

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 451 November 2022

Larkhall Bridge – will it remain closed for ever?

This has been a burning issue for Clapham residents for some years and concern is mounting. Its future is due to be decided this month.

In October 2020 Larkhall Bridge was closed under a Temporary Traffic Order as part of Lambeth's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Soon after, the Larkhall Bridge Action Group formed to challenge and scrutinise the reasons for closure, which led to several heated public meetings. Following requests for a more detailed explanation, Lambeth Officers explained that closure was to enable operation of Quietway 5, a priority route for cyclists devised by TfL.

Opponents of the closure cite the impact of increased congestion around North Street, Clapham Manor Street, Edgeley Road, Voltaire Road and



Gauden Road, as well as displaced traffic now adding to rat runs around streets off North Street, evidence of which was apparent in Lambeth's own traffic analysis conducted during the lockdown period in April 2021. In late March 2022, closure status altered to an Experimental Traffic Order, enabling

cameras to capture vehicle data, and fines have been issued since that date. This also marked the start of a six-month public consultation period.

A further public meeting was held in late July 2022 at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, where officials from Lambeth Council Transport and Sustainability Department met residents to present the case for bridge closure in person for the first time. The deadline for submissions was Wednesday 28 September and further arguments against have been aired, including concerns that closure, along with resultant congestion, has created more dangers for cyclists approaching both Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street as they join significantly more congested roads.

In addition residents have reported feeling unsafe at night walking over the bridge with an absence of passing cars. Another submission proposed that zero-emission traffic and licensed taxis be permitted to cross the bridge, enabled by Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology.

Most concerning for opponents of the closure is that there has been no publication of traffic and air-quality data collected in April and June 2022 by Lambeth Council. At the time of writing this data is 'still being analysed' and Lambeth Officers have stressed the analysis will be available before Councillor Rezina Chowdhury makes her decision as to whether closure will be made permanent in November 2022.

Report and photograph by Lee Roberts

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts promptly at 8pm and our guest usually speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and discussion. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. Please arrive in good time before the start. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks – a great opportunity to socialise with other members before (and after!) the meeting. In the next issue, look out for news of talks and meetings planned for 2023.

Monday 21 November

Women of Lambeth. Lambeth is the backdrop to the stories of some extraordinary women. At this talk **Jenny Rossiter** will provide an historical perspective as to why we are more familiar with pioneering women of north rather than south London and offer a glimpse of mountaineers, artists, architects, actors, politicians, doctors, nurses, novelists, theatre directors, social reformers and campaigners – all of them women who have lived, worked or set up organisations within Lambeth. Jenny is a founder member of Lambeth Tour Guides Association and has been involved in various voluntary organisations concerned with housing, homelessness and social welfare. In 2012 she wrote and published *Nobler and Better Things* about the work of social reformer Octavia Hill.

Coming soon to Omnibus

Following the March 2020 cancellation of the hotly anticipated production of Ben Jonson's satire *Volpone*, Omnibus Theatre is over the moon to welcome

Tangle to its stage at last. Tangle is bringing its distinctive Southern African township-style theatre to present a radical remix of Shakespeare's **Richard The Second**, set to a score of Zimbabwean music and song. *Richard The Second* runs on



selected dates from **9 to 27 November. Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.** Book at: omnibus-clapham.org/richard-the-second.

After Ukraine: What next for world security?

Come and hear a fascinating line-up of speakers explore one of today's most pressing issues: world security following the invasion of Ukraine. The discussion will be chaired by **Sean Curran** of the BBC and the speakers are: **Roland Smith**, former UK Ambassador to Ukraine; **Sir John Goulden**, former UK Permanent Representative to NATO; **Dr Bhavna Dave**, Central Asia specialist including Russia and China, School of Oriental and African Studies; and **Nigel Inkster**, former British Security Intelligence Services and author of a book on China's and America's rivalry for technological supremacy. **Thursday 10 November, 7.15pm** (doors open at 6.30). **St Luke's, Ramsden Road, SW12 8HQ**. Tickets at the door or buy online at stlukeschurch.org.uk (select Calendar, November, Thursday 10 and scroll down to Annual Discussion/Debate).

St Paul's organ recitals

The autumn programme concludes with **Norman Harper** (Organist Emeritus at St George's Cathedral, Southwark) in a programme including Bach's great 'St Anne' Fugue. **Thursday 10 November, 7pm. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ**. Tickets at the door or visit stpaulsclapham.org/whats-on. **Alan Saggerson**

St Luke's Music Society

SLMS continues its new season on **12 November** with a recital by clarinettist **Emma Johnson**, **Raphael Wallfisch** (cello) and pianist **John Lenehan** in a programme of trios by Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann. Emma Johnson, a former BBC Young Musician of the Year, appeared in a sell-out concert in a previous season, while John Lenehan is familiar at St Luke's as an accompanist for international recitalists. The concert will be the great cellist Raphael Wallfisch's debut here. **12 November, 7.30pm (pre-concert talk, 6.30pm)**. **St Luke's, Ramsden Road, SW12 8HQ**. Tickets from slms.org.uk.

The Clapham Book Festival was a triumph

Congratulations to the team behind this successful day last month when Omnibus Theatre was buzzing. Seen below are authors/historians **Dr Piers Brendon** and **Sir Antony Beevor** who discussed the Russian Revolution and then Ukraine; trustee **Julie Anderson** in conversation with multi-prize-winning fellow crime writer **Abir Mukherjee**; and **Dame Jenni Murray** who was in revelatory mood.



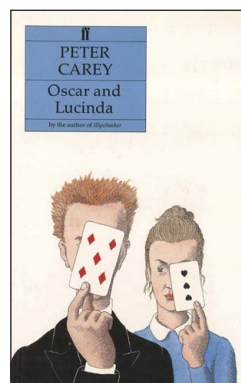
Photographs by Penelope McNeile; Dana Kubick (centre)

Lambeth Palace Library tour

On a sunny morning in early October, members who had signed up were welcomed in the light-filled foyer of Lambeth Palace Library by its Librarian and Archivist, Giles Mandelbrote. Some of you will remember Giles's riveting talk to the Society last June (Newsletter 449). For the sake of anyone who had missed it, he filled us in on the history of the Library and its new incarnation. There is a joke, he said, that the building is a thickening of the garden's boundary wall. He finished his introduction with a shout-out for the Friends scheme, so vital to the Library's survival. We were shown the Reading Room, the Conservation Studio, the Events Room on the seventh floor with its breathtaking views of Westminster, and various displays of artefacts, prints and manuscripts. If you were on the waiting list or couldn't make it, Giles has offered a second tour at **10am on Friday 9 December**. Highly recommended. To join, email your names (required for security purposes) **before 1 December** to events@claphamsociety.com. Find out more about the Lambeth Palace Library Friends scheme at lambethpalacelibrary.org/about-lambeth-palace-library/friends-of-lambeth-palace-library. **Ruth Eastman**

Do judge a book by its cover?

Since its foundation in 1925, Faber & Faber has built up a reputation as one of London's most important literary publishing houses. This lecture traces its history through its book illustrations, covers and designs. **Toby Faber** is an experienced lecturer, public



speaker and author (*Fabergé's Eggs; Stradivarius: Five Violins, One Cello and a Genius*). After reading Natural Sciences at Cambridge he worked in investment banking and management consultancy. For four years Toby was the managing director of Faber & Faber, the publishing company founded by his grandfather, where he remains on the board, and he is the Chairman of Faber Music. If you have ever wondered about what makes good book design, this is the talk is for you.

It takes place at **Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT, on Wednesday 16 November at 11am**. Tickets cost £10 (visitors and non-members); members free. To join The Arts Society for free entry to this and future events, email claphamcommon@theartsociety.org. You can come and see us at the Picturehouse before the lecture starts, from 10.30am. Please note that The Arts Society Clapham Common is a separate organisation to The Clapham Society. **Susan Holder**

Royal Trinity Hospice Christmas Fair

The Wandsworth Friends of Royal Trinity Hospice have held a Christmas Fair at St Luke's Battersea for many years in support of this wonderful local charity of which our new Queen Consort is patron. Invited stallholders are given the opportunity to sell goods not usually available on the high street, giving 10 per cent of their proceeds to the Hospice. This is an ideal opportunity to do your



Christmas shopping while supporting an excellent cause. **Tuesday 15 November, 6-9pm, is preview night**, with the first drink and some canapés provided; tickets cost £12 or £20 for two at the door (reduced price tickets can be purchased in advance at royaltrinityhospicechristmasfair.org). Or come along on **Wednesday 16 November, 8.30am to 3.30pm**; tickets cost £5 on the door or are available online as above; children under 12 free. **St Luke's Church, 197 Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. Liz Burke-Murphy**



Alison Day

Van Gogh House

The Georgian terraced house in Brixton in which Vincent lodged during his formative stay in London in 1873-74 is now a site for exhibitions and artist residencies. In September Van Gogh House opened its doors for its annual artist commission, this year by artist **Harold Offeh**. An immersive sound and sculptural installation entitled 'We Came Here', the exhibition is centred around an imagined conversation across a century between 20-year-old Vincent Van Gogh, who in 1873 had just arrived in Brixton; and 20-year-old Olive Morris, a Jamaican-born, Brixton-based community leader who arrived in 1961. 'We Came Here' builds on these stories and narratives of young migrants arriving in contemporary London to build a unique collection of accounts across generations. The exhibition continues until **18 December**.

Clapham Society members are invited to a tour on **Wednesday 16 November, 2.30pm**, led by the exhibition's community engagement guides, all of whom are similar in age to Vincent at the time of this imagined conversation and have some experience of migration themselves. There is an entry donation of £3 per person; please pay by card (only) when you arrive. Email events@claphamsociety.com if you would like to join. *Quratulain Shams*

Clapham Chamber Concerts

On **18 November** Clapham Chamber Concerts welcomes Sarah Bennington (flute/spoken word) and Tomáš Klement (piano) to perform 'Root after Root of Story' – an exploration through music and text of human connection, breath and story-telling. The evening will feature works by Francis Poulenc, Valerie Coleman, Ian Clarke, John Adams and Joseph Schwanter, as well as poetry by Águeda Pizarro and Maya Angelou.

Two performances will take place, at **6pm and 8pm, at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ**. Tickets cost £15 (£12 concessions); £10 (Friends of CCC); and £5 (children under 12). Advance booking via Eventbrite is recommended. Please visit claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk for more information. *Amanda Lake*



Battersea Society – Battersea's lost baths

By the 1900s Battersea boasted some of the finest municipal swimming baths in England, including the country's largest indoor pool at Nine Elms (below). Find out more about these and other, more dubious, aquatic options within Battersea in this illustrated, free online talk which will be presented by local historian Sue Demont. **Wednesday 16 November, 6-7pm**. To register, visit batterseasociety.org.uk/events. *Sue Demont*



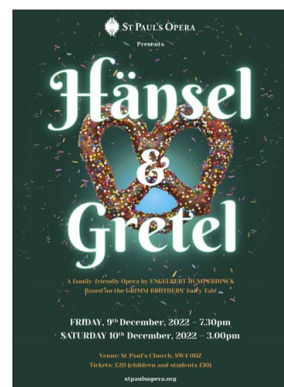
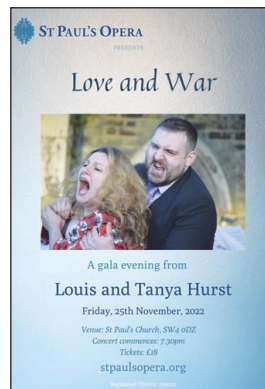
Witches, fairies – and a tempestuous marriage

St Paul's Opera is getting busy in the build-up to Christmas. On **Friday 25 November** we look forward to welcoming husband-and-wife team, Louis and Tanya Hurst, in a concert called 'Love and War', which they say will give us a flavour of how tempestuous it is being married to an opera singer. Performing a multitude of scenes and arias, they will explore the nature of love and how passionate it can be.

Then in December we have a Christmas opera for all ages – Engelbert Humperdinck's setting of the classic fairy tale **Hänsel and Gretel**, complete with children, fairies, an essential witch, and some gloriously beautiful music. We will have two performances of this semi-staged production, **Friday**

9 December, 7.30pm, and Saturday 10 December, 3pm. If last year's production of Cinderella is anything to go by, we anticipate filling the house with families of at least three generations.

Set all these dates in your diaries to avoid disappointment. Tickets for both events go on sale in early November at stpaulsopera.org, so grab them fast to secure your seats. **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Tricia Ninian**



Wandsworth Historical Society

The latest *Wandsworth Historian* assesses the endurance of Battersea's post-war prefabs, follow the ups and downs of a pharmacy technician's life, and recalls the achievements of the Lobjoit family of Huguenots. The *Wandsworth Historian* is published by the Wandsworth Historical Society, wandsworthhistory.org.uk. Copies are available (£3 plus £2 p&p) from WHS, 119 Heythorp Street, London SW18 5BT, or by emailing 020neil119@gmail.com. Please make cheques payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', but online payment is preferred.

In other news the **42nd West London Local History Conference** will go ahead as a Zoom event on **Saturday 26 November**. Its



theme is sport and the WHS will be represented by **Philip Boys**, who will be speaking on cricket and other sports associated with Wandsworth Common. It looks like it is going to be a thoroughly enjoyable day but places are limited, so book your ticket without delay by visiting ticketsource.co.uk/west-london-local-history-conference/t-xmdyxp. For details, email 020neil119@gmail.com. *Neil Robson*

New members are our future

We are delighted to welcome Nigel and Jane Fawkes, Simon Ware and Bruno Sonzogno, and Marion Weber. Clapham is a vibrant place and The Clapham Society is here to celebrate that and help protect it. If you know anyone who would like to join the Society – a year's subscription costs just £10 (individual member), £15 (household of up to three), £25 (company), please encourage them to email membership@claphamsociety.com or suggest they visit claphamsociety.com/join-the-society. *Jennifer Everett*

Unbuilt Clapham: The hospital that never was

Local protest pays. The Georgian terrace on North Side would not be here today had plans approved by Parliament to merge St George's Hospital and Westminster Hospital gone ahead. Can you just imagine if they had?



In 1913 the lease on Church Buildings (left), Clapham Common North Side, expired and the land was bought by Westminster Hospital for £23,000. Westminster Hospital, which at the time was in Broad Sanctuary opposite Westminster

Abbey, and St George's Hospital, then at Hyde Park Corner, were negotiating to amalgamate and build a new hospital south of the river. The plans were approved by Parliament, as the population of the Clapham area was expanding rapidly.

Funds were such that a 500-bed hospital was proposed on the six-acre site between Macaulay Road and The Chase (diagram, right). The front of the hospital would face the Common. A further 50 acres behind the site were available for a possible extension, meaning that the proposed hospital could stretch to the end of Macaulay Road.

The plan attracted much debate. The Mayor of Wandsworth, the Medical Officer of Health and several of the Consultant body at Westminster Hospital were in favour, but there was local opposition to the demolition of the Georgian houses.



Little happened during the years of the Great War but afterwards the plan was revived. Opinion among staff at Westminster Hospital for a move to Clapham was by then much less enthusiastic. This was partly because the plans to amalgamate with St George's had fallen through and one of the Senior Consultants at the Westminster Hospital, who had been in favour of the move, had died. In addition there had been a proposal to amalgamate with King's College Hospital, which had recently moved to Denmark Hill, Camberwell. That plan did not attract great support either.

The deciding factor, however, was cost. To proceed at the Clapham site the Westminster building would need to have been sold and a further £200,000 raised by appeal. In 1921 this was decided to be impracticable. Westminster Hospital was upgraded and the Clapham site was sold. The land passed to a developer but, after a successful appeal to the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian terrace was saved and sold privately. **Gillian Robinson**

Next issue: The Clapham Reservoir

Plans for Holy Trinity get green light

Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common is our best-known landmark. It was built in 1774-76 on ground donated by Mrs Penelope Pitt, the last of the Atkins family, to serve the local population who had outgrown the old parish church of St Paul's in Rectory Grove. The latter was demolished, but subsequently rebuilt c.1815. Holy Trinity, apart from being a much-loved local feature, has an important place in our history. It was where the Clapham Sect worshipped and under the leadership of a number of influential parishioners, including William Wilberforce, secured the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade which had flourished since Elizabethan times.



In recent years as its congregation has expanded, the Parochial Church Council has been considering ways to accommodate this increase and introduce greater flexibility in how the church is used. Plans were drawn up involving the removal of (Victorian) pews in the nave, the redevelopment of the Edwardian north and south vestry wings, and the erection of a glazed enclosure to encompass the west front. Landscape architects were also commissioned to replan the churchyard, to introduce new planting, and to make it more accessible once the enlarged vestry wings are built.

A planning application was submitted to Lambeth Council in February 2021, following consultation. The Clapham Society was particularly concerned about the changes proposed for the west front, and registered its objection to this. We noted that considerable thought had gone into the design of the new vestry wings, and how they would be used, and we were encouraged that pews in the galleries would be retained (but the pews in the nave will not). Our concerns were shared by other conservation groups.

In July we were advised that the plans for the portico had been dropped, and in November 2021 Lambeth approved the revised proposals. However, approval by the Diocese remained outstanding, and we learned in February that this scrutiny was under way.

The Chancellor of Southwark has now issued approval of the plans, and the congregation and supporters of Holy Trinity face the monumental task of raising funds to see the project through to completion. A fundraising drive, 'Revitalise 250', has been set up with the following link: holytrinityclapham.org/giving-to-revitalise-250.

Alison Inglis-Jones and Mark Leffler

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

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