



The Clapham Society

Newsletter

Issue 365

March 2014

Commemorating the First World War

At the start of this centenary year, much has already been written and spoken about the First World War, some of it highly controversial. But one aspect is beyond controversy: the war affected the lives of most families, here and in the other combatant countries, and it changed society for ever. Over the next four years, we can expect many projects to record memories, including a London wide initiative by Age Exchange, the subject of a recent open day at Clapham Library. The Clapham Society would like to make its own contribution.

Many of our members will have fathers or grandfathers who took part in the war, and maybe uncles or great-uncles who died. Women's lives were changed also, many doing work previously reserved to men. In our September meeting, we would like to present some of these experiences. To plan for this, we would like to hear from any members who have family memories they would be willing to contribute. These might be photographs, letters or other documents, or simply what they have been told – though many of those who were in the war would never talk about it afterwards. There doesn't have to be a connection with Clapham, as many of us or our families come from elsewhere. If you would like to contribute, please get in touch with Peter Jefferson Smith, 22 Ivey Road, London SW4 0EW, email peterjs1@mac.com, with an outline of what you could say.

Vauxhall Bus Station

Regular users of Vauxhall bus station will be concerned to learn that its future is uncertain. Although it was opened less than ten years ago, it would disappear completely if proposals by Lambeth Council and TfL to redevelop the area were adopted. These would involve getting rid of the gyratory system and reinstating two-way traffic along Wandsworth Road. Bondway would become a pedestrianised high street, and the bus stops would be relocated to the roadside.

At a number of recent local meetings vociferous opposition to these plans has been very evident, but Lambeth Council and TfL have given no assurance that the option of retaining the bus station as part of any redevelopment will be considered. The bus station's supporters now have a Facebook page ([facebook.com/pages/We-love-Vauxhall-BusStation/207071692827334](https://www.facebook.com/pages/We-love-Vauxhall-BusStation/207071692827334)), and the websites of the Vauxhall Society (vauxhallcivicsociety.org.uk) and Kennington Oval and Vauxhall Forum (forumkov.wix.com/kov-forum) give more information including details of an on-line petition. The Roads and Transport Sub-committee will keep a close eye on the situation.

This year our meetings will be held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW on **MONDAY** evenings. The bar at Omnibus will be open from 7 pm, and meetings will commence at 8 pm. Our guest will normally speak for about 45 minutes, followed by around 15 minutes for questions and discussion, and the bar will remain open after meetings. Meetings are free and open to non-members, so please bring your friends along.

Monday 17 March

Sustaining the High Street. Jeremy Keates, the Clapham and Brixton Town Centre Manager at Lambeth Council, will describe the work currently taking place to support and strengthen the local business community. We will be able to hear about a new business partnership for the town, and also understand how Clapham performs as a town centre and learn about current high street trends. The well-being of the High Street has been a matter of concern for the Society over many years, and this meeting will be a good opportunity to discuss how it is now and how we might hope for it to develop in future.

Monday 14 April

Pursuing Politicians. It is said that the five words politicians most fear are 'Michael Crick is in reception'. Local resident **Michael Crick**, political correspondent for Channel 4 News, ex-Newsnight presenter, biographer of Arthur Scargill, Jeffrey Archer, Michael Heseltine, Michael Howard and Alex Ferguson, and member of the Clapham Society will reveal some of his encounters with politics and politicians. Most recently he was attacked by Godfrey Bloom of Ukip who said afterwards he was thinking of taking up shooting and 'Crick might be the first cartridge'.

Clapham Books

We are delighted to learn that Clapham Books have now arranged their relocation, and will be opening in the first week of April at 26, The Pavement, SW4 0JA – an excellent central Clapham location, only two doors away from Moens!

On the Common

The increasingly fierce debate about the commercialisation of Clapham Common continues. When the Society learned that Live Nation, the UK's biggest music business, was negotiating with Lambeth for a three-year contract and was applying for an open-ended Premises Licence, it was agreed that we should try to take our concerns to the Chief Executive, Derrick Anderson CBE. He was unable to see us before the Live Nation application was heard by the LBL Licensing Sub-committee. The outcome was reported in the February Newsletter.

A meeting on 14 January was agreed and it was attended by Derrick Anderson, Julian Ellerby (Director of Campaigns and Communications) and Councillor Sally Prentice for Lambeth Council, and Annabel Allott, Chairman of the Society, John Adams and Alison Macnair, the two previous Chairmen, and Anna Jefferson Smith, Convenor of the Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee, for the Society. We were given a generous 45 minutes during which there was a wide ranging discussion of the main issues that we felt were having a damaging effect on the Common. As well as inappropriate events, environmental damage and management, we expressed concerns about proposals for extended facilities in a significantly larger building on the site of the West Side changing rooms, with an expansion of the number of football pitches, and even the possibility of a 100-space car park on the funfair site.

We have now received a detailed letter in hard copy – unusual in itself – from Dr Iain Boulton, Parks Project Officer (Communities & Education), on behalf of colleagues, addressing some of our concerns. It ended: 'In conclusion be assured that Lambeth officers are doing their best to preserve the quality and character of Clapham Common, and will ensure that its natural assets are protected, including from events which are an important element of the way in which the Common is managed to ensure it meets the needs of all its users.'

In this context it is worth repeating that the Clapham Society is happy to support many types of events which are appropriate to the venue. Most people were very sorry to lose Ben and Jerry's Sundae which reflected care of the environment as well as appealing to all age groups. Members of the Society were instrumental in bringing the event to the Common and would very much appreciate its return.

Anna Jefferson Smith

Clapham Chamber Concerts

Following the concert on **Friday 28 February** commemorating the anniversary of the First World War, **A Line in the Sand: 100 years since WWI**, Clapham Chamber Concerts continues its spring programme on **Friday 28 March**, with a return visit by the cello and organ ensemble, the Svyati Duo. The Duo takes its name from the solo cello and choir masterpiece *Svyati* by Sir John Tavener, who was their patron until his death in 2013.

Rebecca Hewes (cello) and Julian Colling (organ) will perform works by Bach, Buxtehude, Fauré and Rheinberger. The concert will also feature the world première of a piece by Colin Riley.

Concerts are at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX, at 7.30 pm (doors open 7.00 pm). Tickets on the door: £12/£9 concessions and students, £5 children. For more details go to claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk.

Festival Chorus

On **Saturday 29 March** at 7.30 pm the Festival Chorus, under their conductor and Musical Director, David Fawcett with the Sinclair Sinfonia will be performing Liszt's *Via Crucis*, Bach's *Cantatas 38 and 182* and Bruckner's *Motets for Holy Week*.

This varied programme of works were all composed for, or relate to, that particular season in the church calendar leading up to Easter – Holy Week. The two Bach Cantatas will be known to many. In the case of *Cantata 38* it is the sentiments that are so pertinent, while Bach composed *Cantata 182* for Palm Sunday, the event that stands at the beginning of Holy Week, the week in which the church remembers the events leading up to the Crucifixion on Good Friday, followed by the Resurrection at Easter. Similarly, the three Bruckner *Motets* are specific to this week.

The concert is at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets on the door £12, £8 concessions, from the box office 07951 791619 or slms.org.uk/2/book/.

An outsider's view

We recently received a fascinating account from Peter Hopkins who lodged with Mr and Mrs Wilson in Offerton Road (Grafton Square) when he was based at the War Office in Chessington in 1955-56, doing his National Service. A return visit to Clapham in 2004 led him to recall life in London, not just Clapham, at that time. A short extract is shown below, but the full account can be seen on our website, in the historical articles section. (claphamsociety.com/articles/localhistory.html)

'In the mid-1950s that part of Clapham had a neglected and run-down air. Grafton Square was hardly Berkeley Square. Its very shabby and unkempt weed-grown central garden was surrounded by broken railings. Almost all the houses in the area needed refurbishment and a coat of paint. And yet their terraced architecture suggested that the district had seen better days. ... As London had expanded, desirable dwellings had evidently moved further out, leaving this area to decline into cheap lodging houses.

Cheap indeed! Mrs Wilson's weekly charge for bed-and-breakfast at 1 Offerton Road was thirty shillings (£1.50). Yes, 30/- per WEEK! And it included full board on Sundays! There was another lodging house nearby where I heard that young soldiers paid even less: only 27/6 weekly (£1.37). It is strange to reflect that nowadays, of course, that entire weekly rent wouldn't buy a cup of coffee. But it must be remembered that National Service basic pay for a Private soldier was then 4/- (20p) daily, or £1.40 per week. And even the national average weekly basic wage in the mid-1950s would have been well under £10. I cannot now recall what the Army paid me as an official lodgings allowance, but by 1956, after several stages of promotion to sergeant, I was receiving total pay of about £3.50 a week – and this was certainly enough for my simple requirements, even in London. ...

I occupied a cramped little chamber on the top floor – once, no doubt, a servant's room. I could touch three of the walls while lying on the bed. Frayed curtains, worn lino, 40-watt bulb: but what more could you expect for thirty bob a week? There was a tiny, antiquated, free-standing gas heater on which I could balance a kettle and even – with a little ingenuity – make toast. I was three floors up, and there was no fire escape. The entire house would have failed any test applied nowadays by the fire service or the Health & Safety Executive!'

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.

Volunteer at Omnibus

Volunteers play a vital role in the day to day running of Omnibus and so they are always looking for enthusiastic team members. There are various opportunities available including bar, front of house and box office. A small but regular commitment is required, and in return you are offered the experience of working in a new and exciting arts centre. Volunteers are given free tickets, a range of in-house discounts and a free drink voucher after every shift. To join the team email volunteers@omnibus-clapham.org.

Prisonomics

For our first meeting of the year, and the first at our new venue, we had a record audience of 93 members and guests to hear local resident and Clapham Society member, Vicky Pryce talk about her recently published book, *Prisonomics: Behind bars in Britain's failing prisons*. Vicky received an eight-month prison sentence for perverting the course of justice when she admitted taking speeding points for her ex-husband. During her time at Holloway and East Sutton Park open prison, near Maidstone she kept a diary on which this book is based. The book also addresses the wider issues of the suitability of prison sentences for women, especially those with families, and discusses possible alternatives.

Vicky gave some basic facts of which many of us were ignorant. It is normal practice that an eight-month sentence is immediately reduced to four months of which two are served in prison, and two at home under a Home Detention Curfew or 'tag'. She pointed out that many women simply left their children with a neighbour when they went to court, not expecting to be convicted. When found guilty they are taken straight to prison, so, if as is often the case a woman does not have a partner, her children are likely to be taken in to care. On release women may well find they have to fight to get their children back, they may be homeless and are likely to have lost their jobs. The statistics she quoted are shocking, not only on a personal level, but because of the needless waste of money. She argued that with steadily falling crime rates, the fact that the number of people in prison has doubled over the last 20 years at a huge cost to the economy and society makes no sense at a time of shrinking government budgets.

While Vicky's talk was entertaining, and many of the incidents and experiences she related were amusing (such as the time the van transferring her from Holloway to East Sutton Park broke down, and the replacement van got lost), the underlying theme of the book is the urgent need for an alternative to prison for women. Community service is one obvious alternative.

Royalties from the sale of the book go to the charity Working Chance which finds quality jobs for ex-offenders with various employers, including Virgin and Pret A Manger. Investment in the Working Chance model has provided excellent returns with a consistent reoffending rate of less than 3%, compared to the national average of 45%. Their cost to place a woman in work is £3,000, compared to £45,000 to keep a woman in prison for one year. Working Chance aims to place more than 750 women into work over the next three years.

Old Town is being transformed now but it looked quite different in 2000.

Right: Before Starbucks was built on the corner of Orlando Road, next to the Prince of Wales. The Rose and Crown is in the foreground and Omnibus (then the library) in the background.



Left: The Polygon before the east side was rebuilt. After the original houses were destroyed by WWII bombing a garage and car salesroom occupied the site for many years. The remaining original houses can be seen on the extreme right of the picture.

Events at Omnibus

Sunday 2 March at 4.30 pm. Award-winning piano and cello duo Pei-Jee Ng and Chiao-Ying Chang have performed in numerous festivals, competitions and concert halls around the world. They are both members of the Fournier Trio. They will play music by Beethoven, Barber and Franck. Tickets £15/£12 concessions.

Sunday 9 March at 7 pm. Misha Mullov-Abbado Quintet plays an original set of compositions and arrangements. From chorales and free music to heavy swing and funk, their influences are as diverse as Bach, Stevie Wonder and Brad Mehldau. Tickets £10.

Sunday 16 March at 4.30 pm. Celan Quartet perform regularly across the UK and will appear at the Cheltenham Music festival later this year alongside the Medici Quartet in a world premiere of a work by John Tavener. They will play a programme of Mozart, Schubert and Beethoven. Tickets £15/£12 concessions.

Sunday 23 March at 7 pm. With a passion for hot swing from the 20s and 30s, the five-piece Man Overboard brings together 'staggeringly virtuosic' violinist Thomas Gould, lyrical clarinettist Ewan Bleach and the distinctive vocals of Louisa Jones. With double bass and guitar. Tickets £15/£12 concessions.

Sunday 30 March at 4.30 pm. Making her critically acclaimed debut with the Budapest Festival Orchestra aged twelve, Hungarian violinist Júlia Pusker has been described by *The Times* as a player of 'eye popping virtuosity'. With Alexandra Vaduva, piano, and Matthew Scott, clarinet. The programme will include music by Bach, Bartok, Milhaud and Ysaye. Tickets £15/£12 concessions.

For tickets call the box office 020 7498 4699, visit omnibus-clapham.org or drop in to Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

New events are regularly scheduled at Omnibus, so go to the website and put your name on the emailing list to ensure that you receive regular updates.

Wandsworth Museum

The current interesting exhibition

Keep it clean: A grubby history of Wandsworth has been extended until 26 April. Songs and Stories for tinies (up to 3-year olds) are on **Thursday 13 March**, when the theme is Colours and **Thursday 27 March**, when the theme is Spring. Sessions are from 10.15 to 10.45 am.

For details and museum opening times go to wandsworthmuseum.co.uk or call 020 8870 6060.

Councillor Mark Bennett

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death early in February of the Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Mark Bennett, at the age of only 43 years. Councillor Bennett was a keen historian and an enthusiastic and inspiring chairman of the steering group planning Lambeth Council's commemoration of World War I. Members will remember him at the opening of Omnibus at the end of last year. He will be greatly missed.

Care for a coffee?

Would you like to hold a coffee (or tea) party to raise funds for Trinity Hospice? Trinity's Big Care for a Coffee Weekend starts on **Friday 21 March**. You are invited to organise a morning coffee or afternoon tea party for your friends, and ask them to make a donation to Trinity Hospice as they leave.

For details and a special pack including invitations, cake recipes and a voucher for free ground coffee from Starbucks contact Catherine on 020 7787 1012 or email cyskes@trinityhospice.org.

Men in Pants

An exhibition of Evelyn De Morgan's male life drawings from the Slade School onwards starts at the De Morgan Foundation on **Friday 7 February**.

This exhibition sheds new light on the experiences of female Victorian artists. The De Morgan Centre, 38 West Hill, SW18 1RX is open Tuesday – Friday 12 pm – 4 pm, Saturday 11 am – 5 pm. Late opening **Thursday 6 March** until 8 pm.

Abbeville Road

We are sorry to see the loss of another independent shop in Abbeville Road, with the recent closure of Treohans, both the grocery and hardware departments. They are to be replaced by a Cooperative Food Store.

Making connections

We answer many enquiries about Clapham history, via our website, and we also receive interesting reminiscences about Clapham in earlier times, from former Clapham residents all over the world. In our newsletter in October 2012 we published some memories of growing up in war-time Clapham, which had been sent to us from New Zealand by Ron Durham.

This article recently caught the eye of Reginald Denny from Salisbury who emailed to ask if we could put him in touch with Ron, who had been his neighbour and best friend as a child, and best man at his wedding, but they had later lost contact with each other. So, to the delight of both of them, we were able to put them back in touch, and they are now exchanging emails!

Reginald Denny's family ran an old-established dairy in Clapham, and in our book, *Clapham in the Twentieth Century* we have a good picture of the horse-drawn milk delivery cart outside their premises in Stonhouse Street. This interesting book of memories of Clapham throughout the 20th century can be purchased on our website.

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 our website at claphamsociety.com