



# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter

Issue 421

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### Omnibus Theatre

You may have noticed that Omnibus Theatre has been undergoing a transformation over the summer. As part of a capital redevelopment project, funded largely by our wonderful donors and audiences who made this all possible, existing spaces in our building have been reconfigured to improve the audience experience. We have a street-facing cafe/bar, a fresh block of toilets and sound-proofing for the main 110 seat theatre. You are welcome to pop in and take a peek next time you are passing by. I do hope you agree that our new cafe/bar, which will be completed in phases, and open very soon, will be a wonderful space serving great food and drink for everyone in the community.

*Marie McCarthy*  
*Artistic Director, Omnibus Theatre*

### Clapham Book Festival

Clapham's very own book festival, now in its fourth year, takes place on **Saturday 5 October** at Omnibus Theatre. If you haven't bought your tickets yet, you are missing out on top-notch thriller writers and TV journalists **Frank Gardner** and **Simon Berthon**, historians **Kate Williams** and **Henry Hemming** (who has had great recent notices for *Our Man in New York*), biographers **Ursula Buchan** and the prize-winning **Aida Edemariam**, and novelists **Michèle Roberts** and **Elizabeth Buchan** (getting wonderfully reviewed for *The Museum of Broken Promises*). More details and tickets at [www.omnibus-clapham.org/clapham-book-festival-2019](http://www.omnibus-clapham.org/clapham-book-festival-2019).

### Events on Clapham Common

We are very pleased to report that Lambeth have finally responded to our challenge to their use of the Common and in favourable terms. In particular, we have managed to secure their agreement not to grant licences for events such as Winterville without first seeking ministerial consent. That gives all of us the opportunity to comment on any proposed licence before it is granted. It also appears that there are no current plans for Winterville this year, but if it does go ahead, it will be on the Circus site on West Side. The letter reads as follows:

*23 August 2019*

**Re: Use of Clapham Common; Winterville and other events**

*Thank you for your letter dated 6 December 2018 on behalf of the Clapham Society, the Friends of Clapham Common, and the Open Spaces Society in relation to Lambeth Council's current use of Clapham Common for events with specific reference to the Winterville 2018 event.*

*We have taken into consideration the points that you have raised in relation to the Council granting licences and/or permission for use of the Common which engages the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks and Open Spaces) Act 1967 ("1967 Act") and respond as follows:*

*[continued on back page]*

We meet 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. Talks 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 14 October

**Annual General Meeting.** Followed by **Growing Up in Wartime Battersea.**

What was it like to be a child in London during World War II? This talk, narrated by **Carol Rahn**, shares highlights of filmed interviews with men and women recounting their childhood experiences during the war. It is a fascinating story of the terror – and temptations – of bombing, disrupted schooling and youthful independence that would be unthinkable today. Even for those familiar with the history of the war years, these first-hand accounts are magnetic.

#### Monday 18 November

One of our most popular speakers in the past, **Edmund Bird**, returns to tell us about the **Architectural History of the London Underground**. Edmund has been the Senior Heritage Advisor to Transport for London since 2006 working on projects to refurbish and adapt London Underground and Overground historic stations and Thames bridges together with highway schemes in conservation areas.

## Derrick Johnson (1938-2019)

We are very sad to report the death of Derrick Johnson at the end of August. Derrick was an enthusiastic member of the Clapham Society's Local History Sub-committee from 2007, and he took over as Convenor from Peter Jefferson Smith in 2010. He also represented the Society on the Wandsworth Heritage Group from the time of its formation in 2010.

Derrick will be best known to many members as a leader of walks. He led many over the years and devised several new ones, including Clapham in WWII which he adapted for schools with particular success. The Deep Shelters fascinated him and following a well-researched talk to the Society some years ago, as soon as Clapham South Deep Shelter was opened up, he arranged for a specialist talk and a site visit. A visit to Clapham Common Deep Shelter soon followed as well as the installation on it of one of our commemorative Green Plaques, another initiative with which he was closely associated.

Derrick derived much pleasure from research for some of the unusual Local History queries we receive. Among these the Clapham connections of the criminal mastermind Fu-Manchu,

and the story of the Swedish inventor of the letter bomb who lived in a Clapham Park villa until the law caught up with him and he was removed to Brixton Prison, provided material for articles in the *South London Press* (now on the Clapham Society website).

Derrick was quiet, mild mannered and gentle, but his many interests were followed with energy and enthusiasm. He spent many happy days (and some not so happy) at the Oval following the fortunes of Surrey, and was a knowledgeable plantsman, not, as he would insist a gardener. He had a deep knowledge and interest in wine, and also in beer. Perhaps most extraordinary was his knowledge and following of theatre of all kinds, and in various venues. He could remember faultlessly details of productions he had seen many years ago and was always game for anything new in the theatre. I was regularly presented with a neat cutting from *The Guardian* of a review by the saintly Michael Billington as a suggestion for a proposed visit with him and Janet. And his knowledge of interval ice-creams was legendary!

I personally mourn and shall greatly miss a good friend, and the Society has lost a much valued member.

*Alyson Wilson*

## Clapham Chamber Concerts

The new season starts on **Friday 4 October** with a varied programme of music for voice, clarinet and piano. Presented by CCC artistic director and clarinettist, Jonathan Parkin, this concert will showcase the talent of young award-winning soprano, Charlotte Bowden. Whilst featuring two greatly loved works by Franz Schubert, the *Arpeggione Sonata* and *The Shepherd on the Rock*, the concert will also include a rarely performed song cycle by popular 20th century English composer Gustav Holst, and music for solo piano by Franz Liszt, performed by pianist John Paul Ekins, now a familiar face at the concert series.

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](mailto:claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com).

**Royal Trinity Hospice** is the charity beneficiary of the Affordable Art Fair, Battersea, which runs from 17 – 20 October. Proceeds from tickets purchased on the Trinity website at [royaltrinityhospice.london/aaf](http://royaltrinityhospice.london/aaf) go directly to the hospice and include access to the Charity Preview Event on **Wednesday 16 October**, a complimentary drink and access for the full duration of the fair. Call 020 7787 1000 for more details.

The Wandsworth Friends of Royal Trinity Hospice will hold their annual Christmas Fair at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ on **Tuesday 12** and **Wednesday 13 November**. There will be 40+ exciting and varied stalls including a silent auction and Royal Trinity Hospice Christmas Cards.

Tickets are now available and more information, including a list of stallholders, is at [royaltrinityhospice.london/fair](http://royaltrinityhospice.london/fair). The event is generously sponsored by Knight Frank.

## Time to revitalise Clapham North

Since 2012 the Old Town and the area around Clapham Common tube station have benefited from a range of welcome improvements to the public realm by Transport for London (TfL), Lambeth Council (LBL), and *This Is Clapham*, our local Business Improvement District (BID). This concentration of attention and resources has left the northern end of the High Street, in the vicinity of Voltaire Road and Clapham North Station looking very much the poor relation and sadly down at heel – an issue the BID and the Society are keen to address.

In the meantime, TfL's Overground service at Clapham High Street Station has experienced steadily increasing passenger numbers, and the area has become a significant public transport interchange. The High Street end of Voltaire Road has itself become an important destination in its own right with private investment in the railway arches, and attractive eating and drinking establishments on both sides of the road.

Two or three years ago we came close to gaining a commitment from key authorities to invest in the public realm around Clapham North. TfL undertook preliminary design work aimed at tackling a range of issues identified by a public realm study led by the BID, with input from the Society. The study looked at a range of things to lift the area, including street trees and planters, improving the visibility of Clapham High Street Station and signage (it is virtually invisible behind foliage currently), environmental improvements in Voltaire Road, re-siting of a pedestrian crossing to provide a safer crossing point between the two stations, and making the bridge across the High Street a more attractive gateway feature.

Of particular concern is that the area between the Bedford Road junction and the Lendal Terrace gyratory exit onto the High Street is a severe accident blackspot. At the time of writing it is unclear how best to fix this. Sadly for Clapham, the funds available to take these ideas forward were allocated elsewhere, and design work was largely suspended.

During the past year or so a number of us, including elected representatives, have maintained pressure to secure a range of improvements. A dialogue has been maintained with Network Rail about the state of the bridge and discussing investment in the station to provide level access, and platform improvements. We also continue to press for SE Region suburban services to include a stop at Clapham High Street in the new franchise. This has involved a series of meetings with senior figures at the Department of Transport (albeit Ministers keep changing).

At the time of writing I remain reasonably optimistic a plan for the public realm will re-emerge in coming months, and the authorities will see fit to invest to revitalise this end of the High Street. This may assist in attracting demand for the many vacant premises along the street. However, station improvements and relief of the congested Northern Line must remain longer term aspirations.

*Mark Leffler*

## Battersea's First Lady. The life and times of Caroline Ganley MP

The genuinely startling thing about Sue Demont's latest book on Caroline Ganley – given that Battersea's early 20th century radical tradition is such a peculiarly fertile and well-ploughed field, and the reader is already well aware of the important local legacies of the likes of John Burns, Charlotte Despard and Shapurji Saklatvala – is to discover another Battersea political figure of such significance and stature.

Like Burns (and unlike Despard and Saklatvala) Ganley, born in 1879, lived locally and was all too well aware from her own family experiences of the corrosive effects of insecure employment, low wages, ill health, bad diet and poor housing. Her solution through socialism seemed self-evident; her slogan as a Labour LCC councillor in 1925 proclaimed her credentials: 'Battersea is a working-class borough. Vote for your working-class candidate.'

Sue Demont has done a nimble and sensitive job in contextualising Catherine Ganley's own memoir and various other sources and turning them into a coherent narrative. In the process she uncovers the extraordinary quiet determination of an under-educated working-class mother who spent her entire life working through the structures and committees of various local socialist organizations (the Social Democratic Foundation, the Women's Socialist Circle, Battersea Trades Council, the No Conscription Fellowship, the London Cooperative movement) both as ends in themselves and to achieve office in local and national government.

The list is long and startling. Ganley served as a Battersea councillor (1919-1925), as the first woman JP on the Wandsworth bench (1920-1947), as Battersea's LCC

councillor (1925-1931) and as the Labour MP for Battersea South (1945-1954). Her swansong was to serve once again as a local councillor from 1954 until 1965, only standing down when her beloved Battersea was absorbed into the new London Borough of Wandsworth.

Rather than a political trajectory punctuated by grand-standing and sound-bites, hers was one of a quiet and unobtrusive persistence (while serving as the first female President of the London Cooperative Society, she was referred to as 'that little woman from the Co-op') and of working through available radical working-class organizations to improve the lives of local people. Demont singles out her practical alleviation of child poverty while working on the Sleaford Street School Care Committee, securing free school meals of decent quality for its undernourished children; the fact that on her watch as a JP flogging was abandoned as a punishment on the Juvenile bench; and her role, as chair of the Health and the Maternity and Child Welfare Committees, in securing Battersea's first Maternity Home on Bolingbroke Grove which opened in 1921.

As Battersea, the place, continues in its giddy and constant reinvention, Ganley's selfless life comes to represent an older vanishing municipal tradition of service. She was just nine years old when the newly-constituted Battersea Vestry adopted its motto, *Non mihi, non tibi, sed nobis* (Not mine, not thine, but ours). Perhaps fittingly she died in 1965, the year after Battersea ceased to be a borough. She was 84.

*Battersea's First Lady. The life and times of Caroline Ganley MP* by Sue Demont is obtainable via mail order from [suedemont57@gmail.com](mailto:suedemont57@gmail.com). £5.99 plus £1.50 P&P.

Jon Newman

## Clapham Common Film Club

The second film in the new season at the Film Club is *Wajib* to be screened on **Monday 28 October**. This was the 2017 Oscar foreign film entry from Palestine and is a humorous family drama in which a father and his estranged son must come together to hand deliver across Nazareth his daughter's wedding invitations as per local Palestinian custom. The film has been praised for its blend of comedy, drama, its rich sense of place and seductive complexity of its characters.

Future Autumn screening dates are **Sunday 24 November** and **Monday 16 December**. Starting time is 7.30 pm at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. Doors and bar from 7 pm. Discussion is encouraged in the bar afterwards. Membership is essential and can be acquired at the screening or in advance; the full programme and more details from Roger Booker at [ccfilmrb@gmail.com](mailto:ccfilmrb@gmail.com).

## Stage Door

Balham's theatre group, Southside, will perform *Stage Door* by Edna Ferber and George S Kaufman. The play is set in New York in 1936 in The Footlights Club, which was based on the Rehearsal Club, a Broadway haven for women performers during the 1930s. It was conceived by the play's co-author Edna Ferber, whose niece was a struggling actress in New York at the time.

From **Wednesday 23 October** to **Saturday 26 October** Wednesday – Friday at 7.45 pm, Saturday at 3 pm Tickets: £12, concessions (Wednesday and Saturday only) £9. Box office 07914 657524 or book online at [southsideplayers.co.uk](http://southsideplayers.co.uk). Chestnut Grove Academy Theatre, Boundaries Road, SW12 8JZ.

## Black History Month

Black history is celebrated throughout the country in the month of October, and nowhere more energetically than in Lambeth. Activities – many free – include talks, poetry readings, opera, music of all kinds, exhibitions, walks and plenty more. For full listing go to [blackhistorymonth.org.uk/listings/region/greater-london/lambeth](http://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/listings/region/greater-london/lambeth) or pick up a leaflet in a Lambeth library.



## St Luke's Music Society

The season opens on **Saturday 5 October** at 7.30 pm with the great British tenor Ian Bostridge presenting Schubert's iconic *Winterreise*. Not only is Bostridge acknowledged as the world's leading interpreter of this astonishing song cycle, but he has also recently published a widely acclaimed book exploring every aspect of Schubert's masterpiece, which will form the basis of an introduction that he will give to the concert. He will be accompanied by pianist Julius Drake making his second appearance at St Luke's. Some tickets are still available from [slms.org.uk](http://slms.org.uk). St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ.



[continued from front page]

1. We note your concern regarding the impact of events on Clapham Common and acknowledge that you wish for the comments set out in your letter to be considered as part of the consultation over Lambeth's Events Strategy.

2. The Winterville event is a seasonal family friendly event which incorporates a variety of recreational activities and entertainment including an ice rink, pop up cinema, crazy golf, along with various street food vendors and a Christmas market. The organisers of Winterville wanted to ensure that they had enough time to ensure the best delivery of the event and this saw the organisers being on site from mid-November to commence the set-up on the event site. The event opened to the public at the end of November 2018 and closed on 23 December 2018.

3. In order to adequately restore the area which previously hosted Winterville, the Council is preparing to invest approximately £200,000 in order to carry out a refurbishment of the site area. We confirm that we are currently procuring an appropriate contractor to undertake this work.

4. In response to concerns raised over the length of time that the events area of Clapham Common was closed off to the public following Winterville, and in response to the support expressed through the Council's consultation to make better use of hard-surfaced areas, it is proposed that should Winterville return in 2019 it would not be permitted to take place on the same grassed area of Clapham Common and that, subject to a formal application being received, consideration would be given to hosting that event on the surfaced Funfair area and Redgra pitches.

5. As you know, the Council's position is that it has the power to grant licences and permissions for the use of Clapham Common for events such as Winterville under article 7(1)(b) without ministerial consent from the Secretary of State. We are accordingly satisfied that all necessary permissions were put in place for the Winterville 2018 event. Notwithstanding the same, we accept that the wording of, and interaction between, the relevant parts of the 1967 Act, namely articles 7 and 12, is ambiguous and uncertain, therefore, whilst reserving our formal position in this respect, we confirm that in future the Council will seek consent from the Secretary of State for structures associated with similar large events of this kind planned on Clapham Common. We trust that this satisfactorily addresses your concerns.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Crook

Assistant Director Neighbourhoods

## Musical Tales

St Paul's Opera presents a musical gala on **Friday 11 October**. We welcome back soloists from our summer production of *Le Nozze di Figaro* – a hugely pleasurable reunion for a group of musicians who have made lifelong friendships, such as the camaraderie of the Figaro team. Our programme will include arias, duets and ensembles from operas such as *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *Ariodante*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Pasquale*, *La Traviata* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

We are also welcoming back Musical Director Panaretos Kyriatzidis. 'Telling

stories is what opera is all about,' Pan tells us. 'Not only through words and spectacle, but also through some of the best music ever written. From fairytales to dramatic love affairs and from medieval Scotland and bourgeois Paris to ancient Rome – expect a lot of stories, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Oh, and some banging tunes, of course.'

The full programme for the evening is on our website: [stpaulsopera.org](http://stpaulsopera.org) where tickets are also available, advance purchase £15, on the door £17. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX.

Patricia Ninian

## October at Omnibus Theatre

This month is the 5th Annual Perception festival. There will be a programme of six shows across four weeks. Highlights include Futures Theatre's *I'd Rather Go Blind* by Somalia Seaton, which explores what it takes to be a mother in a world that is closing in around you and is inspired and informed by women who have lived through the criminal justice system.

Fireraisers present their touring production of *Femme Fatale* by Polly Wiseman, an unconventional dark comedy based on a true story about fame, failure and feminism.

Vicky's greatest desire is to be the perfect hostess, mother, bride. *Havisham* by Emma White is a deliciously provocative show and asks if traditional perfection can really make us happy, or if we should wave goodbye to our great expectations.

For full details and booking go to [omnibus-clapham.org](http://omnibus-clapham.org), box office on 020 7498 4699 or call at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common Northside, SW4 0LH.



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](http://claphamsociety.com)

