

The Clapham Society Newsletter



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Another Green Plaque

The Clapham Society's second green plaque was unveiled on the surviving wing of Eagle House in Narbonne Avenue by Lord Hankey on 10 December. This scheme celebrates important buildings in our area which have changed their use over the years. Eagle House, built in 1773, was one of the grand mansions which once bordered Clapham Common. Most of the house was demolished in the 1890s for the development of Narbonne Avenue, part of Hambalt Road and Mandalay Road. This wing survived and has been put to various uses over the years, before being refurbished and restored to residential use by Sinclair Johnston in 2008. More details and pictures can be found on our website.

Sir Thomas Hankey owned the land on which the original house was built, and his direct descendant, architect Donald Hankey who unveiled the plaque still lives in the area. Following the unveiling of the plaque Sinclair and Madeline Johnston invited us all in to their splendid sitting room for very welcome refreshments on a cold day.

Lambeth Orchestra

Have you heard of the Lambeth Orchestra? If not I strongly recommend you visit www.lambeth-orchestra.org.uk to find out more. I discovered it when I saw a neighbour putting her double bass in the car each week, as she went off for practice!

Founded in 1972, the orchestra performs six concerts a year under their musical director Dr Christopher Fifield. The next one is on **Saturday 11 February** at 7.30 pm at All Saints Church, Lovelace Road, West Dulwich SE21 8LN. Tickets £10, concessions £8, and children £1 include a programme.

Ann Dunkley



Lord and Lady Hankey beneath the plaque on Eagle House [Photo: Mary Coales]



The party in Eagle House after the unveiling of the plaque. [Photo: Bill Emmett]

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 meetings finish by 9.30 pm.

Wednesday 22 February

Mexico 68 – Preparing for an Olympiad.

After qualifying as an architect, **John Adams**, former Chairman of the Clapham Society, worked for the Organising Committee of the XIX Olympiad in Mexico City. He will describe the preparations and other events of 1968, a year of significant protest and unrest in Mexico as well as Paris. The Mexican Olympiad was modest by today's standards, but was distinguished by some fine buildings and was the first to introduce the idea of a cultural programme in parallel with the sporting events. It was also remarkable for brilliant design and graphics which gave a common visual identity to the vast array of activities and productions which formed part of the official (and unofficial) programmes.

Wednesday 21 March

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 travelled to Sierra Leone as wife of one of the Church Missionary Society's first recruits. Her tragic story illustrates how a woman's life at that time was bound by her husband's actions.

The End of an Era

When the Clapham Society (founded in 1964) published its first book in 1968 it turned to local family printers, Battley Brothers, based in Clapham Old Town. A close relationship soon developed, each subsequent book was printed by the company, and eventually also the monthly newsletters. In 2002 Battleys moved to larger premises in Battersea, having merged with another company to form the Cantate group. Not until 2007 did the last member of the family, Margaret Battley, wife of Bernard whose father had started the business with his brother in 1898, finally retire.

Thus ended the Battley family connection with Cantate, but not the Clapham Society's. Cantate printed our book, *Discovering Clapham*, in 2007 and our newsletters until December 2011. The company has now ceased printing in London and our link of 43 years has ended.

We are grateful to the Battley family and Cantate for their sterling service to the Society for so many years, concluding with the introduction to Battersea-based family printers, Embassy Press, who are printing this newsletter. We look forward to an equally happy, and long-lasting relationship with Embassy Press.

New leisure facilities

The new leisure centre in Clapham Manor Street which opened on 2 January has a six-lane swimming pool, a teaching pool (under 16s and over 60s can swim for £1) a fitness gym, a four court sports hall, dance, yoga and martial arts studios, and rooms for community groups and exercise classes. For more details and opening times go to www.gll.org/centre/clapham-leisure-centre.asp#.

On **Friday 3 February** there will be a special launch event – a sporting extravaganza with gymnastic displays and a swimming gala – taking place throughout the day.

The new library and health facilities in Clapham High Street are due to open in March – more details in the next newsletter.

New members

We have welcomed the following new members recently: Nigel Baxter and Claire Harnett, Lord Hankey, Cristian Leon and Gary Logue, Simon Millson, Drs Simon and Veronica van Heyningen, and Judi Vernau.

Old Clapham Library

This is an urgent call for your support for the first phase of a campaign to save the old Clapham Library building on the corner of North Side and Orlando Road.

When the library moves to new premises in March, the building it has occupied since 1889 will be boarded up. Meanwhile, the owner, Lambeth Borough Council, has invited tenders for a lease or outright purchase of the site. With the aim of securing the preservation of the old library building as a cultural amenity for the Clapham area, a group of local residents has formed a charitable trust called OMNIBUS.

OMNIBUS is working with Lambeth Council to ensure that this much-loved building in the heart of Old Town is retained for community and cultural use. Our mission is to create a centre for the arts in Lambeth, specialising in music and other forms of performance with space for temporary exhibitions.

Demand for such an amenity has been demonstrated by an immediate and enthusiastic response from nearly 2000 individuals who have either been consulted on line or have signed a petition, and it has been confirmed by professionals in the field of music and live performance in London.

A robust business plan has been developed and an application is being submitted for a substantial lottery grant to enable the building to be refurbished and adapted in 2012. We are also in discussion with potential commercial partners about long-term funding.

Meanwhile, we urgently need to raise £100,000 to enable us to submit our tender to Lambeth Council in the next few weeks. If we reach that target in time, we are confident of submitting the winning tender. If we do not, a once-for-all-time opportunity will have been lost and the old library will almost certainly be developed for private or commercial use.

A new Clapham Arts Centre will enhance the quality of life in Clapham. It will add something special to the other amenities which year by year have made Clapham an increasingly desirable place to live.

Please make a donation by sending a cheque, payable to Omnibus-Clapham, to Omnibus, 36 Clapham Common South Side, SW4 9BS.

George Owen, Chairman, Omnibus

Omnibus Cocktails and Canapés Fundraiser will be held at the Grafton House Restaurant and Bar, 13-19 Old Town, SW4 0JT on **Thursday 1 March** at 7 pm, with entertainment provided by comedian and star of the BBC TV show, *Grumpy Old Men*, Arthur Smith, cool music by Junction Jazz and a raffle with valuable prizes. Tickets (£20) are available from Under the Greenwood Tree, 11 The Polygon, SW4 0JG. Call 020 7627 4557 or email natalia@underthegreewoodtree.co.uk. All funds raised will go towards the Omnibus campaign to save Clapham library building.

On the Common

The decision by Lambeth Council to lift restrictions on events on Clapham Common in order to maximise income continues to have repercussions. The Claphamland Winter Festival event planned for Christmas and the New Year to which the Society had objected was withdrawn, but Lambeth Council has now committed to the Pride House event due to be held during the Olympic Games, referred to in our last newsletter.

We have expressed our concerns about this event, in particular its length. The event itself will last for 18 days with 7 days to set up and dismantle. Taking into account the events before and after, Ben and Jerry's Sundae and the SW4 large music/dance event, a very substantial part of the Common will be inaccessible to the general public from 9 July to 29 August, therefore throughout the school holidays. We also have worries about security around this event, when police

resources will probably be concentrated at the Games themselves. Names on the current list of performers include Elton John, Lily Allen, Stephen Fry and George Michael, all of whom will be major crowd pullers. Two aspects of the event likely to be unpopular locally are the proposed closure of Rookery Road between South Side and Long Road, and the positioning of large screens showing the Olympics so that they cannot be seen from outside the enclosure.

A report is also to be presented to the Lambeth Council Cabinet in February which, if accepted, will result in an increase in the permitted sound levels at large music/dance events on Clapham Common and the extension of allowed finishing times from 9 pm to 11 pm. The Society has responded as a stakeholder with a strong objection to both proposals.

If members have views on any of these issues please email John Kerridge: JKerridge@lambeth.gov.uk.

Anna Jefferson Smith

A Fast Clapham Lady

Violet Piercy (or Piercey) was the first British woman to complete a marathon. Her most famous long distance run (probably short of a full marathon) was from Windsor to Battersea Town Hall on 2 October 1926. She later competed unofficially in several Polytechnic marathons, ran 10 miles in 1 hour 25 minutes and in 1935 ran 5 miles and then climbed the Monument – the *South London Press* records that huge crowds lined up outside her Clapham home to see her set out. She is of historical significance in successfully challenging the established belief that long-distance running was unsuitable and even dangerous for women. The *Dictionary of National Biography* plans to include her in its May 2012 edition on Olympic-related sportspeople.

Although she was a key figure in the development of the women's marathon and had a flair for publicity, Violet Piercy was enigmatic in many ways – she certainly never gave her age to the press. There is still uncertainty about her dates of birth and death and details of her life. She was probably born in 1890, and between 1930 and 1933 she lived at 21 Leathwaite Road, just off Battersea Rise. She seems to have resided in South London for much of her life, but nothing is known about her after 1938. Research continues but does anyone have memories or information about her? If you wish to see the lady in action go to www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=48853 and, more amusingly: www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=14469

We hope to give a talk about her at the Wandsworth Heritage Festival in early June, and we are also planning a small display on distinguished Clapham sportspeople, to be shown during the summer. Clapham has blue plaques to Jack Hobbs, cricketer (1882-1963) and Ted 'Kid' Lewis, world welterweight boxing champion (1893-1970). Clapham Rovers were early FA Cup winners (1880). We would welcome members' suggestions of other sports personalities who were born or raised in Clapham or – even better – lived in Clapham at the time of their sporting achievements. Please send your stars to Derrick Johnson (johnson45dj@yahoo.co.uk) or Peter Jefferson Smith (peterjsl@mac.com).



Art+Cake This free one day event on **Saturday 4 February** offers local artists and designers a platform to sell and exhibit their work to the Clapham community in the contemporary glass hall of Clapham Methodist Church, Clapham High Street, SW4 7UH. Art+Cake was launched in September 2011. Organised by the *SW Review*, the event provides locals with an opportunity to buy new art, contemporary and vintage designs, craft and home wares, fashion, jewellery, books and collectibles from local artists and designers, along with a chance to indulge in plenty of cake. For further information and to sign up to the free mailing list email: artbazaar@theswreview.co.uk/artbazaar or call 07588 466 870.

The *SW Review*, formerly known as the *SW4* magazine is celebrating its first anniversary and new name at its free event in Old Clapham Library, 1 North Side, on **Friday 24 February** at 7.45 pm. Further information: www.theswreview.co.uk.

Governor elections at Guy's and St Thomas'

Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Trust (GSTFT) has a Council of Governors composed of governors elected from amongst the local population, patients, staff and local stakeholders.

This is a voluntary role. Governors have an advisory role to the Board of Directors and are responsible for appointing the Chair and the non-executive directors. I have been a governor for four years and have found it very interesting to hear about the challenges faced by one of the largest foundation trusts in the country. It is in the interests of the local population that governors ensure that this hospital continues to provide a good service, as we will probably all need it as we get older!

Five public governors and five patient governors are due to be elected in May 2012. You need to be a member of GSTFT in order to stand for election. You can become a member if you live in Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth, Westminster or Lewisham, or have attended Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals as a patient during the last 5 years. To be a public governor you must be in the former category and to be a patient governor in the latter. The deadline for nominations will be 25 April.

Go to www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/home.aspx (box at bottom right) for more information on becoming a member, and about the elections (available there soon). Please contact me (jennycobley@aol.com) if you would like to know more.

Jenny Cobley

Clapham Chamber Concerts

On **Friday 10 February** a recital by Kirby Hall (soprano), Fraser Kelman (oboe) and Helen Taylor (piano) will include Vaughan Williams' *Blake Songs* for soprano and oboe, a selection of Mozart's arias and Faure's melodies as well as Saint-Saens' *Oboe Sonata*.

The concert on **Friday 23 March** will be music inspired by dance, played by Amanda Lake (violin) and Jessie Maryon Davies (piano): Britten's Suite for violin and piano, Szymanowski's *Nocturne and Tarantella*, Ravel's *Habanera*, Piazzolla's *Tango* and the premiere of a work by local composer Michael Graubart.

Both concerts start at 7.30 pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0EA. Tickets are available on the door at £10 (concessions £8).

Lambeth Prospects

An exhibition of images from the collection at Lambeth Archives, from the 17th to the 21st centuries, opens on **Thursday 9 February** at Morley College Gallery, 61 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7HT.

The views, in media including oil, watercolour, print and photography give a rarely seen insight into Lambeth over the centuries. They focus on the north of the borough's transition from a riverside village, to a Victorian industrial centre and then to today's diverse 21st century community, but also on the development of its suburbs in Brixton, Streatham, Clapham and Norwood.

The exhibition runs until 23 February. For opening times telephone 020 7450 1826 or email gallery@morleycollege.ac.uk.

The Rainbow School

At our November meeting Karen Sorab spoke to us passionately and movingly about the charity she founded, recently renamed BeyondAutism, and the Rainbow School for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

She first told us something about autism – the ‘hidden disability’ – a complex neurological disorder, which is identified in the first three years of life. Sufferers typically have speech and social problems, learning difficulties, lack communication skills and spatial awareness, and often prefer to be alone. At the severe end of the spectrum they need 24-hour support, as they are unable to understand every day concepts like water, electricity and roads, have difficulty understanding instructions and take language literally. Any change in routine causes anxiety and tantrums, so that life for carers is very stressful. Sufferers must be taught every skill since they lack the ability to pick up knowledge by osmosis.

The cause of ASD is unknown and there is no known cure. One in every hundred children in this country suffers from ASD, and four times as many boys as girls. Many partnerships break up as a result of the stress caused, and the cost to the UK government is huge.

When Karen’s daughter, Alex, was diagnosed with the disorder at the age of two years, and Karen was told that this meant life in an institution, she determined to find another solution. Through the autism charity, Peach, she discovered Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) which was an immediate help to Alex. She then, with three other mothers of autistic children, started a school for autistic children in a prefab in the grounds of Beatrix Potter School in Earlsfield. The school initially had just four children. Within a few years it moved to new premises – the old tram house in Garratt Lane – and had 20 children.

Teaching in the school is based on Verbal Behaviour (VB) a branch of ABA, which breaks each task down to a logical progression with a reward at the end. It teaches children to listen and learn, aiming to develop functional communication and learning skills. The Rainbow School is a registered charity, an independent school, open to all with a statement for ASD.

Last year the school received loans and grants of £4.38m to renovate a recently purchased property on North Side Wandsworth Common. This means that a Secondary School can be added alongside the Primary School, and children between the ages of 4 and 17 can receive the dedicated one-to-one teaching and personalised curriculum so necessary for them to overcome their disabilities.

The attentive audience had several questions for Karen. She attributed the apparent increase in the incidence of autism to better diagnosis. She confirmed that music therapy plays a large part in the teaching, that the school is free, with fees paid by the local authority, that the national curriculum is followed and that Alex has now achieved GCSE passes!

We are very grateful to Karen for an inspirational talk, and especially for the fact that she stood in at short notice when a speaker dropped out at the last moment. For more information go to: beyondautism.org.uk, and do consider supporting this valuable local charity.

Karen has asked me to thank members who have already kindly donated and, to save postage, have asked not to receive a ‘thank you’ note. She adds that if you would like to visit to see the school in action you are very welcome to contact her.

Julius Caesar

As part of the RSC Open Stages festival, Southside Players will be staging *Julius Caesar* – with a twist. This version, inspired by the events of spring 2011, is not set in Ancient Rome but in modern London, in the very real and immediate climate of regime change, public unrest and twitter revolutions.

Using social media as part of the mise-en-scène the audience will be encouraged to keep their phones switched ON and to join the twitter feed.

Julius Caesar is at Chestnut Grove Theatre, Chestnut Grove School, Boundaries Road, Balham SW12 8JZ from **Wednesday 15 February to Saturday 18 February** at 7.45 pm (5.00 pm Saturday). Tickets: £10.00, concessions (Wednesday and Saturday) £7.50 from the box office 07914 657 524 or book online at: www.southsideplayers.org.uk.

De Morgans and the Sea

A new exhibition opening at the De Morgan Centre on **Friday 3 February** is entitled *Voyages of Discovery: The de Morgans and the Sea*. It will feature ships, sea monsters, shells, sirens and sea-maidens on William de Morgan’s distinctive ceramics and his wife’s paintings. A tile panel commissioned for a P & O ship in 1895 will be among the exhibits. Check opening times at www.demorgan.org.uk or 020 8871 1144.

Lambeth College

Richard Chambers, who retired as Principal of Lambeth College last October was awarded the OBE in the New Years Honours list for his services to Further Education. Under his leadership, in 2008 the college was graded outstanding in leadership and management. He is succeeded as Principal by Mark Silverman.

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.
