

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



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A Green Plaque in Crescent Lane



The Mayor of Lambeth, Saleha Jaffer, Rt. Hon. Alan Johnson, MP and Annabel Allott, Clapham Society Chairman beside the Green Plaque on the terrace of a penthouse apartment at Metropolitan Crescent. Photo: Grant Silverman

On a gloriously sunny early March day, our ninth Green Plaque was unveiled on the former Union of Post Office Workers HQ in Crescent Lane, which has recently been converted to luxury apartments by Galliard Homes and named Metropolitan Crescent. The unveiling ceremony was performed by Rt. Hon. Alan Johnson, MP who had worked in the building for many years when he was General Secretary of the Union.

The celebration started on the terrace of one of the penthouse apartments with a short performance by the choir of Mary's School, which is just across the road from the building, arranged by their talented Music Director, Julieanna Haynes. Annabel Allott, Clapham Society chairman gave a brief background to the Green Plaque scheme; on behalf of Galliard, Lindsay Maggs introduced the conversion scheme and welcomed guests before handing over to Alan Johnson who did the unveiling and gave a characteristically entertaining speech, recalling amusing incidents of his working life in the building. The Mayor of Lambeth, Saleha Jaffer added a few words of welcome and congratulations before we all enjoyed the lavish hospitality of Galliard.

Meanwhile at ground level a time capsule was buried by the school children and the plaque was attached in the appropriate position on the wall, so that it can be clearly seen by those walking along Crescent Lane. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and we are grateful to Galliard for hosting a very memorable occasion.

This year's summer garden party will be on
Tuesday 27 June
More details and a ticket booking form will be in the
next newsletter.

Our meetings are held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The bar at Omnibus is open from 7 pm, and meetings 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. We recommend that you arrive in good time to ensure entry, since there is a limit on the number the theatre can accommodate.

Monday 24 April

Sir Hans Sloane, Chelsea Porcelain and the Chelsea Physic Garden. Sally Kevill-Davies, ceramic specialist who worked at Sotheby's and was a member of the BBC TV Antiques Roadshow team of experts for nine years, will trace the fascinating history of the plants which were grown at the Chelsea Physic Garden, and painted on Chelsea porcelain plates during the 1750s. Sally, who lives in Clapham and is a member of the Society, has written and lectured widely on ceramics, and last year published *Sir Hans Sloane's Plants on Chelsea Porcelain*.

Monday 22 May

Ghostsigns. Fading on walls across the world are the ghosts of advertising past, still whispering the slogans of old. Once brightly coloured and promoting everything from Black Cat Cigarettes to Hovis Bread, these painted signs are now 'ghosts' of their former selves. Since 2006 **Sam Roberts** has been photographing, researching and archiving evidence of this outmoded form of advertising. In a richly illustrated talk he will offer a brief history and share the stories that these signs tell, if you care to listen. For more information about Ghostsigns visit ghostsigns.co.uk.

Bandstand Beds

At our February meeting Diana Linksey and David Dandridge gave us a well illustrated talk on the history and development of Bandstand Beds. Starting with a few sunflowers and beans near the Bandstand café in 2013 and three members at the first AGM, the community food growing group has expanded so that it now has 90 members, weekly working parties and a comprehensive growing programme.

From the start a regular photographic record has been kept, which allowed us to see clearly how the scheme has evolved.

We learnt how the area under cultivation has gradually grown as fruit bushes were planted in The Spinney, near the children's playground, in 2014 and then part of the green waste site, known as The Dump, in Windmill Drive was taken over in 2015. A huge amount of work was required to make this inhospitable area usable for planting, as we saw from the 'before' and 'after' pictures. Lambeth helped clean up the space, grants and generous donations were attracted and

Clapham Book Festival

Clapham's first book festival took place in 2016. This year, with generous support from This is Clapham, the Clapham Writers are back on **Saturday 6 May** with a Clapham Book Festival programme that includes something for everyone, from crime and thrillers, historical novels and history books, to spies in fact and fiction. There is also a meet-and-greet session with local authors in the Omnibus Bar from 6.30 pm and, to round off the day, award-winning broadcaster Kate Adie will be discussing her life and work.

Elizabeth Buchan, herself a best-selling novelist, who has put the programme together said: 'We've got Natasha Cooper quizzing Sabine Durrant, J P Delaney and Annemarie Neary about their very different crime writing in *Death in the Afternoon*; local author Julie Anderson asking Bafta-winning World War II specialist Simon Berthon, and novelists Elizabeth Fremantle and Robin Blake about reconstructing history in *The Past is another Country*; and I am investigating the thrilling and deadly business of spying with Burgess expert Anthony Lownie and wartime writers Rick Stroud and Jane Thynne in *Spies under the Bed*. I also can't wait to hear what Kate Adie has got to say about her life as a broadcaster and her books on redoubtable women. It's all going to be terrific fun.'

Clapham Writers, This is Clapham, Clapham Books and Omnibus are partners for the Clapham Book Festival. It takes place at Omnibus from 1 pm to 9 pm on **Saturday 6 May** – tickets are on sale for each event on the Omnibus website at omnibus-clapham.org and are going fast. There's more information on our authors and their books too at claphambookfestival.com.

*Penelope McNeile
Clapham Writers*

The Power behind the Crone

On **Sunday 9 April** Alison Skilbeck will give a charity performance of her latest one-woman show, a serio-comic celebration of Shakespeare's older women. As Professor Artemis Turret, Alison sets out, in seven wildly contrasting roles, to refute the words 'There are no good parts in Shakespeare for older women'.

a polytunnel has been acquired which greatly increases the crops that can be grown. Paths have been installed making disabled access possible, and in the last few weeks a container has arrived, in which a kitchen will be installed to make dishes from the on-site produce for the regular 'feasts'. Last autumn workshops were held, which gave advice on pest control, composting and planting.

We heard about other local growing initiatives, in particular the one in Cresset Street, and were pleased to learn that there has been virtually no vandalism and the sites have been appreciated and respected by the public.

To find out more about Bandstand Beds go to bandstandbeds.org.uk, follow them on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram or best of all turn up near the polytunnel on a Saturday morning between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm and see what's going on. You will receive a warm welcome! Make a note of the date of the next picnic – **Saturday 29 April**.

This is an unticketed event, with donations on the night to support the Sunera Foundation who run drama workshops for the disabled in Sri Lanka. Email Alison on skilhardy@yahoo.co.uk to reserve a place. The show is at 7 pm in the Music Room at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

Bach's St Matthew Passion

On **Saturday 8 April** at 7 pm South West London Choral Society will perform Bach's St Matthew Passion at Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common, SW4 0QZ. Tickets are £15, £12 concessions, free for under 15 years, on the door or in advance from boxoffice@swlcs.org.uk or 07914 807055.

The choir welcomes new members and there are no auditions. Come along to see if you like it before signing up. Rehearsals for the summer concert (on 8 July) start on **Monday 24 April** at 7.30 pm at Balham Baptist Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8QX. For more information go to swlcs.org.uk or call 020 8673 7890 or 01252 726001.

Changing Faces: Landscapes of Clapham Common past and present

On **Sunday 2 April** Iain Boulton will lead a walk to look at how the Common has changed over time in terms of important heritage and natural features. What has been lost and gained, how did this happen, and what can we put back or add? Meet at the Bandstand for a 2 pm start. Iain's entertaining and informative walks are highly recommended.

London Russian Ballet School

As we go to press we are sorry to learn that the London Russian Ballet School has won its appeal against the refusal by Lambeth Council to grant them planning consent to expand the ballet school as given in their original application in 2015. The school can now go ahead with the construction of the extension but must agree a traffic management plan with Lambeth Council.

Hospice Choir

Trinity's Community Choir is a friendly group of amateur singers who share a love of music. Members are of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Many singers are connected to the hospice in some way, while others simply live in the local area. The choir rehearses on Wednesdays from 7 pm in the Mulberry Room at Royal Trinity Hospice, 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN. £5 per session (free for patients). For more information, contact Rebecca Blatchford on 020 7787 1062 or email r.blatchford@royaltrinityhospice.london



Rear gardens and tennis court

Montrose Court Hotel Garden 1939

Montrose Court Hotel

A recent email enquiry to the Society from John Cooper of Bognor Regis resulted in some fascinating recollections of the Montrose Court Hotel on Clapham Common South Side.

In 1917 Mr Cooper's maternal grandmother purchased three houses on South Side, and turned them into Montrose Hotel. In 1936 the houses were demolished and Montrose Court Hotel built on the site. This included the Clapham Palais de Danse with its sprung dance floor, and a clubroom. The hotel consisted of self-contained serviced flatlets which in 1936 cost £2 12s 6d (£2.62) per week, inclusive of heating, service, breakfast and dinner. There was a large rear garden with a tennis court. In the back wall of the garden was a plaque stating 'This wall was built by Thomas Hankey, Knight, and stands on his property'. Sir Joseph Hankey was a governor of the Bank of England in the 18th century whose family owned land in Clapham. The hotel only had a 'club licence' for selling alcohol so anyone booking a room was asked whether they wished to join – this allowed for the 48 hours lapse required by law between joining and being permitted to purchase a drink! When the hotel restaurant was closed during World War II the flatlets were fitted with cookers so that residents could cater for themselves using their ration books.

Mr Cooper's grandmother retired in 1949 and sold the hotel. It became Halliday Hall which many readers will remember. This was run by the NHS as a nurses' home and then became a King's College students' hostel. It was later sold to the Metropolitan Housing Trust and finally demolished. It was replaced in 1997-8 by the block of flats which we see today. The name Charleston House recalls the dance hall formerly on part of the site.

Derrick Johnson

Sir George Shearing

Members are invited to the unveiling of a Battersea Society plaque to the jazz musician Sir George Shearing on **Saturday 22 April** at 11 am at Northcote Lodge School, 26 Bolingbroke Grove, SW11 6EL, formerly Linden Lodge School for the Blind, which George attended. George Shearing, who was born blind, was the youngest of nine children and lived in Battersea. His father delivered coal and his mother cleaned the trains. He played first in pubs and hotels, then joined a band of blind musicians and emigrated to America in 1947 where he became very successful with his quintet.

Spring Offensive

'A dark comedy about war, lost boys and fighting for survival'. For this play the theatre at Omnibus will be transformed, with the audience sitting in the dining room of expat April's Bed & Breakfast on the Somme, where the action takes place over one spring evening. *Spring Offensive* takes a wry look at the First World War tourism industry and those making a buck from it. **Tuesday 18 April to Sunday 30 April** at 7.30 pm, Sundays at 4 pm. Tickets £15, £10 concessions from omnibus-clapham.org, telephone 020 7498 4699 or call in at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

The Arts Society Clapham Common

Following the rebranding and renaming of CCDFAS, we have emerged as The Arts Society Clapham Common (TASCC). Membership cards were sent off and promotional flyers were distributed locally displaying our iconic Clapham Common bandstand, in one of the new colours with The Arts Society logo.

Our inaugural meeting at Clapham Picturehouse on 15 March was attended by the National Chairman, June Robinson, the Mayor of Wandsworth and an abundance of new members. They in turn witnessed the proposers and seconders, for the Clapham Common branch Chairman and committee.

This was followed by a very entertaining and informative lecture by Antony Penrose, entitled *The Boy who bit Picasso*. We would like to thank everyone who attended the meeting and look forward to seeing new members on **Wednesday 19 April** for a lecture by Linda Smith – *Great Tarts in Art: High Culture and the Oldest Profession*.

Nikki Brine

The Arts Society Clapham Common

Clapham Chamber Concert

The next concert, on **Friday 21 April** at 7.30 pm, features harpist Jean Kelly and flautist Eimear McGeown playing music with a distinctly romantic flavour by composers Debussy, Fauré and David Wallace. These pieces are set alongside traditional Irish music arranged by classical composers such as TC Kelly and music drawn more directly from the tradition. The recital will feature the world premiere of another work by CCC composer-in-residence David Wallace: *From My Window I Can Hear The Sea*. This is an evocative piece that was inspired by the seascape of the south coast of Ireland. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets on the door at £12, £10 Friends of CCC, £5 children. For further information email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com or see claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk.

Garden Openings

Clapham Gardens open for the National Gardens Scheme this month include Royal Trinity Hospice Garden on **Sunday 9 April** from 11 am to 5 pm and 51 The Chase on **Sunday 23 April** from 12 noon to 5 pm and **Tuesday 25 April** 6 pm to 8 pm.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Tim Bennett, Selina Buenaventura, Jeff Dickerman and Jeff Lindsey, Judy and Peter Digney, Philippa and Gary Gould, Graham Hacche and Pat Kane, Katie Isbester and Kees 't Hooft, Keri and Deepak Maharaj, Axel Maier and Allison Clark, and John, Adsvora and Zophia Sunderland.

48 Hours on Clapham High Street

Opening on **Monday 3 April** at Omnibus is an exhibition by award-winning photographer, Jim Grover, which captures the complete transformation of Clapham High Street from day to night. The photographs capture the stark contrast between daytime shoppers and nighttime clubbers, between chaos and tranquillity, between youth and age.

Alongside the images are analyses of daily life in the High Street with key quotes from interviews with residents and workers, which highlight the wide variety of opinions and reactions that the street provokes. Just 48 images are on show – 24 in colour taken on the south side of the street in the daytime and 24 in black and white taken on the north side in the night.

The exhibition is open daily from 10 am to 6 pm at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW until the end of April. Admission free. Go to 48hoursonclaphamhighstreet.com for more details and lots of fascinating information.



Mr and Mrs Singh Soor 46 years on the High Street. Photo: Jim Grover

Developments on Clapham Common

The Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC) held its annual election on 2 February and six new members were elected as community representatives to join four others who were re-elected, as well as local Councillors and representatives from the Friends of Clapham Common and the Clapham Society. The CCMAC meets monthly, joined by representatives of Lambeth Landscaping (the new name for Lambeth Parks) and invited guests, presenting on a wide range of topics affecting the Common. See claphamcommon.london for details of the CCMAC's work, including minutes of previous meetings. We are looking for a member of the Clapham Society to take up our place on the CCMAC, which is currently being filled on an interim basis by our Secretary, Maev Sullivan. please contact maevsullivan@gmail.com if you are interested.

The Lambeth Events programme for 2017 onwards has been published and is updated on a rolling basis. Apply to events@lambeth.gov.uk if you would like a copy emailed to you. This programme includes details of the proposed Winterville event details of which are available on our website claphamsociety.com/news/proposed-winter-event-on-clapham-common.

The Society, the CCMAC and the Friends of Clapham Common have been asked to comment on the proposal to hold Winterville, an event that will occupy Clapham Common's Events site beside Rookery Road and Long Road for over 50 days from November and December into January 2018. The Society intends to oppose the proposals as the event is likely to damage the fabric of the Common, at the very time when it should be recuperating from the summer events such as SW4, Let's Rock, etc. Winterville's funfair activities are more suited to the hard-standing

Circus site beside the Avenue and Windmill Drive. Thank you to those members who gave us their comments on these proposals. We will publish the Society's comments following submission to Lambeth Events and keep you updated on the outcome of this preliminary consultation in future newsletters and on the Latest News section of our website.

Other Lambeth developments on the Common include the resurfacing of the Basketball and Netball courts alongside Rookery Road, plans to install electric charging points on the Common, improved weekend litter collection in the summer and short-term leases to be granted for the old Fields café and the Bowling Green café. The BID's work on regenerating the 'grassy knoll' beside Clapham Common tube station, known as Clapham Common Gateway, will commence soon – thisisclapham.co.uk/clapham-common-gateway.

Finally, a summer series of Clapham Common bandstand concerts is being organised by Peter Jefferson Smith on behalf of the CCMAC. Details will be published in a future newsletter and on the website.

Maev Sullivan

We are keen to recruit members to the Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee, particularly those who have an interest in the Common and use it regularly. This is an interesting pro-bono role which does not need to take up a lot of time but is hugely valuable to all users of the Common.

Anyone willing to help would represent the Clapham Society on the Clapham Common Advisory Committee (CCMAC) to discuss and agree on topics affecting the Common. Please contact maevsullivan@gmail.com.

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