

8. This avenue was laid out as a Horse Ride. It was one of the first improvements of the Common carried out by the Metropolitan Board of Works after it purchased the Common from the Lords of the Manor of Clapham and of Battersea and Wandsworth in 1877. To the left are three Redgra football pitches. Beyond this is a hard surface area traditionally used for fairs and circuses.

Turn left into Windmill Drive.

9. The area on your left is a Speakers' Corner (the sign has gone). This was previously far larger and early in the 20th century ranked second to Hyde Park as a place for Open Air meetings. John Burns was arrested here, George Bernard Shaw and countless others spoke here.

Ahead you will see a pond with a tree covered mound in the middle. Leave Windmill Drive and walk clockwise round the pond until you reach Windmill Drive again.

10. This is Mount Pond, which was the first part of the Common to be landscaped, by a banker called Henton Brown who lived on South Side. This may be the Clapham Common pond on which the American scientist Benjamin Franklin did his oil on water experiment in around 1770.

Turn left back into Windmill Drive for a short distance to where the road is closed to traffic. There turn right onto the path which runs along the side of The Bandstand Beds.

11. This is a community vegetable garden run by volunteers. It occupies part of what was formerly called "The Dump", now used by the council for handling the Common's green waste.

When two paths cross take the right hand path and follow it until it joins The Ride alongside the South Circular.

12. As you follow this path Nursery Woods are on your left. In recent years many woodland flowers have been introduced, so in Spring you will see snowdrops, daffodils and bluebells.

Turn left along The Ride and follow it until you reach the next path to the left close to the South Side of the Common. You will see on the other side of the South Circular a large round neglected looking structure.

13. Clapham Common Deep Shelter below the Northern Line. After the war it filled various roles including that of providing temporary accommodation for some Empire Windrush arrivals in 1948, and as an Archive store. The shelter is now managed by the London Transport Museum which organises tours of it as part of its Hidden London programme. There is a full history of the shelters on the Local History section of the Clapham Society's website claphamsociety.com.

You will find a path on your left which leads back along the third side of the Nursery Woods triangle. When the paths cross again take the right hand path until you reach Windmill Drive.

14. On the other side of Windmill Drive is the children's play area, completely refurbished in 2020 and enormously popular with children and their carers. Before retracing your steps to Windmill Drive look at the Wildflower Beds almost opposite the play area, which are maintained by volunteers and provide a riot of colour in the summer months.

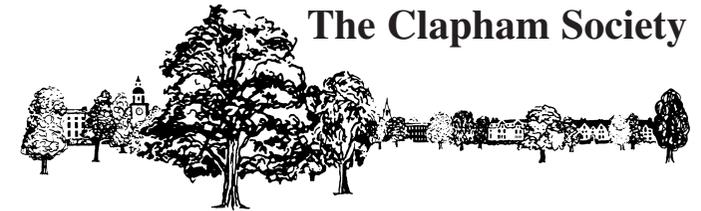
Turn right and walk a few yards on the grass, to the next path which leads off to the right of Windmill Drive. This takes you along to Clapham Common South Side with Eagle Pond on your right.

15. Eagle Pond is now a fishing pond, created from an old gravel pit. In the early 2000's various public bodies joined together to initiate improvements, including the development of a small wetlands area, adjacent to the pond.

On reaching South Side turn left. Shortly you will see The Windmill on the Common.

16. The Windmill on the Common dates back to c.1797, extended in the 19th and 20th centuries. Called after a long vanished post mill.

Clapham Common and Clapham South Underground Stations are equidistant from here, it is also on several bus routes. To return to Clapham Common Underground Station follow the road in front of The Windmill back on to South Side, turn left and continue straight along South Side until you reach the station. For Clapham South Underground Station turn right on South Side.



Clapham Walks

4: Clapham Common

Before the eighteenth century Clapham Common was wild Surrey heathland, uneven with assorted ponds and ditches. Among the furze, gorse, heather and hawthorns there was some pasturage for the sheep and cattle of the villagers. There were rewards from the vestry for killing polecats and hedgehogs. It was also a haunt for highwaymen.

The Common originally comprised the common land from the Manors of Clapham and of Battersea and Wandsworth. In the eighteenth century the boundary was often disputed.

In 1877 the Metropolitan Board of Works bought the land from the Lords of the Manors of Clapham and of Battersea and Wandsworth, the intention being that the land was "dedicated to and for the use and recreation of the public as an open and uninclosed (sic) space for ever."

Control of the Common passed to the LCC in 1889, the GLC in 1965 and to its current owners Lambeth Borough Council in 1971.

There have been many changes of use of parts of the Common over the years and this will no doubt continue in the future. However the value set on it as a place of recreation and refreshment remain constant.

You may wish to look across, or explore independently, the area of the Common west of The Avenue, and the facilities marked on the map.

The full walk will take about 1½ hours.

The Clapham Society is a local civic amenity society, which aims to improve the quality of life for residents, promote quality in new developments and to conserve the best features of the past. For further information please visit our website claphamsociety.com

Start at Clapham Common Underground Station by the Clock Tower.

1. The small triangle of land behind the Underground station is part of Clapham Common. the grassy mounds cover air raid shelters from the Second World War.

Cross to the Common by the pedestrian controlled lights, and go towards the large statue.

2. The large drinking fountain is by August von Kreling, cast in 1884 by F Miller of Munich. It depicts a woman giving water to a beggar. Originally erected by the United Kingdom Temperance and General Provident Society on the northern approach to London Bridge, it was moved here in 1895 when it is said that its weight had begun to crack the bridge approach.

Close to the fountain is a large black poplar behind an iron fence. Its predecessor was known as Captain Cook's tree although as far as is known he never lived in Clapham.

Walk towards Holy Trinity Church keeping the paddling pool on your right.

3. The paddling pool was once Cock Pond, cratered by a V2 bomb in January 1945.

Keeping the church on your right follow the path which leads to Rookery Road then turn left.

4. Holy Trinity Church was built in 1774-1776 with later alterations and extensions. the architect was Kenton Couse. Porch added by Francis Hurlbatt in 1812, east end vestries, chancel and former Lady Chapel by Arthur Beresford Pite, 1902-1903. It is the church where the Clapham Sect worshipped. Led by William Wilberforce they secured the abolition of the slave trade in the colonies and promoted many Christian and philanthropic causes.

Cross Rookery Road and Long Road at the traffic lights and follow Rookery Road until you reach Long Pond. You will pass a small skate park next to a café.

5. Long Pond was once the boat house pond for the Lord of the Manor. It is now specially constructed for sailing model yachts. There has been a Yacht Club here since the 1870s. To your right are the basket ball and netball courts which cover the site of Second World War gun emplacements.

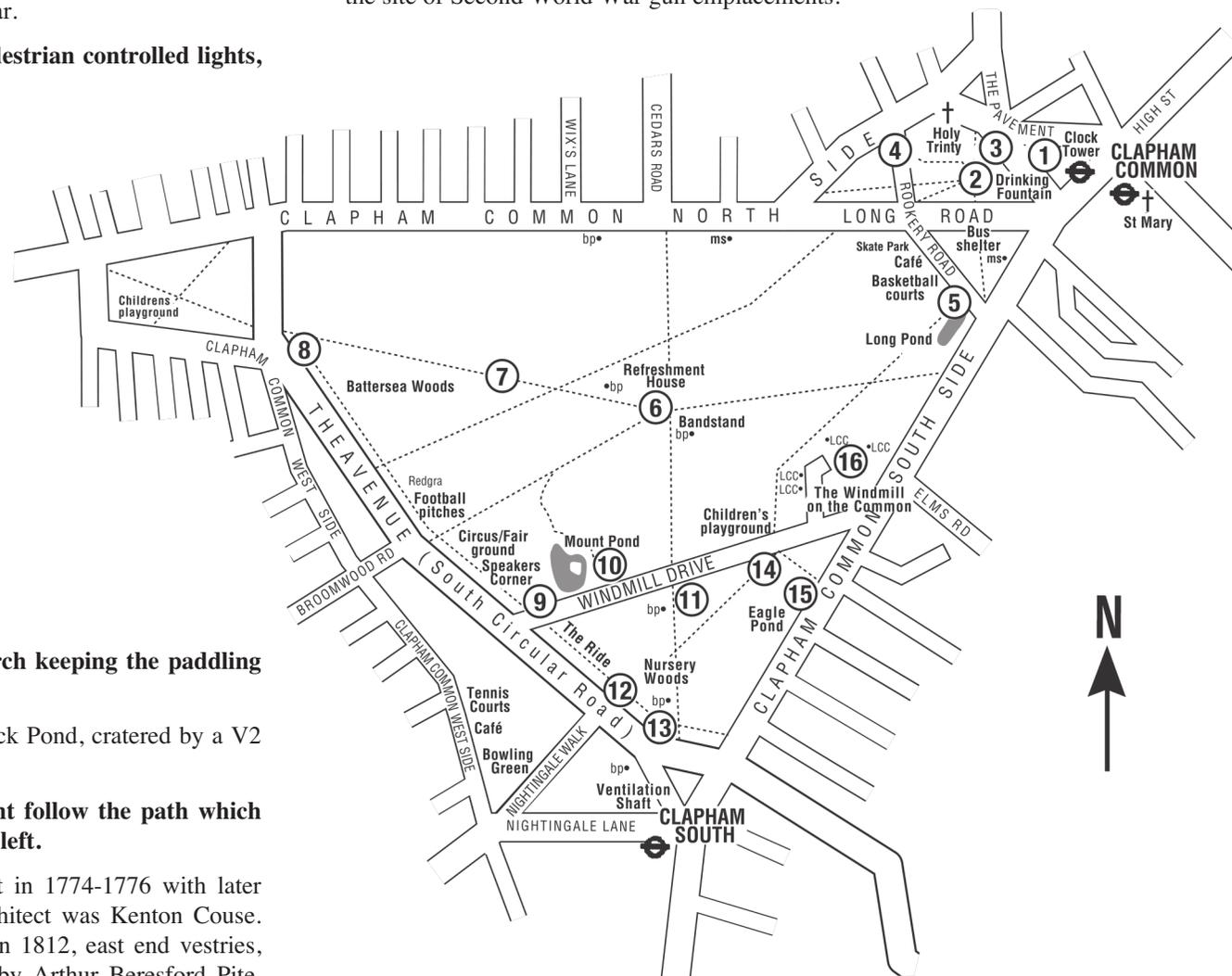
At the end of the path, to your left is one of several iron posts marking the boundary between the parishes of Battersea and Clapham. The Battersea posts are dated 1863, the Clapham posts 1877, but many are illegible.

The Grade II listed bandstand is the oldest surviving in Greater London and one of the largest ever erected in England. Built in 1890 by the LCC architect Thomas Blashill, it is a near replica of two designed by Francis Fowke in 1861 for the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens in South Kensington, both lost in the Second World War. After many years of dereliction, it has been fully restored and brought back into use in 2006. The Refreshment House near the bandstand, built in 1925, is now The Pear Tree Cafe.

At the bandstand, take the second path from the right which is almost opposite and follow it to the West Side of the Common.

7. From this path there are interesting views to the right of the buildings on the North Side of the Common. Note the two large terraces by J.T.Knowles, 1862. The second part of the path goes alongside Battersea Woods, an area which has retained some of the original character of common land. The white flowers of the flowering cherries are the Common's first sign of spring. Towards the end of the path and looking towards North Side there is an avenue of horse chestnut trees. When in blossom they alternate between pink and white.

Turn sharp left before a wooden building and follow the avenue of plane trees alongside the South Circular Road until you reach Windmill Drive. (This path may be muddy at the beginning, if so go round the building to the road and then turn left.)



Keeping Long Pond on your left follow the path until it is crossed by another path from the left. At the junction turn right to walk towards the Bandstand.

6. As you walk to the right you will pass a small cluster of twelve trees planted by the Clapham Society in 1997.