

Green WITH ENVY

In 2011, The Clapham Society set up a scheme whereby local significant buildings which have changed use are commemorated with a green plaque. Just last month, the seventh plaque was unveiled, The Journal investigates all seven to find out more...

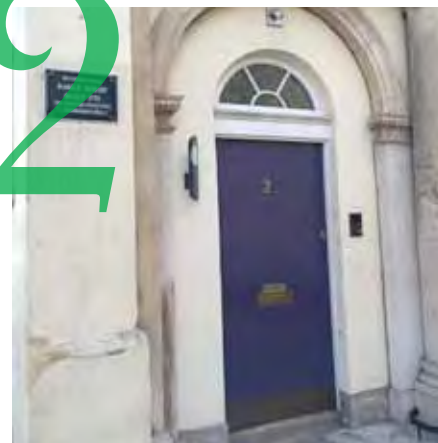


Sycamore house

Built in 1787, Sycamore House sits on the site of a former family home. Benjamin Bentley was the first occupant who lived there, from 1787 to 1806, and decorated the interior in an 18th-century neoclassical style. After two further occupants, it remained as a residence until 1841, when like so many large houses in Clapham, the property became a private school. By 1868 it became a Working Men's Club until it was turned into a laundry in 1898. It wasn't until 1994 that the laundry buildings on the site of the original garden were demolished and the gated estate, Sycamore Mews, was built while the main house was converted back for residential use. The main floor was bought by bespoke furniture designer Tim Gosling, who has restored many original features and converted the original laundry room into his studio. It was the first to be awarded a green plaque by The Clapham Society in 2011, which was designed by Tim himself and unveiled by Dame Vivienne Westwood who lives a stone's throw away.

Eagle House

Eagle House was constructed in 1773 by Benjamin Bond, who came into a fortune on his marriage to a wealthy heiress, Elizabeth Hopkins. Bond leased the site, approximately 15 acres, from a local landowner and the house was passed through various owners. After 1889 the estate, including the house and surrounding buildings, were sold and the street layout developed. Only the south wing remained and in 2008 it underwent another transformation to become the home of Sinclair Johnston and his family.



Odeon Cinema

The cinema, which opened on 16 April 1938, was commissioned by Oscar Deutsch from architect George Coles (1884-1963), who was one of the leading designers of Art Deco-style cinemas in the 1920s-30s. During World War II, in 1940, it was badly damaged and although it remained open, it wasn't rebuilt until 1948. It closed in 1972 and plans to demolish it and replace it with 22 flats were submitted but Wandsworth Council refused them and it was saved. It then reopened under the name of The Liberty in 1974 until 1979, where it showed Asian films. It finally closed in 1979 and

the auditorium was demolished in May 1985, with the foyer being converted to Majestic Wine Warehouse which is still in occupation. The rest of the building was rebuilt as flats and renamed Foyer Apartments.



The Old Fire Station

The building, which is now called The Lodge, was built in 1868 as a Fire Station. It was one of 26 that was built around London to meet the demands of the brigade. However, in 1902 a much larger station was built in the Old Town as the original sat on a restricted site with the surrounding greenery being part of the Common. In 1912 it was surrendered to the council until 10 years later, when it was turned into a residence for the person in charge of the Common, which remained this way for most of the 20th century. However, towards the end of this period it became redundant and was sold in 2004. Thanks to help from The Clapham Society, the building is now Grade II listed.



4

Clapham Parochial School

By the 1830s the original parochial school, which had been founded at least as early as 1648, had outgrown its site and a new school was built for the boys. In the 1960s, it was still not suitable for use due to its size, so was closed in 1974, with a new one built on Victoria Rise. It was then used as the offices of the Muscular Dystrophy Group, who renamed it Natrass House after a benefactor. In 1999 it became a private house and the home



to Frederique van der Vorm who generously donated the plaque and unveiled it on the Society's behalf in 2014.



5

Clapham Library

Clapham Library was among 10 new library administrations set up in 1887, a sudden upsurge which may have been the result of competitive civic pride as a new-found urge for learning. After much deliberation about the location of the site, the north side of the Common was chosen and it was open two years later. By the end of the 20th century, reference books were mainly kept at a central library in Brixton and the building became less and less suited to the functions of a modern library, so as part of a major development plan for leisure services in Clapham, Lambeth Council decided to move to a new purpose-built library on Clapham High Street. Despite protests from many who were fond of the old building, the old library closed in 2012. A local campaign resulted in Lambeth granting a long lease to Omnibus, a trust set up to use the library as an Arts Centre.

6



Oddfellows Hall

Just last month, Edmund Bird, heritage advisor to the Mayor of London, unveiled a green plaque for Oddfellows Hall, which was built in 1852 as a Chapel for the Ebenezer Strict Baptists. In 1908 it was purchased by the Pride of Clapham Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, a charitable society which still owns it and holds its meetings there. The building is now also the home of the Shambhala Meditation Centre. ■

For more information, visit claphamsociety.com



Edmund Bird with Provincial Grand Master John Mann PPGM after the unveiling

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7