



The Clapham Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Monday 16 October 2023

The 59th Annual General Meeting of the Clapham Society was held at 8.00pm on Monday 16 October 2023 at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

The Society's President, Martin Drury, took the chair and welcomed members to the Annual Meeting. Thirty-five members were present.

1. Apologies:

David Brown, Andrew Summers, Georges Chalfoun, Caroline Booth, Jenny and Peter Cobley, Chrissy Thirlaway, Cllr David Robson.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM dated 17 October 2022

Approved.

3. Annual Report for the year 2022-2023

The Annual Report had been published in the October 2023 edition of the Newsletter and was duly adopted.

4. Financial Report & Accounts for year ended 31 March 2023

David Brown, Treasurer, had sent his apologies for the Annual Meeting.

Anna Long, Independent Examiner, kindly agreed to respond to any questions on his behalf.

The Financial Report & Accounts were adopted.

5. Election of Officers and Committee Members for the year 2023-2024

The following were elected:

Chair	Mark Leffler
Vice Chair	Alison Macnair
Legal Counsel	Georges Chalfoun
Secretary	Gill White

(NB the positions of Treasurer and Membership Secretary were left unfilled.)

The following **Members** were elected to the Committee: Christine Armstrong, Michael Barry, Ruth Eastman, Alison Inglis-Jones, John Langley, Gery Roberts.

Martin Drury remains as **President** and Julia Barfield as **Vice President**.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

Anna Long, FCA was thanked for her work during the past year and reappointed as **Independent Examiner**.

7. Any other business and announcements

Martin Drury invited questions:

7.1 Penny Hurst raised the issue of the Society's funds being mainly from subscriptions rather than the ultimate need to raise income through increasing the membership. She added that a declining membership in recent years would indicate that the Society is not proving sufficiently attractive for new members to join – possibly because of transitory stage/lifestyle of the local population, the current ageing membership and a failure to recruit new and younger members. 'Wilberforce Clapham' remains a diverse area that has seen many changes over the past 60 years. She urged a different approach both to encourage new members and to raise income, and noted that the annual summer party was not cost effective.

7.2 Mark Leffler thanked Penny Hurst for her thoughtful comments and agreed that the Society has a largely ageing membership, but said that attracting younger people to join the Society is not at all straightforward, and is an issue that many, if not most, amenity societies face. This may reflect broader changes in our society. It may be that those wishing to be involved locally consider they have other options to do so. However, our overall membership numbers remain relatively static, with similar numbers joining as leaving. The point made about other methods of fundraising is very well made, and this is something the Committee has been actively considering.

7.3 Euan Kennedy expressed his appreciation and thanks to Ruth Eastman, as Newsletter Editor, for maintaining high-quality editions and congratulated her on a consistently well-produced and well-written Newsletter which he enjoys reading.

7.4 Martin then invited Mark Leffler to present his annual report before bringing the meeting to a close.

7.4.1 Mark thanked Martin Drury for his long-time support and input as President of the Clapham Society and for chairing the 2023 Annual Meeting, and went on to place on record his appreciation of the Committee over the past year. He hoped members had considered the substance of his report, that had been circulated ahead of the meeting, and to which we wished to make reference.

7.4.2 He registered particular appreciation of

the work done by David Brown (not present) and Jennifer Everett, who have both given unstinting service to the Society through the past two decades. Both had expressed a wish to take a back seat from their roles as Treasurer and Membership Secretary henceforth, and thus decided not to stand for re-election. However, he was delighted to say that they have each agreed to continue to provide advice and active support behind the scenes pro tem. Clearly, we must be on the lookout for people who can fill these key roles long term.

7.4.3 He welcomed the two new members of the committee, Michael Barry and John Langley, and thanked all Committee members for their support during what has been a testing time for him personally due to health issues.

7.4.4 Special thanks were due to Alison Macnair for her unfailing wise and friendly counsel, and to Andrew Summers, who was standing down as our very adept spokesperson on the CCMAC (Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee) due to work pressures. Mark expressed a hope that Michael Barry would agree to take over Andrew's role regarding the Common and open spaces.

7.4.5 He thanked Gill White for her continued diligent support as Hon Secretary, despite a bereavement following the death of her husband in August 2022.

7.4.6 Warm appreciation was also expressed to Ruth Eastman as Newsletter Editor, for the huge amount of work she puts into producing this vital communication to our members and for her own well-written as well as commissioned articles. And he thanked Christine Armstrong, who has had to contend with a difficult time personally. He commended her excellent and varied programme of speakers for our monthly meetings held here at Omnibus.

7.4.7 Looking to the year ahead, Mark noted that our finances face a major challenge. The

costs of producing the Newsletter, of hiring space at Omnibus for our meetings, and of maintaining developing and improving our IT systems to enable us to manage members' subscriptions and our ability to recover Gift Aid are all matters of concern. Clearer guidance on these matters would appear in the December newsletter.

7.4.8 In terms of external issues, the use of the Common for events and the proposed development of the Clapham College site on South Side have been the biggest issues we face.

7.4.9 The Public Inquiry held in June has resulted in Lambeth being granted approval to proceed with Festival Republic's events on the Common next year.

7.4.10 The Planning Application on the College site has yet to go to Committee. At the latest count the planning database contains 391 documents submitted by the developer, and to date 172 objections have been submitted.

7.4.11 Traffic congestion remains a constant issue in Clapham, as demonstrated only recently at the A3/Clapham Park Road junction where a hole was dug on Friday, blocking this important junction, with no one working to repair the carriageway all weekend.

7.4.12 Members were encouraged to raise any issues that they feel should be addressed – and to make contact if someone you know might like to become more involved.

7.4.13 Finally, he welcomed George Owen and Marie McCarthy from Omnibus who had kindly agreed to talk following the formal part of our Meeting about saving the building and the creation of Omnibus Theatre and its first 10 years.

The meeting concluded at 8.20pm.

Gillian White, Hon Secretary
October 2023

