Parson's Green and Sandford ward

Of all the founding settlements of Fulham, bar that township itself, Parson's Green is arguably the best known. It's the only one with a tube station - North End had one until Messrs Gibbs and Flew persuaded the rail owners to rename it West Kensington; and Walham Green had one until councillors decided it was time their borough had at least one station with "Fulham" in its title.

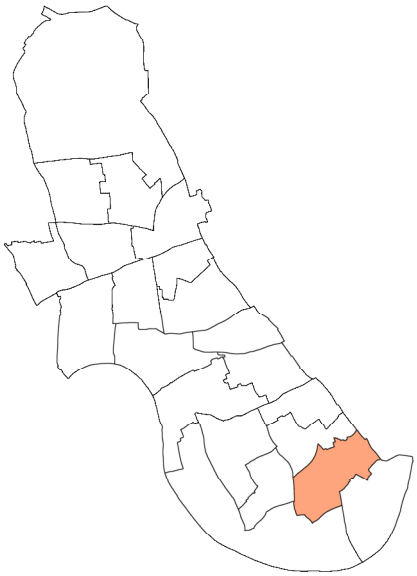
It is one of the most affluent parts of the borough and its most prestigious pub, the White Horse, is renowned across the capital among revellers. Yet, for all this, Parson's Green has for long stretches never been recognised politically. The reasons for that were discussed in the Palace and Hurlingham profile but essentially the problem is that Parson's Green blurs into surrounding neighbourhoods closer to the edges of Fulham.

When that happens, the central community - in this case Parson's Green - ends up donating parts to other wards. The area immediately behind Parson's Green Station, for example is in Fulham Town, even though the residents would identify as living in Parson's Green. Broomhouse Road, Linver Road, Alderville Road and the like are metres from Parson's Green - but in Palace and Hurlingham ward. The Peterborough estate is now in Parson's Green and Sandford ward but for decades were in Sulivan ward. Parson's Green itself used to be in Eel Brook ward.

And yet as a neighbourhood it has arguably the strongest "brand" in Fulham. It even has its own local newspaper: The Parson. Hardly anywhere has one of those any more!

Just like Palace, Labour was very happy with the creation of Parson's Green [and Walham, as it started out] in 2002 - and for the exact same reasons. Lots of the very strongest Conservative areas were packed into this new ward: the Peterborough estate from Sulivan; the Eel Brook Common end of Eel Brook; Moore Park from Walham.

The northern end of Sands End: places like Harwood Terrace and Imperial Square, which had become dreadful for Labour. As a result Sands End became defensible and Fulham Broadway became defensible, when the six council seats between them could have been put beyond Labour's reach.



Parson' Green and Walham also made sense in terms of the communities it served. Most wards are defined by very clear boundaries: Avonmore, for example, is hemmed in by the Hammersmith and Talgarth Roads, the borough boundary and Hammersmith Broadway. These are significant boundaries that separate the communities within Avonmore from those beyond. Then there are wards like College Park and Old Oak which, while having clear physical boundaries like the Westway actually draws together the neighbourhoods orbiting Wormwood Scrubs.

Parson's Green and Walham is a ward more like College Park and Old Oak. It serves the communities living either side of King's Road and New King's Road or, alternatively, the neighbourhoods that surround Parson's Green and Eel Brook Common.

New King's Road is the common thread through this ward; a focal point for the communities either side of it. The largest of these is the Peterborough estate, built across the grounds of Peterborough House: originally the home of Charles Mordaunt, the third Duke of Peterborough.

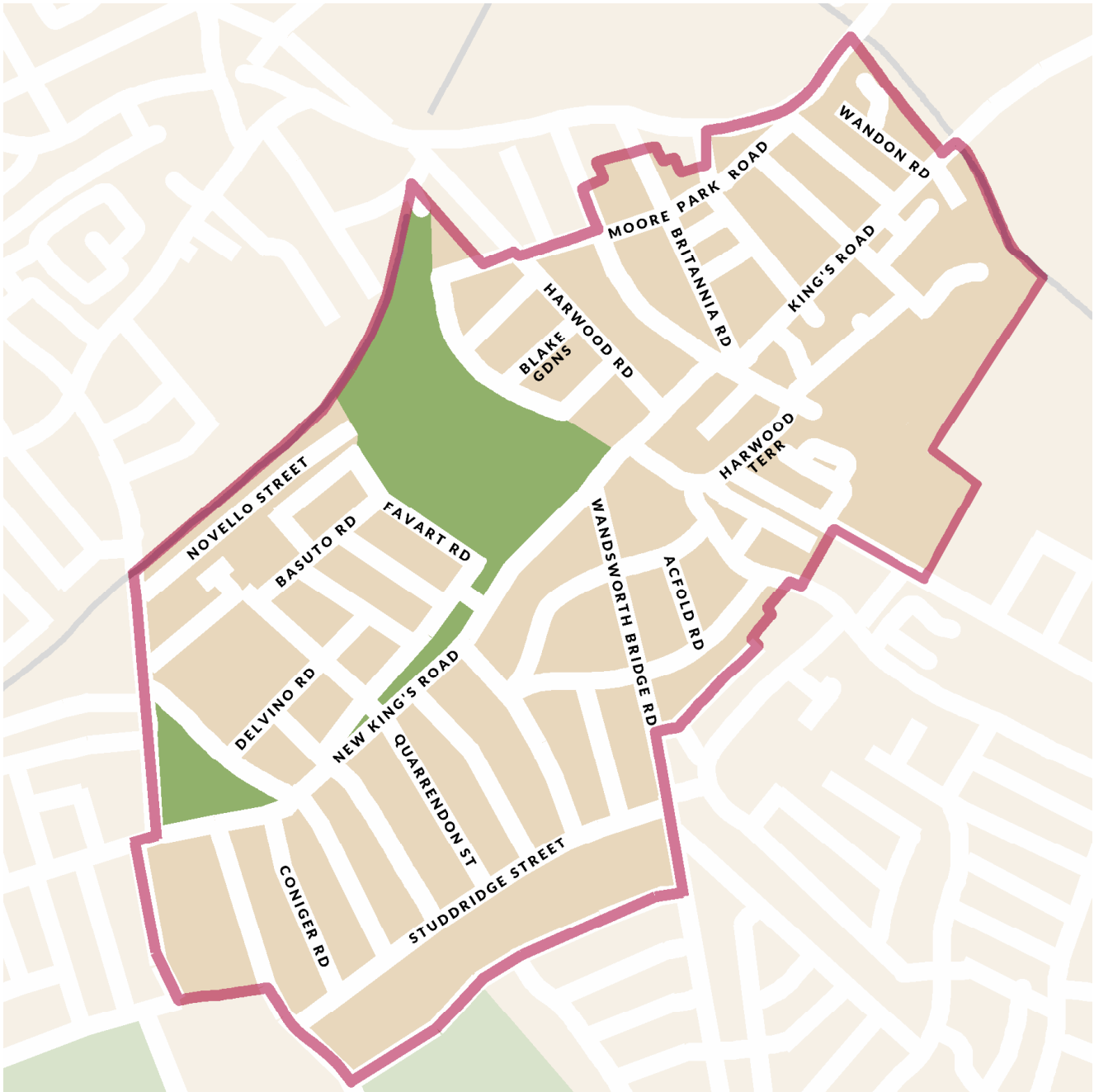
As the estate passed from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie it gradually fell in to decline - and scandal: one of its tenants, Richard Heaviside kidnapped a young woman he was smitten by, had her transported up the river from Lambeth and held her captive for over a year as his concubine.

Eventually, parcels of the vast grounds of the estate began being sold off to settle debts or because they were becoming unmanageable. Unusually it was just one builder, Jimmy Nichols, who developed this land - ensuring that the whole area was built in the same broad style: red brick houses designed in couplets with white awnings and decorative plaster lions.

The legend is that Nichols, who later became a Moderate (Conservative) councillor for Sands End over-ordered the lions: he planned to buy two hundred and ended up with over two thousand, so far more ended up decorating these houses than planned. Hence they became known as "Lion Houses".

There are somewhat different forms of this style: the New King's Road frontage comprises higher town houses and mansion blocks; the houses differ in size and some philistine owners have painted the frontages white, but overall the entire estate is in tact and of a piece. The estate extends across Wandsworth Bridge Road - or rather begins there because these were the first streets built. Then came the atypical curving Ryecroft and Stokenchurch Streets plus Coniger, at the other end of the estate. Quarrendon lies across the footprint of Peterborough House.

The Peterborough estate was the largest neighbourhood in the Sulivan ward (the Sulivans being the next door



neighbours to the Peterboroughs, living in Broom House) that existed from 1964 to 2002. It was the Peterborough estate that determined the political swing of Sulivan ward - a ward that started off very comfortably Labour but which, by its last election in 1998 was strongly Conservative.

Labour won Sulivan very easily in its first contest in 1964, taking two thirds to one third of the vote. They lost, as they did almost everywhere, in 1968 and in 1971 won it back, easily but somewhat closer than 1964: 63%-37%.

The gap narrowed again in 1974: 59% to 41%. And then Labour's vote collapsed. In 1978 a 14% swing enabled the Conservatives to take the ward easily enough. It was the rapidly changing demographics of the Peterborough estate, especially, that were driving the swing of Sulivan to the Conservatives.

So comfortable was the Tory victory in 1978, and so numerous were the marginal wards elsewhere, that Labour did not put very much effort into attempting to regain it in 1982.

This gave an opportunity to the Liberal-SDP Alliance, which had polled 11% in 1978. They finished runners-up, just 167 votes behind the re-elected Tories. Labour slumped to 23%.

Labour rebounded in 1986, getting to within 100 votes of winning - but even this result actually shows how strongly Conservative Sulivan had become: one of just four wards that elected full sets of their councillors that year.

From then on the Tories pulled away from Labour. By the time the ward was last contested in 1998, it was the Conservatives winning in excess of 60% of the vote, with Labour well below 30%.

Almost all of that Conservative lead came from the Peterborough estate. The rest of Sulivan was fairly evenly balanced, with the two big council estates (Sulivan Court and the Townmead estate) and the residual, diminishing Labour vote in the streets around South Park balancing out the new build exclusive developments like the Piper Building and Hurlingham Square.

Courage of mourned councillor

A LEADING Conservative councillor and former chief officer of the GLC died last week after a long illness.

Cllr Jonathan Maiden, 64, of Hurlingham Gardens, Fulham, leaves a wife, Jane, and four grown-up children.

He was first elected councillor for Sulivan ward in Fulham in 1990, and held the seat in 1994.

Tory leader Cllr Gerald Wombwell, who recruited Cllr Maiden just before the 1990 election, said he was "enormously sad" to learn of his colleague's death. "His wisdom and guidance were so valuable to us," said Cllr Wombwell. "I am only glad his suffering of the last few months has come to an end, but we shall miss him very much indeed. Above all, I'll remember an astonishingly brave man who bore a long illness with incredible courage and steely determination."

Mayor Iain Coleman said: "Cllr Maiden was well-liked and respected by both sides of the council chamber. It's sad to lose someone who served the council and his constituents with great distinction. Our deepest sympathies go to his family."

With his vast experience in the public and private sectors, Cllr Maiden was an obvious choice as the Tories' finance spokesman.

After qualifying as a surveyor, Mr Maiden spent two years in the Royal Artillery on National Service. He went on to become a captain in the Territorial Army's Honourable Artillery Company and was awarded the Territorial Decoration. After a successful career in the building industry, including 14 years at Bovis, he joined the GLC in 1976, where he held three chief officer posts, including general manager of Thamesmead New Town from 1981 to 1986.



Cllr Maiden (right) jokes with colleagues

Cllr Maiden was a charity worker and environmentalist. He was a director of the Fulham Palace Trust, a Fulham Society committee member and played a key role in the Royal Cambridge Home for Soldiers' Widows and the Francis Holland Schools' Trust.

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New Cllr says result was vote of no confidence in council

Triumphant Tories celebrate victory

By THOMAS HARDING

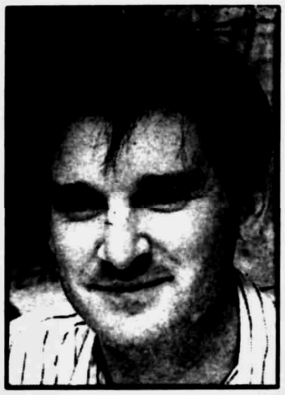
FULHAM Tories are celebrating their victory in the Sulivan ward by-election saying it sets a platform for them in the next General Election.

But Labour politicians believe another 3.4 per cent swing to them in a Conservative stronghold sounds the death knell for MP Matthew Carrington after the recent Crabtree ward defeat.

The result was announced after the last of 1,568 voters filed out of the assembly hall in Sulivan Primary School in the muggy heat of Thursday night last week.

Newly elected Nicholas Byron Botterill promised he would fight for better living conditions for the people in his ward.

Flushed with victory after winning with 52 per cent of the votes Cllr Botterill said: "I feel elated. This victory sends a strong message to the Labour council. It is a vote of no confidence by the Sulivan ward electorate on how they have been appallingly treated by the council. This especially includes those tenants who have been dreadfully treated in Sulivan Court."



Victorious: Nick Botterill

A 33-year-old bachelor and director of Teddies Day Nursery in Wandsworth Bridge Road, Fulham, he added: "I intend to fight on quality of life issues for the people in my ward."

To win the seat Labour needed a massive 10 per cent swing to overturn the Tory majority.

Before the count party officials said they would be delighted if they got a four per cent swing.

Council leader Andrew Slaughter said: "If this is the best they can do in a stronghold ward like Sulivan then we will win this seat in the next General Election."

But Tory leader Gerald Wombwell said: "This is a tremendous result for the Conservative Party. It sets us on the road to victory in Fulham for Matthew Carrington and will make Labour very nervous."

Lib Dem candidate Richard Patterson, 47, put on a brave face after winning only eight per cent of the vote.

He said: "I am very pleased that my first outing into local politics has produced this good result. It could have been better but it is a small step in building the groundwork for the future."

UK Independence Party candidate, Gerald Roberts, 60, quickly left with only two per cent of the vote after the count was announced.

● Total votes polled: Nicholas Byron Botterill (Conservative) 808, Ronald Burns (Labour) 609, Richard Patterson (Lib Dem) 121, Gerald Roberts (UK Independence Party) 29. One vote was spoiled in the 37.2 per cent turnout.

If the Peterboroughs and Sulivans are responsible for the western, Parson's Green, end of the ward, the Harwoods and Maxwells are responsible for the east: Sandford and Moore Park.

The Harwood family owned pretty much all of the land between Walham Grove and Sandford Manor; acres of market gardens watered by Counters Creek before it was turned into the Kensington Canal and then filled in when the West London Line was built.

As well as Harwood Road, Harwood Terrace, the Harwood Arms and the now closed Harwood Primary School, the three streets immediately east of Eel Brook Common are all named after members of the family.

A Charles Harwood was a Municipal Reform councillor for Walham ward in the early 1920s - perhaps a member of that family or maybe just coincidentally named.

J. Percival Maxwell developed the Moore Park estate: the area between Fulham Road and King's Road, named after his home town in Ireland. Moore Park was one of the earliest planned neighbourhoods in Fulham - as mentioned in other profiles,

Most of Fulham developed from the east and this area was closest to Chelsea. When the West London line was built a station was provided here - where the Wandon Road council estate now stands, and that helped make the district financially viable to construct.

Winding down after 20 years of work on the front benches

Since quitting two weeks ago as leader of the borough's Tories, Gerald Wombwell is enjoying his new-found freedom. MICHAEL GERRARD reports

THE telephone no longer rings constantly and the piles of council papers have been replaced by the *Daily Telegraph*, but Cllr Gerald Wombwell is enjoying his newly-acquired backbench life.

The leader of Hammersmith and Fulham Council's Conservative group for the past eight years, he resigned at the beginning of the month.

"I did not want to go on too long in this business and become some old figure shuffling around the town hall and people saying: 'He used to be leader 20 years ago, you know'," he explained.

"In the 10 days or so since I ceased being leader, the telephone calls have stopped as has much of my mail.

"My life is now my own again and I'm finding it quite marvellous.

"For the first time in a long time I am not doing two full-time jobs."

But after nearly two decades on the front bench, both in opposition and in power, one suspects that Cllr Wombwell's distinctive tones have not been heard for the last time.

Brought up in Bovingdon, near Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, Gerald Wombwell, 61, has lived in Fulham for 35 years.

For much of that time, he has worked as a marketing consultant from the Quarrendon Street home where he lives with his wife Elizabeth, an NHS manager in Wandsworth. They have two grown-up children.

First elected for Sulivan ward in 1982, when the Tories ran the council, he was immediately put o: to the front benches. He is particularly proud of the three years he was chairman of the environmental services committee.

He said: "In the early 80s many areas of council services were grossly overmanned and inefficient, the 'Spanish practices' were beyond belief.

"I made it clear to the trade unions that we were not hell-bent on privatisation, but getting the best efficiency for our constituents."

He admits that more than 400 workers were made redundant, but is proud that no days were lost to strikes. He said the council ended up saving millions of pounds.

Back in opposition during the late 80s, he sees the Tory group's exposure of the then Labour council's practice of gambling £6 billion on the money markets as another highlight.

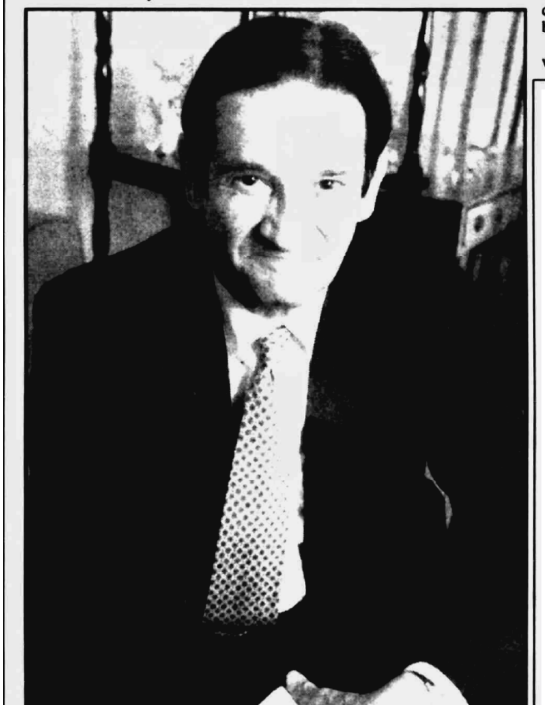
The House of Lords ruled the practice illegal, and the deals were gradually unravelled over several years.

Cllr Wombwell will retire from the town hall in three years, but says he wouldn't have missed it for the world.

He said: "It's a fascinating job. You are representing the needs of a population of 150,000 people in this borough and we are actively involved in so many areas of their lives.

"You represent them from cradle to grave, registering their births and deaths, and are involved in just about everything in between.

"But I am coming to the end. Twenty years is long enough."



East Fulham is different to West Fulham and one of the ways that is true is the different housing styles. Moore Park is an archetype: flat-roofed town houses, some with basements and large sash windows framed by thick moulded cornices. This style does not spread beyond North End Road. Coupled with other unique architectural styles like those in the Gunter estate this side of Fulham has a completely different feel to the west.

The difference is more than architecturally stylistic: the east of Fulham is more densely packed with much less public open space, there are more large public housing estates and it is generally less affluent than the west.

But nearly all of the estates are not within this ward: it is unique in not having any consequential council or housing association estates within it. They've all been carved out. Instead, the ward is getting an estate of a very different type: so-called Kings Road Park - which should have been called Sandford Manor.

Unlike Peterborough House and Broom House, Sandford Manor House still stands - though it's incredibly hard to find these days, hidden behind high walls down Rewell Street, which is more a path than a road.

Some historians claim the house was purchased by Charles II for his mistress, Nell Gwyn - its why the pub on King's Road on the corner of Rewell Street used to be named the Nell Gwynne and why Gwyn Close is so-named. Later owners, the Maynards, also have a residential cul-de-sac named after them here.

The name Sandford seems to have less to do with a ford crossing sandy Counters Creek, but a person: John Saundford, who owned the manor house back in the fourteenth century.

The grounds of Sandford Manor were huge, extending south as far as Townmead Road. The Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company purchased most of the manor's 24 acres of in 1824 and built their huge gas storage and processing plant that began the industrialisation of Sands End - and also the end of market gardening here: the gas plant quickly contaminated the neighbourhood.

The site was derelict for decades with just the massive rusting gas-holders left. There was an effort to list all five of the holders - as has been done, pretty successfully, with the gasometers in Camden by the Regent's Canal, where circular apartment blocks have been built within them. But the developers didn't want the constraints of these massive structures and, in the end, just one will survive once the building is finally complete.

Being stranded in the middle of Imperial Road, with the high brick wall of the plant on one side and the high brick walls of the assorted buildings that backed onto it from Bagley's Lane on the other, you could be forgiven for feeling in the middle of the sort of industrial wasteland politicians staged photo-opportunities in to show an intent to regenerate an abandoned community. I don't think any politicians used derelict Sandford for that purpose, even though it's only metres from Chelsea.

Other than the 25 acres all-in of the derelict gas holders, the area is a strange mix of Victorian streets, a spill-over of the Moore Park estate like (some of) Harwood Terrace and Avalon Road, plus the lovely, semi-hidden Imperial Square - built for gas plant workers. There are the pretty cottages along one side of Sandilands Road, which has been the ward boundary since 2002. There is the earlier-mentioned eastern end of the Peterborough estate; and some 1980s cul-de-sac housing. This includes Gwyn Close, Maynard Close, gated-off Cheryl's Close - plus Manor Court and Maltings Place.

These were the first parts of Sands End that gentrified and the solid Conservative vote from this end of the old Sands End was what first gave the party the idea that it could be competitive in that ward. For the same reasons, Labour hoped to jettison it from Sands End at the first opportunity.

That opportunity came in the boundary review before the 2002 elections. Labour had proposed a re-creation of the old Sandford ward - that is Sands End plus the Moore Park end of the former Walham ward. This would have been even harder for Labour to win than Sands End had become (it had been whittled down to just 12% by 1994) for reasons we've already looked at above. But was this a cunning double bluff? There was no political benefit to recreating Sandford and, just as turkeys tend not to vote for Christmas so political parties generally do not turn winnable wards into unwinnable ones.

The Labour plan allowed for a rebellion by Sands End councillor Brendan Bird to submit a counter proposal for the area, and get supportive community groups and residents to write in. That proposal suggested that Sands End should expand west, across Wandsworth Bridge Road instead of north, across King's Road, as far as Broomhouse Lane. Rather than lots more Conservative-voting streets this would bring the huge Sulivan Court council estate into the ward.

Because this was not a partisan proposal: neither Labour nor the Conservatives had proposed such a ward, it looked like a genuine attempt to draw a ward that best reflected the neighbourhood, and that much better ward for Labour was adopted. It's how Parson's Green and Walham ward came into existence too: the receptacle of not just Moore Park and the Peterborough estate but also that northern section of Sands End that Labour wanted gone.

Yet the Brendan Bird proposal was drawn up for him - to make sure it complied with all the review criteria - by those who wrote the Labour boundary submission. It was a roll of the dice: Labour had simply not believed that taking Sands End as far west as Sulivan Court would ever be adopted if they themselves had proposed it: it was the most optimal way Sands End could have been drawn at that point in time. The only way they might get the ward they wanted was to make it look like independent-minded councillors were staging a rebellion against their own party's proposal.

When the newly drawn wards first elected in 2002, Labour just about clung onto Sands End, while the Conservatives, unsurprisingly, won a landslide that surpassed even that of Palace ward in Parson's Green and Walham. They won by over 1,200 votes on a vote share of more than 70%.

Four years later - Labour's worst election result since 1968, the Tories increased their lead to 76% to 13% for Labour. That was the ninth largest Conservative vote in the whole of London that year: just a few Kensington & Chelsea wards plus Belgravia in Westminster, Wimbledon Village in Merton and the rural Bromley ward of Darwin produced larger Conservative shares.

In 2010 the much higher general election turnout gave the Conservatives the only majority exceeding 2,000 votes that the amalgamated borough has ever seen. Labour won Munster ward with majorities well over 3,000 in 1945 but that ward had over 17,000 electors: Parson's Green and Walham was 10,000 voters smaller.

Summary of election results for Parson's Green and Sandford ward

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
Sulivan ward					
1964	32.9	67.1			
1968	56.0	44.0			
1971	64.7	35.3			
1974	44.8	55.2			
1978	50.9	38.2	10.9		
1982	42.6	22.7	34.7		
1986	46.9	41.7	11.5		
1990	58.6	35.0	6.4		
1994	54.2	34.4	11.4		
1996B	51.6	38.9	7.7		0.7
1998	62.3	28.2	9.4		
Parson's Green and Walham ward					
2002	71.8	16.9	11.4		
2006	75.6	13.4	11.0		
2010	68.7	15.1	16.2		
2014	70.2	20.4	9.4		
2018	64.2	21.3	14.5		
Parson's Green and Sandford ward					
2022	55.0	29.3	15.7		
2026	50.2	17.9	9.3	9.8	12.8

Wards like this and Palace are so Conservative that they are almost immune to swings away from the party. In 2014 when Labour regained the borough the Tories still won here by 70% and in 2018 despite the very poor Conservative result, despite Brexit, despite Boris Johnson's Partygate unpopularity they still won 65%.

The reason electoral reviews are required every twenty years or so is that populations shift. Some areas gain residents, some maintain their electorate and some even lose it - less of an issue in growing London. It is one of the structural problems the Conservatives have in this borough that the areas they represent tend to be fully developed, whereas the big sites where lots of homes can be planned tend to be in Labour-voting areas. That affects them because as the borough's population grows, their settled wards shrink relative to it. Then, when a boundary review comes around, they risk losing seats as representation shunts towards new neighbourhoods.

That was exactly the Tories' problem in Parson's Green and Walham. By 2024 it was projected to have 7,700 voters. That was actually an increase of about 500 since the 2002 election, but the borough's electorate had gone from 115,000 to 141,000 over the same period. So it was to become about 16% too small to retain three councillors.

We've already looked at how the wedge of Hurlingham was returned to Palace ward in 2022: that was a thousand voters removed. Another 800 or so were moved into the new Walham Green ward. And those two pockets of land being lost along with it already being small, deleted a Conservative councillor in their safest ward.

Because the area transferred to Walham Green was Walham Green itself, this slimmed-down ward needed amending. Several descriptions were considered: Eel Brook; Parson's Green and Peterborough; Parson's Green and Moore Park. Labour proposed Parson's Green and Sandford, reviving the Sandford ward title that had existed between 1964 and 1978, because it was historically the manor on which most of the eastern end of the ward had been built.

Labour pressed for - and got - one other fairly important change, and that was to include the derelict Imperial Gasworks site. This was irrelevant at that point because no voters lived there: in that specific point in time it didn't matter in which ward it was located. But when so-called King's Road Park is fully occupied it could have well over 3,000 residents. Voters are only now starting to come onto the electoral register from this new neighbourhood and it's far from completed. But by keeping those voters out of Sands End, that ward will remain competitive. And, for a change, Parson's Green and Walham is going to outpace the growth of the borough because of King's Road Park, meaning the Conservatives will have a case for regaining a third councillor or getting an entire new ward out of that end of Sands End at the next review.

Parson's Green and Sandford should have been even safer than its predecessor because the Oswald Stoll and Walham Green estates had been stripped out. The only public housing of any size left in this ward is Broxholme House at the end of Harwood Road, St Mark's Close in Parson's Green, and the Wandon Road estate, which was in Chelsea until 1998: Labour simply has no base here.

And yet, once the votes had been counted in 2022, Labour actually did better - substantially better - than they had in any Parson's Green and Walham election, reaching 30% of the vote. Where these votes came from is a puzzle. And yet despite this surge towards Labour, the Conservatives still won almost twice as many votes.

In 2026 the Conservatives fell back further, but not as much as Labour did, so their lead expanded from 26% to 32%. Reform won 13% - possibly a fair chunk of it from the Oswald Stoll Foundation; the Greens 10% and the Lib Dems 9%.

In Sands End, all the new development along the riverside contributed towards making that long-term Labour ward more Conservative (though seemingly not quite in the amounts it was expected to).

It will be interesting to see what impact the new neighbourhood being born in Parson's Green and Sandford has on its political leanings.

While New King's Park has been built as a, generally, upper end, exclusive development, in the context of the exceptional affluence of the wider ward it may, ironically, actually put more voters at least open to voting Labour into this ward. Nowhere near enough to create an electoral problem for the Conservatives, however.

Rollcall of Parson's Green and Sandford ward councillors

including Parson's Green and Walham ward (2002-2022) and Sulivan ward (1964-2002)

2026
- Jose Afonso
- Adrian Pascu-Tulbure

2022
- Jose Afonso
- Adrian Pascu-Tulbure

2018
- Mark Loveday
- Frances Stainton
- Matt Thorley

2014
- Nicholas Botterill
- Mark Loveday
- Frances Stainton

2010
- Nicholas Botterill
- Mark Loveday
- Frances Stainton

2006
- Nicholas Botterill
- Mark Loveday
- Frances Stainton

2002
- Nicholas Botterill
- Mark Loveday
- Frances Stainton

1998
- Nicholas Botterill
- Gerald Wombwell

1996B
- Nicholas Botterill

1994
- Jonathan Maiden
- Gerald Wombwell

1990
- Jonathan Maiden
- Gerald Wombwell

1986
- Guy Roberts
- Gerald Wombwell

1982
- Nicholas Browne
- Gerald Wombwell

1978
- Ernest Ibbott
- Sir David Roche

1974
- Vera Godden (Lab)
- Cecily Liardet (Lab)
- Tony Powell (Lab)

1971
- Malcolm Hall (Lab)
- Cecily Liardet (Lab)
- Will Unwin (Lab)

1968
- Simon De Vogheleare
- Caroline Ground
- Christine Wagner

1964
- Tony Chapman (Lab)
- Malcolm Hall (Lab)
- Cecily Liardet (Lab)