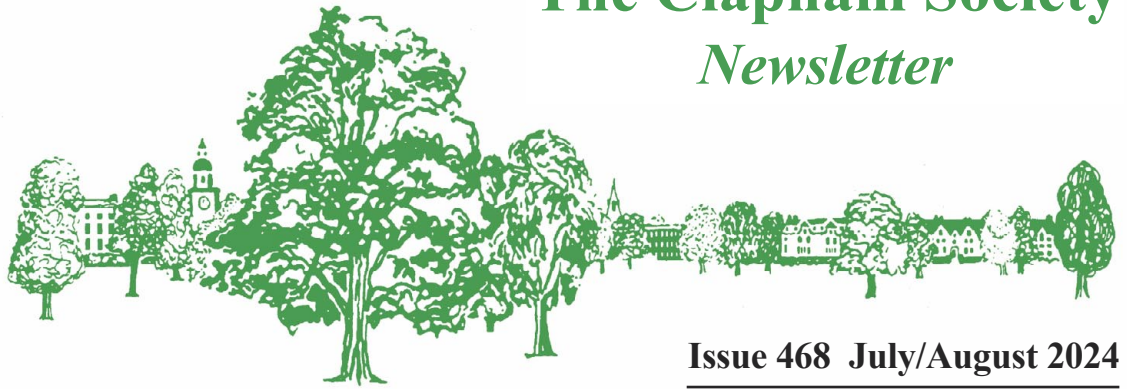


The Clapham Society

Newsletter

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to our sponsor



Issue 468 July/August 2024

Timely look at a timely book

Tim Clement-Jones (The Lord Clement-Jones CBE) is the former chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence and the Liberal Democrat House of Lords spokesperson for Science, Innovation and Technology. He is also, not least, a long-time member of The Clapham Society. His book, 'Living with the Algorithm' (Unicorn, £14.99), came out earlier this year.



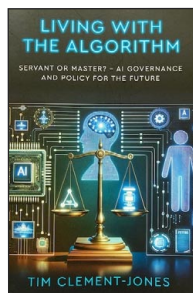
Tim Clement-Jones has produced a comprehensive and persuasive analysis of the risks of artificial intelligence (AI) – as well as the likely benefits – and how to deal with them. Almost daily AI is in the news. It is increasingly embedded in all we do. If the loss of map-reading skills matters little, the Horizon computer scandal has been a horrific example of over-dependence on algorithms. A framework for the governance of AI is badly needed, Clement-Jones argues, even if the time is never ripe to spend money on risk prevention.

It is clear that AI is not a conventional technological advance, and the creativity of 'generative AI' continues to grow. Algorithmic decision-making is increasingly used in central and local government, with almost no transparency. Even more alarming are the risks posed by autonomous weapons systems, the development of which have become a priority for the military in the UK and elsewhere. The author examines how AI will affect intellectual property – in literature, art, music and film.

There will be many benefits of AI, and the UK has world-beating researchers and developers. An employment apocalypse is not inevitable. But the benefits must be widely shared. Everyone will need the digital skills and understanding to use the new technology.

Looking at the different approaches of the US, the EU and the UK to AI regulation, none has been perfect. But that of the UK has been disappointingly minimalist and incomplete. This is a very authoritative account by someone closely involved in AI policy for many years. It sets out practical solutions and the author remains cautiously optimistic. But as the historian Yuval Noah Harari has said, 'We should regulate AI before it regulates us.'

Benjamin Buchan



Clapham Book Festival

Save the date of **12 October** from 3pm at Omnibus Theatre for an exciting line-up including **Sir Anthony Seldon** and **Gavin Esler**. Tickets available in September at claphambookfestival.com/tickets.

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 questions and discussion. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to donate. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks, a great chance to socialise with other members before and after the talk. Our full list of talks for 2024 is available at claphamsociety.com/events.

We apologise that last month's talk had to be cancelled and hope the speaker will be available again soon.

There are no talks in July or August.

Monday 16 September

Keys to the City. Historian and author **Margaret Willes** will talk about her latest books – on St Paul's Churchyard, and Southwark and its people. Society member **Helen Esmonde** and Margaret will also talk about their forthcoming book on the Livery Companies of London, *City Unlocked*, due to be published in March 2025. Margaret Willes was, for many years, the Publisher at the National Trust and Helen Esmonde is a Past Master of the Stationers' Company, and their first woman Master. (The working subtitle of their book is *From Wool to Digital*.) Helen hopes the book will enable others to share her experience of discovering the history of the Livery movement, how it mirrors the growth of the nation's economy, and its relevance in the 21st century.

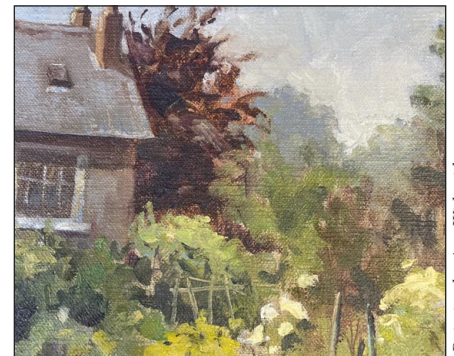
The Clapham Society summer party

Our summer party for members is on **Thursday 18 July, 6pm to 9pm**, and takes place in a very special private garden in the heart of Clapham Old Town. The guest list is limited to 60, so don't delay if you want to come. Entry price is £25 per person and covers all food and drink.

To reserve your place (before **11 July, ideally**, to help with catering), please send a cheque, made out to the Clapham Society, to:

David Brown, Treasurer,
The Clapham Society,
15 Turret Grove, SW4
0ES; remember to include
the names of your guests,
and your contact details/
email address to enable us
to give you details about
the venue. Or simply buy
your tickets via the **Donate**
button on our website at
claphamsociety.com; just

choose the relevant price point, depending on how many tickets you want, and select 'Events' where indicated – if you're bringing guests it would be helpful if you could email treasurer@claphamsociety.com with their names. We look forward to seeing you there. **Mark Leffler**



Painting by Ann Witheridge

St Paul's Opera: In conversation with the patron

As rehearsals for 'Die Fledermaus' were gathering pace in May, **Tricia Ninian**, Founder and Director of St Paul's Opera, asked if we would interview its celebrated patron, **David Butt Philip**. He spoke via Zoom from Vienna where he was in 'Die Meistersinger' at the Staatsoper. The full interview will appear at stpaulsopera.org and audience members will be driven by a QR code to it in the programme.

How do you see your role as patron of SPO? It happened quite organically. I was invited to give masterclasses, which people seemed to get a lot out of, so we started experimenting with fundraising concerts and they also went well. This year I am going to sit in on some rehearsals for *Die Fledermaus*. The first one is open to the public.

Tricia had told me you were going to be doing that and she's very excited. Do you know what you will be looking for? No, not really. I need to discuss with the director and the music director in what capacity they would like me to be there. I'm happy to sit and observe,



Matthew Carter

if that's what they prefer or, alternatively, to be more involved in terms of giving feedback. I don't know the stage director but the music director, George Ireland (*above, far right*), is a friend of mine. I met him through St Paul's actually. He accompanied the masterclass in 2023, then I invited him to be one of the pianists for the gala this year.

Going back a bit, how did your singing career start? Being a singer started when I joined the church choir at the age of seven. That's when I fell in love with singing and started to think of myself as a singer. I was a chorister at Peterborough Cathedral and music became my hobby. At university my hobby began to take over. I dropped out after my first year and auditioned for the Royal Northern College of Music. When I got there, at the age of 22, I realised very quickly that this was something that I was supposed to be doing.

Then, after your post-graduate year at the Royal Academy of Music, you were a Jette Parker singer at the Royal Opera House... Yes, that was fabulous. I was 32 and had been in the Glyndebourne Chorus for two years, but I had almost no experience as a soloist at that level – with the best singers, the best conductors, the best directors in the world – and from that perspective it was incredibly useful.

You touched on this in one of your masterclasses, but how did you make the switch from baritone to tenor? In the two years after the Royal Academy, particularly when I was working at Glyndebourne, my voice was changing. It was getting higher, and the resonance was in a different place. I experimented with singing tenor repertoire for fun and then spent about six months going around the country and seeing different coaches and teachers whom I knew and respected – at Glyndebourne, the Royal Academy, the Royal Northern – to get feedback. They all said, 'We think this is a good idea.' So I made the switch, largely with the support of Glyndebourne who agreed to have me back in the chorus the following year as a tenor. That was 13 years ago, my summer in Glyndebourne as a tenor; my first job as a tenor.



What were you singing that summer – can you remember? Funnily enough, I can. Serendipitously it was the opera that I am doing now in Vienna, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which I encountered for the first time that summer and completely fell in love with. I said to myself during those performances that I needed to sing the lead role in this one day. It's wonderful and here I am.

The role you're singing now is for a heldentenor. Does that call for a different technique? Heldentenor is the German word for a tenor who sings the heroic tenor roles in the operas of Wagner and Richard Strauss. Within that there is a range of different possible voices. For example, there is the kind of heldentenor who sings roles such as Tristan and Siegfried, which I don't do, but I do sing Walther von Stolzing, Lohengrin and Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The other side of that is a lyric tenor: Rodolfo in *La bohème* or Alfredo in *La traviata*. If I'm one or the other, I'm a heldentenor, but I don't really consider myself as one or the other. It's not a different technique but it does call for different strengths. The German heroic repertoire requires the ability to sit in a high register all the time. It also requires the ability to be heard over an extremely large orchestra. And stamina, as some of these roles are four and a half hours of music.

Is there a role you would still like to sing? I'm lucky in that if you'd asked me five years ago what roles I'd wanted to sing I've done almost all of them now. *Meistersinger* would have been very high on my list, also *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Rusalka* (*above, Royal Opera House, 2023*) and *Jenůfa*. These are dream roles for me and ones I now do fairly regularly. I would love to sing *Tosca* or *La fanciulla del West* or *Andrea Chénier*. I'm doing *Pagliacci* at Opera Holland Park in July. I haven't sung it before and it's an opera I've always absolutely loved.

What about *Die Fledermaus*? I've never sung that. Oh well, that's not quite true. When I was at the Royal Academy we did a scene with me as Eisenstein, but only one scene and that was 16 years ago now.
Interview by Ruth Eastman

'*Die Fledermaus*' is at **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ**, from **4 to 6 July**. Johann Strauss's operetta is reimagined in a vintage movie studio. The famous tunes are roared into life by musical director George Ireland and his ensemble and a cast of brilliant singers. For showtimes and tickets, visit stpaulsopera.org/die-fledermaus. Our spies who attended the open rehearsal say it's going to be the best yet. David Butt Philip's next SPO masterclass is on Thursday 7 November.



Trinity Hospice

Royal Trinity Hospice's regular Talk & Tours are a great way to find out more about their work in the local community. For example, did you know that over 85% of patients under Trinity's care are supported in their own homes? In the course of two hours, you'll hear from a range of the professionals delivering care, as you walk around the building and stunning grounds. These events are free, accessible and all are welcome but booking is essential. Find out more at www.royaltrinityhospice.london/events. The next Talk & Tour is **Tuesday 16 July, 2-4pm**.

Omnibus Theatre

Make space in your summer diary for the world premiere of *Wormholes* (23 July to 10 August). This darkly compelling tale about coercive control, domestic abuse and how the mind finds a way to escape brings together a powerhouse team. Written by Emily Jupp (Liverpool Hope Prize 2019, Bruntwood Prize Longlist 2022), it stars **Victoria Yeates** (above, *Call the Midwife*, *Fantastic Beasts*, *Ben and Imo*) and is directed by Scott Le Crass (*Rose*, Ambassador's Theatre). **Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW**. Visit omnibus-clapham.org for showtimes.



Duke of Edinburgh's visit to Omnibus



We promised to show you the official pictures of this special occasion in our April Newsletter and now we can. Apologies if they look similar but it's the only way all on 'our' side of the room can be seen.

Above, from left: Omnibus Theatre founder George Owen welcoming the Duke (centre); technical advisor Roddy Gye; Louisa Hartwell of Clapham BID; Angela Cobbin; Clapham Society Vice President Julia Barfield and Newsletter Editor Ruth Eastman; Christine Green, early supporter and member of the 1889 Circle; Carol Rahn (Battersea Society); Marie McCarthy, Artistic Director of Omnibus. Also present (*below, from far left*): Trustee and Secretary Keith Parker; Councillor Linda Bray; Alyson Wilson (Clapham Society Local History and Publications); Roger Eastman; a member of Omnibus Writers' Group; Omnibus volunteer Jeannette Croft.

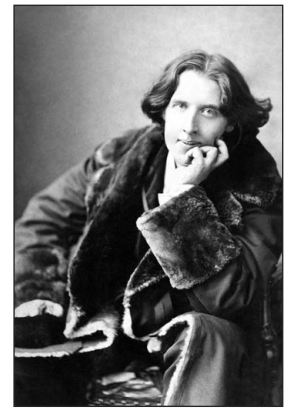


Photographs by Sarah Louise Ramsay

Still time to see...

Oscar Wilde at St Luke's

As usual, **St Luke's Music Society** will end its season with a reception and private performance for members, but this year a small number of seats to the private performance will also be made available to the public. The piece being performed is *Work is the Curse of the Drinking Classes*, a one-man show written by Neil Tittley, based on the writings of Oscar Wilde. Funny and sad at the same time, it features **Will Govan** as Oscar Wilde. **Sunday 30 June, 7pm**. **St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8HQ**. To book tickets, free for members and £10 to non-members, visit slms.org.uk.



Bandstand concerts

The summer concert series organised by CCMAC with Lambeth Council continue through to the August Bank Holiday. **All concerts are free and start at 2pm**. The remaining line-up includes some well-loved groups from past years:

Saturday 29 June – Crystal Palace Band

Saturday 13 July – Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band

Sunday 14 July – Junction Jazz

Saturday 20 July – The Fabulous Honeyes

Sunday 21 July – Real Voices

Saturday 27 July – London City Brass

Sunday 28 July – Graham Pike Big Band

Saturday 3 August – South London Jazz Orchestra

Sunday 4 August – South London Symphonic Orchestra

Sunday 11 August – Allegra Concert Band

Saturday 17 August – The Macaroons (Jazz)

Sunday 25 August – Anastasia Cociorva

Monday 26 August – Tequila Brass (*shown*).

Come along, grab a deck chair and enjoy the live sounds. **Michael Barry**



Lambeth Tour Guides

Last month, we mentioned there is still space on the Lambeth Tour Guides course at Morley College in **September**. If you already know and love Clapham, the South Bank, the heritage of entertainers such as Charlie Chaplin and the history of the Festival of Britain, why not discover more about your borough and learn to become a Lambeth Tour Guide. From parks to museums; architecture, from Austen Hall to Zaha Hadid; regal connections, from the Duchy of Cornwall to the Royal Vauxhall Tavern; high art and street art, it's all in Lambeth. To apply for a place, visit lambethtourguides.org/lambeth-guiding-course.

Save the date

Since 1884 the **Devas Youth Club** on Stormont Road has been providing activities and opportunities to local youth who need them most. Help Devas celebrate and raise funds for their work by accepting the invitation (*right*) to a gala evening on **Monday 2 September**. To find out more, please visit www.devasclub.org.

CELEBRATING
140
Devas Youth Club
YEARS

**Gala Evening to Celebrate
140 Years of the Devas Club**

Posh Party, Celebration Dinner,
Entertainment & Special Guests

Monday 2nd September 2024
From 7pm - 10pm
The Grand Hall
**BATTERSEA
ARTS CENTRE**

Since 1884, The Devas Youth Club on Stormont
Road, Battersea has been providing activities
and opportunities to local youth who most need

Help us celebrate and raise funds for our
youthwork, tickets available from
tickets@eventbrite.co.uk or info from
www.devasclub.org

Committee posts: give back to Clapham!

The election of Officers and Committee members at the October AGM is not far away. We will formally be requesting nominations in the September issue, but all positions are open and we have two key vacancies currently: our Treasurer and our Membership Secretary, both of long and sterling standing, have indicated a wish to step down. Both roles call for people of meticulous accounting (Treasurer) and record-keeping (Membership) skills. IT fluency is also an asset and the Membership Secretary collaborates with the Newsletter Editor on distribution and the Treasurer on subscriptions. If either role sounds like you or you'd like to be involved in any other way in this influential community-based charity, we would love to hear from you. Put your name forward in September, or contact Mark Leffler, David Brown or Jennifer Everett at their email addresses below.

Do we have your email address?

We apologise to members that our **June talk** had to be cancelled at the last minute. If we had your email address you will have been contacted, but it is possible that we do not have it. To be kept informed in case of any other urgent updates, please send your email address to the Membership Secretary at membership@claphamsociety.com. All addresses are held in confidence and strict adherence to data protection (GDPR) is kept. **Jennifer Everett**

Membership and subscriptions

We extend a warm welcome this month to Helena Ware and remind readers that new members are always encouraged to join the Society.

Many thanks to those of you who have amended your standing orders to reflect the new subscription rates from 1 April 2024. Sorry to repeat our request but there are still some whose standing orders were paid at the old rate. Please can you amend yours now so that individual reminders do not have to be sent out? It would be helpful to the Society's financial situation if you could also clear the outstanding balance as a one-off payment for this year. This can be done via the **Donate button** on the Society's website, bank transfer or sending a cheque, made out to The Clapham Society, to me at: 30 Trinity Close, SW4 0JD. If you have a query, feel free to get in touch with me.

Finally, the Treasurer is still keen to have your Gift Aid Declaration to ensure he can make an up-to-date request to HMRC for the funding. Details in the May Newsletter, which is available on the Newsletter page of our website. **Jennifer Everett**

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

Chairman	Mark Leffler mark.leffler88@gmail.com	Meetings and Events	Christine Armstrong events@claphamsociety.com
Vice Chair	Alison Macnair vicechair@claphamsociety.com	Common and Open Spaces	Michael Barry mbarryuk@claphamsociety.com
Secretary	Gillian White secretary@claphamsociety.com	Local History and Publications	Alyson Wilson history@claphamsociety.com
Treasurer	David Brown treasurer@claphamsociety.com	Social Media	Alison Inglis-Jones socialmedia@claphamsociety.com
Membership Secretary	Jennifer Everett membership@claphamsociety.com	Newsletter Editor and Instagram	Ruth Eastman news@claphamsociety.com

Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at claphamsociety.com



Clapham street names: Rookery Road

Have you ever wondered where the rooks are on Rookery Road? In fact, the road gets its name from an alternative definition of the word in the Oxford dictionary. A rookery is also 'a dense collection of housing, especially in a slum area'.

In the mid-1700s John Thornton got permission, in return for a small annual payment to the Clapham Parish Vestry, to build brick stables and a yard on the Common opposite his grand house which stood on the site of today's Notre Dame Estate. Around 1790 his son, Robert, was allowed to extend the stables down to the present Rookery Road itself, building a collection of timber-framed cottages.

This unusual settlement on a corner of the Common endured over the next hundred years,

long after the Thorntons had left. The Rookery, as it became known, housed various businesses including a vet-farrier, an ale-house and a washerwoman's establishment. Over time it became scruffy and ramshackle, and acquired, perhaps unfairly, an insalubrious reputation. Local artists, however, liked to portray the cottages as a quaint corner of the Common. This 1896 photograph (*above*) shows the entrance to Garside's vet and farrier's yard.

Inevitably, there were complaints from the residents of the developing Victorian suburbs around the Common and the site was cleared in 1904 when the land was returned to the Common. The clearance created the open view of Long Pond from the road, as we see it today, the pond having previously been partially obscured behind bushes and the cottages.

The name of Rookery Road lived on, and it was another 35 years before buildings appeared again. This time the constructions were pre-fabricated dwellings for the army during World War II, later used as emergency civilian housing until they, too, were removed in the 1950s. **Tom Jansz**

Next month: Rectors of Clapham

More about Garside's at claphamsociety.com/clapsocNL_332_Nov_2010.pdf in the 'Archive' section of our Newsletter page.

If you can suggest how your street was named or want to find out more about it, please email history@claphamsociety.com.

