

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 456 May 2023

Mega music festivals on the Common: Public Inquiry

The Clapham Society and Friends of Clapham Common are united in their determination to preserve the peace of the Common and its accessibility to local residents, writes Shirley Kermer, Chair, Friends of Clapham Common

A Public Inquiry will mark a critical moment in the history of Clapham Common, which has enjoyed a two-year reprieve from the large-scale music festivals that have been the source of so much contention in the community. However, the submission by Lambeth Council to the Secretary of State for a mega music festival in August 2024 has put us back on our guard. Despite the application being submitted over the Christmas period, at a time when people are most distracted, it nevertheless garnered more than 575 objections, enough to secure a Public Inquiry – a chance, finally, for local people to have a voice.

The Friends of Clapham Common are attempting to co-ordinate individual



speakers to avoid overlap and repetition. We have been advised that the same point being reiterated will detract from the argument and we are hoping to be able to guide and streamline objectors so, if you are intending to speak, please email friends@claphamcommon.net.

Hosted by Lambeth, the inquiry will be livestreamed and open to anyone wishing to follow online. Members of the public can follow the proceedings on Microsoft Teams or by phone if you do not have Teams; visit eventlambeth.co.uk/clapham-common-common-land-consent-application-2/ for details. The inquiry will run for approximately 10 days, starting on **Tuesday 13 June**. Douglas Edwards KC will represent the Friends. The Planning Inspector will be Mr Rory Cridland and his decision is expected in late September/early October 2023.

The importance of this case cannot be overstated. The outcome will be a landmark decision that will set a precedent for the protection of common land and parks across London and throughout the UK. We must seize this opportunity to ensure our case prevails; it is the only one we shall get.

We have retained some funds raised with your generous support from our previous campaign, but to secure the legal representation this case deserves we still need to raise a substantial sum. Please help us if you possibly can. You can make your donation at app.moonclerk.com/pay/6g37dovw01i. Thank you.

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts promptly at 8pm and our guest normally 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 chance to socialise before (and after) the meeting.

Monday 15 May

Aren't bees brilliant? This talk by **Dr Paul Vagg** will introduce you to the world of honey bees: what they do for us and how we can help them. The holder of a PhD in beekeeping, there is not much Dr Vagg doesn't know about his subject. He will look at how we manage bees in a city environment and what it would mean if we were to lose them. We'll also learn how a colony is set up and about the life cycle of our honey bees. Everyone can help these important pollinators.

Monday 26 June

Performance is ephemeral while buildings endure. **Iain Mackintosh** has lived in Clapham for 52 years, earning his living in the theatre, first as a producer and subsequently as a designer of theatre spaces. He presented the Prospect Theatre Company, which he co-founded, across the world as well as at five successive Edinburgh International Festivals and in the West End. Then, with Theatre Projects Consultants from 1973, he originated the design of many auditoria and stages. These include, in the UK, the Cottesloe (now Dorfman) at the National and the new Glyndebourne of 1994. He has been a guest lecturer at conferences all over the globe. The story is told in his memoir, *Theatre Spaces 1920-2020: Finding the Fun in Functionalism*, published in April by Bloomsbury/Methuen. The talk will start with his fresh analysis on the current and historical problems of the London Coliseum and continue in conversation with **Mark Leffler**.

Summer party save the dates

The Friends of Clapham Common Summer Party is on **Thursday 22 June**. Reviving our own event since before lockdown, we are also excited to announce that there will be a Clapham Society Summer Party on **Thursday 13 July**. As many of you belong to both groups and two parties are better than one, we hope to have great turnouts at both. More details next time.

An exploration of creative thinking – who knows where it can lead or how?

The audience who packed in to Omnibus Theatre to hear **Julie Anderson** and **Elizabeth Buchan** speak at the Society's March meeting were offered an entertaining discussion between these two local novelists, with a little help from two visual puzzles intended to unlock creativity.

Reassuringly, it turns out, we are all creative; we write, paint, invent, garden, even tell a joke well (or not). But what is the spark that turns an idea into something more? The answer seems to lie in endless curiosity,



Dana Kubick

good powers of observation, a capacity for research, the ability to let the unconscious process the information and then, well, just 'sitting down and opening a vein', as Buchan put it.

Julie and Elizabeth (*above, from left*), both full-time writers with other careers behind them, ground their stories in their own experience. Former civil servant Anderson sets her thrillers in the Whitehall she knows so well. Buchan's books skilfully weave in her own rich life experience as editor, traveller, gardener, wife, sister and mother; she began as a blurb writer for Penguin. Inspiration comes for both from perhaps a chance remark, a fleeting experience, a newspaper headline – 'Woman dies in Railway Station', for instance, may have been the catalyst for Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* – followed up by research, plotting and finally writing.

Having retired Cassandra Fortune, heroine of her three latest novels (*Plague, Oracle and Opera*), Julie Anderson found inspiration for the book she's currently writing in a conversation with a woman who used to work at the former South London Hospital for Women. For Elizabeth Buchan, the ringing of a black Bakelite phone in a mocked-up interrogation cell seen while she was on a visit to Prague was the spark for one of her finest novels, *The Museum of Broken Promises*.

The evening's discussion and Q&A session were entertaining and inspiring, ending all too soon. Whether the visual puzzles could have unleashed the creative juices remains a mystery, as none of us present solved them. **Nikki Mohan**

Omnibus Theatre

Don't miss two exciting shows this month. ***Supernova* (25 April to 13 May)** is a sharp, funny play about falling in love with someone whilst falling out of love with yourself. Tess and Harry's perfect love story starts to collapse in this debut play by award-winning comedy writer Rhiannon Neads (half of duo Stiff & Kitsch from BBC Radio 4's *The Now Show*), directed by Jessica Dromgoole (***Home Front***, BBC Radio 4; *Just Not Fair*, National Theatre).

Then join Ibn Khaldun, medieval mystic, polymath and jurist, on a journey from the Great Plague to the Covid-19 pandemic in multi-media, magical realist drama ***breadth* (16 May to 3 June)**.

Based on true experiences, the play examines prejudice through the lives of older people and the racial minorities who care for them. **Selected dates at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.** For more details and to book, visit omnibus-clapham.org/whats-on.



The Arts Society Clapham Common

Napoleon's Empress, Joséphine de Beauharnais, was a passionate gardener, book collector, patron and art collector. Her reputation in France and abroad for generosity, charm



The Wallace Collection

***The Empress Joséphine* by Ferdinand Quaglia, 1814.**

and gentleness of manner was of enormous value to Napoleon: a feminine counterpoint to the military and legalistic timbre of his regime. ***The Empress Joséphine and the Artists of her Time* by Stephen Duffy**, formerly Senior Curator of the Wallace Collection, is a lecture not to be missed.

Wednesday, 17 May, 11am, Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT.

Doors open at 10.30am.

Tickets cost £10 (visitors and

non-members); members free. To join The Arts Society for free entry to this and future events, please email claphamcommon@theartsociety.org. **Susan Holder**

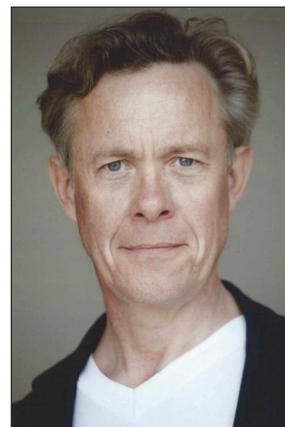
Wandsworth Heritage Festival

This year's festival runs from **20 May to 11 June**. There will be many exciting events. The programme can be found online at better.org.uk/wandsworth-heritage-service and on Twitter @Better_WHS. **Timothy Walker**



St Luke's Music Society

The 2022/23 season finishes with pianist **Lucy Parham** and actor **Alex Jennings** who present *Élégie: A Portrait of Rachmaninoff*, which chronicles the life of the composer through his music, letters and diaries from his early life in Russia and exile in 1917 to his death in California in 1943. **Saturday 13 May, 7.30pm, St Luke's, Ramsden Road, SW12 8HQ.** Further details and tickets are available from slms.org.uk.



Carmen is coming to (Clapham) Town

St Paul's Opera is delighted to present Bizet's *Carmen* at its Summer Opera Festival this year. Tickets go on sale in the first week of May for performances on **Thursday 29 June, Friday 30 June** and **Saturday 1 July**. Bring your family and friends along to enjoy a pre-opera picnic in the beautiful grounds of St Paul's, Rectory Grove. We have a limited number of picnic tables for hire, but these sell quickly, so book early to reserve one.

Returning to support SPO for a second year, the Cosman Keller Art & Music Trust is providing funding to ensure we can take opera workshops into four local primary schools to give them a taste of *Carmen*'s wonderful music. There will be a **family-friendly matinée on Saturday 1 July** (in addition to the evening show), when the children can experience opera live.

SPO is also pleased to be working for a second year with Emma's Estate Agents, a family-run business in Streatham, which is generously sponsoring the opera, and aiding local promotion with display boards around Clapham and its neighbouring communities for two to three weeks in the run-up to the performances. If you would like to help this promotions by hosting a board outside your home, email info@stpaulsopera.org. Contact us, too, if you would like to distribute flyers and posters, help set up the church before the shows, or assist with front of house each night. Don't be shy; we'll find you a job. **Tricia Ninian**



Enjoy books? Read on...

The Clapham Book Festival, our annual local celebration of books and reading, is seeking volunteers. Once a year the literary and writing world visits Clapham; past guests include Sir Antony Beevor, Kate Adie, Sir Michael Morpurgo, Frank



Gardner, Dame Margaret Drabble, Ben Macintyre, Vaseem Khan and Mark Lawson. The festival champions local authors too, such as Rosanna Amaka, Professor Mark Beaumont, Henry Hemming, West Camel and Shafik Meghji. Run by a charitable enterprise and staffed entirely by volunteers, the Festival needs help from other

volunteers in the weeks leading up to showcase day, usually in October, to deliver leaflets, organise social media, and liaise with local societies and groups. If you can help, please email the organisers at claphambookfestival@gmail.com.

Royal Trinity Hospice

Join a summertime social this month in the grounds of Royal Trinity Hospice at **The Wandsworth Friends Summer Garden Party**, sponsored by Savills. The Wandsworth Friends will be hosting an evening of music, live auction, prize draw and wishing tree in the secluded and beautiful setting of Trinity's gardens. Funds raised will go towards Trinity's palliative and end-of-life care services. Tickets cost £50 per person. To ensure your place, please book at www.royaltrinityhospice.london/Event/wandsworth-friends-summer-garden-party-2023. **Wednesday 24 May, 6.30pm, 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN.**

The Wandsworth Museum Collection

Wandsworth Council's Arts and Culture Strategy 2021-31, published in early 2022, had as one of its key aims 'to provide a rich variety of lifelong learning opportunities using the borough collection'. Since the 2022 elections Cllr Kemi Akinola has taken Cabinet responsibility for Arts and Culture while Cllr Rex Osborn has responsibility for the Museum Collection, still stored in the former West Hill site.

A Museum Action Group (MAG) has been formed, chaired by Sheila Allen, former Chair of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum. The Group aims to coordinate and channel the efforts of local amenity and historical societies, working with Wandsworth Council, to open up the Museum Collection to the public. The ultimate aspiration is for a sustainable new museum in a new location.

Progress is being made despite acute budgetary constraints. Updating the collection's records is a priority. Small-scale displays of collection artefacts are

planned at local libraries and at Battersea Arts Centre, which is working with Roehampton University students and MAG volunteers.

Digitisation is progressing, slowly (to see the range of paintings online, which includes Robert C D Lowry's



BAC Moving Museum: Wandsworth Collection

Battersea Power Station, London, 1972, above, visit bit.ly/40Jq3yQ). Crowd funding options will support exhibitions. A new charity will be set up to receive donations and apply for Arts Council and other grants.

Restoring the education outreach programmes is a priority. The Council is supportive subject to budgets. If you would like to become involved in or lend support to this exciting project, please email sheilamacallen@gmail.com. **Jonathan Callaway**

Jonathan Parkin and friends play Brahms

Clapham Chamber Concerts continues its series with music for clarinet, cello and piano. Artistic director and clarinettist **Jonathan Parkin** is joined by pianist **Sebastian Stanley** and cellist **Daniel Bull** to perform the Trio in A minor by Brahms, written at the end of the composer's career. Gabriel Fauré's lyrical Trio in D minor also features, as does music by the Italian film composer Nino Rota. With three wonderfully varied works performed by three exceptional artists, this promises to be a truly special evening. **Friday 12 May, 7pm, St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ.**

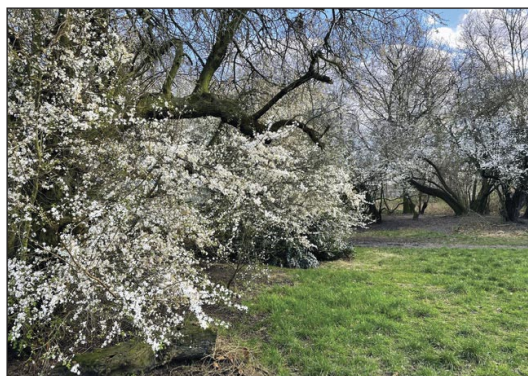
Tickets cost £15, £12 (concessions), £10 (Friends of CCC), £5 (children under 12). Book in advance, please, at claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk.



SLK Fotografie

Clapham Common: new Local Nature Reserves and the inside track on dog-walking restrictions

On the long march back towards a healthy and biodiverse green space, the London Borough of Lambeth has made the welcome move of creating a series of interconnected Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) running through the middle of Clapham Common. In consultation with



Natural England, Lambeth has the power to designate areas as LNRs under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.

The new LNRs, totalling 16.38 hectares, will be sandwiched

between the north and west edges of the Common and will include Battersea Woods, the 'Alps' (the raised hills between Mount Pond and Battersea Woods), the Scrublands (to the northwest of the Bandstand), Mount Pond, the new wildflower meadows by Windmill Drive, Nursery Woods and Eagle Pond. The Clapham Society can take some credit here for helping to fund the Scrublands and wildflower meadows.

Lambeth's Environmental Compliance Officer Dr Iain Boulton says, 'An LNR contains features or habitats of wildlife interest and value, and is managed so that the general public can visit and use it to enjoy nature close to where they live, work, play and study. LNRs are typically chosen so they are close to urban centres and are easily reached by foot, bicycle or bus, without the need for a private car.'

The Common is already a protected green space and a highly valued 'Borough Grade 2 – Site of Importance for Nature Conservation'. The new designation affords additional protection to these spaces but, given limited Council funds and resources, the cynic could view this as a tick-box exercise, perhaps less useful than planting more trees or restoring the wetlands. That said, the London Borough of Lambeth is now obliged to ensure these areas are 'sustainably managed, improved and enhanced for public use and benefit'.

Although the reaction has been mainly positive, there has been some scepticism from the public. Rumours of fences being erected and dog-walking restrictions being imposed are simply not true. LNRs must be accessible to the public and, almost without exception, this includes access for dogs.

Indeed, Lambeth has already polled people online for their views on a proposed Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in the borough. Since the pandemic, there has been a 35 per cent increase in dog ownership nationally, with London seeing the highest rise.

The push for a Lambeth-wide PSPO has arisen due to an increase in dog-related antisocial behaviour, including dog attacks, dog fouling, unwanted contact, or dogs being walked in banned areas, such as children's play areas and formal ornamental gardens. The results of the survey should be published in the near future. Watch this space.

Report and photograph by Gareth James

Unbuilt Clapham: Police station – or a prison by another name?

The proposal for a new police station in Clapham on the corner of Grafton Square and Old Town was first raised in 1991 when it received a reasonably friendly reception, but with some reservations. It was seen by some as promising improved policing and security but, as plans evolved over the next few years and more details were released, local residents became more hostile and voiced their concerns at a rowdy public meeting in November 1996. As a result, the first plan for a Divisional Station serving Brixton, Streatham and Clapham with a central charging unit, a cell block with 62 cells, an expected turnover of up to 18,000 prisoners per year and 125 officers on site, was roundly rejected.

The police fought back with a road show in March 1997 to air their new proposal. This was for a Criminal Justice Facility which included an 'identity parade suite', four 'vulnerable persons rooms', 12 cells that had become 'detention rooms' and 50 that remained as cells, i.e. no real change. By this time, there was considerable animosity, rumours of underhand practices, additions ranging from a heliport to police horse stabling which led to extensive press coverage, and an appeal to the Home Secretary. Almost all objections referred not to the design of the building but to its



inappropriateness in a Conservation Area and a residential family area, with a children's playground, primary school and two nurseries nearby. Additional traffic, extra parking spaces and the impact on local businesses were also serious considerations.

Following the second rejection, the furore died down while the police licked their wounds. As time passed it was obvious that policing was changing and, although in 2001 the architects for the police presented their proposals for a new Command and Control Centre, the next year it was announced that the site was no longer to be used by the police. Soon thereafter it was sold to developers for the construction of the present Wingate Square. *Allyson Wilson*

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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