



The Clapham Society

Newsletter

Issue 417

May 2019

Our meetings are held at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk will commence promptly at 8 pm and the bar will open prior to the talk at 7 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, who are invited to make a donation.

Please arrive in good time to ensure entry. There is a limit on the number the room can accommodate, and you will not be admitted when that number is reached.

Monday 20 May

John Inglis and **Jill Sanders** will talk about their **Panorama of the Thames Project**. When filming the River Thames from Tower Bridge to Hampton, to produce a contemporary panoramic record of the river, they uncovered a 1829 60ft panorama from Richmond to Westminster. Both show continuous views of both banks of the river, enabling comparisons across almost 200 years of social and architectural change. This presentation is an introduction to a fascinating project, with additional short films illustrating special features. Their book *A Riverside View of Georgian London* (price £25) will be on sale after the presentation.

Monday 17 June

Brewing along the Wandle Valley. **Alison Cousins**, a volunteer at the Wandle Industrial Museum based in Mitcham, has a keen interest in our local heritage and will talk about brewing along the Wandle Valley. While Young's is the best-known name associated with brewing in south London, there were many other brewers along the Wandle and now a local revival is taking place.

This month's walks

Thursday 16 May

Larkhall This guided walk led by Anne Wilson, will start outside the gates to St Paul's Church in Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX at 6.30 pm. The route will follow Larkhall Rise and Larkhall Lane taking in the Grade II listed Larkhall Estate and gardens and proceeding to Larkhall Park and The Surprise.

Friday 17 May

Spring Bat Walk. Always popular, we'll use bat detectors and our own eyes to look for, listen to and be amazed at these fascinating creatures, and who knows, we might find some new and interesting species as well as the more common ones! Wrap up warm and comfortable for a journey into the world of our night time companions. Meet at 9 pm at the Bandstand; duration approximately 60 minutes.

Sunday 26 May

Henry Tate Gardens. Following Bill Linskey's talk about Henry Tate (see report overleaf) you have the opportunity to see the exterior of his Grade II listed mansion and explore the historic garden with its Grade II listed garden features, including a dramatic Pulhamite (artificial stone) grotto, Victorian castle folly, lake and temple. Meet at the lodge gates, Henry Tate Mews, Streatham Common North Side, SW16 3HA at 2 pm or 3 pm.

Hopping on Clapham Common

Many varied activities have taken place on Clapham Common over the years, but perhaps none so curious as the hopping match of 1826. Hopping had been a traditional English sport since the 16th century when men raced with one leg, usually for a piece of jewellery as a prize. This illustration shows a renowned runner William Jackson hopping against a brewer Richard Roberts. The men made a bet of £30 on who could cover the greatest distance in 50 hops. Jackson stripped down to his undergarments, took his run up to the starting post and then 'bounded off with the elasticity of a doe' according to one onlooker. He covered the first 40 yards in 10 hops, and gradually weakened until his 50th leap carried him a total distance of 160 yards. Roberts removed only his shoes, coat and waistcoat and being in much worse shape collapsed out of breath ten yards short.



Bernard Chester Middleton (1924 – 2019)

'Bernard was a good boy and never a problem' his mother told me when I was taken to visit her at a nearby nursing home back in the late 1980s. By then completely blind, she had been rigorous in ensuring Bernard wrote well, and would correct and return any letters with mistakes even into his adulthood. Bernard was ever grateful for the discipline he received from his mother.

Bernard devoted his life to book restoration together with producing designed bindings intricately tooled with gold leaf. When I first started working for him, he constantly reminded me of the need for disciplined hard work and he was at the bench six and a half days a week until his 80s.

Always generous with his time, sharing his knowledge with those seeking his advice and help, each afternoon he would go up to his study to answer the day's correspondence by return, hurrying to catch the last collection at 5.30 pm. His trips to the post box were eased with his enthusiastic adoption of first the fax machine and then email.

His two monumental publications, *The History of English Craft Bookbinding* and *The Restoration of Leather Bindings* became essential reading for students, practitioners, scholars, collectors and the book trade across the world. Following the installation of his bookbinding library at Rochester Institute of Technology, a conference *Bookbinding 2000* was held there in his honour. More than 400 people from nearly 40 countries attended.

In 2000, the British Library/Oak Knoll published his *Recollections: A Life in Bookbinding*, a major book of his life and career. Over the decades, he wrote numerous articles and reviews.

He once said to me, he realised he no longer had the oomph to run and catch a bus. At first, I thought he was joking but age had begun to take its toll. Following his first stroke in 2011, he gradually became slower and weaker. At 92, he finally retired after 78 years in the trade!

For the last two years of his life, he was virtually confined to bed. Finding difficulty shaving, he grew a snowy white beard which caused initial confusion to many. The highlights of his life became excursions to eat out and visits to book fairs (reluctantly in his wheelchair).

There, his eagle eyes sought out fine gold tooled bindings to add to his collection and he met the myriad of book dealers and collectors that he knew. His memory and mind remained razor sharp. Visitors enjoyed hearing his vivid memories of events and conversations with fellow bookbinders going back to the 1940s. Always smiling and looking radiant in his favourite bright yellow sleeveless pullover.

His admiration of fine craftsmanship of yesteryear remained undiminished. The last book he collected arrived in the post on the morning of his death. He was very kind, gentle, generous, extremely modest and loved by everybody. In the trade he was known as 'The Great Man'. His mother would have been so proud that her boy was not only good but great.

Flora Ginn

Bernard was a long-term Clapham Society member, and for several years a valuable member of our Local History Sub-committee.



Clapham Sings

In the March newsletter Clapham Community Choir's forthcoming concert promised to be different and special, and it was!

The Choir had been involved since before Christmas in a collaborative project with Clapham Manor, Heathbrook and Macaulay CE primary schools. On 28 March the Choir and the choirs from the three schools came together in a concert rounding off the project: 'Clapham Sings. A celebration of London songs'.

The school choirs – some 30 children from each school – captured the London theme with three iconic songs: Macaulay CE Primary School sang *Old Father Thames*, Clapham Manor performed *A Cockney Knees Up*, and Heathbrook gave us *A Foggy Day In London Town*. The choirs were beautifully rehearsed and sang like spring-time, with energy, musical colour and huge enthusiasm.

Clapham Community Choir started the concert off with Noel Coward's *London Pride* and *Accentuate The Positive*. The school choirs followed with their songs. The finale saw all the choirs together singing Stanley Holloway's raucous *With Her*

Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm, and then, in contrasting mood, the poignant *Streets of London*.

The audience response matched the energy and enthusiasm of the performance. It was a remarkable evening – and, of course, the children stole the show! The project was a great success, with enthusiastic collaboration from the schools and the music teachers. The Choir received a grant from Skipton Grassroots Giving to start off the project and benefitted from sponsorship from Goodsell Solicitors in Clapham Old Town, and support from local businesses Crosta & Mollica and Nardulli Ice Cream.

The CD recorded by the choirs in February is available from Clapham Community Choir (contact via website).

Clapham Community Choir is a non-audition choir, with members from Clapham and other parts of Lambeth and neighbouring boroughs. The Choir rehearses on Tuesday evenings, from 7.30 to 9 pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX, and is always pleased to welcome new members. For further information about Clapham Community Choir go to singclapham.org.

Henry Tate

Bill Linskey, Chair of the Brixton Society, gave us an interesting talk about the local sugar millionaire and philanthropist, Henry Tate. Born in Lancashire, the 11th of 12 children of a Unitarian minister, Henry's only schooling was at the school run by his father to supplement his meagre income. At the age of 13 Henry was apprenticed to his older brother as a grocer, and at the end of his seven year apprenticeship he opened his own grocer's shop in Liverpool. He prospered, opening eight shops within 20 years and then a wholesaler, before selling his business to buy into a sugar refiner. At the time sugar was sold in cone-shaped loaves which had to be broken up by the grocer for sale. Tate bought rights to European methods of refining the sugar to eliminate impurities and make it as white as possible, and importantly, rights to equipment to produce sugar lumps. By this time he had built a new refinery in London and left the earlier partnership, to form Henry Tate & Son. (We learnt from a subsequent question that the partnership with Lyle was not formed until the early 20th century).

In 1881 Henry Tate moved to London leaving his son, Edwin, in charge of the Liverpool business. He bought a house in Streatham called Park Hill where he lived until his death in 1899. (See details of the opening of the grounds of this house on front page).

From the late 1880s onward Henry Tate made many very large donations. Perhaps best known to what is now Tate Britain, but originally the National Gallery of British Art and then the Tate Gallery. Wondering what to do with his extensive art collection, which included works by Millais, Constable and Landseer he offered them to the National Gallery on condition they were exhibited as the Tate Collection. After long protracted negotiations, a site was agreed, land purchased and the new gallery on Millbank was finally built.

Tate's donations were mainly in Liverpool and south London and focussed on education and self-improvement, as well as, unusually for his time, the advancement of women. But he insisted that his money was well used. His funding of Brixton library was dependent on the local library rate being doubled to ensure there was sufficient income to sustain it.

Bill answered several questions, and in particular addressed the issue of the sugar trade and slavery. He pointed out that the transatlantic slave trade was abolished by the UK government in 1807, and the slave trade ended in 1838 – before Henry Tate was in business.

A welcome visitor who was introduced to us on the evening was Caroline Tate, great granddaughter of Henry Tate.

Glebe House

On **Wednesday 15 May** and **Thursday 16 May**, to celebrate the launch of high end catering and events company BYRD Food, chefs Rosie French (French and Grace) and Sherri Dymond (The Canton Arms, Ducksoup, Rochelle Canteen, Italo, Koya) will be taking over Grade II listed Georgian coach house in Clapham Old Town, The Glebe House London, for two special supper club nights of seasonal spring feasting. Three courses and paired wine. Tickets £55 from info@theglebehouselondon.com. More details at theglebehouselondon.com. The Glebe House London, 6 Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ

May at Omnibus

Simon Stephens' *Country Music*, a raw and powerful play about love, crime and redemption, which premiered at The Royal Court Theatre in 2004, is revived with a brand-new production by twice OFFIE-nominated director Scott Le Crass. Stephens' work includes the multi-award winning *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *On the Shore of The Wide World*.

The story which begins in 1983 in Gravesend centres on the life of Jamie Carris and follows his journey over the course of twenty years. The play runs from **Wednesday 29 May to Sunday 23 June**. Times vary, see website for details.

Music includes internationally renowned harpist Alina Bzhezinska coupled with award-winning jazz saxophonist Tony Kofi. On **Sunday 12 May** this group, Alone Together, will perform timeless tunes by Coltrane, Ashby and Ellington as well as original compositions.

On **Sunday 19 May** Duo Travels present chamber jazz of the highest virtuosity performed by bassist Yuri Goloubev and guitarist Maci Pysz. For full details and to book tickets go to omnibus-clapham.org call 020 7498 4699 or drop in at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

Brixton Windmill

Don't miss Windmill Beer and Bread Festival on **Monday 6 May** from 1 to 5 pm. This Mayday celebration of local producers includes food, entertainment and more local breweries than ever before. Visitors can also meet a team of volunteer millers inside the windmill who will be busy milling flour that will be available to buy on the day.

May Open Weekend at the Windmill is on **Saturday 11 May** and **Sunday 12 May** from 1 to 5 pm.

You can book a tour to the top in advance at www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit or just turn up on the day for a shorter tour. Short tours run every 20 minutes and all tours are guided by trained Windmill volunteers. Tours are free, although donations are welcome.



Royal Trinity Hospice

In May, Royal Trinity Hospice will be hosting two free events as part of Dying Matters Week, a national campaign encouraging people to talk more openly about death and dying.

‘Living every moment: what death can teach us about living fully’ will take place on **Tuesday 14 May** from 6.30 to 8 pm in partnership with Poppy’s Funerals. This panel event will be an uplifting conversation about how the experience of death can enable us to live a richer life with more meaning and fewer regrets. Guests will have the opportunity to participate in a Q & A and share their own experiences.

Trinity will also host their annual ‘Death Café’ on **Wednesday 15 May** from 6 to 7.30 pm, providing the chance to eat, drink tea and talk about death in a safe and supportive environment.

Both events will be held at Royal Trinity Hospice, 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN. The events are free, but booking is essential at royaltrinityhospice.london/events, on 020 7787 1010 or media@royaltrinityhospice.london.

Wandsworth Heritage Festival

This annual festival runs from **Tuesday 25 May** to **Sunday 9 June** with a range of interesting events including tours, walks and exhibitions. The theme this year is *Entertaining Wandsworth*. The Clapham Society’s contribution is a walk, led by Timothy Walker entitled Growth of a Victorian Suburb on **Monday 3 June**, leaving from Clapham South Underground Station at 6.30 pm.

The full programme is available at Wandsworth libraries.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The tenth anniversary season continues with a programme of piano quartets performed by CCC artistic director Amanda Lake (violin), violist Madeleine Pickering, cellist Sophie Rivlin and pianist John Paul Ekins. The programme will feature *Mozart Piano Quartet in E flat KV493*, *Mahler Piano Quartet in A minor* and *Fauré Piano Quartet in C minor Op 15*.

The concert starts at 7.30 pm at 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.

The Guggenheims

On **Wednesday 15 May** at The Arts Society Clapham Common meeting Professor Andrew Hopkins will talk about the Guggenheim Art Collections. He will look at the beginning of both Solomon’s and Peggy’s collections in New York City, with artists they acquired such as Kandinsky and Pollock, and trace the development and expansion of their collections over more than half a century, by which time the Guggenheim name had become synonymous with some of the most inspiring art and museums in the world. Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT starting at 11 am. £10 on the door or enquire about membership at theartsociety.org/claphamcommon.

New Members

We have recently welcomed the following new members: Sophie Clement-Jones, David Goldsworthy, Matilda Harden, King’s Avenue School, and Alex Kirwan and Sarah Mitchell.

Jess Gillam at St Luke’s

St Luke’s Music Society ends its season on **Saturday 18 May** with a very special event – Jess Gillam, who thrilled the country with her performance at the Last Night of the Proms, is giving a saxophone recital featuring music ranging from John Dowland to Benjamin Britten and other twentieth century giants. There are still a few tickets remaining for what promises, even by the Music Society’s own high standards, to be an exceptional evening. Performance starts at 7.30 pm at St Luke’s Church, 194 Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets at slms.org.uk or the Box Office on 07951 791619.

More books about Clapham

We have recently been offered several out-of-print books about Clapham for sale for the benefit of the Peter Jefferson Smith Fund. These include a Battley’s *Guide to Clapham* of 1937, and Eric Smith’s *Clapham* (1976). If you are interested in seeing these please contact the Editor (details below).

More Walks

There are many more free walks listed in the Local History Walks in South London leaflet, which is available now from libraries, several public venues and on all walks. It can also be downloaded from the Lambeth Local History Forum website at lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk/home/walks/. Or, if you prefer a self-guided walk, details of our seven leaflets and how to buy them can be found on our website at claphamsociety.com/clapsocpublications.html.

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

