

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



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George Owen MBE

George Owen, Chairman of Omnibus is seen here with his wife, Angela, outside Buckingham Palace on the occasion of his investiture with the MBE by the Prince of Wales on 4 February. The honour was awarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours last year for 'services to the arts and the community of Clapham'.



Lord Avebury

We were sorry to learn of the recent death of Lord Avebury, whose family have long-standing connections with Clapham. Members will remember that Lord Avebury gave an interesting talk at the celebration of the opening of Omnibus as an arts centre in October 2014, reminding us that his grandfather, Sir John Lubbock, had opened the building as Clapham Public Library exactly 125 years to the day earlier.

As Eric Lubbock he was elected Liberal MP for Orpington, in a sensational by-election in 1962, overturning a huge Conservative majority and sparking hopes of a Liberal revival. He had a distinguished and colourful career as an MP, business man and, after his succession to the peerage in 1971, in the House of Lords.

As a further connection with Clapham, Lord Avebury was married to Lindsay Stewart, daughter of Clapham novelist, Pamela Hansford Johnson.

Our meetings are held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The bar at Omnibus is 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 the talk. Meetings are free and open to non-members, so please bring your friends along.

Monday 21 March

Conscription and Conscience in Clapham. To mark its centenary **Ben Copsey** of Peace Pledge Union will talk about the introduction of conscription in 1916, when millions of men around Britain faced a future in uniform – willing or no. For those engaged in the anti-war movement this was unacceptable, and they registered their opposition to war by becoming Conscientious Objectors. Fifty men from Clapham made this difficult and often dangerous decision. From tribunals to work camps and prison and from Clapham Common to Alexandria, Egypt, the experiences of First World War Conscientious Objectors are a fascinating story of courage, conscience and morality.

Monday 25 April

The race to save the sea. **Charles Clover**, chairman of the Blue Marine Foundation will tell us about the enormous opportunities for grand scale conservation in the British Overseas Territories. As an environment journalist with 30 years' experience, Charles has covered virtually every issue that arises out of man's treatment of nature. His book *The End of The Line* (2004) and the award-winning documentary film that it inspired brought the problems of overfishing and the impact it is having on life in the oceans into public focus. He also co-founded Fish2Fork, an online sustainable restaurant guide.

Spring Bird Walk

Sunday 10 April. A leisurely walk around Clapham Common with Dr Iain Boulton, Lambeth's Environment Officer (who spoke at our January meeting, see below) to look at the main bird species present, as well as any unusual guests or exotics! Which parts of the Common do birds frequent and why? What can we do to encourage and protect them, and what does the future hold for our feathered friends? Meet at Clapham Common Bandstand for 10 am start. Duration about 1.5 hours.

Conservation Area Consultation

Lambeth is currently consulting on a draft character appraisal of the Clapham Park and Northbourne Road Conservation area. The purpose is to explain what is special about the area, why it was designated and how the boundary is to be extended.

The Society will be commenting on it and members are encouraged to do as well. The draft document and information on how to comment can be found at lambeth.gov.uk/consultations/clapham-park-and-northbourne-road-draft-conservation-area-statement. The closing date is 14 March.

Festival Chorus

The Festival Chorus starts its 40th year on **Saturday 12 March** at 7.30 pm with a terrific double bill: Brahms' *Requiem* – 'a truly tremendous piece of art which moves the entire being in a way little else does', Clara Schumann wrote to Brahms – is a deservedly popular choral work. And Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* is, according to conductor Claudio Abbado, 'a unique jewel'. Andrea Brown conducts the Festival Chorus and Sinclair Sinfonia, with pianist Elspeth Wyllie at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road/Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets £18, concessions £14 on the door.

The concert is part of the St Luke's Music Society 2015/16 season of concerts and tickets can also be booked via the Music Society website slms.org.uk or by calling the box office on 07951 791619.

Clapham NADFAS

Don't forget that the free taster lecture is on **Wednesday 9 March** at 2 pm (doors open at 1.30 pm) at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The lecturer will be Linda Collins, and the title of her talk is: *From Wild Beasts to Pickled Sharks - 100 years of Modern Art 1900 - 2000*.

You are invited to come along to attend the lecture, meet the organising team – maybe volunteer to join them – and find out more about this exciting new development in Clapham. Although admission is FREE you need to book a place in advance. Contact James Wilkins on 020 3206 9324 or membership@nadfasc.org.uk.

Gena Gilbert, Chair
Clapham NADFAS Steering Committee

London's Open Spaces

At our January meeting, Lambeth's Environmental Officer, Dr Iain Boulton, gave an interesting talk about Commons and Open Spaces throughout London, putting our concerns and thoughts about Clapham Common in a wider context.

The prime purpose of metropolitan open spaces has always been recreation and enjoyment. Over the years recreational activities have changed and landscape and ecological features have been lost. The present challenge is to decide whether we restore what has been lost or create something better. These open spaces cannot be wildernesses, they must be managed but in a sensitive and appropriate way. Iain pointed out that commons are usually on poor land, prone to erosion and weathering, poor-draining or impermeable. As the population of London has increased and the city expanded into its rural fringes, it has become increasingly important to protect common land, which is inevitably seen as potential land for houses.

In the last few years we have become more conscious of protecting what remains. As far as Clapham Common is concerned much has been done recently on Mount Pond – desilting, planting reedbeds, restocking and habitat creation. Similar issues are now being addressed on Eagle Pond and Long Pond. Iain showed us pictures of the various stages of work in progress, alongside current views. He went on to talk about the management of the grassland on Clapham Common and the present plans to create wildflower meadows, and to introduce native wildflowers and shrubs. All has to be done in balance with the need for sports facilities.

We heard about the problems faced on other common land in London and how the issues are being addressed there. Iain showed pictures and told us about Blackheath, London Fields, Little Wormwood Scrubs and Hayes Common – which, like Clapham Common, are heavily used for events, dog walking and sports. They too are starting to clear scrub, restore grassland and introduce wildflower meadows. The current aim for our valuable open spaces is to create a balance between recreational activity and landscape and ecological value. And the question we must ask is whether we restore the old landscapes or introduce something new, and better. Food for thought indeed, and it was very valuable to look at our Common in a wider context, and to realise that our concerns are not unique.

Iain Boulton conducts regular free guided walks on Clapham Common. The next one, as shown elsewhere in this newsletter is a Spring Bird walk on **Sunday 10 April**. On **Sunday 15 May** the title of his walk is *The Rogue's Gallery or Our Welcome Guests? A Guide to Native, Non-Native and Invasive Wildlife on Clapham Common*.



Spring comes to Clapham Common

photo: Claire Fry

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The next concert is on **Friday 4 March** at 7.30 pm, when violinists Amanda Lake and Guillem Calvo Martinez, violists Christine Anderson and Alison Jones and cellists Sophie Rivlin and Louise McMonagle will perform Mozart's exquisite *Viola Quintet in G minor K516* alongside one of the great romantic chamber works, Brahms' *String Sextet in B flat major Op 18*. The recital will also include a world premiere by Clapham Chamber Concerts' Composer in Residence David Wallace, entitled *Hexad*. Wallace states: 'Writing for a sextet is a challenge but one that I've always wanted to try'. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets available on the door at £12, Friends of CCC £10, children £5. For further information email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com.

This is Clapham

This is Clapham Business Improvement District (BID) was established in October 2014 by a ballot of local business, and has spent the first year setting up a number of core services.

The BID has created a new website which seeks to promote the area. It includes a business directory, local offers, blogs, events and information about the Clapham BID.

The BID has focused a lot of energy on issues of safety and security. It now employs a team of wardens at weekends. Since their deployment crime in the area has fallen by as much as 25% in some areas. Their role is to prevent low level crime and anti-social behaviour and support local businesses. The BID also funds the Hub at the Methodist Church and this partnership approach has been hailed as best practice across London.

The BID now delivers a Sunday morning cleaning service which deep cleans one side of Clapham High Street every week and works alongside existing cleaning provision provided by Lambeth Council. We have seen a significant improvement in the cleanliness of the area and will continue to invest in this service.

All businesses in the area can now take advantage of a free recycling service from the BID. This has enabled more

businesses to recycle their waste and save money. The Purity skin centre on the High Street has reduced their waste bills by as much as 50% as a result of this service. Over 60 businesses are now signed up to the service.

The BID has also started to improve parts of the public realm. It funded the festoon lights on Venn Street and completed a Green Infrastructure audit of the High Street. One of the positive outcomes of the audit has been the installation of green roofs on the air raid shelters by TfL. We will continue to lobby TfL and other public agencies to invest in Clapham and set high standards.

The BID also has its own plans to improve the public realm and has earmarked funding for a number of projects. This includes a proposal to improve the green space behind Clapham Common Tube Station, install up-lighting in trees, install an urban orchard on Landor Road and create a cultural map of Clapham. Residents should see these projects taking shape over the coming months.

If local residents have any issues they would like the BID to address or have ideas on how to improve the area then we would be keen to hear from you. Please visit our website (thisisclapham.co.uk) for contact details.

Jeremy Keates

Manager, This is Clapham BID

March Highlights at Omnibus

Saturday 5 March at 7.30 pm. British Comic Opera, a collective of singers led by Daisy Evans, brings a bag of opera tricks, ranging from song to improvised opera. The dizzying heights of grand opera are delivered to the audience's cocktail tables. Tickets £12, concessions £10.

Sunday 13 March at 11 am and 2 pm. *Sea Story*. A combination of dance, storytelling, music, and puppetry; expect storms, shipwrecks, pirates, and a very curious sea creature. One hundred stories especially written by young people from across the UK woven together into a tale which takes the audience on a magical journey over, under and through the sea. Tickets £9, concessions £7. For 5+.

Wednesday 16 March at 7.30 pm. **A SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENT** to celebrate the new patrons of Omnibus, actor **Michael Gambon**, theatre and film director **Sir Richard Eyre** and Artistic Director of the Old Vic, **Matthew Warchus**. Michael Gambon and Eileen Atkins will discuss their illustrious careers, from appearances at the RSC and National Theatre, to numerous roles in TV and film, including Gambon's performance as Albus Dumbledore in Harry Potter. All tickets for this intimate fundraising event with a post-performance drinks reception are £50.

Thursday 17 March at 7.30 pm. *At The Mountains of Madness*. For nearly a century, this cornerstone of weird fiction has thrilled readers with its tale of a disastrous expedition to Antarctica, and the awful implications of what was discovered. RSC and RADA alumni Tim Hardy, brings the ill-fated leader of the expedition William Dyer, to life. Trapped and tormented by visions of what he saw – and what he could not possibly have seen – those ancient, Antarctic mountains of madness, Hardy's powerful performance will be all the more compelling in Omnibus' intimate theatre setting. Tickets £12, concessions £10.

Sunday 20 March at 7.30 pm. Misha Mallov-Abbado Quintet is made up of some of the finest, multi-award-winning musicians in the country. The band has performed as part of the BBC Proms Lates series and its repertoire is influenced by a broad spectrum of music with thrilling results. From chorale-based and contemporary-classical styles influenced by Bach and Brahms right through to Stravinsky and Bartok and jazz musicians. Tickets £10.

Buy tickets for all performances on line at omnibus-clapham.org, call the box office: 020 7498 4699 or drop in at 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0DN.

March at Clapham Books

Thursday 3 March. Leila Segal will talk about her new book *Breathe: Stories from Cuba*, a collection that explores the heart of Fidel Castro-era Cuba.

Tuesday 15 March. Local author, Anna Raverat, will launch her new novel *Lover*. When Kate discovers emails from her husband Adam - aka 'Prince Charming' - to another woman, she takes a long look at her long marriage. And once she starts, she finds all kinds of things she had been doing her level best not to see.

Tuesday 22 March. Launch of Paris Lit Up Magazine No. 3. Paris Lit Up Press is an experimental publishing collective. It is a community laboratory where language, ideas and desires are shared. The third issue of the magazine has a foldout cover with artwork by the Spanish artist María Argüelles, 200 full-colour glossy pages filled with poetry, short stories, artwork and photography from the best names in contemporary art and literature.

All events start at 7.30 pm at Clapham Books, 26 The Pavement, SW4 0JA.

There is also free story telling every Thursday at 11 am.

Hats, Huguenots and High Street Fashion

The series of talks of local interest at Battersea Arts Centre continues on **Wednesday 30 March** at 6 pm with a talk with the intriguing title shown above. Talks are free, but it is advisable to book as space is limited. Telephone the box office on 020 7223 223, email boxoffice@bac.org.uk or call in at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN.

CCMAC Annual Open Meeting

On the evening of 4 February, Omnibus was crowded with outdoorsy-looking people, there for the Annual Open Meeting of Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC).

CCMAC is the umbrella body for individuals and groups involved with the Common, and includes Lambeth Council members. So this was an opportunity to hear about a whole range of activities on the Common, from food growing on the green waste site, to tree planting, to the plans for redeveloping the Deep Shelter and the Polygon WC building, and more.

The highlight of the evening was a talk about the 2007 Clapham Common Masterplan: the Next 50 Years. The speaker was Adrian Wikeley of Land Use Consultants (LUC), who worked on the Masterplan for Lambeth and CCMAC. Adrian has huge experience, as a landscape architect, of parks and open spaces in London and beyond. (The refurbishment of Brockwell Park is just one example of LUC's work.) He presented a history and appreciation of

Clapham Common, and pointed to some of the issues with which we are now being confronted.

Increasing numbers of people want to be out on the Common, with or without their children and dogs, jogging, playing sport, attending events, enjoying a coffee in the open air, or finding out about nature and the environment. At the same time, tightening public expenditure means that the money for managing the Council's open spaces is being progressively reduced. Adrian urged us to plan for a Clapham Common of the future, which will be used, valued and loved by people in decades to come as much as it is by us now.

CCMAC and Lambeth are now embarking on a review of the Masterplan. For more about the review, CCMAC, and its work, see claphamcommon.london or follow us on Twitter: Clapham Common MAC.

*Alison Macnair, Chair
Clapham Common
Management Advisory Committee*

Painting Norway

The exhibition devoted to Norwegian landscape painter and printmaker, Nikolai Astrup which opened last month at Dulwich Picture Gallery, is a revelation. Virtually unknown outside Norway, Astrup portrays his much-loved native landscape, with freshness and enthusiasm. Mountains and lakes, marsh marigolds and lush pastures predominate, while the paintings in the final room of the exhibition celebrate the Midsummer's Eve bonfires which are a striking feature of summer in Norway. The exhibition continues until mid-May. Check opening times and book tickets at dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or telephone 020 8693 5254.

Also check out other events connected with the exhibition this month – a concert by Norwegian musicians, a full day of talks about Norwegian artists and special evening exhibition opening, with dinner.

Bandstand Beds

On **Easter Saturday 26 March** there will be gardening activity at the Bandstand Beds community food-growing area on Windmill Drive, with sowing of sunflowers, squashes and windowsill herbs.

Bandstand Beds are also working to set up weekday gardening activities for older people. If you wish to be involved email ccbandstandbeds@gmail.com.

Meeting in No Man's Land

Age Exchange, the leading UK charity working in the field of reminiscence, is running a project focusing on British and German family histories of the First World War. The idea is to compare how WW1 experiences have affected families over the years. The project will result in a documentary film which will be shown at open days in the UK and Germany and be put on line.

If you would like to find out more, and discover how you could take part in the project contact David Savill at Age Exchange by telephone 020 8318 9105 or email david.savill@age-exchange.org.uk.

St Paul's Opera

On **Friday 18 March** at 7.30 pm. *Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes*. A gala concert featuring arias, duets and ensembles by Bizet (*Carmen*), Handel, Mozart (*The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*), Puccini, Gilbert and Sullivan and some surprises, performed by members of St Paul's Opera group with pianist Varia Doletskaya. Tickets £15, concessions £12, on line at wegottickets/stpaulsopera. A glass of wine and nibbles at the interval are included. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Doors open 7 pm. Concert commences 7.30 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 our website at claphamsociety.com.

I am Van Dyck

In connection with the display at Dulwich Picture Gallery of Van Dyck's self portrait, on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, alongside self portraits by contemporary artist, Mark Wallinger, there is a series of talks about self portraiture at the gallery this month. On **Wednesdays 2, 9 and 16 March** leading art historians will talk about this art form which was popular before and long predates today's 'selfie' craze. For details and bookings go to dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk and look for Insight Lectures or call 020 8693 5254.