

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter



Issue 345

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## Clapham Leisure Centre

The new building opened its doors to celebrate the start of the new year, on time and on budget. If you have yet to visit, go and have a swim now! Though maybe check the pool times first as it gets booked by schools during the day.

Mike Lawless and LA Architects have given us an excellent building designed with elegance to the highest standards of comfort and sustainability. A little shorter than the old one, the pool is nevertheless a real pleasure to swim in – spacious, full of light, warm and friendly. It has a rising floor and barrier at the deep end capable of dividing it in two for classes and there is a separate learners' pool. Upstairs there are a dance studio and a sports hall, the latter having three badminton courts and a well-equipped gymnasium. The fitness centre is visibly (from the street) popular. Membership is already double that ever achieved for the old leisure centre.

When compared with what might have been had the Clapham Society not spearheaded the opposition to the original plan for a much smaller and subterranean facility beneath the redevelopment on the Mary Seacole (High Street) site, funded by the sale of the Clapham Manor Street site, we can take some pride in our role in having halted the sale of the site, raising aspirations, and retaining an important asset in Lambeth Council ownership.

*John Adams*



*The new pool in use at the opening event*

*[Photo: David Tett]*

Our regular monthly meetings are held at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ. The entrance to the school in Stonhouse Street, through the new building, is NOT open for our evening meetings. Use the Belmont Road entrance, cross the playground and enter the building on the right. The hall is open from 7.30 pm when coffee and tea are normally available. The talk begins promptly at 8 pm and most meetings finish by 9.30 pm. Meetings are free and non-members are very welcome.

### Wednesday 21 March

**The life of Sarah Winsor: from Clapham governess to African pioneer.** Fiona Leach, Emeritus Professor of Education at Sussex University will talk about the life of Sarah Winsor, governess in Rev. John Venn's household in Clapham. In 1804 she married one of the first two (German) missionaries recruited by the Church Missionary Society and accompanied him to the recently created colony of Sierra Leone. There she became the first missionary wife to teach African children. Two years later, Sarah returned to England in poor health and her husband reputedly became a slave trader. After nine long years, Sarah returned to Africa to be reunited with her now repentant husband. Her tragic story illustrates the extent to which a woman's life at that time was bound up with her husband's actions.

### Wednesday 18 April

**Topical issues affecting Clapham.** We shall have brief presentations on several current issues affecting Clapham, including the Gateway project, the increased use of Clapham Common and the new library in Clapham High Street. We plan to have experts on hand and the audience will be invited to join in the discussion. If you would like to raise any particular subject please contact Maev Sullivan (details on back page) and we will aim to add it to the agenda.

## Twixt the Commons

At our January meeting Timothy Walker spoke about his book, published last year (and reviewed in our February 2011 newsletter No. 333), entitled *Twixt the Commons*. Whilst his talk, like the book, concentrated mainly on the development of the area between Clapham Common and Wandsworth Common – which he has been researching for many years – he started with a brief explanation of the rise in popularity of south London generally.

This started in the late 18th century when city business men, mostly bankers, merchants and high class retailers, ceased to ‘live over the shop’ and moved out of central London for clear air, clean water and more privacy for their families. They also sought to separate their women and children from the work force. The fact that these men were not aristocrats (with a very few exceptions) with long-standing links to the area, meant that they were happy to move further out of London when development of the estates took place within the next 100 years.

Up until about the mid-19th century there were a mere five houses on the east side of Wandsworth Common, a few houses on the west side of Clapham Common and in between were Battersea Rise House, Broomwood House and Old Park House, all with large grounds and surrounded by farmland. The land was owned by a few families, and the houses usually rented. The first terrace of modest houses was built in Chatham Road in the 1850s, and thereafter the former estates

were gradually sold to developers and row after row of terraced houses were built. Mr Walker pointed out that what appears now to be a random street pattern was dictated by the boundaries of the different estates.

He gave details of some of the larger and more important houses, such as those in Bolingbroke Grove by ER Robson, the architect better known for his many London Board Schools. He also drew our attention to some fascinating, and very informative maps of the area: Charles Booth’s maps of the 1890s which are colour-coded according to the relative wealth of inhabitants of the various streets, and the Second World War bomb damage maps which show levels of damage to properties in the area. He also covered the changes to the area in recent years, as it has been affected by ‘gentrification’, and most houses have been bought rather than rented.

All in all even his summary of such a comprehensive and detailed book was far too extensive to condense into this brief report. If you have any interest at all in this area you are strongly recommended to buy the book which is packed with interesting detail and cannot fail to engage those living in the area. *Twixt the Commons* by Timothy Walker is available at local bookshops, price £20, or direct from the author at 24 Old Park Avenue, SW12 8RH. Email: [tehwalker@uwclub.net](mailto:tehwalker@uwclub.net)

## Membership Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions are due on 1 April. Current rates are: Individual £6.00; Household (up to three names): £9.00; Corporate: £15.00. Members receiving the newsletter by post pay an additional £5.00 to cover the cost of postage.

Cheques should be made payable to *The Clapham Society* and sent to the Membership Secretary (address on back page). Members renewing their subscription by standing order are asked to ensure that their bank is making the correct payment. Membership will lapse if the subscription is not renewed by 30 June.

Contact the Membership Secretary if you have a query about your subscription.

## Young Musicians

On **Saturday 10 March** from 6 pm to 8 pm the 11th Young Musicians’ Festival will be held in support of Kenyan Young Musicians, at Holy Trinity Church, Clapham Common.

This well established showcase provides a platform for some of the most able young musicians from across a wide area. Upwards of three hundred performers aged between 6 and 19 years will be taking part, including an assortment of choirs, string players from the Centre for Young Musicians and various instrumental groups. All combine together in a grand finale. Admission is £4 (free under 21 years old). Tickets in advance from Antony le Fleming: [antony.lefleming@gmail.com](mailto:antony.lefleming@gmail.com) or 020 8761 4397.

## Share & Care

Share & Care is a family-run agency which finds low-cost live-in Sharers for elderly people who would benefit from the practical help and companionship of such an arrangement.

For just £150 per month they receive 10 hours of practical help each week from their Sharer, plus the reassurance of someone younger living in their home. The Sharer benefits from low cost accommodation in London, and from living in a safe environment. The agency makes regular home visits to ensure the arrangement is happy and suitable, and provide advice and support to both sides.

Our Sharers are typically aged 25+ and are interviewed and carefully vetted to ensure that they are suitable for the role. We ensure that the Sharer and elderly homeowner are compatible for a long and happy Share.

Please telephone Caroline, Olivia or Julia on 020 8875 9575 or email: [info@shareandcare.co.uk](mailto:info@shareandcare.co.uk) to find out more, whether you are interested in being a Sharer (we currently have several local opportunities) or in having a Sharer move into your home. For more details go to [www.shareandcare.co.uk](http://www.shareandcare.co.uk).

Caroline Cooke

## Come and sing!

Singers are in demand this month with a choice of venues to sing Fauré’s *Requiem*. On **Saturday 17 March** Antony Le Fleming will be directing the *Requiem* at Holy Trinity Church, Clapham Common. The rehearsal commences at 2.30 pm with the performance at 7 pm. All voices are welcome to join with the church choir for this event. More information, including further opportunities for brushing-up on notes from [antony.lefleming@gmail.com](mailto:antony.lefleming@gmail.com) or 020 8761 4397.

On the same day, **Saturday 17 March**, a choral workshop based on this well-known work will be directed by Scott Inglis-Kidger at St Mary’s Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA. This event runs from 10.30 am to 5 pm (registration from 10 am). The cost is £40, which includes refreshments during the break. Please bring your own score. For more details contact Adrienne Carr: [workshops@platinumconsort.com](mailto:workshops@platinumconsort.com).

## Information required

We have had a request from the Rev. Ivor Rees, former minister at Clapham Congregational Church, who is writing a history of that church (later the United Reformed Church in Grafton Square), for information, photographs or anecdotes about the church which members may have. If you have anything which might be of interest please contact him on 01792 429442 or email: [i.rees@ntlworld.com](mailto:i.rees@ntlworld.com).

## Clapham Archaeological Surveys

These important archaeological exercises took place as a direct result of the discovery of foundations of the manor house by Peter Jefferson Smith in August 2010. The remains were found in service trenches in Rectory Grove and raised the question of what part of the Elizabethan manor they came from. The Local History Sub-committee decided to call on the services of *Stratascan* who used non-invasive Ground Probing Radar to trace archaeological remains which were otherwise inaccessible due to paved areas or heavily cultivated gardens. The committee decided that while the *Stratascan* team was around it should also examine the sites of the Norman manor house at the west end of St Paul's Church and the 17th century Clapham Place in The Chase.

The geophysical survey team from *Stratascan* carried out the work in the spring and summer of 2011, the final report being submitted in September of last year. It was evident that the sites had been much disturbed during the post-medieval period and the results indicated that surviving foundations were in a poor state of preservation. Nevertheless, important discoveries were made on all three sites, which enabled these mansions to be precisely located and some of their internal arrangements to be plotted.

**Clapham Court.** The area examined was the southern frontage of the Elizabethan range built by Bartholomew Clerke c.1580. In addition to the wall itself, traces of a projecting chimney stack and south-west tower (shown on old views) were also found. The remains extended below the gardens of No 14 Rectory Grove and Nos 39-43 Turret Grove. Extensive archaeological remains of what may have been the principal rooms of the Clerke mansion were also discovered in the gardens of Nos 16 and 18 Rectory Grove.

**Norman Manor House.** The theoretical site of this building was postulated in my book *Historic Clapham* and was confirmed by the geophysical results. Substantial stretches of the south, east and west walls were identified together with a possible entrance and an external staircase in the western frontage. The manor house was about 40 ft. wide and was traced for some 60 ft. of its length.

**Clapham Place.** Geophysical survey work in the roadway of The Chase and in the gardens of Nos 7 and 9 The Chase also produced satisfactory results. The complete outline of the building, with its two towers on the corners of the northern frontage, has now been traced. The great mansion, in which Samuel Pepys died in 1703, is now established to have been 115 ft. long and 65 ft. wide. A stable range 35 ft. by 15 ft. was plotted on the west side of the north court of the building. Traces of the internal arrangements of what was the semi-basement area were discovered, including the fireplace range in the great kitchen.

The Local History Sub-committee of the Society together with this writer are deeply indebted to owners of properties in The Chase, Rectory Grove and Turret Grove for permission to carry out work in their gardens, and in particular to the Rev. Deborah Matthews and her staff of St Paul's, Rectory Grove; also to Mr David Treherne Pollock of No 9 The Chase, for their help and assistance. Lastly the Sub-committee wishes to thank the Society for kindly defraying the cost of the work and the *Stratascan* staff who so ably carried out the survey.

*Michael Green*

## On the Common

The newly upgraded skate park next to Rookery Road is now open and flourishing. From the start of this project it has been the young people themselves who have been in the lead.

The Friends of Clapham Common with Trees for Cities had a major tree planting event in mid January. Thirty-eight standard trees were planted including their 100th tree, a hornbeam, close to the path from the bandstand to Battersea Woods.

A major project has been the installation of a gas governor in front of The Windmill to replace the elderly gas pipe junction. This work should be completed by the end of March and will be followed by extensive landscaping of the area funded by Southern Gas Network.

At the time of going to press there have not been any developments around events on Clapham Common although there has been plenty of debate and discussion. We should have more information in our April newsletter.

## Lee Valley Park

Some of our members may be surprised to know that every year over £300,000 leaves the Lambeth Parks and Open Spaces budget in order to help fund the Lee Valley Regional Park. The reason is historical. When the Park was created in 1966 legislation was put into place which meant that it was funded by the representative bodies of Hertfordshire, Essex and Greater London. When the Greater London Council was abolished in 1986 the precept was transferred to the individual London boroughs by statute.

When the Greater London Authority was created the funding for the Lee Valley Park was not transferred back to the pan-London authority. Over recent years the Clapham Society has raised this matter in a variety of forums. Following a lobby to Clapham Common Ward Councillor Shirley Cosgrave the issue was brought to Lambeth Council's attention yet again, this time with a more positive response. Particularly in the light of all the money which is being invested in that area of London because of the Olympic Games the time has surely come to tackle the relevant legislation.



*Local schoolchildren helping to plant a London plane tree outside Clapham High Street Station on 9 February*

*[Photo: Jackie Fisher]*

## An Unusual Concert

The concert given by **Clapham Chamber Concerts** at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove on Friday 20 January took a different format. We were invited to join a series of recitals each covering a period in the history of Clapham and taking place in different parts of the building.

The performance started in darkness in what is now the church hall, but was formerly the chancel, with three *English Folk Song* settings by Benjamin Britten performed by Frederica Mossone (harp) and Catherine Carter (voice) who, carrying a lit candle, descended from the gallery to our level via a spiral staircase singing all the time. After this very atmospheric start we moved into the Lady Chapel to hear a *Pavan* by Tobias Hume which might have been heard during the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to the Manor House, arranged and played by Sophie Rivlin ('cello). Staying with this period Catherine Carter sang three songs composed by Robert Schumann from *Gedichte der Konigin der Maria Stuart, op. 135* based on letters written by Mary Stuart (Mary Queen of Scots) – Farewell to France, to Queen Elizabeth and Farewell to the world.

Before moving back to the church hall we had an interlude of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces, op. 12* played by Jessica Maryon Davies (piano) since Edvard Grieg was a regular visitor to Clapham in the 19th century. Kate Wakeling (movement) and Sophie Rivlin then gave a representation of Henry Cavendish's experiments on weighing the world.

Next we were transported to William Hewer's house, on North Side and whose memorial is in a prominent position in the church, where Frederica Mossone played Handel's *Sonata in B flat Major, op. 6* and then she and Catherine Carter gave us Dido's Lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

For the final part, The Clapham Sect, we were in Henry Thornton's drawing room listening to an impassioned speech from one of his friends encouraging us to set up a campaign to abolish the slave trade. This was followed by Schubert's *Lied der Mignon, op. 62* to words by Goethe sung by Catherine Carter. The final piece of music was also Schubert, a movement from *Sonata in A Minor, D821* originally for arpeggione, which was a popular instrument of this period, played on the 'cello by Sophie Rivlin.

After this very enjoyable and imaginative evening the audience were given the opportunity to have a drink and to talk to the various performers.

This concert was the first of the Spring 2012 series; a further concert took place on 10 February and the final one this season is on 23 March. Clapham Chamber Concerts was established in 2006 to bring a diverse range of chamber music to Clapham whilst providing a platform for young professional musicians. Those of us who have attended the concerts on a regular basis have been given a wonderful chance to discover their excellent quality. There is no doubt that with performers like this music-making is in very good health and, we trust, will continue to be so for a long time. For information about future concerts email: [claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com](mailto:claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com).

Jennifer Everett

## Storytelling

Clapham Books now has storytelling for 5 to 7-year olds on the first Saturday of each month at 11.30 am, in addition to the Under 5s stories, singing and fun every Wednesday at 11 am. Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UH.

## Inside Wimbledon

A new documentary video about Wimbledon has been produced recently. Go to [www.wimbledofilm.com](http://www.wimbledofilm.com) for full details.

## What do you think about water?

I am a PhD student in the Geography Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. My research explores peoples' attitudes towards water use and water metering and I need your help!

I am interested in the way we use water in the home and how that might change if we had a water meter installed. Most homes in London don't have a water meter. However, because the southeast is the driest yet most populated part of the country, many water companies are planning to install water meters as part of their plans to make the water we have go further. Water meters can help people and water companies save water.

Currently, little is known about peoples' attitudes to water and water metering, so this is an opportunity for you to influence water policy in London. I am intending to hold community research workshops during the last two weeks of March and first week of April; these workshops will last approximately an hour and will be held in Clapham (either at the Bread and Roses, Clapham Manor Street, SW4 6DZ or Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ). You will not be required to provide any private information and any information you do provide will be kept anonymous.

My project is entirely funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, so I am not required to share my research for commercial purposes and your information will not be used for any marketing purposes.

If you are interested in participating, or have any questions, contact me: email [fiona.nash.2009@live.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.nash.2009@live.rhul.ac.uk) or telephone 07825 133958. I would really appreciate your views and opinions about water and water metering.

Fiona Nash

If you have any queries about **The Clapham Society** or have news of local events, please contact the appropriate person below:

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Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications are on **The Clapham Society** website at [www.claphamsociety.com](http://www.claphamsociety.com)