

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 440 October 2021

The eagles have landed

Eagle House was the second building locally to have been awarded a Clapham Society Green Plaque. Its owner Sinclair Johnston restored it with his wife, Madeline, as a family home in 2008. With the 'new arrivals', he explains, work is pretty much complete



Sinclair Johnston

If you've caught sight of the two birds now perched on the end wall of Eagle House, 2b Narbonne Avenue, they are successors to the original cast-iron pair that flanked the driveway before the main house was demolished in 1887.

More recently, the originals graced the parapet of The Old Pottery at 2c Narbonne Avenue, but were removed for repair after an unsuccessful robbery attempt about 25 years

ago and have not been seen or heard of ever since.

The new arrivals have been carved in a fine-grained white frost-resistant limestone, which is good for intricate detail, by a French sculptor and stone mason, Sebastien David, of Stone Art Cotswold in Gloucestershire. I had searched reclamation yards and dealers for ready-made eagles, but all possibilities were too large, too small or too expensive. I had met Sebastien before through my professional work on churches and historic buildings and, since I admired his skill and choice of materials, this seemed like a good opportunity to start from scratch. Rob Hughes, a local architect, dealt with planning and listed building consent; Artemis Conservation prepared the site and helped with the installation.

The history of Eagle House is fascinating. Learn more at claphamsociety.com/green-plaques.



Dana Kubick

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts at 8pm and our guest normally speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and discussion. The bar is open before and after, so people can mingle. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. Please arrive in good time before the start. The October meeting, our AGM, will be live and seats will be distanced; owing to continued safety restrictions, please book in advance by emailing history@claphamsociety.com. In November we will be offering a 'hybrid' meeting. Email the address just given to book a seat at Omnibus, or events@claphamsociety.com to attend virtually; Zoom logins will be sent out a few days before the meeting. Places must be booked in the appropriate month, please.

Monday 18 October

Annual General Meeting. The formal business will be followed by an informal discussion about our recent Survey, led by Andrew Summers, Common and Open Spaces, and about any other issues members may wish to raise.

Monday 15 November

Dr Sue Demont, author of *Battersea's First Lady – The Life and Times of Caroline Ganley MP*, will introduce us to this remarkable but overlooked public servant who lived at Thirsk Road, off Clapham Common, from 1910 until her death in 1966. Ganley's work spanned this entire period and comprised an astonishing range of roles at local, national and international level. These included serving as a borough and county councillor, sitting as MP for Battersea South from 1945-51, becoming one of the earliest women magistrates and the first female President of the London Co-operative Society.

The Clapham Society needs you

In the past 18 months our lives have changed, owing to the pandemic. Some members have left our corner of London while new people have moved in. We've continued to keep you abreast of information about Clapham through the Newsletter and are so grateful to all our volunteers who distribute it. Until this September, however, when we reconvened at Omnibus for the first time since February 2020, our monthly Monday meetings could only take place on Zoom. The live meetings have always been sociable events and, for newcomers, a great way of getting to know people and discuss living here.

It's wonderful that live meetings are happening again, of course, but this is not enough to get the Society back to 'normal'. We are actively seeking involvement from you, our members, to support us by standing for the committee (*Continued on page 2*)

(Continued) – nominations are open every year – in main posts or sub-committees. If you have expertise in these areas (Local History, Roads and Transport, Planning, Events, Clapham and Open Spaces, Social Media), or just a healthy interest and think you could inject new ideas and support, let us know by emailing Gill White at secretary@claphamsociety.com. We'd love to hear from you.

With the return of live events and socialising, the time seems right to refresh and review how we work, the roles and membership of the main committee and sub-committees, and to encourage more people to join in our efforts to make Clapham a great place to live as we move forward post-pandemic. We cannot do it without you!

Our Newsletter has a monthly readership of around 1,000,

including members, councillors and local businesses, and our archive of back copies of the NL and other interesting articles and news items is available on the website if you'd like to learn more about what we do and care about.

So, we invite all members, longstanding and newer members and residents, to consider playing a more active role in the Society, or to consider how you might contribute in other ways. Existing committees may merge, new ones may be established. We welcome ideas to enable the Society to chart and undertake our proposed refreshment and hope you will be able to join us at the AGM in a few weeks' time, where we will also be discussing your response to our survey. *Mark Leffler*

Book the date!

The Clapham Book Festival is back on **Saturday October 16** and breaking new ground. Paula Johnson (Society of Authors, Associate Director Royal Society of Literature and Royal Literary Fund trustee) has pulled the programme together.

It's shorter this year and kicks off at **2pm** with guided walks around the literary sites of Clapham, led by local authors, including the novelist and award-winning short story writer **Annemarie Neary** and at **3.30pm** crime fiction author **Julie Anderson**. Clapham has a long and illustrious literary history and this is a unique way of exploring it, but tickets are limited, so be sure to get yours.

At **5.30pm**, **Sir Michael Morpurgo** will be at Omnibus Theatre. The former Children's Laureate, multiple award-winning author and creator of the world-famous *War Horse* will discuss his new book for children and teenagers, *When Fishes Flew*, and much else besides with bestselling local author **Elizabeth Buchan**. This is a perfect event for all ages.

Then at **7.30pm**, Radio 4's **Ed Stourton**, journalist, historian and one of the founders of Channel 4 News, will discuss his book *Auntie's War: The BBC during the Second World War* and trading stories of a lifetime in broadcasting with local author and broadcaster **Simon Berthon**.

Come and meet the authors and have your books signed (on sale thanks to the support of our partner, Clapham Books). We will livestream our 5.30pm and 7.30pm events at Omnibus for those who not wishing to attend in person, with a copy of the author's book, which will be posted by Clapham Books, included in the ticket price.

The Book Festival is also continuing its live author interviews online in partnership with *Time & Leisure* magazine. After a break for the summer holidays, we present **Ben Macintyre** (*Agent Sonya* and all things espionage) on **7 October**, followed by **Rosanna Amaka** (*The Book of Echoes*) on **19 October**. Both at **7pm**.

Tickets for all events are on sale via Eventbrite at <https://bit.ly/3A9fuYy>.
Julie Anderson

Omnibus stages a first and new opening hours for the Café Bar

Book now for Omnibus Theatre's dazzling winter line-up. Our top pick is *The Girl Who Was Very Good at Lying*, about a girl from a



tiny Northern Irish town who decides to give an attractive American tourist a creative tour of the local area's history. Arriving fresh from an award-nominated digital run at Jermyn Street Theatre in the West End, it will be staged in front of a live audience for the very first time this autumn in Clapham.

In other exciting news, the Café Bar is now open every day but Monday – more precious hours to get your cake fix, grab a bite for brunch or enjoy a relaxing tippie. The café's new opening times are: **Sunday, 9am to 5pm; Tuesday/Wednesday, 6-11pm; Thursday, 12 noon to 11pm; Friday/Saturday, 9am to 12 midnight.**

Keep an eye on omnibus-clapham.org for breaking news and sign up to the Omnibus Theatre newsletter for updates. *Ellie Grice*

October walks

Since our walks were fully booked this summer it's clear there's an appetite for 'real' walks, so we have arranged three extra for October. For details of routes, booking information and starting points go to claphamsociety.com/walks. **All walks start at 2.30pm and booking is essential.**

• **Friday 8 October, The History of Clapham Common.**

Tom Jansz traces the history of Clapham Common from medieval grazing ground to the green heart of our thriving and multi-cultural area.



Ruth Eastman

• **Sunday 10 October, Mostly Medical. Gillian Robinson** will repeat her June walk along Nightingale Lane, looking at some of the old and not so old houses, with an emphasis on those that have a medical history.

• **Wednesday 20 October, Around Park Hill. Alyson Wilson** will repeat this walk from 2020, following Crescent Lane towards Park Hill to trace the start of the building of Cubitt's Clapham Park estate, as far as Clarence Avenue and back along King's Avenue. *Alyson Wilson*

Battersea Society

October is a busy month. On **Wednesday 6 October** at **6.30pm** there will be a fascinating talk by local historian Jeanne Rathbone about **Three Women Authors of Battersea**: Ethel Mannin, Pamela Hansford Johnson and Penelope Fitzgerald, who was living in Almeric Road when she wrote her Booker Prize winning work, *Offshore*, set on Battersea houseboats. The talk, which is free and no reservation required, will be given at Battersea Library, 265 Lavender Hill, SW11 1JB, as part of Libraries Week 2021.

The subject of the talk on **Thursday, 4 October, 6.30 for 7pm**, is the **St John family of Lydiard Tregoze and Battersea**. Sarah Finch-Crisp, Chair of Friends of Lydiard Tregoze, looks at the history of Lydiard House, a Grade I-listed Palladian mansion in Wiltshire that for 500 years was home to the St John family, along with the medieval St Mary's Church, which is home to the St John family



monuments. The Manor of Battersea was held by the St Johns of Lydiard Tregoze from 1644 to 1763. Venue: St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA. £5 payable in advance at batterseasociety.org.uk or on the door. *Sue Demont*

Clapham Common Film Club

As trailed last month, the new season of the Clapham Common **Film Club opens on Sunday 24 October** at Omnibus Theatre with *After the Wedding*, starring Sidse Babbett Knudsen and Mads Mikkelsen (*below, from left*). Nominated for an Oscar in 2007 and set in Denmark and India, it unfolds like a jigsaw puzzle yet to be completed. The programme has 10 films from eight different countries including the UK. All are celebrated for their compulsive originality! Screenings are on Sunday or Monday, approximately monthly, and start at **7.30pm**. Further details are available from Roger Booker by emailing ccfilmrb@gmail.com.

Roger Booker



Clapham Chamber Concerts

The autumn season opens on **Friday 8 October** with two performances of Schubert's String Quintet by Ensemble SW4 (leader: Amanda Lake). Written just two months before his death in 1828, it represents the composer at his best – an intimate, beautiful and heartfelt masterpiece. The concerts will take place at **6pm** and **8pm** at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove. Advance (only) tickets and early booking is recommended; visit claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk. Audience numbers will be limited and we will continue to apply relevant Covid regulations. *Paul Askew*



Wandsworth Historian

Our Autumn 2021 issue celebrates the time, 70 years ago, when 'amid beautiful trees beside London's wonderful river' Battersea Park played host to the Festival of Britain's Pleasure Gardens. The issue also contains a tribute to Stanley Stevens, a noteworthy Wandsworth topographer between the wars; an article describing the time when Wandsworth provided safe haven for an exiled Czechoslovak prime minister; and a glimpse inside a highly decorated parlour in an artist's brand-new home in Putney in the 1870s.

Copies are available for £3 plus £2 p&p from the Wandsworth Historical Society, 119 Heythorp Street, SW18 5BT, or by emailing 020neil119@gmail.com. Cheques payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', please, although online payment is preferred (account details available from email address above). *Neil Robson*

The leaflet for the 1951 Festival Pleasure Gardens offers much promise. (From the collection of Roger Logan)



St Paul's Opera... 'Oh, yes, it is!'

This year's Christmas concert will be *Cinderella (Cendrillon)* by Pauline Viardot. This classic pantomime story from an exceptional 19th and 20th century female musical talent will be performed as a concert operetta. With plenty of scope for additional seasonal entertainment – and, most certainly, audience participation – it will take place on **Thursday 9 December (evening)** and **Saturday 11 December (matinee)**. The matinee performance makes it an occasion for the whole family. Times and ticket sales will be announced on stpaulsopera.or, so subscribe for updates, including the full programme for our 2021-22 season. *Tricia Ninian*

Pressing transport matters

Some important matters came in too late for inclusion in our last Newsletter. Of most immediate concern was an announcement by Transport for London (TfL) inviting comments on proposed changes to the **Central London Congestion Charge Zone**. People will be aware that emergency powers were used radically to amend the hours of operation to restrict entry into the zone seven days a week from 7am to 10pm daily. TfL have now announced that they propose to increase the daily charge to £15, and to reduce the hours of operation back to 7am to 6pm on weekdays, but from noon to just 6pm at weekends – a very considerable reduction on the hours previously allowed. TfL also intends to suspend charges between Christmas and New Year. People have until **6 October** to submit comments and objections on TfL's website: haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/congestion-charge-changes.

A further important matter, which will affect commuters in particular, is the **planned closure of the Northern Line, Bank branch from Kennington, for 17 weeks from early January 2022**. This is to facilitate the final stages of reconstruction at Bank station. According to TfL, their modelling indicates that they will not require additional buses (route 155) to cope with the displaced demand, and Tube passengers from Clapham and further south will be able to use the Charing Cross branch, which will provide an enhanced service, instead. It is understood a temporary bus service will operate from Kennington going north.

The use of **electric scooters** has become an increasingly important issue on our streets and more especially on our pavements, combined with the failure of many riders to adhere to any sort of highway code. The majority of scooters have been acquired privately and are not approved for use on public thoroughfares. TfL has been operating trials in a number of pilot areas of London, and Lambeth has sought to be included in the next phase. To find out more, you might want to read what TfL has to say: haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/e-scooter-trial.

What has become clear is that emergency measures affecting how people travel around London in response to the pandemic are likely to be adopted permanently and taken further as public bodies seek to alter travel patterns and spending in response to concerns about climate change. Readers are urged to consider the recommendations that emerged from Lambeth's recent Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, at lambethclimateaction.commonplace.is. I'm sure there will be a wide range of views on these. *Mark Leffer*

Up for discussion next month

A powerhouse of speakers, chaired by BBC Radio 4's **Sean Curran** (*Today in Parliament* and *Yesterday in Parliament*), is lined up for the Annual Discussion at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ, on Thursday **4 November**. The subject is **Democracy: Is it on the way out?** and the speakers will be **Baroness Hale of Richmond**, former President of the Supreme Court; **Lord O'Donnell**, former Cabinet Secretary; **Andrew Rawnsley** from the Observer; and **Neil Jameson**, founder of Citizens UK. Audience questions and discussion strongly encouraged. Tickets, £10, at the door or from stlukeschurch.org.uk/calendar (go to 4 November and scroll down); **7.15-9.15pm** (doors open at 6.30).

Help us to protect the Common

In August Clapham residents witnessed, yet again, a 3.4-metre-high steel perimeter fence erected around the 20-acre meadow off Long Road on the northern side of



the Common, referred to as the 'Event site', and closing off an important footpath to the Bandstand. This year a small group of intrepid local protesters spent a week, initially to impede the succession of low-loader trucks delivering fencing and other heavy equipment to the site, but also to explain to visitors on the Common why the enclosure of this field by **Live Nation** was not legally approved, and that Lambeth was acting *ultra vires* (beyond their legal authority) in allowing it to proceed. Most of the area had already been fenced off for nine months from last September, depriving commoners access. The Council claimed this was to regenerate the area and repair the damage caused by previous events.

Many members are doubtless aware of the Society's mounting concern in recent years at how this part of the Common is being exploited to hold large commercial events that both damage the Common and deprive access. While events have been held on the site for many years, in the past these were of short duration and did not entail fencing off and charging entrance fees. Recent events have become considerably larger, attracting vast crowds, mainly from outside the area due to proximity of the Tube, and frequently resulting in significant levels of anti-social behaviour, noise and crowd-control issues.

In 2018, when it became clear that Lambeth had contracted with Winterville to return and had again granted planning consent for the event, after severely churning up the area the year before, the Society linked up with the Friends of Clapham Common (FCC) and the Open Spaces Society to seek a legal opinion from Queen's Counsel on the Council's right to use the Common in this way.

Counsel's advice was clear: the legal framework governing what a London council may and may not do in parks and open spaces is largely set out in a 1967

piece of legislation. In brief, it specifically restricts the exercise of a council's powers to erect or to permit to be erected any building or other structure on any part of a common without the consent of the relevant Minister. The fact that these structures or buildings may be temporary is irrelevant under the legislation.

In response to our joint letter enclosing Counsel's Opinion, Lambeth said, '...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.'

Initially true to their word, Lambeth sought consent under the 1967 legislation for the steel fencing, staging, marquees and other structures required by Live Nation for their summer season last year (2020). Because of the pandemic the events did not proceed and the application was withdrawn, but only after the Clapham Society had submitted a very detailed objection.

On 23 April 2021 an almost identical application was submitted to DEFRA, after a hotly contested planning application had once again been approved by Lambeth's Planning Committee. It was pretty clear at that stage that Lambeth's late application left very limited time for it to be properly considered, given the issues involved. More than 470 objections were submitted, with very detailed objections from both the Clapham Society and FCC.

Unsurprisingly, in July it was confirmed that DEFRA would be unable to complete their assessment of Lambeth's application in time, and Lambeth, at the very last minute and contrary to their word, resolved to allow the music festival to proceed in the absence of consent.

We understand that Lambeth has entered into a five-year contract with Live Nation for them to return to the Common for a series of summer seasons in coming years.

While the Society recognises there may be reasonable arguments for such entertainments on the Common and these will restrict access, **we do not find it acceptable for Lambeth Council to flout the law.** Neither is it acceptable for such events to cause serious degradation of this large area of the Common. The works undertaken to repair it were the third attempt in four years to restore this grassland following serious damage, and restrictions on access for months at a time. The latest event has once again churned up the Common and undone some of the work in the area that required fencing off during lockdown when it would have been an important space to use.

With FCC, the Clapham Society is keen to raise funds to help us hold Lambeth to account for the way they have overridden local concerns for this space, flouted the legislation designed to protect the Common, and for repeatedly making the Common available for such large commercial events. FCC has arranged a campaign page, ourcommon.co.uk, and if you would like to donate to the Society's fighting fund our bank details are: The Clapham Society, Account 22217045, Sort Code 60-05-34, reference: Fighting Fund.

Report and photograph by Mark Leffler

New members

We extend warm welcomes to eight new members: Jeremy and Penny Brodie; Craig Donachy and Jonathan Jackson; Natalie O'Hare; Tricia and Alan Owens; and Jenny Sheridan. *Jennifer Everett*

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

Chairman	chairman@claphamsociety.com	Meetings and Events	Christine Armstrong events@claphamsociety.com
Secretary	Gillian White secretary@claphamsociety.com	Planning Matters	Martin Pratt planning@claphamsociety.com
Treasurer	David Brown treasurer@claphamsociety.com	Roads and Transport	Mark Leffler transport@claphamsociety.com
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Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications can be found on our website at claphamsociety.com

