Clifford Haigh House Housing Association block, plus Rainville Court by the river.

Crabtree ward existed from the unification of the two boroughs in 1964: essentially from the western sections of the Fulham Borough Council Margravine and Munster wards. The section contributed by Munster - essentially the Bishops Park estate - contained a lot of Conservative voters even then, but nowhere near as many as nowadays - and they were usually outvoted (just) by Labour: a classic marginal.

In the ward boundary review prior to the 1978 elections the Labour-run council attempted to improve the party's chances in Crabtree by creating Palace ward and putting half of the Bishops Park estate into it. Even though the newer, smaller, Crabtree was better for Labour - much, much better than Palace which produced overwhelming Conservative votes from its first election - it was not so much better that it could withstand the huge swing in 1978. So big was that swing that Crabtree looked reasonably safe for the Tories, and was the seat of the council leader for most of the eight years they were in power, Kim Howe.

But Crabtree fell to Labour in the 1986 landslide by the minuscule margins of 81 and 28 votes. Thus began a period when the ward was among the most marginal in the borough. The Tories regained it in 1990 beating former council leader Gordon Prentice and ousted Broadway councillor John Gorter: a rare example of two serving councillors defeated in a ward neither of them had represented.

Fulham Chronicle
Friday, November 30, 1934

Fulham Council

Four candidates for Margravine ward vacancy

There are four candidates for the Fulham Borough Council by-election in Margravine ward on Thursday next. The vacancy arose through the election of Mr. C. Lancaster, L.C.C. as an Alderman. Nominations were received by the Town Clerk (Mr. W. Townend) at Fulham Town Hall on Friday, the candidates being as follows:-

FALCON, Hilda Mary (M.R.) widow: 50 Margravine Gardens, Fulham. Proposed by Alfred Charles Milton, 83 Rannoch Road, Fulham, seconded by Frederick James Thoresby, 9 St. Dunstan's Road, Fulham.

HASKELL, Frank George (Com.) clerk, 24 Ewald Road, Fulham. Proposed by Albert Edward White, 14 Aspenlea Road, Fulham, seconded by Winifred Alice White, 14 Aspenlea Road, Fulham.

HOLINHBERY, Elizabeth Eva (Lab.) married woman, 5 Clonmel Road, Fulham. Proposed by Susan Rebecca Harrison, 39 Claybrook Road, Fulham, seconded by Eliza Gibson, 18 Aspenlea Road, Fulham.

LANSDELL, Charles Ernest (I.L.P.), clerk, 26 Crondace Road, Fulham. Proposed by Ernest Frederick Heckford, 44 Tasso Road, Fulham, seconded by Florence Maude Chilman, 44 Tasso Road, Fulham.

"Who's Who" of the candidates

Mrs. H.M. Falcon is a voluntary worker at the Greyhound Road Infant and Child Welfare Centre, a school manager, and vice-chairman of the Margravine ward branch of the West Fulham Conservative and Unionist Association.

Mr. Frank Haskell is 24 years of age and a member of the West London Youth Anti-War Committee. Early in August he was elected by the Knightsbridge Branch of the Shop Assistants Union to go to the Sheffield Youth Anti-Fascist Congress. At this congress he was chosen to go with four others to form the British section of a deputation to visit Germany. In company with his companions, Mr. Haskell was arrested in Germany and locked in a cell. They were released after undertaking to leave the country. Mr. Haskell was a Munster ward candidate for the Borough Council election on November 1. He polled 175 votes.

Mrs. E.E. Hollingbery is closely identified with the work of the Labour movement, being a member of the General Management and Executive Committee of the West Fulham Labour Party. She is also a school manager.

Mr. C.E. Lansdell is chairman of the Fulham Branch of the Independent Labour Party. For 25 years until his recent marriage, he lived at Gastein Road. He is a member of the National Union of Clerks, and is described as an active co-operator.

Although this win was hailed as part of the big Fulham swing back to the Conservatives, they gained Crabtree by fewer than 130 votes. In 1994 Labour regained one of the two Conservative seats by 22 votes. Then, in 1996, when the remaining Conservative quit to live in France, having been defeated in his bid to win the group leadership, Labour got the other seat too - the first ever Labour by-election gain in Hammersmith and Fulham (the combined borough, that is).

In 1998, that by-election gain was reversed and the ward split its representation again, with the new Conservative councillor in by just 75; he in turn resigned just a year later. The by-election was held on the same day as the European Parliamentary elections in 1999, one of the first bad results for Tony Blair's still new government. Hence the Conservatives won - by just twelve votes. Another squeaker.

Fulham Reach also got a handful of streets sandwiched between the Bayonne estate and Queen's Club Gardens, donated by the abolished Normand ward. These are typical, tightly packed Fulham terraces built for the manual workers the area needed back in the day, that are now hugely expensive and considerably Conservative leaning.

What happens when you expand the boundaries of a safely Labour ward into areas where the party has far less support? Well, if the first election for Fulham Reach had taken place in 1998, the answer would have been a slimmed down - but still substantial - Labour win, probably by around 59% to the Conservatives' 35%.

But a feature of both the 2002 and 1978 boundary reviews is that the baseline results these notional figures



were based on: 1974 and 1998 (2018 as well), were very good years for Labour. And the first election under the new boundaries occurred in a less positive year (2022 was, unusually actually a better year for Labour than 2018).

Had abour worked Fulham Reach in 2002 (the party assumed - not entirely unreasonably - that the ward was safe and sent its candidates to work in other parts of the borough) they could probably have saved the two seats that ended up going Conservative. But they didn't and Margravine councillor Min Birdsey was left as the only Labour representative in that set of three.

In 2006 there was a further swing against Labour nationally: arguably the party's worst performance since their 1968 disaster, and the Conservatives picked off the third Fulham Reach seat putting them ten points clear of Labour.

Although numerical majorities stayed the same in 2010, the higher general election turnout meant there was a small swing back to Labour in that year - and a surge in Lib Dem support - but Fulham Reach stayed blue.

In 2014, Labour just managed to regain the three seats here - their third candidate in by just 21 votes. But the swing back was the smallest of any ward they gained that year That hardly suggests that the reason given for the win: saving Charing Cross Hospital, had much impact in a ward with the highest number of healthcare professionals residing in it.

Over the course of the first four elections for Fulham Reach, 2002 to 2014, both main parties polled within a very tight ceiling and floor. Labour's vote was never outside a range of 37% to 45% and the Conservatives

Nine fight for seats on council

Conservatives bid to win in Labour stronghold

TORIES are set to challenge a Labour stronghold in a by-election next week.

They are certain Conservatives will win votes away from the Left in Margravine Ward which covers the Hammersmith and Fulham border.

Tory candidate Iain Duncan-Smith said: "I feel convinced that traditional Labour voters will vote for us because a lot of people are saying they are dissatisfied with their performance."

Nine candidates are fighting for the two seats on January 17 left vacant by the death of Cllr William Spiers in November last year and the resignation of Cllr David Jordan.

The outcome could drastically effect the make-up of the Conservative / Liberal controlled hung council which stands at 23 Conservatives, 25 Labour and two Liberal.

Conservatives, Labour and SDP/Liberal Alliance are fielding two candidates each.

The Ecology Party, Ratepayers Association and an Independent candidate are also standing.

Two former councillors Tom Champion and Margaret Ingram represent Labour. Mrs Ingram, who lives in Fulham, represented Wormholt Ward, Shepherds Bush between 1971-1982.

Civil servant Mr Champion, represented Margravine during the same period. He said: "Having been a councillor in Margravine in the past I intend to carry on the work that I left off when I retired.

"The most important thing for electors is that their cases are taken up as they used to be."

His Conservative opponents Simon Burns and Iain Duncan-Smith deny standards have gone down.

They are eager to win the seat to get a firmer grip on the Town Hall. Mr Burns said: "The main thing is to secure the election of more Conservative councillors because I think the record of this Conservative council is excellent. We have reduced the borough rate in the last three years."

SDP candidates Peter Tedder and Michael Orr also hope to challenge Labour's dominance in the ward. They criticised extremists in Labour's ranks.

In the 1982 council elections Labour won 1,700 votes in the ward compared with 1,000 for the Conservatives — a majority of 700. The SDP / Liberal Alliance won 350 votes.

Finely balanced Crabtree ward goes to the polls

Cllrs prepare for by-election battle

A BY-ELECTION will be held in Fulham next month, following the decision of Tory councillor Guy Mortimer to emigrate to France.

Cllr Mortimer, 54, and his wife Wendy are moving to Beziers, on the Mediterranean coast near Montpelier to live and work, realising an idea they first hatched eight years ago.

Crabtree ward, which was split between Cllr Mortimer and Labour Cllr Adam Gray at the 1994 election, is one of the most finely balanced wards in the borough, and politicians are already talking up the contest.

Labour says if there is a swing similar to the by-election in Town ward in January – which the Tories held – the Conservatives would lose the seat.

In turn, the Tories say Labour's decisions to cut Eternit Wharf leisure centre and Munster library will prove unpopular with the electorate.

By MIKE PARKINSON

Tory leader Gerald Wombwell said he would be sorry to lose Cllr Mortimer.

"It's his decision and I wish him very good luck," he said.

Cllr Mortimer was first elected in 1990, when he defeated former council leader Gordon Prentice, and he retained his seat in 1994.

Cllr Wombwell commended his colleague for his work on the education committee.

"Guy has spoken out in forthright terms about the collapse in standards in secondary schools and some primary schools," he said.

"On local issues he has worked with residents' groups on matters as diverse as bringing residents' parking to Crabtree ward, trying to save the Eternit Wharf Leisure Centre and stopping late-night music and noise in clubs."

Cllr Mortimer plans to work with local Conservatives to ensure his Party's successor is elected.

He told the *Gazette* "It's going to be a wrench leaving Fulham.



Emigrating: Guy Mortimer

"I have a lot of friends here. But we have been anticipating going to France for six to eight years. It's just a question of when we can sell the house."

Cllr Mortimer hopes to use his qualifications as a teacher of English as a foreign language.

Labour leader Cllr Andrew Slaughter insisted his party would take the seat from the Tories.

He said: "We're going to fight a vigorous campaign to try and win this seat back from the Tories because this authority's excellent record speaks for itself.

"We're one of the top London authorities when it comes to spending on education, provision of nursery places, free home helps, affordable homes, clean streets and we've been commended by the District Auditor for our efficiency."

The by-election is expected to take place on June 27.

never fluctuated beyond 41% to 50%. But then London turned against the Conservatives and in 2018 Labour won Fulham Reach 57% to the Tories' 27%. That still wasn't back to Margravine-level wins but it was plenty.

There are some wards that are fairly unstable; that comprise a lot of floating voters who are interested in the retail offer the parties present them with each election. Addison is a good example of these swing marginals.

London has far fewer of these than the wider country because the city is calcified between pretty affluent and acutely poor areas living side-by-side. This produces wards with entrenched blocs of voters who strongly identify with one party and strongly dislike the other main choice. In these sorts of marginals persuading voters over

is so difficult: elections are won by turning their solid bloc of votes out. Fulham Reach is this type of ward: an entrenched marginal. Or at least was, because following the 2018, 2022 and 2026 elections it's difficult to classify Fulham Reach as marginal given how comfortably it's voted Labour. But it is - in the same way that Los Angeles isn't beset by earthquakes...until it is. There is an underlying fault-line beneath Fulham Reach that is dormant for now. But it's there.

When population estimates were drawn up for the boundary review that occurred before the 2022 elections, the projected growth of neighbouring North End ward by 2024 meant that a tranche of voters had to be removed from it. Despite lying next to each other in a fully built-up part of London, there is actually a clear physical divide between the two. It is: Margravine Cemetery, the Queen's Club and Normand Park.

The least bad option for rebalancing the two wards was to move Queen's Club Gardens from West Kensington over to Fulham Reach. Queen's Club Gardens is a set of 33 mansion blocks set around a private green, very much in the style of apartment buildings you find around Sloane Square in Chelsea.

Moving its 700 electors over to Fulham Reach made this ward too large and so the new high-density residential development north of Winslow Road, nowadays bearing the same name as the ward (it was originally called Hammersmith Embankment), and the streets north of Charing Cross Hospital were moved to Hammersmith Broadway. There were about 1,100 voters in this area so, Fulham Reach also received the Fulham Wharves, north of Fulham Football Club.

Sixty six votes secures dramatic win in Crabtree by-election

Labour snatches ward in knife-edge victory

By MIKE PARKINSON

LABOUR'S by-election victory in Crabtree ward last week immediately prompted speculation that Fulham MP Matthew Carrington could lose his seat at the next general election.

It was the first by-election seat Labour has snatched from the Tories in 35 years – and they won it by just 66 votes.

Fired up by the result, council leader Andrew Slaughter threw down the gauntlet to Mr Carrington.

"This is the first sign of Matthew Carrington getting his marching orders," he said. "If anybody is sitting up tonight thinking about this result, it's Matthew Carrington.

"For the first time since he was elected as MP he must be seriously worried."

Mr Carrington said: "I am obviously disappointed we didn't win. We lost it very narrowly. It is a split ward between us and Labour. It is a small win to Labour and there was a low turn-out. Far from showing we are in trouble Labour aren't making anything like the impact locally the national opionion polls suggest. I am confident we will retain Sulivan ward with a large majority."

A by-election will be held there next month following the death of Jonathan Maiden.

Labour's winning candidate, Melanie Smallman said: "It's a fantasic result. We're really pleased. The council has had to make some hard decisions recently because of government cuts. People have realised what is going on and supported the council."

The by-election was called when Tory councillor Guy Mortimer stepped down to prepare for his emigration to France.



The victor: Melanie Smallman

From the start, the campaign was peppered with allegations of foul play from both sides.

Labour attacked Mr Carrington for sending a letter on House of Commons headed paper to 1,000 homes in Crabtree ward a few days after the by-election was announced.

The letter referred to similar issues on which Tory candidate Alex Karmel was campaigning: Labour's decision to close Munster Road Library, Horder Nursery School and Eternit Wharf Recreation Centre.

Under by-election regulations, parties have strict limits on how much they can spend on canvassing materials.

Labour claimed the Conservatives were bending the rules, but Mr Carrington said it was simply a coincidence.

The Tories hit back when Labour announced plans to re-open Eternit Wharf Recreation Centre for the school summer holidays.

After the centre closed in December last year, the council said it was negotiating with the Amateur Fencing Association to take it over. But the deal broke down and the centre stayed closed.

When Labour said Eternit Wharf would open in the summer, Conservative councillors said it was a measure to win votes.

But on the day of the by-election, a more crucial factor may have been the tube strike.

Tory campaigners said scores of their supporters who worked in the City were leaving their journey home until later because of the rush hour chaos.

That meant many of them missed the 9pm deadline for voting.

● Total votes polled: Melanie Smallman (Labour) 832, Alex Karmel (Conservative) 766, Brian Gallagher (Liberal Democrat) 98. There were five spoiled papers.

Summer magic

A FANCY dress competition and magic show are the highlights of the Clem Attlee summer spectacular.

The Notting Hill Housing Trust, involved in the redevelopment programme, is taking part in the family fair on Sunday from 2-6pm. The fancy dress competition will start at 3pm and magic show at 4pm. Youngsters can enjoy face painting and a bouncy castle. The barbecue opens at 2.30pm.

Summary of results for Fulham Reach ward

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
Margravine ward					
1900	37.0		33.6		29.4
1902B	46.4	39.9	13.0		0.7
1903	34.2	40.5	25.4		
1906	53.3	25.3	21.5		
1909	57.1	42.9			
1912	52.6	22.4	25.0		
1912B	64.7		35.3		
1917B	Unop				
1919	37.8	62.2			
1921B	48.3	49.1			2.7
1922	55.2	44.8			
1925	48.4	51.6			
1928	36.3	59.9			3.6
1931	52.1	47.9			
1934	35.8	64.2			
1934B	37.1	59.8			3.1
1937	34.6	65.4			
1945	21.2	78.8			
1949	35.0	63.1			1.9
1953	28.5	71.5			
1956	28.2	71.8			
1959	28.7	71.3			
1962	25.4	74.6			
1964	20.7	79.3			
1964B	38.6	55.0	6.4		
1968	49.4	50.6			
1971	24.8	75.2			
1974	24.6	75.4			
1978	32.6	58.8	3.4		5.3
1982	31.3	52.6	10.8		5.3
1985B	26.0	51.6	13.2		8.4
1986	24.4	66.5	8.4		0.7
1988B	32.6	63.2	3.5		0.7
1990	30.7	60.5	7.7		1.1
1994	28.0	59.9	12.2		
1998	22.9	65.9	11.2		
Fulham Reach ward					
2002	43.5	42.1	10.4	4.0	
2006	50.3	38.2	11.5		
2010	44.6	37.1	18.3		
2014	41.4	45.1	5.8	7.8	
2018	26.8	56.5	7.2	9.4	
2022	24.8	63.3	11.9		
2026	21.2	43.7	6.5	16.6	12.0

Fulham's riverside has not always been the sublime Thames-side walk across the river from the Barn Elms wildfowl reserve it is today. The river used to work for Fulham: its banks lined with wharves and factories, cranes and warehouses.

The wharf industries gradually closed - the last of them, a petrol and oil storage depot by Eternit Wharf didn't shut until 1999. Then the council stepped in and bought them up, building a string of riverside estates all the way north to Rainville Road. The neighbourhood got a Thames Path and Millshott Close, Wheatsheaf Lane, Adam Walk and Rainville Court; plus three sheltered housing schemes: Rowberry and Meadowbank Closes and Cedar Lodge, plus the open space by Queen's Manor School: Rowberry Mead.These developments are why Labour remained competitive in the old Crabtree ward: staunchly loyal to the party and very high turnout.

A lot of this council housing has been sold off under right-to-buy but a lot has not and, even where it has been sold, many of those who bought stayed. Why wouldn't they, when their homes front some of the most spectacular riverside views in London?

These changes: Queens Club Gardens and the Fulham Wharves - in; the northern strip - out, were politically neutral; potentially even slightly beneficial to Labour if they could enthuse the residents of the wharves to turn out after two decades in an uncompetitive Conservative ward (Palace Riverside).

Queen's Club Gardens voters barely turned out in the 2018 elections when they were in North End ward and were well below the ward-wide turnout in 2022 and 2026. There is no way the Conservatives can win Fulham Reach without a big turnout here. The nature of Queens Club Gardens, like so many mansion block developments in the borough, has changed significantly since it was the core of the Conservative vote in the old Lillie and Normand wards but still.

In 2026, with a depleted pool of activists the Conservatives had to prioritise more winnable wards than Fulham Reach. They put in some work here but got no return on it, slipping to just 21%. Labour lost a lot more support - nearly twenty percentage points of it - evidently not to the Conservatives but instead to the Greens who took 17% and (maybe) to Reform UK which won 12% - one of their better performances of an inevitably poor set. Because of Labour's slump the gap closed considerably with the Conservatives but the top Tory candidate was still more than 600 votes behind and they need a swing in excess of 10% to win this ward back.

This is the sort of ward that could turn aggressively away from Labour if (or when) people find themselves paying a lot more Council Tax because the government has pulled millions of grant from the borough to fund councils elsewhere in the country. It may also be the sort of place that responds favourably to a Conservative Party pledging to remove people's main dwelling from Inheritance Tax: given even the smallest houses in this ward nowadays nudge a million pounds. But it will take a jolt of that sort of scale for people to once again consider the Conservatives. Until then, Margavine's Labour torch still burns fiercely after 126 years of elections.

Rollcall of Fulham Reach ward councillors

including Crabtree ward (1964-2002) and Margravine ward (1900-2002)

2026
- David Campbell
- Anna Magryta-Urban
- Nikos Souslous

2022
- Omid Miri
- Lucy Richardson
- Nikos Souslous

2018
- Iain Cassidy
- Christabel Cooper
- Guy Vincent

2014
- Iain Cassidy
- Vivienne Lukey
- Guy Vincent

2010
- Gavin Donovan
- Peter Graham
- Andrew Johnson

2006
- Paul Bristow
- Gavin Donovan
- Andrew Johnson

2002
- Min Birdsey
- Charles Boyle
- Gavin Donovan

Crabtree ward

1999B
- Amanda Lloyd Harris

1998
- Adam Gray
- Mark Simonds

1996B
- Melanie Smallman

1994
- Adam Gray
- Guy Mortimer

1990
- Guy Mortimer
- Elizabeth Randall

1986
- Marily Naden
- Sally Whitman

1982
- Patricia Fitzgerald
- Kim Howe

1978
- Kim Howe
- John Pearce

1974
- Doris Banfield
- Gwyn Evans
- Kim Howe

1971
- Doris Banfield
- Gwyn Evans
- Birte Little

1968
- David Ashby
- Christopher Horne
- Delphine Joseph

1964
- Birte Little
- Dennis Noel
- Elizabeth Sears

Margravine ward

1998
- Min Birdsey
- Lisa Homan

1994
- Lisa Homan
- Shirley Spiers

1990
- Tony Hastings
- Marilyn Naden

1988B
- Tony Hastings

1986
- David Dunwoody
- Margaret Ingram

1985B
- Tom Champion
- Margaret Ingram

1982
- David Jordan
- William Spiers

1978
- Tom Champion
- Bill Spiers

1974
- Tom Champion
- Dick Rayner
- Clive Soley

1971
- Tom Champion
- Eric Hill
- Sid Matthews

1968
- Eric Hill
- Roger Holroyd
- Jack Ireland

1964B
- Leonard Stanley

1964
- Frank Banfield
- William Molloy
- Florence Pusey

1962
- Eric Hill
- Sid Matthews
- WIlliam Molloy
- Florence Pusey

1959
- James Horton
- William Molloy
- Florence Pusey
- Henry Rickards

1956
- James Horton
- William Molloy
- Florence Pusey
- Henry Rickards

1953
- Frank Banfield
- James Horton
- Henry Rickards
- Thomas Winstanley

1949
- Frank Banfield
- James Horton
- Christopher Lancaster
- Thomas Winstanley

1945
- Frank Banfield
- A. Clare
- Christopher Lancaster
- L. Sogan

1937
- Frank Banfield
- Charles Boaden
- Jose Da Palma
- Charles Jewitt

1934B
- Elizabeth Hollingbery

1934
- Frank Banfield
- Charles Boaden
- Jose Da Palma
- Morgan Phillips

1931
- John Corcoran
- Arthur Ford
- Gladys Scales
- Charles Viveash

1928
- Sidney Ballantyne
- William Banfield
- Christopher Lancaster
- James Prouse

1925
- Sidney Ballantyne
- William Banfield
- Arthur Cook
- Christopher Lancaster

1922
- Arthur Cook
- Francis Crowne
- Henry Todd

1921B
- James Prouse

1919
- William Banfield
- Thomas Cooper
- James Ritchie

1912B
- Charles Cross

1912
- Arthur Cook
- George Franklin
- Arthur Guttridge

1909
- Arthur Cook
- Arthur Guttridge
- Edward Varge

1906
- Arthur Cook
- Arthur Guttridge
- Edward Varge

1903
- John Bancroft
- Arthur Cook
- Emanuel Honey

1900
- Arthur Cook
- John Cooney
- George McArthur