

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 402

November 2017

Clapham Through Time at Minnow

On **Sunday 19 November** there will be an exploration of Clapham's past and present, hosted by the Clapham Society and new contemporary restaurant Minnow: the small fish in a big pond, aiming to be an independent but integrated part of the community.

Clapham Through Time – named after the book by Alyson Wilson and Claire Fry – has been inspired by plans to repair the showpiece Turret Clock in the restaurant (pictured), which belonged to collector Geoffrey Heywood MBE, the late grandfather of restaurant owner Chris Frichtot.

The event starts with a walking tour at 11.30 am, including visits to Omnibus Theatre (formerly Clapham Library); the Clapham home of JF Bentley (architect of Westminster Cathedral); and Holy Trinity Church, once the gathering place of the Clapham Sect.

In the 19th century, the Clapham Sect was a group of social reformers who were instrumental in the passing of the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833. Today, their place in history is celebrated with a place on Minnow's locally-inspired cocktail menu.

Join us at Minnow, 21 The Pavement, SW4 0HY on **Sunday 19 November** by 11.30 am. Tickets are £30 (£20 students) including the walking tour, a Sunday Roast, a cocktail and additional talks and entertainment. For more information visit minnowclapham.co.uk or email info@minnowclapham.co.uk.

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. Non-members are invited to make a donation.

PLEASE ARRIVE IN GOOD TIME TO ENSURE ENTRY. THERE IS A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER THE THEATRE CAN ACCOMMODATE AND YOU WILL NOT BE ADMITTED WHEN THAT NUMBER IS REACHED.

Monday 27 November

Antibiotics and antibiotic resistance.

For decades, antibiotics have been used to treat infections and have allowed advances in surgery and cancer treatment. Hand in hand with the increasing use of antibiotics is the rise in antibiotic resistance. There is rising alarm over the spread of 'superbugs' and the impact they could have on the future of medicine. The threat is deemed serious enough to be placed onto the national risk register. In this febrile and worried climate **Dr John Clark**, consultant microbiologist at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust will go through the history of antibiotics and the rise of resistance and attempt to bust myths and predict the future.

There is no meeting in December. The next meeting is on Monday 22 January 2018. The full programme for 2018 will be published in the December newsletter.



The Polygon – update

Since the article in our October edition (*Barricades in Old Town*) we are pleased to see that the contractor's hoardings erected around the former WC building at The Polygon have been substantially reduced in size, and the piazza is largely restored. Workmen have removed the roofing tiles to a secure location for possible re-use elsewhere, and the Indian bean trees (*Catalpa*) and the mature olive tree have been released from their captivity. Sadly, one of the *Catalpa* trees has lost several of its branches, leaving its umbrella shape lop-sided.

Within the reduced compound there remains a significant pile of rubble, and the foundations of the former building still need to be dug out. It is very much to be hoped that the Council will shortly commence consultation on a landscaping plan and the return of the site within the hoarding to common land.

However, it is concerning that the word on the street is that the hoardings may well be left in place for a year while the Council ponder what to do next. On which point it is also of concern that the Council workmen reinstated the agent's signs on the hoarding seeking commercial interest in the site for A1 use. It seems as if this sorry saga is set to run, and Old Town will have to put up with this blot on the landscape for a while longer, unless pressure can be applied for some quick decisions.

Mark Leffler



Julia Barfield

Noted local architect Julia Barfield, of Marks Barfield Architects was the speaker at our September meeting. From the partnership's many and varied projects she chose to talk about six in detail.

First, almost inevitably was the now world-renowned London Eye. A fuller story of this remarkable project is told in the tribute to David Marks on the last page of this newsletter. It is a tale of persistence and determination. The Eye helped regenerate the South Bank and has been copied around the world. Julia shared with us some of the many complexities overcome in designing, constructing and erecting this monumental structure by the Thames.

Kew Treetop Walkway offered totally different challenges: not only the complicated construction based on the Fibonacci sequence in weathered steel at treetop level, but at ground level and below, the careful avoidance of tree roots, and the pause in construction caused by a nesting peregrine falcon.

Julia then brought us back to Clapham to look at the improvements to Old Town and The Polygon area. Here the object was to reduce the space taken up by roads, increase the pavement area, reorganise bus stops and stands, and landscape the area to provide a public space as an extension to the Common. The transformation is popular and successful.

Next we heard about two developments in Cambridge: one a primary school to be used for teacher training and research by the University

and which opened in September 2015, the other a mosque which is still under construction. Although the former is huge for a primary school – with space for 700 pupils – the clever combination of inward looking courtyards and views out to the countryside give a sense of friendliness, unity and cohesion. We saw some of the research into traditional and historic buildings, combined with a close regard for environmental sustainability and use of technology employed in the design of both these projects.

Julia's final topic was the recently completed i360 tower in Brighton which bears similarities to the London Eye both in its purpose – a view of the surroundings from high up and in its technology and materials. One large circular capsule rises up a central pole to a height of 162 metres affording views of Brighton, the coastline and the South Downs. More information about this too is on the last page.

There were many questions and comments and Julia generously stayed on for some time in the bar to talk to members. We were sad to learn, only a few days later, of the death of Julia's husband, David Marks (see tribute on back page) and we are very touched that she honoured her engagement at such a difficult time.

Bike rides for women

Battersea Breeze organise cycle rides of various lengths on Mondays and Fridays, starting at the bandstand on Clapham Common. For full details and to sign up go to letsride.co.uk/groups/battersea-breeze or email aisamiller@ntlworld.com.

New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Wendy Anderton and Ashia Icheke Gabriel Hennessy-Jones, Michael and Jill Mann, Ian McCalla, Mark McLaren, Kate Meyer and Donald Messenger, and Becky and Dan Philip.

St Paul's Bonfire Party

This will be on **Saturday 4 November** at 6 pm. Tickets Adults £12 (includes sausage and soup), children 16 and under £6 (includes sausage and soft drink). For tickets and information call the Parish Office on 020 7622 2128, or email admin@stpaulsclapham.org.

Growing Underground

Clapham's site for growing fresh micro greens and salad leaves 33 metres underground, using the latest hydroponic systems and LED technology, recently won the Future Food Award at BBC Food and Farming Awards. Crops are grown year-round in a pesticide-free environment that these forgotten tunnels provide. Thanks to the controlled environment greens are unaffected by the weather and seasonal changes, and the central London location reduces the need to import crops and drastically reduces the food miles for retailers and consumers.

Access to gardening

If you are a regular user of Clapham Common you will have noticed an ever-changing landscape at the Bandstand Beds community garden on Windmill Drive.

Along with the wide variety of fruit and veg our volunteers have grown this year they have also extended the garden, adding more raised beds and doubling the amount of produce grown. A new shipping container was installed in the spring and converted so it could be used as a kitchen. But sadly, due to the uneven levels of the ground it wasn't accessible to everyone who visited the garden.

In July, we set up a Spacehive crowdfunding project to raise money through donations to install pathways. We also ran foodie events and a weekly produce table to raise money to add to the pot.

The project achieved its target of £5,055 and the pathways are now in, making the garden a safe and welcoming place for everyone. A huge thank you to everyone in the community who helped make this happen!



It's been a busy 12 months for our volunteer-led organisation but a lot of fun too – and we plan to make next year even better. On the first Saturday of the month we are going to open later for a gardening session followed by a laidback lunch. We've also secured a bit of funding to run a weekly over-50s group, providing them with an opportunity to enjoy all the benefits of gardening and to meet people.

If you would like to become a volunteer or find out more about Bandstand Beds email me at ccbandstandbeds.org.uk or drop into the garden any Saturday between 10 am and 1 pm.

David Dandridge
Chair of Bandstand Beds

The Trap

Acclaimed playwright Kieran Lynn talks about *The Trap*, his latest play, which receives its European premiere at Omnibus Theatre from **Tuesday 31 October to Sunday 19 November**.

Why would someone want to come and see *The Trap*? *The Trap* is a comedic play about an important issue. I think people should come and see it if they like to laugh and they like to think more about the world that they live in.

Describe in one sentence what it's about. Two people break into a payday lending company to clean out the safe, but everything goes wrong.

Where did the inspiration come from?

The seed of the idea came from having two people caught in the beam of an alarm – not able to move for fear of setting it off. With this idea in mind, I started asking questions like: Who are these people? Why are they caught in an alarm? Is it a trap? Or are they committing a crime?

Do you have a writing style? My style is about taking big, occasionally important, issues and using them to make meaningful comedies. I think this play does all of that.

Describe the characters. Tom is timid and skittish; before breaking into his company his last crime was stealing a roll of Sellotape to wrap a birthday present. Clem is feisty and hot-blooded; she is the driving force behind the heist and wants to get revenge on the company. Alan is an underworked, overpaid middle manager with a gambling problem. Meryl is an ambitious senior management figure who lives beyond her means.

Why did you choose to set the play in a payday loans company? Payday lending is an issue that has faced a lot of scrutiny in the media over the last few years, yet I hadn't really seen it tackled in the theatre. I thought I could use the play to draw a little attention to it and that it would suit the action of the play.

Downton Abbey Songstress Comes to St Paul's!

Following the success of the first concert by Clapham resident Mike Christie in the inaugural Amick Concert Series in October, the next one will take place on **Saturday 25 November** at 7.30 pm. International singer Mary-Jess, who is the voice of the official Downton Abbey theme, will be joined by the London Chinese Philharmonic Chorus. The last concert in this current series will be given by Britain's cherished soprano Lesley Garrett CBE on **Saturday 9 December**. There is a 15% discount exclusively for Clapham Society members using code CS15 at AmickProductions.co.uk or 0870 780 0425. Tickets £15, or £12.75 with the discount. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DR.

Trinity Cinema

This month's classic film presented by Royal Trinity Hospice and Clapham Picturehouse on **Monday 6 November** at 6 pm is *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tickets at £10 include complimentary popcorn, and guests have a 10% discount on food and drink at the Picturehouse, with a chance to win great prizes in Trinity raffle.

Christmas Fair

Wandsworth Friends of Royal Trinity Hospice's Christmas Fair is on **Wednesday 15 November** from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. Or join the special Preview Evening on **Tuesday 14 November** from 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm.

How important is the timing of the play at Omnibus? *The Trap* will open in November, right when our collective attention will be beginning to turn to Christmas. A time of year when many people will be thinking more about money and payday loans will see a spike in lending.

What do you hope audiences are going to take away from it? The play is a biting comedy and it does present a few serious truths. If it makes the audience think more about those themes, while also serving up a good dose of humour, then I'd be happy.

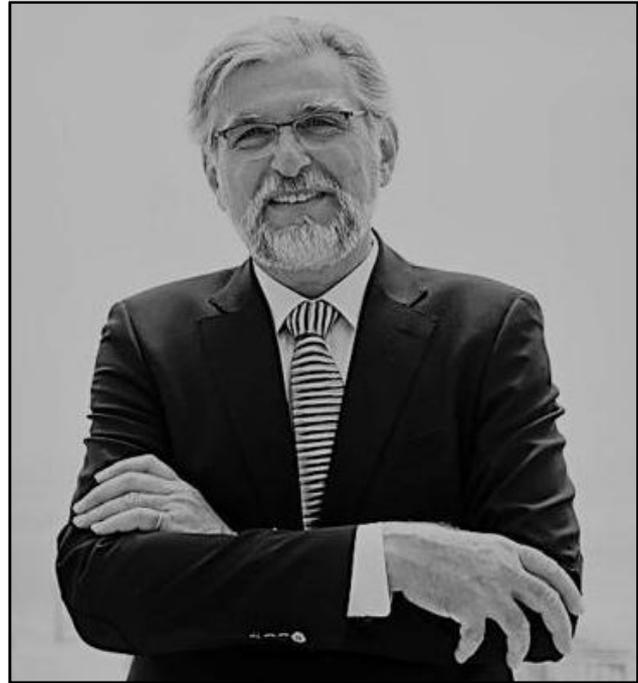
For tickets go to omnibus-clapham.org, call 020 7622 4105, or drop in at 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. Clapham Society members have a special £12 ticket offer for the first week – type in DEBTDUCK at check out when booking online.

David Marks (1952-2017)

It is with very great sadness that we learned of the death of quiet visionary local architect David Marks MBE FRSA RIBA, the husband and business partner of fellow architect Julia Barfield, our guest speaker in September.

David and Julia met as students at the Architectural Association School in the early 1970s, and married in 1981. Much of David's early career was spent at Richard Rogers Partnership, but in 1989 he and Julia formed Marks Barfield Architects (MBA) initially in their garden shed in Stockwell, before moving to their more expansive studio in Clapham on the back of a large commission. However, with the recession in the early 1990s the project suddenly folded: 'Our income stopped overnight. It was our lowest point' Julia says of that time. They managed to stay afloat with a trickle of small residential commissions. 'What kept us going was that David and I trusted each other'.

In 1993 they decided to enter a competition to design a landmark to commemorate the millennium, and came up with the idea of a giant wheel, to signify the passage of time, and which would provide a series of enclosed viewing platforms. They suggested this could be erected at the site of the original Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. No one won the competition, but David and Julia kept the concept alive while they developed and refined their ideas, talking them through with friends. One such contact resulted in British Airways agreeing to provide funding to take the project forward. By then they had concluded that siting the wheel on London's South Bank would be a better solution. They re-mortgaged their house, set up the Millennium Wheel Company and submitted a planning application to erect the wheel next to the former County Hall. It took two years to secure permission, initially for five years, and British Airways and Madame Tussauds agreed to fund the majority of the construction cost. In spite of



a range of financial and technical setbacks the London Eye was officially opened on time on 31 December 1999, seven years after David first came up with the idea, and it immediately became an iconic symbol of 21st century London, and a major tourist attraction.

Since then MBA has been responsible for designing and realising many remarkable, innovative and eye-catching buildings, structures and spaces around the world, for commercial, cultural, educational, health and recreational uses as well as bridges and infrastructure, and has received 65 awards over 25 years. The British Airways i360, a 162 metre tall needle structure with the world's first vertical cable car at the base of Brighton's derelict West Pier opened in August 2016, and is a joint venture with Brighton & Hove Council.

David was undoubtedly a world-class innovative and entrepreneurial architect. He was also a man of great humanity and warmth. He embraced working with other disciplines, particularly engineers, to create lasting landmarks to inspire and provide pleasure and joy. He died at home after a long illness on 6 October. He will be sorely missed.

Mark Leffler

St Paul's Opera

On **Monday 13 November** at 7.30 pm St Paul's Opera presents a Masterclass with David Butt Philip, tenor (most recently appearing as Laertes in the Glyndebourne production of Brett Dean's *Hamlet*). St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets on the door or at wegottickets.com/StPaulsOpera £10, £8 students.

Never Such Innocence

On **Friday 10 November** at 7.30 pm, Clapham Chamber Concerts will present *Never Such Innocence*, a narrative recital of words and music from the First World War. This will be a reflective and inspiring evening, including works by Wilfred Owen, Owen Thomas, Siegfried Sassoon and Vera Brittain, with piano music by Elgar, Ravel, Debussy, Frank Bridge and Ivor Gurney. Performed by Christopher Kent (actor) and Gamal Khamis (piano). St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets available on the door at £12, £10 concessions and Friends of CCC, £5 children. For further information email claphamchamberconcerts@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