

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 434 March 2021

With the world still holding its breath in hopes of the vaccine easing the pandemic, events continue to be virtual, including our meetings and other inspiring Clapham pursuits. We pay tribute to a local legend in Old Town and one of our members has provided a fascinating ‘peep’ into Samuel Pepys’ account of the last plague. Keep your news coming – and stay safe.

From generation to generation

Maurice Moen, founder of butchers M Moen & Sons, died on Boxing Day last year, aged 86. Roger Eastman made a trip to Old Town to pay his respects

Fifty years ago a genial young Irishman from Ballymay, County Monaghan, set up shop in south London. Maurice Moen was the third generation of butchers in his family. Arriving in England in 1952 at 18, he had worked in the trade for a number of years before establishing his own business in 1971. His older son, Garry, who most readers will know, continues to run the business at 24 The Pavement. Moen’s



has to be one of the most attractive shops in Old Town both for its aesthetics and its comestibles, assuming you like good food and meat in particular.

Maurice’s first shop was in South Norwood, followed by 19 The Pavement. There was a Kennington shop but ‘it wasn’t Clapham,’ said Garry, so never took root. In time, it and the South Norwood shop went and the Moens centred their attention on Old Town. Then, in the late 1990s, the landlords of No 19 decided they wanted the premises back ‘to redevelop’ and M Moen & Sons had to move. (To this day it remains an empty site behind a hoarding illustrated with local heroes.)

Extensive market research as to the best possible relocation site nearby was carried out. Abbeville Road was looking like the frontrunner when, quite by chance at a social function, Maurice heard of the perfect solution, and it was only five doors away. F A Heffer & Co, a wholesale decorators’ merchants that you hardly knew was there, wanted to sell up. A deal was quickly done and in 1999, the butchers as Claphamites know it today, was opened to the world in all its glory. The project was Garry’s baby (*continued on page 2*)

In this detail of a 2000 painting by local artist Mary Millner, Maurice can be seen doing what he did best. The picture (*see overleaf*) hangs in Moen’s today, but you have to look for it!



Our meetings are normally held at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, but with normal life still on hold, the next two will be held on Zoom at the usual time of 8 pm. To book, email events@claphamsociety.com. Login details will be sent out 24 hours ahead of the event. Please book during the appropriate month.

Monday 15 March

Ready, steady, census! With the decennial census almost upon us, **David Gwyther**, Census Engagement Manager for North Lambeth, will speak about its importance and the practicalities of taking part. Households across Lambeth will soon be asked to participate in the nationwide survey of housing and the population. Information from the ‘digital-first’ census will help decide how local services are planned and funded. This could affect things like doctors’ surgeries, housing or new bus routes. The March meeting is your chance to find out more, and David will be happy to answer your questions at the end of the call.

Monday 19 April

The House on the Hill. Journalist and author **Christopher Impey** will tell the story of HMP Brixton, London’s oldest prison, which was 200 years old in 2019 and forms the subject of his book by this name. Brixton began as the Surrey House of Correction, infamously popularising the brutal treadmill. Later, it became the first convict prison solely for women and, during the 20th century, the remand prison for London. By the millennium it was rated the worst prison in the country by inspectors, but in recent years it has been transformed and now boasts such enterprising prisoner rehabilitation schemes as The Clink restaurant and Clink@Home, a local delivery service especially busy during lockdown, and National Prison Radio.

(continued from page 1) but with Maurice 'keeping a watchful, twinkling eye over Garry's shoulder', as the designer and Society member Adrian Mason-Rogers put it. The concept they worked to was a traditional-looking shop, wholly in place in the Conservation Area that is Old Town, fulfilling English Heritage's requirements yet fitted with the latest equipment for a modern butcher's. Top-quality craftsmen and materials, from bespoke tiles to proper timber for the shopfront, were used. Mission very much accomplished and the shop remains immaculately kept to this day.

Maurice continued to work at No 24 but soon began to take a back seat. He had always strived to run a business where



Christmas 1993, from the family album.

quality of produce and service to the customer were paramount. His friendly, jocular demeanour was a constant draw to customers, who value the same warmth from Garry and his team today. This is still a family business serving a local community, but such is Moen's reputation that people journey from as far as north of the river (!) to buy their meat.

As Garry told me, 'Over the years our customers have become ever more discerning. Quality is the key and people now want to cook and eat restaurant quality food all the time. The last year of Covid has only served to amplify that.'

If you've ever wondered where their meat comes from, they prefer to deal direct and follow the seasons. Lamb, for example, comes from a number of sources, moving gradually north as the months progress and new lambs are ready. Their staff, about eight butchers usually, are often trained on the job and in view of the customers. Most of the prep work is also done in store; behind the scenes there is about the same floor area again for the heavier jobs and storing chilled meat.

Maurice was justifiably proud of how his business has grown. Long may it and his memory live on. Thanks to fourth-generation Garry for ensuring they do.

Mary Millner created this painting from life and pictures: 'The butcher patiently posed for me and I caught other details from setting up an easel outside.' Garry appears far right.



Ruth Eastman, Painting by Mary Millner, marymillner.com

Top brass at St Luke's Music Society

The huge emotional impact of Tasmin Little's last-ever London concert before Christmas, before her retirement from public performance, seems to belong in a different world. But now we are thrilled that St Luke's Music Society can resume its world-class programmes, initially online. First up is the **A4 Brass Quartet**, who recorded the concert scheduled for presentation at St Luke's in January. The A4 is a one-off group; winners of a Royal Philharmonic Society award and at the forefront of British brass chamber music, it combines traditional brass band instruments with contemporary elements never seen before in this medium. The members hold principal positions with the Black Dyke, Brighouse & Rastrick, Flowers, and Foden's Bands.



The A4 Brass Quartet: Jamie Smith (cornet), Chris Robertson (euphonium), Mike Cavanagh (baritone horn), Jonathan Bates (tenor horn).

The renowned cellist **Raphael Wallfisch**, accompanied by **John York**, will present the programme he had been planning to play here in February. A member of a distinguished musical family, Raphael has a remarkably wide repertoire that includes every concerto ever written for the cello. He recorded this performance for us at St John's Smith Square.

For timings and links for both programmes, visit slms.org.uk. The concerts are free, but if you cared to buy virtual tickets we would be very grateful. *Robin Cooke-Hurle, SLMS*

March at Omnibus Theatre

If you missed our sell-out run of *We Were Having A Perfectly Nice Time* last year, don't worry. Conflicted Theatre have teamed up with award-winning filmmaker Will Peppercorn for a film adaptation of their hit play, premiering 4 March with a live Q&A.

Engine Room is back! Keeping the audience at the heart of the creative process, our regular scratch night returns (digitally) for a month of daring new work. Discover the next generation of theatre before anyone else. Details for both at omnibus-clapham.org.

Pots and frocks: the world of Grayson Perry, Britain's favourite transvestite

Widely known for his appearances dressed as his feminine alter ego, Claire, Grayson Perry, RA, is now a core part of the art establishment. Ten years after winning the Turner Prize, he gave the BBC Reith Lecture in 2013. His works of ceramics, textiles and prints are highly sought after. Often controversial, he is able to tackle difficult subjects in a poignant yet witty way. This Zoom talk on **17 March at 11 am** by **Ian Swankie**, an acclaimed lecturer on contemporary art and architecture, will examine Grayson Perry's works and look at the character inside the flamboyant frocks. Visitor (non-member) tickets £10 – or contact us to join The Arts Society for free entry. Log in details will be sent when payment is received (then please log on at 10.50 am on the day); for a place, please email claphamcommon@theartsociety.org.

Susan Holder, The Arts Society Clapham Common

'In its Familiarity Golden', the first of Grayson Perry's two *Essex House Tapestries: Life of Julie Cope*.



Lambeth history unlocked

Following the success of their series of talks given during the first lockdown, Lambeth archivists **Jon Newman and Len Reilly** will be giving more talks about Lambeth history. The talks take place on a Thursday evening at 7 pm and last for about one hour. This month's talks will be held on **4 March: Lambeth and the census**; **11 March: Charles Dickens and Lambeth**; **18 March: What we do in the day job**; **25 March: Portrait photographs**. If you wish to be kept informed email archives@lambeth.gov.uk to register and you will be put on the list to receive the login details each week.

Audiences for the last few talks have been in the hundreds, which attests to the growing interest in local history. These talks should open the eyes of many to the rich archives held by the Borough of Lambeth. They are freely available to the public and although the building is closed during the current lockdown, the (continued on page 3)

The plague that ailed Pepys' London

Samuel Pepys lived in London for most of his adult life. When he was in his late sixties, his long-term friend and former servant, Will Hewer, invited him to live at his house in Clapham. Traces of one of the walls of Hewer's mansion, Clapham Place, were found just a few years ago, running along what is now the east side of The Chase which is thought to be part of the access drive. Water mains were being repaired, and excavations were watched with interest by the Society's historian and archaeologist, the late Michael Green. Pepys died in 1703, and is buried at St Olave's, Hart Street, in the City.

Prompted by Covid-19, I checked his voluminous Diary, which mentions and gives details of the bubonic plague that beset Europe in the late 1650s and onwards. Of the scores of stories and entries in it, I have been asked to choose a few in which Pepys mentions the plague in London (mostly). A search of the Diary shows these references to what we now call The Great Plague. The similarities and differences between our current pandemic are thought provoking!

The first mention is **31 October 1663**: The Plague is much in Amsterdam, and we in fears of it here, which God defend.

30 April 1665 Great fears of the Sickness here in the City, it being said that two or three houses are already shut up. God preserve us all.

10 June 1665 In the evening home to supper, and there to my great trouble hear that the plague is come into the City (though it hath these three or four weeks since its beginning been wholly out of the City); but where should it begin but in my good friend and neighbour's, Dr Burnett in Fenchurch-street, which in both points troubles me mightily. To the office to finish my letters, and then home to bed, being troubled at the sickness, and my head filled also with other business enough, and particularly how to put my things and estate in order, in case it should please God to call me away, which God dispose of to his own glory.

23 June 1665 So home by hackney-coach; which is become a very dangerous passage nowadays, the sickness increasing mightily.

22 July 1665 I by coach home, not meeting with but two coaches and but two carts from Whitehall to my own house – that I could observe – and the streets mighty thin of people.

15 August 1665 It was dark before I could get home; and so land at churchyard-stairs, where to my great trouble I met a dead Corps, of the plague, in the narrow ally, just bringing down a little pair of stairs, but I thank God I was not much disturbed at it. However, I shall beware of being late abroad again.

9 September 1665 Nothing done to encourage the Parliament to give money, nor the Kingdom able to spare any money if they

would, at this time of the plague. So that as things look at present, the whole state must come to Ruin.

16 October 1665

Walked to the Tower. But Lord, how empty the streets are, and melancholy, so many poor sick people in the streets, full of sores, and so many sad stories overheard as I walk, and that man sick, and so many in this place. And they tell me that in Westminster there is never a physician, and but one apothecary left, all being dead – but that there are great hopes of a great decrease this week: God send it.

31 December 1665 It is true we have gone through great melancholy because of the great plague, and I put to great charges by it, by keeping my family long at Woolwich [not classed as in London, as there was much countryside to go through]... But now the plague is abated almost to nothing, and I intending to get my family [back]... [who] hath been well all this while, and all my friends I know of, saving my aunt Bell, who is dead, and some children of my Cousin Sarah's, of the plague. But many of such as I know very well, dead. Yet to our great joy, the town fills apace, and shops begin to be open again. Pray God continue the plague's decrease.

5 January 1666 ... a delightful thing it is to see the town full of people again, as now it is, and shops begin to open, though in many places, seven or eight together, and more, all shut; but yet the town is full compared with what it used to be, I mean the City-end, for Covent Garden and Westminster are yet very empty of people...

16 January 1666 ... mightily troubled at the news of the plague's being increased...

30 January 1666 This is the first time I have been in this church since the plague; and it frightened me indeed to see so many graves lie so high upon the churchyard, where people have been buried of the plague. I do not think to go through it again a good while.

Peter Skuse, Clapham Society member and member of The Pepys Club. An article about Pepys in Clapham by Timothy Walker can be found on the Local History page at claphamsociety.com.



Samuel Pepys by Sir Godfrey Kneller

New members and annual subscriptions

This month we welcome Jenni Bowley, Carolyn and Michael Cripps, Dave Cross, Hugh and Penelope Hurst, Christa Marshall, Lee and Sarah Roberts and family, and Roberta Tarran.

Annual subscriptions for 2021-22 are due on 1 April. Cheques should be sent to the Membership Secretary; bank transfers can be made direct (details on the Clapham Society website). If you pay by standing order please check that the correct amount is being paid by your bank. Rates are as follows: Individual, £10; Household (up to three names), £15; Business, £25. Please add £10 if you wish to receive the newsletter by post to cover the cost of postage. Alternatively, you can choose to receive the newsletter by email at no extra cost; if you opt for this method, please email membership@claphamsociety.com. Jennifer Everett

(continued from page 2) archivists are offering a service whereby you can email them with any specific query and they will respond. Many of the talks are recorded and can be seen on the Lambeth Local History Forum website at lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk by clicking on 'Talks' in the banner heading. Recent topics include The Walcot Estate, started in 1667 when Edmund Walcot gave four fields in Lambeth for the benefit of the poor which now generate an income allowing for the distribution of £2 million per annum to improve the long-term prospects of Lambeth's disadvantaged citizens; and the story of Lambeth's unlicensed theatres, which provided lively entertainment for local workers. The sole survivor is the Old Vic, which was to become the first home of the National Theatre. Both of these talks are on the website above. Alyson Wilson

Making an entrance at Clapham Common Tube station

Transport for London (TfL) has completed renovations at Clapham Common Tube station, transforming a wall that had fallen into disrepair into one that complements the surrounding area. The wall, at the Southside entrance to the station, was built in the 1990s and featured tiles that later fell off. This left an exposed concrete wall in an area featuring a number of listed buildings, including the station's main entrance, designed by Charles Holden in the 1920s.

After consultation with local borough officers and organisations such as the The Clapham Society, TfL engineers have now completed work to ensure the wall fits in better with the area. It has been clad with Portland stone blocks above a granite plinth and topped with stone coping below the Underground roundel sign. The Portland stone, a traditional building material in London, means that it complements the historic buildings surrounding the station and has enhanced the public realm as a whole.



Ruth Eastman

Events on the Common – taking the long view

Known as Grendel's Mere in a long bygone age, the Common has once again become a quagmire during the winter months, with standing water and muddy pools – a far cry from the parched ground of last summer. Anyone who visits the Common regularly must surely be hoping that warming spring breezes will shortly return to its fields and footpaths to promote more normal service, and that trainers not gumboots can again be the footwear of choice.

Since early September some 17 acres of the Common, referred to as the **Events Site**, has been fenced off to enable reconditioning of the soil and re-seeding, following many years of heavy use. (We understand the contract for these works was £200k.) The Council has



Mark Leffler

displays on the Heras fencing (*left* and peered through on a snowy February day *below*) outlining the works they've embarked on. These have been undertaken to provide grass cover, but also to enable the site to host again a range of income-generating activities as in the days of yore pre-Covid. Lambeth Council's Events Team has been lining up a range of events for various sites on the Common, and a planning application has been duly submitted for those proposed for the Lambeth side of the borough boundary. (It is already clear that certain events on the list will not now take place in 2021.)

The most significant planned booking is to enable **Festival Republic** to occupy the whole of the Events Site from **8 August to 6 September** in order to stage six major event days attracting up to 40,000 people, plus four large event days with a capacity for 20,000. **Full details of all the events planned** are available on

Lambeth Council's Planning Applications Portal, application **ref 21/00180/RG3**. **Winterville** is also hoping to return to Clapham in 2021. This time it has agreed to locate on the Fairground and Redgra sites on the west side of the Common, for which it must seek planning permission from Wandsworth (application yet to be submitted at time of writing). Members may recall that there has been considerable opposition to Winterville locating on the Events Site in previous years. Permission is being sought to be open to the public from **18 November to 23 December**, and for a period before and after these dates to set up and remove the compound and equipment. We understand that these applications, if approved, will also require approval from the Secretary of State for Defra.

As with the **Putt in the Park** proposal (Newsletter 433), which is now the subject of an appeal, both of the above proposals will be seeking licence approvals to enable on-site franchisees to serve alcoholic beverages. Events on the Common provide enjoyment for many, but they are also an important source of income that help pay the massive costs involved in maintaining, regenerating and improving this vital community asset. Cancellation of events in 2020 due to Covid has left a large hole in Lambeth's coffers. The Society would like to explore with our members how together we can help make a difference and improve our Common. If any Society members feel strongly that these, or any of the other events on the Common, should not take place, please note that **objections** need to be submitted on the relevant council's planning portal. To email your councillor, you will find contact details available online at lambeth.gov.uk/findyourcouncillors and wandsworth.gov.uk/the-council/councillors/find-your-councillors. The final date for Putt in the Park is 8 March; the deadline for comments on events in Lambeth was in February. Licensing is dealt with by a separate council committee; similar arrangements apply for submitting objections and comments to these committees online. *Mark Leffler*



If you have any queries about **The Clapham Society** or have news of local events, please contact the appropriate person below:

Chairman

Annabel Allott

Email: chairman@claphamsociety.com

Secretary

Gillian White

Email: secretary@claphamsociety.com

Treasurer

David Brown

Email: treasurer@claphamsociety.com

Membership Secretary

Jennifer Everett

Email: membership@claphamsociety.com

Common and Open Spaces

Andrew Summers

Email: openspaces@claphamsociety.com

Meetings and Events

Christine Armstrong

Email: events@claphamsociety.com

Planning Matters

Martin Pratt

Email: planning@claphamsociety.com

Roads and Transport

Mark Leffler

Email: transport@claphamsociety.com

Local History and Publications

Alyson Wilson

Email: history@claphamsociety.com

Newsletter Editor and Social Media

Ruth Eastman

Email: news@claphamsociety.com

Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications can be found on our website at claphamsociety.com

