

The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 366

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Curiouser and curiouser!



A giant hedgehog appeared briefly on a recent sunny Sunday morning on Clapham Common. At 12 ft long, 7 ft high and 8ft wide with 2000 spikes made from soft wood, the hedgehog was unveiled to launch a new series of David Attenborough's programme, *Natural Curiosities*.

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 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'.

Diane Abbott MP

The 27th Martin Luther King Memorial Lecture will be given on **Saturday 5 April** at Clapham Methodist Church, 121 Clapham High Street, SW4 7JR by Diane Abbott, MP, the first black woman MP in the UK. The title of her lecture is *The Relevance of Nelson Mandela's Journey to the future of Black Politics in Britain*. Doors open at 5.30 pm. Tickets £10/£6 concessions, on the door, include light refreshments, soloist and choir.

Gardens Open

Clapham Society member, Charles Ruthfoord's garden at 51 The Chase SW4 0NP will be open on **Sunday 27 April** from 2 pm to 5 pm and on **Wednesday 7 May** from 6 pm to 8 pm. The garden has over 1500 tulips, among irises and tree peonies.

Trinity Hospice Garden will be open on **Saturday 5 April** and **Sunday 6 April** from 10 am to 3 pm. Both openings are for the National Gardens Scheme.

Monday 19 May

Clapham and the Bicycle. Clapham has a little known but important place in the early history of the bicycle. There were several local manufacturers, the earliest (whose machine was appropriately called the Pioneer) in 1879. Perhaps the best known was Claud Butler, operating from Clapham Manor Street between the Wars. Clapham Society member **Roger Armstrong**, cyclist and historian, will tell the story.

European Election Hustings

The Putney Society, in association with other local societies, is organising a European Election Hustings at St Mary's Church, Putney High Street, SW15 1SN on **Thursday 1 May** at 7.30 pm. Candidates of each of the five political parties currently representing London in the European Parliament have been invited. This is your opportunity to listen to the debate and get answers to your questions prior to the European election on **Thursday 22 May**.

Latest News on Website

We have now added a Latest News page to our website. This is mainly to alert members to issues which arise too late for the newsletter deadline. So keep an eye on claphamsociety.com/news/. If there is anything you would like members to know about at short notice please contact Alyson Wilson (details on back page of newsletter).

Shops Moving

At last we have some good news about local independent businesses. **Clapham Books** will be opening at 26 The Pavement on **Thursday 3 April**, when the Pond Gallery closes at that address. But **Pond Framing** will continue to provide a top quality framing service from the basement workshop, and **Pond Gallery** will be going on-line at pondgallery.co.uk, to supply interesting and unusual prints and other art works.

And **Treohan's** hardware shop, which closed a few months ago at 58 Abbeville Road, has re-opened on the other side of the road, slightly further south, at 27 Abbeville Road.

Garden or Car Park?

Many Londoners are enthusiastically paving over their front gardens and turning them into off-street parking. About two-thirds or 12 square miles of the capital's front gardens are now partially paved. If a new car park 22 times the size of Hyde Park were to be suggested there would be a public outcry. Yet this has in effect already happened, quietly and incrementally.

Local estate agents, Aspire, say in their magazine that creating off-street parking could add £30k to the value of your house. So we feel we should spell out the problems in doing so and recommend that you think long and hard before turning your garden into a car park.

Flooding. Paved areas increase water run-off into our overloaded Victorian drains which can overflow into the river causing flooding, often combined with raw sewage. The trends for digging out basements and paving over gardens front and back have added to the threat of flood to such an extent that there are situations where people are pumping water out of their cellars daily. With the threat of climate change promising more of the same, we need green areas to do their job of absorbing water back into the ground. If you must pave then porous paving should always be top of the list.

Streetscape. The removal of boundary



Local MP Kate Hoey joined Dame Vivienne Westwood, artist Maggie Hambling and other local residents in Lillieshall Road to protest against the continuing sale by Lambeth Council of rented accommodation in Listed Buildings in Clapham Old Town. The Clapham Society was represented by Peter Cobley (back right).

One house was sold for £725,000 and another for £730,000. We would like to think that the funds will be used for new affordable, or rental houses.

walls, fences, hedges and trees and the paving over of soiled areas means that a street can become hard paved across its entire width. A couple of properties start a skittle effect and everyone else follows. The visually softening effect of vegetation next to the footpath is lost, the road appears wider and the hierarchy of space is lost, making the whole environment harsh and the pedestrian experience poor. You may find that the lovely tree lined street that so attracted you to your home has been gradually eroded. You may have even unwittingly contributed to its demise. If the house is a Listed Building the removal of garden walls or railings requires statutory consent.

Wildlife. London's front gardens cover 3-5% of London's land area, that is 18.5 square miles. This offers a huge potential habitat for wildlife. As we have already paved over 12 square miles of that habitat, you may imagine the loss to our wildlife and biodiversity. Fashion should favour green and planted gardens if we really do care about our environment.

Property Values. It may seem attractive to add value by turning your garden into a car park but, if the majority of the street follows you, property values will reflect an impoverished streetscape.

Prompted by TV makeovers and a vogue for minimalist gardens, the use of contemporary materials in front of period houses is often out-of-keeping

with traditional building and results in a loss of local character. The coherence of the whole street depends upon some conformity in the use of paving materials, fencing and planting.

Finally, if you are still tempted to consider on-site parking or are seduced by a questionable uplift in value, I urge you to put the planet first, to be sustainable, to cherish wildlife and to do your bit for the character of our neighbourhood.

*Diana Armstrong Bell
Landscape Architect*

Trinity Hospice

If you don't have a ballot place for the London Marathon on **Sunday 13 April** you may still have time to join Team Trinity to raise money for Trinity Hospice. Or maybe Trinity's Skydive Day on **Saturday 3 May** would appeal? For details contact Catherine Sykes on 020 7787 1012 or email csykes@trinityhospice.org.uk.

Or why not enter a team for the annual Trinity Golf Day at Kingswood Golf Club on **Thursday 15 May**. Find out more at trinityhospice.org.uk/golf14 or call 020 7787 1046.

More knitters are still required for Trinity's Easter Chick Campaign. If you, or any group you are involved with, would like to knit some cute little chicks which are then stuffed with chocolate eggs to raise money for Trinity Hospice, contact Catherine Sykes (details above).

On the Common



By kind permission of Hydro Cleaning Ltd.

First the good news. As anyone living locally probably knows, there has been water spouting up from a drain cover on the Common since Christmas Eve. A succession of contractors called in by Lambeth Council failed to solve the mystery. On Monday 10 March Hydro Cleansing Ltd finally located a blockage in a drain running along North Side. Using some gargantuan equipment they cleared the blockage and thoroughly washed out the drain. The photo shows one end of the operation which turned into a very smelly exercise. The Hydro Cleansing staff were cheerful and tolerant when responding to endless questions from the curious.

On the debit side, at the time of going to press there has been no progress as yet on the reinstatement of the Event Site following the Freeze Festival which was held at the end of November. The Clapham Common Management Committee, of which both the Clapham Society and the Friends of Clapham Common are members, are pressing hard for urgent action, particularly as the next large event, Moonwalk, is due to begin setting up on 1 May.

February Meeting

The subject of the meeting was Sir Frank Baines (1877–1933), not perhaps the most famous figure but definitely a talented, odd and fascinating man.

An East End boy made good, he became Sir Frank Baines – respected resident of Loughton (with close relatives in smart houses) where he was known as chief architect of the Office of Works, whose work includes Well Hall Estate Eltham, a man who helped plan the coronation of George V, a leader of the conservation movement (responsible for advising on the restoration of the hammer beam roof of Westminster Hall), pioneer of prefabricated factories in WW1, friend of royalty and much more. But he was also Mr Francis Lloyd Baynes – respectable married man with one son who lived modestly in rented accommodation in Clapham's Venn Street, ostensibly as a salesman in motor oils and later an engineer, and had a holiday home in Cornwall.

Chris Pond of the Loughton and District Historical Society gave an informative and highly entertaining account of this mysterious figure who maintained two separate lives.

Frank Baines was obviously highly talented as a manager of projects to a very high standard and one assumes very likeable but a secretive man with a double life, an opportunistic liar (he lied about his age, his qualifications and his job) and 'retired early' from the Office of Works after a political row for having designed (for ICI), whilst still a civil servant, Thames House Millbank (now the headquarters of MI5).

Chris Pond has done much excellent research but even he cannot provide the motivation for Baines/Baynes. He has, however, had Sir Frank accepted into the *Dictionary of National Biography* which should add a touch of the disreputable to enliven that tome.

Chris has also offered to lead a tour of Loughton and into Epping Forest if members are interested. Please let Peter Jefferson Smith know if you are. I would expect it to be interesting and fun.

Janet Johnson

Planning News

Since November the Planning Subcommittee has been notified of some 95 planning applications, reviewed 20 of them and made representations on those listed below.

3-5 Turnchapel Mews. Strong objection to an application to demolish three original mews buildings and replace them with oversized and poorly designed new houses. The mews are part of the Cedars Road Estate designed and developed by the Clapham architect JT Knowles in the 1860s. These are good, historic buildings in a significant part of the conservation area; they should be repaired and restored for residential use, not demolished.

25 Landor Road. Comments on a poorly designed shop front in the Clapham Road Conservation Area.

29 Lillieshall Road. Comments on the design details of two applications to refurbish and extend one of the Listed artisan's cottages recently sold by Lambeth Council, emphasizing the importance of retaining what remains of the historic fabric within the building.

56-58 Abbeville Road. Objection to the design of a new shop front for the Co-op. The closure of Treohan's represents the loss of another independent retailer but the planning system makes no distinction between independent and national retailers. The shop front was very poorly designed for its Conservation Area context. The application has subsequently been refused for these reasons. Treohan's have since re-opened their hardware store further down the Abbeville Road parade.

Trinity, 4 The Polygon. Comments on an application to change the use of the first floor from residential accommodation to an enlarged restaurant. Whilst this business is well run others may not be, so commercial activities would be best limited to the ground floor in Old Town locations such as this to minimise their potential impact on the amenity of nearby residential neighbours.

New members

We have welcomed the following new members this month: Paul Burchell, Bethan Cornwall, Alexandra Marchand, Tom and Dominic Newton Dunn, Joanna Nurse, and Richard and Susan Stern.

April at Omnibus

Sunday 6 April at 7 pm. **Northside Jazz:** Rob Luft Trio (National Youth Jazz Orchestra). Rob Luft (guitar), Joe Downard (double bass) and Ben Brown (drums). Tickets £10.

Monday 7 April at 7.30 pm. (Suitable for 18+) **Film Night:** *12 O'clock Boys* (2013) Lofty Nathan's (Dir.) acclaimed film follows the dreams of Pug, a wisecracking, bright thirteen year-old who longs to join Baltimore's notorious urban dirt-bike gang the 12 O'Clock Boys. The film premiered to critical acclaim at film festivals in the US last year. Tickets £5/£4 concessions.

Film Night is a new series of film screenings at Omnibus showing some of the best documentaries and non-fiction features from around the world, as well as short films from exciting new filmmakers. Future screening dates: **Monday 5 May, Monday 2 June.** Programme of films to be announced shortly.

Wednesday 9 April at 10.30 am and 2.30 pm. *The Dream.* Explore the enchanted world of fairies in this unique take on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Nights Dream*, an interactive theatre experience devised especially for children ages 3-6. Running Time approximately 35 mins. Tickets £7 Children (£5 additional children in the same group), Adults and under 2s FREE.

Friday 11 April at 7.30 pm. **Comedy Night:** *Still Score* (Tom Adams) and *Sky Show* (Rob Auton). Omnibus' monthly comedy night continues this month with two unique shows. Using comedy, storytelling and song, Tom Adams creates an uplifting, funny, moving, musical love letter to life. Adams is a London based emerging theatre-maker with a background in the musical comedy/stand-up circuit.

The Sky Show is a poetry/comedy/theatre show about the sky and the things in it. Rob Auton has been standing up on poetry/comedy and theatre stages around the British isles for the past five years. Tickets £10. Bar open from 7 pm.

Sunday 13 April at 4.30 pm. **Classic Sundays:** Venari Trio comprising Henry Tong (violin), Yoanna Prodanova (cello) and Hunter Noack (piano) will play Mozart's *Piano Trio in B-flat major*, Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces Op.88*, and Dvořák's *Piano Trio No.4 in E-minor, Op.90*. Tickets £12/£10 concessions. Limited number at £5 for Under 25s (proof of age required).

Sunday 27 April at 7 pm. **Northside Jazz:** On the Slide (NYJO) will perform arrangements first written especially for the trombone band Bone Structure, plus new compositions by current members. The line-up includes Chris Valentine, Owen Dawson, Maddie Dowdeswell and Alex Kelly (trombones), Chris Eldred (piano), AJ Brinkman (bass), Rob Luft (guitar), and Will Glaser (drums). Tickets £10.

Monday 28 April at 8 pm. **Route 88: Acoustic Night.** Super Spokes are cousins Royce and Rosie whose acoustic sets are a regular highlight in South London venues. They host our monthly Route 88 acoustic nights, bringing an eclectic and always high quality line-up of some of the best new music from across the capital. Suggested donation £5 on the door. Bar open from 7pm.

To book tickets for events call the Box Office on 020 7498 4699 during office hours or drop in at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. For regular updates visit omnibus-clapham.org, join Omnibus mailing list and keep an eye on facebook.com/OmnibusClaphamArts.

Easter holidays at Wandsworth Museum

Tuesday 8 April 2 pm to 4 pm. Ice Age Wandsworth. Come and learn about woolly mammoths and rhinos which roamed the icy plains of Wandsworth 20,000 years ago and make your own Ice Age artworks to take home. £4 per child (For children aged 3+ and their families).

Wednesday 9 April 2 pm to 4 pm. Lotions and Potions. Discover the fascinating history behind herbal remedies from Tudor times to today, and make your own to take away. £3 per child (For children aged 3+ and their families).

Tuesday 15 April and Wednesday 16 April 2 pm to 4pm. Wild Wandsworth with potter Bessie Millar. Create a menagerie of clay creatures inspired by the beasts and birds of Wandsworth. £3 per child (For children aged 5+ and their families).

Book in advance by email bookings@wandsworthmuseum.co.uk or calling Zoe or Kathryn on 020 8870 6060. All events at Wandsworth Museum, 38 West Hill, SW18 1RX.

Growing Underground

A novel enterprise has been started in the deep shelter tunnel under the Northern Line at Clapham North, built as an air raid shelter during WW2, and unused for many years. Zero Carbon Foods are experimenting with growing salad leaves and micro greens using LED lighting and hydroponic watering systems. Is this the future for urban gardening?

Eden Garden

For some spring fresh air and exercise why not join the Eden friends Volunteer Day on **Sunday 13 April**. Just show up at the garden, near St Paul's Church in Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX any time between 9 am and 1 pm.

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 claphamsociety.com.