

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter



Issue 460 October 2023

The Annual Report comes with this issue. Have a good read and if you would like to stand for the Committee, you will find nomination details in the Annual General Meeting notice below. For many, Omnibus Theatre is the beating heart of Clapham. It is where our open meetings take place, as well as so much else on the local cultural scene. Congratulations, Omnibus, on your 10th anniversary this month. This issue suggests your October is going to fizz.

### Clapham Book Festival 2023

Clapham's distinctive book festival was inaugurated in 2016 and has since brought an eclectic range of writers to Clapham, from eminent historians and broadcast journalists to poets, crime writers and bestselling, much

decorated, novelists; not forgetting a bevy of writers at the beginning of their careers.

The **Showcase Day** will take place on **Saturday 14 October at Omnibus Theatre**. It includes one of the biggest of British broadcasting names, **Melvyn Bragg (left)**.

The Festival opens at **3pm** with two multi-talented writers: prodigious crime-and-screen writer **Simon Brett** in discussion with barrister-turned-crime-writer and part-time judge **Nicola Williams (below right)**. At **5pm**, bestselling novelist, broadcaster and



co-founder of the Women's Prize for Fiction **Kate Mosse (below)** talks about her new novel and more with bestselling local author **Elizabeth Buchan**. Then at **7pm Melvyn Bragg** will talk with Radio 4's

esteemed cultural presenter **Tom Sutcliffe** about broadcasting, writing – and life.

During the day the authors will be signing their books and chatting with festival goers. You can also meet the authors who will appear online later in the week: Southfields-based thriller

writer **Ivy Ngeow** and **Sarah Bax Horton**, who brings to light new research into the real Jack the Ripper using her own family's historical records. Ivy and Sarah discuss their books online on **17 and 19 October** respectively.

At **3-5pm on Sunday 22 October** local thriller author **Julie Anderson**

will lead a walk (**right**) around the literary sites of Clapham, telling of its many and varied writers past. To learn more about the festival, visit [claphambookfestival.com](http://claphambookfestival.com). Tickets, including all day festival passes and concessions, are on sale at [payhip.com/claphambookfestival](http://payhip.com/claphambookfestival). **JA**



Our open 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 great opportunity to socialise with other members before (and after) the meeting.

### Monday 16 October

**Annual General Meeting.** The AGM is your opportunity to join our Committee and to become more involved in the Society's activities. We are especially keen to recruit people with knowledge of planning, architecture and building design, admin and communication skills, and the use of IT. If you would like to talk to one of our Committee members about what would be involved, email [secretary@claphamsociety.com](mailto:secretary@claphamsociety.com), and we will be in contact. The formal part of the meeting is brief. Members are then invited to enjoy nibbles and a glass of wine before our guest speakers, **Marie McCarthy**, Artistic Director of Omnibus Theatre, and **George Owen**, Founder, tell us about the theatre's anniversary celebrations.

**Nominations for the election of Officers and Committee Members are open until 2 October.** Please email the Secretary, Gill White, at [secretary@claphamsociety.com](mailto:secretary@claphamsociety.com) with the names of your proposer and seconder.

### Monday 20 November

**How London's transport shaped our capital.**

Transport for London's Heritage Manager, **Edmund Bird**, will present a talk about the history of the city's transport development from the Romans to the present day, and how modes of transport influenced the growth and development of London, from the first river crossings to travel by stage coach, omnibus, suburban and underground railway, tram, trolley bus and the motor car. His presentation will include a feature about the evolution of Clapham's transport networks and how they were the catalyst for its expansion.



## Treasures Revealed

This free exhibition, open as part of this year's National Heritage Days, documents the story of St James' Church, Park Hill – the building as well as the remarkable work of its architect, Nugent Cachemaille-Day (FRIBA). It was created and has been stunningly curated by **Jim Grover**, the award-winning Clapham-based social documentary photographer whose 2023 exhibition, *Windrush: A Voyage through the Generations*, received extensive national media coverage. The title of his current show refers to the contrast between the simple exterior of St James' (*right*, as seen from Briarwood Road) and its beautiful interior (*below right*).

The exhibition is in two parts. The St James' Story (1829-1958) brings to life with vintage photographs, maps, prints, architect's drawings and other archive

materials the history of the church from its construction in 1829 (*left*) through to its destruction in the early days of the Blitz (it received two hits in as many weeks, the first on 16 September 1940), and the challenges faced by the parish and the architect in the 1950s to build the new St James'. St James' was one of the first of some 50 churches in the Southwark Diocese destroyed in World War II. It was consecrated and re-opened in 1958. The stained glass window behind the altar, sited

unusually, Grover says, at eye height and comprising some 4,000 pieces of glass, is the work of Arthur Erridge, the leading designer at the time at J Wippell & Co.

The second part focuses on other work by Nugent Cachemaille-Day through photographs of 24 of his churches built either side of World War II. This is the first exhibition of his lifetime's work as a church architect. It is fascinating.

**Until Sunday 15 October. Saturdays, 10am to 5pm (light refreshments and home-made cakes available); Sundays, 2-5pm; Tuesdays and Fridays, 11am to 2pm. St James' Church, Park Hill, SW4 9PB.**

View of St James's Chapel, drawn by T M Baynes, 1829



Photographs by Jim Grover



**Meanwhile, Bach at St Paul's...** If you get this Newsletter early enough, try to catch the last in the organ recital series at St Paul's, as mentioned last time. **Richard Pilliner** will play music by **Bach** (mostly), **Saint-Saens** and **Jongen**. Entry is free with a retiring collection and a glass of pop afterwards. **Sunday 1 October, 3pm. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Alan Saggerson**

## Debate and concert at St Luke's

On **Thursday 19 October** St Luke's Church holds its annual public discussion. The subject is the biggest issue facing us today: **climate change**. After a summer of wildfires, floods and extreme weather, few will any longer need convincing that action is needed. Chaired by BBC presenter **Sean Curran** and including Science Editor of *The Times*, **Tom Whipple**, and students from local schools, it will involve the audience in a discussion of how individuals can contribute to possible solutions. Doors open at **6.30pm for 7.15pm**. Tickets, £10 to include a glass of wine or soft drink, are available on the door; or visit [stlukeschurch.org.uk/calendar](http://stlukeschurch.org.uk/calendar).

**Saturday 21 October at 7.30pm** sees the opening of **St Luke's Music Society's** 21st season, which features concert performances of operatic arias and duets by students of the **National Opera Studio**, sponsored by Killik & Co. The National Opera Studio has nurtured some of British opera's most outstanding talent, so this is a wonderful chance to hear these young opera artists at the beginning of their careers whilst enjoying some of the greatest vocal music ever written. Tickets are available at [slms.org.uk](http://slms.org.uk).

Both events are at **St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, London SW12 8RQ.**

## The women who inspired Rubens

**Rubens & Women** is the first exhibition to challenge the popular assumption that Peter Paul Rubens painted only one type of woman. It provides a more nuanced view and reveals the important places occupied by women, real and imagined, in his world. **Until 28 January 2024. Dulwich Picture Gallery, Gallery Road, SE21 7AD.**



Clara, Serena Rubens, the Artist's Daughter, c. 1620. Private collection



## Veni Vidi Vauxhall: London Influencers walks on Local London Guiding Day

Many Lambeth Tour Guides are members of The Clapham Society. You are invited to join them for short circular walks on **Saturday 7 October**, gathering at the entrance to Vauxhall train station at **10am, 11am, 12pm, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm**. Walk through one of Lambeth's most influential hidden gems. The launch pad for hot air balloon pioneers in 1836 and the birthplace of UK car manufacturing, the area is also home to secret agents, a city farm, pleasure gardens and Little Portugal. Book (free) at [lambethtourguides.org/walks](http://lambethtourguides.org/walks) (hit the down arrow for time) or just turn up. Five other walks around the capital take place that day; details at [locallondonguidingday.com](http://locallondonguidingday.com). **Gillian Robinson**

## St Paul's Opera news

If you have your diary to hand, we have news of key dates for our 2023/24 season.

- **Friday 20 October** Autumn gala.
- **Friday 8 and Saturday 9 December** Christmas Opera Panto.
- **Monday 15 January (Spoiler alert!)** Clapham Society talk: SPO's Schools Outreach Programme.
- **Friday 19 April** Oratorio concert.
- **Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 July** Summer Opera Festival.

First up, our **autumn gala**, *Endless Pleasure*, features many of the faces from the sensational cast of *Carmen* in July. This delicious programme of arias, duets and

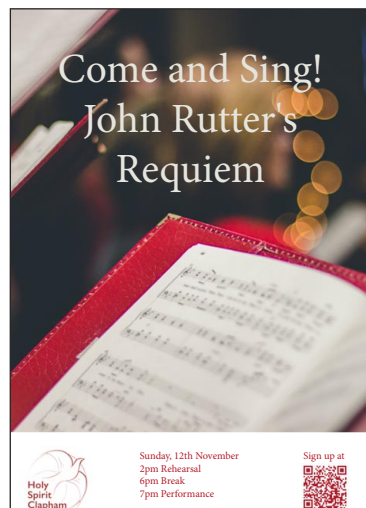


ensembles covers a diverse selection of operas through the centuries. We are privileged to welcome as narrator one of SPO's greatest supporters (and very local resident), **Kate Hopkins**, who will provide context and insight for each item. Kate is a pre-eminent contributor of programme notes to some of the world's

leading music establishments including the Royal Opera House and the Salzburg Festival. To find out more, including cast members and programme, visit [stpaulsopera.org](http://stpaulsopera.org), where you can also buy tickets, £18. **Friday 20 October, 7.30pm (doors open at 7pm). St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Tricia Ninian**

## Save the date: Come and Sing

The choir at Church of the Holy Spirit in Narbonne Avenue, SW4 9JU, is excited to announce its first Come and Sing: **John Rutter's Requiem**. It's on **Remembrance Sunday, 12 November, 2-8pm**, with a **sing-through performance (free)** at **7pm**. Singers of all ability are welcome so do come.



To sign up, visit [holyspiritclapham.churchsuite.com/events/b9zr9zso](http://holyspiritclapham.churchsuite.com/events/b9zr9zso) or email [musicadmin@holyspirit-clapham.org.uk](mailto:musicadmin@holyspirit-clapham.org.uk). A confirmation email following payment, **£10 to include hire score**, will contain a link to rehearsal recordings; click on your voice part to access. Dress code for singers: dark/black. **Emma Grainger**

## South London Choir

We are an inclusive, friendly, non-auditioning community choir led by our dynamic musical director **MJ Paranzino**. We sing pop, classical, musicals, gospel and more in four-part harmony. Rehearsals take place **Tuesday evenings, 7.15-9.15pm**, in Ravenstone Primary School, Ravenstone Street, SW12 9SS. Many members live in Clapham and over the years we have performed at the Church of the Holy Spirit's summer fair and Holy Trinity's Anti-Slavery concert. Several members of the South London Choir and MJ's other three choirs participate in the Liberty Choir programme, going into prisons and singing with prisoners. Choirmaster and broadcaster Gareth Malone (*below*, with South London Choir singers, *from left*, Sharon Tynan, Kirsty Jenkinson and Jane Sleightholme) came along to a session to see MJ in action in Wandsworth Prison whilst making his BBC documentary *The Choir: Aylesbury Prison*. Come and try our choir out; the first session is free. Email [southlondonchoir@gmail.com](mailto:southlondonchoir@gmail.com) or visit [southlondonchoir.co.uk](http://southlondonchoir.co.uk). **Jane Sleightholme**



## The Wandsworth Historian

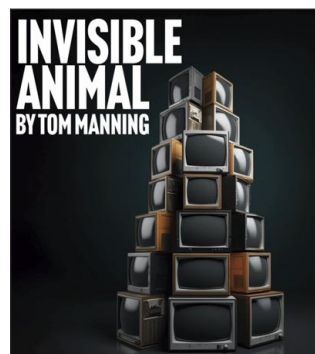
The Autumn issue, just out, celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Wandsworth Historical Society with a look back at archive articles covering the history of Emanuel School in Battersea, archaeological activity in 1960s Putney, and the pitiful poverty that could still be found in 1930s Tooting. There is also a feature on Aylings, the world-famous oar makers based on Putney Embankment, as well as a celebration of the centenary of King George's Park, Wandsworth. Copies are available at £3 plus £2 postage from WHS, 119 Heythorpe Street, SW18 5BT, or by emailing [020neil119@gmail.com](mailto:020neil119@gmail.com). Cheques payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', but online payment is preferred. Visit our website at [wandsworthhistory.org.uk](http://wandsworthhistory.org.uk). **Neil Robson**

## New members

We extend a warm welcome this month to: Nigel Bassindale and Janet Dilke; Steven Courtney; Lalit Malik; Robin McAfee and Jon Miller; and Marianne Rodney. If you, or someone you know, would like to join The Clapham Society, email [membership@claphamsociety.com](mailto:membership@claphamsociety.com), visit [claphamsociety.com/join-the-society](http://claphamsociety.com/join-the-society) or come to any of our events when we can tell you, or them, more. **Jennifer Everett**

## Omnibus Theatre: Invisible Animal

This is a show for autistic people. This is a show made by autistic people. This is a show for people who exist as different versions at different times in different places, in multitudes that risk spinning out of control. Living in a world made for neurotypical people means Tom is sometimes invisible to others. This time we're inviting you in. Written by Tom Manning, it runs from **17 October to 4 November**. Visit [omnibus-clapham.org/invisible-animal](http://omnibus-clapham.org/invisible-animal) for show times and to find out more. **Sarah Verghese Productions**





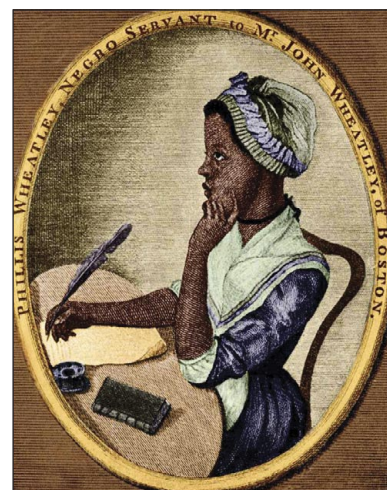
## Black History Month: Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753-1784)

Phillis Wheatley was born in West Africa and at the age of about seven was taken from her family and transported to North America. On arrival, she was purchased by the Boston merchant John Wheatley as a maid for his wife, Susanna. The family was unusually progressive and Phillis was brought up more as a member of the family than as a servant. Her talent was recognised early and she was tutored by the Wheatley daughter, Mary, and son, Nathaniel.

Adopting the deep religious convictions of the family, by the age of 12 Phillis was writing poems often on religious subjects and corresponding with family friends in England, including John Thornton of Clapham. Although some of her poetry had appeared in pamphlets, no publisher in America was prepared to print them in a book. For that reason, she travelled to England in 1773 at the age of 19 to find a publisher.

During her visit, she stayed with John Thornton at his house on Clapham Common South Side and met many of his friends including the abolitionist Granville Sharpe who lived on North Side. Unfortunately, she returned to Boston quite suddenly because Susanna Wheatley was dangerously ill, but not before she had reached an agreement for *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* to be published in 1774 – the first book by American-African author ever to be published. Sadly, Phillis did not return to England, and never produced another book. She died in poverty at the age of only 31. **Alyson Wilson** For a slightly longer version of Phillis Wheatley's life visit [claphamsociety.com/articles/29two-american](http://claphamsociety.com/articles/29two-american).

**Next month: Who was 'Mary Clapham'?**



Portrait of Phillis Wheatley (originally monochrome) from the frontispiece of her book

## Lambeth College, 45 Clapham Common South Side redevelopment

London Realty continues to work with Lambeth Council on the application for the redevelopment of Lambeth College, 45 Clapham Common South Side (first covered in our September 2022 Newsletter, available on our website along with numerous subsequent issues this year on the subject). The Clapham Society is keeping an eagle eye on the application as proposed changes will go out for public consultation again, possibly at the time this issue comes out. **If you have not put in an objection yet please do so at [bit.ly/42u2LNA](http://bit.ly/42u2LNA)** and contact [ainglisjones@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:ainglisjones@lambeth.gov.uk) if you have any questions. Valid reasons for objection are: Adverse Impact on the Conservation Area; Excessive Height of Buildings; Excessive Density of Buildings; Disturbance; Loss of Privacy; Loss of Light; Overdevelopment; Pressure on Local Amenities; Negative Effect on the Environment; Impeding Road and Highway Access. **Alison Inglis-Jones**



Photograph by Alex McIver Aerial ([instagram.com/alexmciveraerial/](https://www.instagram.com/alexmciveraerial/))

The Lambeth College site (in red) extends back to The Elms Academy (low building directly behind) and the still unfinished Thornton Park development, sandwiched between the Notre Dame Estate and elegant 19th-century terrace on Clapham Common South Side.

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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Secretary	Gillian White <a href="mailto:secretary@claphamsociety.com">secretary@claphamsociety.com</a>
Treasurer	David Brown <a href="mailto:treasurer@claphamsociety.com">treasurer@claphamsociety.com</a>
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Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at [claphamsociety.com](http://claphamsociety.com)

