

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter



Issue 349 July/August 2012

### Clapham Common Trees

With this newsletter you will receive your free copy of our new Clapham Common Tree guide, prepared by Jennifer Everett and members of the Commons and Open Spaces Subcommittee and designed by Claire Fry. We hope you will find this interesting and informative. If you know of any schools, clubs or local organisations who might like copies please contact Jennifer Everett (details on back page).

### Garden Open

The garden at 35 Turret Grove SW4 0ES will be open on **Sunday 22 July** from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission £3, children free, home made teas. This exuberant garden is described by its owner as 'a visual feast of intoxicating colours' where 'Clapham meets Jamaica'. See photos on [www.turretgrove.com](http://www.turretgrove.com).

### New Library

The new library in Clapham High Street will be opening to the public in mid-July. There will be a formal opening later in the year.

### New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members this month: John Bainton, Joe Bikart and Adrien Mastrosimone, Heather Binney and Bryan Murphy, Adam, Louise, Charlotte and Hugo Butcher, Lily Corbett, Michael Crick and Lucy and Isabel Hetherington, Louise and Russell Hendry, Fiona Hicks-Beach, Polly Pattullo, and Ashley Letchford of Jam Tree Clapham.

This year's summer party is on **Wednesday 4 July** at the **Hibbert Almshouses** on Wandsworth Road. There may still be some tickets available when you receive this newsletter. Check with Alyson Wilson.

### Andy Warhol

Now on at Dulwich Picture Gallery, and continuing until mid-September, is an exhibition of the Andy Warhol print portfolios, including the iconic Marilyn and Muhammed Ali series as well as many less familiar sets. For full details and opening time go to [www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk) or call 020 8693 5254.

### Dido and Aeneas

On **Saturday 7 July** at 7.30 pm the Festival Chorus, under their musical director David Fawcett, will perform Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets £10 (concessions £6) on the door or from the box office 07951 791619.

### Open-air cinema

The Trinity Hospice open-air cinema series this year is showing *Mamma Mia* on **Wednesday 15 August** and *Back to the Future Part 1* on **Friday 17 August**. Gates open at 6.30 pm for picnics and the film starts at 8.30 pm. Tickets £15 (concessions £10) from [clubbock@trinityhospice.org.uk](mailto:clubbock@trinityhospice.org.uk) or 020 7787 1080.

In July and August our regular meetings are replaced by the following walks:

#### Wednesday 18 July

**Clapham Park.** Starting from Clapham Common Underground Station, Peter Jefferson Smith will lead this walk around the Park Hill area. This was first developed for housing in the 1820s, and has an interesting range of suburban housing from then to the present day. There are a few remains of industry and trade union offices from the 1930s.

#### Wednesday 15 August

**Historic Clapham.** This walk, led by Anne Wilson, will explore the centre of the original settlement of Clapham at St. Paul's Church in Rectory Grove and the gradual expansion of the village to the stagecoach and omnibus stand in the Old Town. It will also cover the 18th century expansion around the Common and Holy Trinity Church.

For both walks meet at the clock tower outside Clapham Common Underground Station at 6.30 pm. Walks last about 1½ hours and are free. There are many other walks during the summer organised by local societies. Ask the leader of your walk for a leaflet with details.

**Our next meeting at Clapham Manor Primary School is on:**

#### Wednesday 19 September

**The greening of a small Victorian terraced house in Clapham Old Town** – a follow-up on Iain McCaig's talk last year about ways to reduce heat loss in traditional buildings. **Peter and Jenny Cobley** have downsized and modernised a house with the aim of reducing running costs, and providing a more comfortable home, whilst at the same time doing their bit to save the planet. Susan Venner, the project architect and specialist in green buildings, will be present to explain the problems involved in constructing both new and old sustainable buildings.

## St Mary's Church and Monastery

For our May meeting over 70 members gathered at the monastery and, after refreshments in the cloister, moved into the church to hear Father Dominic O'Toole's concise and informative, illustrated history of the Redemptorists and of the Clapham monastery and church.

The order was founded in 1732 by a Neapolitan priest, Alphonsus Liguori, in the village of Scala, just above Amalfi. The mission of the order was to preach in villages in a simple manner and to offer retreats. St Alphonsus wrote over 100 books, and was a prolific musician – amongst the hymns he wrote is the popular 'O Bread of Heaven'.

The Redemptorists first came to England in 1843 when a small community landed in Falmouth. In 1848 at the invitation of Bishop Wiseman a group came to Clapham where they purchased part of a house, formerly the home of Lord Teignmouth, which was roughly on the site of the present monastery. The original Clapham community consisted of one Austrian, one Russian, one Belgian – all with limited English – and an American student. Initially the parlour of the house was the chapel, but this soon proved inadequate for the growing community and the foundation stone of the present church was laid in 1849. The architect was William Wardell, a pupil of Pugin. Wardell subsequently emigrated to Australia where his work includes the cathedrals in Sydney and Melbourne. The community ran into serious debt by building the church, but fortunately, a new recruit to the community, Edmund Douglas, who came from a wealthy family paid off the debts.

St Mary's had a splendid peal of six bells but these could not be used for several years because Mr Soltau, the owner of the other part of the house the community had bought, obtained an injunction to silence the bells since the belfry was outside

his bedroom window. On his death in 1864 the Redemptorists bought Mr Soltau's half of the house, the bells pealed and the community expanded.

In 1892 local architect, John Francis Bentley (who lived in Old Town and most famously designed Westminster Cathedral) designed a new transept for the church as well as the present red-brick monastery. This was built in front of the old house which was demolished once the new building was completed. Father Dominic mentioned the further alterations to the church in the 1920s, and pointed out various objects of interest which we could look at later.

He then told us about the essential repairs, which will commence in September. The Kentish ragstone, of which the church is built, has weathered badly, and many stones need to be replaced. There are also iron bands between the stones on the spire, which have corroded so badly that light can be seen through them. The dangerous state of the spire explains the decking which has encircled it for some months. A major fundraising effort has been launched to repay the loan raised to enable the work to start without delay.

Father Dominic took some questions before inviting us to look round the church and parts of the monastery under the guidance of Father Michael, while he himself showed us plans and pictures of the monastery which were laid out in the refectory. Finally, we were all given an illustrated guide to the church.

We are very grateful to Father Dominic for his time and trouble in arranging a most interesting evening, and to the community for allowing us to see inside the monastery. St Mary's Church is open most of the day and is well worth a visit.

*Alyson Wilson*

## Maurice Stewart (1932-2012)

Maurice Stewart, whose death in April was recorded in our May newsletter, was for many years a familiar Clapham personality. Born in Leicester to a mother who had been prevented from fulfilling her own theatrical ambition, he started singing, dancing and acting at a very early age. When, at 11, he won a scholarship to the Italia Conti stage school, he lodged with a Clapham family; by the age of 16 he was appearing regularly in stage shows and, at the bidding of his far-sighted mother, bought the house in Fitzwilliam Road that became his London base for the next 50 years. So began an extraordinarily wide-ranging career spent largely in and around the theatre (though with the odd entrepreneurial venture into other areas).

His early theatrical work was in variety. At the age of 15 he joined a cast of under-21s to tour austere post-war Britain for 38 weeks with a variety revue *Youth on Parade* which gave twice-nightly shows and had its own railway wagon to carry cast, props and scenery to a new town every Sunday. Around this time, he adopted 'Maurice Stewart' as his stage name (he had previously been Jim Addison) to become one-third of a variety act, *The Stewart Brothers and Angela*, which toured variety theatres around the country and also appeared in prime London night clubs such as the Embassy, the 400 and the Blue Note. He then began to look for ways of broadening his experience and activity, taking on stage management and acting work first with a number of repertory companies, then working with the Old Vic company in a half-year Shakespearean tour of the USA and Canada, and becoming stage and company manager for several British theatrical touring companies. He also started to direct productions for various repertory companies, and became involved in theatrical training at RADA and other colleges.

His later career included television work, both as writer and director; and he developed new interests in areas such as puppetry and oral history while continuing to expand his knowledge of drama and the history of the theatre. The Clapham Society put his extensive experience to good use for several very successful events celebrating Noel Coward, Gilbert and Sullivan, Samuel Pepys, the British Music Hall tradition, and – in 2010 – the 'unpredictable' life and times of Maurice himself. More detail of this eventful career can be found at [www.mauricestewartuk.co.uk](http://www.mauricestewartuk.co.uk).

Two years ago, Maurice moved to a spectacularly-placed flat overlooking the sea at Rottingdean, which he had inventively upgraded and refurbished to form an imaginative and comfortable home. All his friends will miss the chat, reminiscence, discussion, food, wine and general enjoyment that were part of every visit to him there.

*Jill Cramphorn*

## Battersea film project

Do you have any cine film or video that we could use in an exciting new research project? To research done on the parish of Battersea by the Survey of London, which will be published next year, we will

add film, photographs, prints, drawings and maps to build up a rich portrait of Battersea. This will be on a website and a Smartphone app that works like Sat Nav so you can both access what we have gathered and add to it yourself to

create an interactive living history. Look at our website for more information, [expressivespace.org/battersea.html](http://expressivespace.org/battersea.html), call 020 7973 3643 or 07980 807871, email [battersea@arct.cam.uk](mailto:battersea@arct.cam.uk).

*Aileen Reed*



## The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in Clapham

*Over the Diamond Jubilee weekend Holy Trinity Church flew a large Union Jack which had seen active service on a battleship during the First World War. One of our members inherited it from her grandfather.*

*Photographs by Bill Emmett, Anna Jefferson Smith and Sinclair Johnston*

*During the Diamond Jubilee royal visit to south London Anna and Peter Jefferson Smith were presented to HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. They are seen here with Mrs Josie Heffernan and Councillor Christopher Wellbelove.*



*A lively street party was held in Prescott Place*



*... and one in Narbonne Avenue*



*... and the Queen was in Old Town*

This month we review two books of local interest: one a well researched account of the life of an eminent Clapham family 200 years ago and the other a fictional take on contemporary life in a south London suburb, which bears a remarkable resemblance to Clapham. Both books are available at local bookshops.

***Wilberforce, Family and Friends* by Anne Stott**

In 2004 Anne Stott's biography of the evangelical philanthropist Hannah More, was published to critical acclaim, winning the Rose Mary Crawshay prize for literary biography. And hard on its heels (in literary terms anyway) comes another fascinating book on the life of *Wilberforce, Family and Friends*. Both books are published by Oxford University Press and were launched at Holy Trinity Clapham, the spiritual home of the Clapham Sect.

Anne has published widely on women and evangelicalism, which makes her latest book all the more fascinating because most of the books on my bookshelves about the slave trade and its abolition have been written by men. By contrast, Dr Stott's biographical insights bring to the foreground the women who managed themselves, and the families of high profile public figureheads in the 18th and 19th centuries and draws extensively on diarised records of what makes families tick in any generation – incidental and sometimes consequential asides, preoccupations and relationships which add a rich texture to otherwise complicated but significant public figures. Relationships between spouses, the joys and anxieties of child rearing, domestic ideology, women and gender, sexuality and intimacy are explored with great insight and sensitivity over 16 chapters covering the abolitionists; love, marriage and their consequences; family life in Clapham and the sometimes difficult and strained relationships between a father and his progeny.

Anne's thoroughly well researched references and notes make this account of Clapham's most significant resident and the network of domestic relationship which earthed his pursuit of great causes, a thoroughly good read, casting light on the crucial significance of Wilberforce's closest friends and acquaintances. In the end, I was left with a more sympathetic impression of those who for too long have lurked in the shadows of this famous man. Summer's coming and time, like my forebears here, to pour something like a decent cup of tea (no sugar) and settle down to an entertaining and edifying read.

*Canon David Isherwood*

***Capital* by John Lanchester**

Pepys Road is a fictitious street in an unnamed suburb of south London. Unnamed, but not unrecognisable: it has a common with a bandstand and lies between Balham and Stockwell. The inhabitants of Pepys Road are some of the people you might find in such a place. There is the old lady who lives, and dies, in the house where she was born; the wealthy banker and his wife, for whom contentment is measured by their ability to spend lavishly; the young Senegalese football prodigy temporarily living in the house owned by a premier football club; and the Asian Muslim family in the corner shop. Closely linked with Pepys Road are the Polish builder and the traffic warden, a Zimbabwean failed asylum seeker.

The characters are contrasting and colourful, but real. Many are the sorts of people I can recognise in Clapham; Eastern European builders working in our street will shortly be repairing my garden wall; and I think I recognise the vicar who conducts the funeral, though she moved from Clapham a few years ago. The events in the book are realistic too; the only artificial part of the plot is a campaign of threatening postcards to all the houses in the street, but this does provide some linkage and enables the downfall of several of the characters.

*Capital* tells the stories of these people between December 2007 and November 2008, that time when the Western economies were steaming towards the rocks. The stories interconnect at many points, but the real connecting theme is what the title suggests – money, having it, losing it, and never having had much of it. In Pepys Road, people live individual lives and there is little neighbourliness, save from the Muslim family. They provide a counterpoint to western values and the hedonistic lifestyle, though they too have their errant members.

The society in which the characters live is real enough too. The author lives here, so he should know. Novels like this, however, which paint a picture of a society at a point in time, are not social studies, and their authors are artists, not photographers. We see what the artist chooses that we will see, through the glasses he provides and coloured by his palette. Pepys Road is a place, not a community, a society where there is no such thing as society. If the unnamed suburb were all like this, it would not be the sort of place where I would want to live, and I don't think it is.

*Peter Jefferson Smith*

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

<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Annabel Allott</b>
21 Clapham Common West Side, London SW4 9AN	
Tel: 020 7228 5551	Email: <a href="mailto:annabel@allott.plus.com">annabel@allott.plus.com</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Jill Cramphorn</b>
552 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 3JX	
Tel: 020 7720 3343	
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>David Brown</b>
15 Turret Grove, London SW4 0ES	
Tel: 020 7720 7536	
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	<b>Jennifer Everett</b>
30 Trinity Close, London SW4 0JD	
Tel: 020 7627 4770	

<b>Meetings and Events</b>	<b>Maev Sullivan</b>
2 Fitzwilliam Road, London SW4 0DN	
Tel: 020 7498 9205	Email: <a href="mailto:maevsullivan@gmail.com">maevsullivan@gmail.com</a>
<b>Planning Matters</b>	<b>Philip Ashford</b>
45 Rodenhurst Road, London SW4 8AE	
Tel: 020 8674 1727	Email: <a href="mailto:pjashford@yahoo.co.uk">pjashford@yahoo.co.uk</a>
<b>Common and Open Spaces</b>	<b>Anna Jefferson Smith</b>
22 Iveley Road, London SW4 0EW	
Tel: 020 7622 8285	Email: <a href="mailto:annajs@mac.com">annajs@mac.com</a>
<b>Newsletter and Publications</b>	<b>Alyson Wilson</b>
22 Crescent Grove, London SW4 7AH	
Tel: 020 7622 6360	Email: <a href="mailto:alysonwilson.sw4@virgin.net">alysonwilson.sw4@virgin.net</a>

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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)

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