



The Clapham Society

Newsletter

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Clapham Common Deep Shelter

On Friday 15 June the Society's 12th Green Plaque marking a notable local building which has changed use, was unveiled on the former Clapham Common Deep Shelter by the co-founder of the world's first underground farm Growing Underground, Richard Ballard. The ceremony was attended by Lambeth Mayor, Councillor Christopher Wellbelove, Chris Nix of TfL, members of the Society and guests.

Mr Ballard gave an interesting introduction to Growing Underground, which is supported by celebrity chef Michel Roux Jr, and to the products which are now widely available – notably at Marks & Spencer, Waitrose and Ocado. More details can be found on the website growing-underground.com.

A full list of all the buildings that currently have a Clapham Society Green Plaque is at claphamsociety.com/Articles/greenplaques.html where there is also a brief history of each building.



l. to r. Chris Nix, Transport for London; Richard Ballard, Growing Underground; Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Christopher Wellbelove; Annabel Allott, Chair of Clapham Society photo: Jane Sleightholme

What are you doing on 4 July?

Have you bought your ticket for the **Clapham Society Summer Party**, which is on **Wednesday 4 July** at the Eden Garden in Matrimony Place, close to St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove? This quiet green space is the perfect setting for a party on a summer evening, but just in case of bad weather we have arranged back up indoor space. Tickets are still available, but **MUST** be bought in advance to enable us to order appropriately. You will **NOT** be able to buy a ticket on the door. Contact Christine Armstrong christinearms52@hotmail.com as soon as possible.

There are no meetings in July and August. Instead we have the following free guided walks.

Sunday 8 July

The Bugs and Other Beasts of Clapham Common. A look at the many different invertebrates (animals without backbones) that are found on Clapham Common; learn how to survey for insects, spiders and the like, and their importance for the health and wellbeing of the Common and its users. Led by Iain Boulton. Leaving from Clapham Common Bandstand at 1 pm.

Wednesday 25 July

Historic Clapham. A stroll round the Old Town area, to see the development of the village and hear about some of the interesting people who lived there. Led by Peter Jefferson Smith. Leaving from Clapham Common Underground Station at 6.30 pm.

Saturday 1 September

As part of the Lambeth Local History Fair which will be held at Omnibus Theatre from 10 am to 4.30 pm, we are having two short guided walks.

At **11.45** Derrick Johnson will lead a walk around Clapham Old Town and talk about its development and the stories behind its commemorative plaques.

At **2.15** Alyson Wilson will lead a walk along Clapham Common North Side, looking at Holy Trinity Church, and the variety of buildings facing the Common from the discreet Georgian terrace to the flamboyant Victorian blocks which flank Cedars Road.

Many Lambeth Local History Societies will have stands at the Fair, and there will be talks throughout the day including the following:

At **1.30** *Clapham Library to Omnibus Theatre*. How Clapham got its first public library in 1889 – and the anonymous donor unmasked. 125 years later a much-loved public building is saved to become an arts centre.

Clapham historian, Peter Jefferson Smith, will trace the history of Clapham Library from its opening in 1889 to its closure in 2012. Marie McCarthy, Artistic Director of Omnibus Theatre, will follow this with the story of the conversion of the building, its opening in October 2013 and present expansion plans.

continued overleaf

Lambeth Local History Fair, which is in Clapham this year, on the same day as the Old Town Fair on The Polygon is the opening event of Lambeth Heritage Festival that runs throughout September. In addition to the above, Clapham Society events during the Festival include the Park Hill walk (see below), the meeting about Vesta Tilley (see below), our Bandstand concert on 23 September, and a Ghost Signs walk on 30 September. The full brochure of the Festival will be available from the end of July at Lambeth Libraries, at Omnibus Theatre and other local venues.

Sunday 9 September

Around Park Hill. A walk along Crescent Lane to Abbeville Road, and up Park Hill returning down Kings Avenue past some of the last remaining villas of Clapham Park. Led by Alyson Wilson. Leaving from Clapham Common Underground Station at 2.30 pm.

There are many other local walks throughout the summer. A free leaflet entitled *Local History Walks in South London*, showing full details of these is available at local libraries, Omnibus Theatre, on our walks and at our stands at local events. You can also purchase copies of our self-guided walks leaflets (£1 each or 7 for £5) from our stand at local events.

The next meeting will be on **Monday 24 September**, when **Keith Fawkes** and **Richard Norman** will talk about **Vesta Tilley (1864-1952) and her World**. She was a legendary male impersonator, recognised as one of the most successful performers of her generation. Vesta lived in Lambeth for a period, and she was also known for her work in recruiting soldiers during the First World War. She introduced many popular songs e.g. *Burlington Bertie*, *Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who loves a Soldier* and *Following in Father's Footsteps*.

War in Battersea

A talk at the recent Wandsworth Heritage Festival entitled *War comes home: growing up in wartime Battersea* drew a very large audience and was most interesting. The organisers had recorded interviews with people who lived in Battersea during WWII and had vivid memories of bombs, bomb damage and their everyday lives. A group of articulate local residents ranging in age in 1939 from about 15 (and already working) to 5 and 6 year olds just starting school gave interviews, interspersed with pictures of local damage. A booklet about this project is to be produced and should be available soon (price £3) at Battersea Library, 265 Lavender Hill, SW11 1JB. Tel: 020 7223 2334.

Processions

A jubilant march of women and girls took over much of central London on 10 June. It was a work of art called *Processions* brought into being by Artichoke, a creative company founded in 2005 by Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb to work with artists to create unique, large-scale experiences. London has already experienced several of their extraordinary events. In 2006 they brought us the 40 foot tall mechanical *Sultan's Elephant* and a giant Girl puppet that marched through Whitehall. In 2016, to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire of London, their *London's Burning*, a huge scale model of London in 1666, was set on fire on the Thames. Also in 2016 and again in 2018 *Lumiere London* provided a range of imaginative light shows in various locations around London. Their latest event is *Processions*.

Their mission statement is 'Artichoke produces extraordinary and ambitious ephemeral events that live in the memory forever'. This sentiment will be shared by the estimated 40,000 women and girls who walked together through London on Sunday 10 June 2018 in *Processions* to commemorate one hundred years since the first UK women got the right to vote. Each participant was given a green, white or violet scarf to wear suffragette colours. Hundreds of women made banners and many dressed as suffragettes. The atmosphere was amazing. *Processions* also took place in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh



on the same day and a diverse group of women travelled to these cities to take part in this mass participatory living artwork. Happily, Clapham Common was noticeably represented in London by a group of women who made a beautiful banner using the 1918 suffragette rallying cry 'Deeds Not Words'.

text & photo Dana Kubick

The New American Embassy at Nine Elms

Now that the new embassy is up and running on our doorstep, it is interesting to see an exclusive interview by the new Community Liaison Officer, Courtney Austrian, given recently as part of a longer report looking at developments in the Nine Elms area of Wandsworth.

This can now be seen on YouTube. Go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), in the search box enter 'The New American Embassy at Nine Elms' and you should get the interview as well as some good photographs of the embassy.

Bandstand concerts

The following concerts are planned on Clapham Common Bandstand over the summer:

- Saturday 7 July** Lambeth Wind Orchestra – 2 pm to 4 pm
- Sunday 15 July** Folk music festival – celebrating music drawn from London's multi-ethnic community – 12 noon to 5 pm
- Saturday 18 August** Wandsworth Oasis/LGBTQ+ Wandsworth – LGBT acts in partnership with the Clapham Grand – 12 noon to 5pm
- Sunday 2 September** Junction Jazz – 2 pm to 4 pm
- Sunday 9 September** Crystal Palace Band – 3 pm to 5 pm
- Sunday 23 September** Clapham Community Choir – 2 pm to 4 pm. This is the Clapham Society's Annual Bandstand concert, which is part of Lambeth's Heritage Month.

South London Botanical Institute

At our May meeting Roy Vickery, eminent botanist with a career of over 40 years at the Natural History Museum and now President of the Institute, gave an interesting talk about this small botanical garden, herbarium and botanical library in Tulse Hill.

It was founded in 1910 by Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), who served for many years in the Indian Civil Service and was a founder of the first Indian National congress in 1885, and active in reforming education and agriculture in the country. He was also an accomplished ornithologist with a notable collection. On his return to England in 1894 Hume developed an interest in botany, which led to the foundation of the South London Botanical Institute to house his herbarium.

More than 100 years later the Institute flourishes still in the large detached house on a busy South London road, with a quiet botanical garden behind which is full of interesting plants. Apart from maintaining the garden, the herbarium collection and the library, the Institute also promotes botanical education and aims to promote awareness of the importance of botany by organising a programme of talks, workshops, field trips and botanical surveys. Events for children and school

visits are particularly important. Roy showed us pictures of the many activities, including the field trips, which looked fascinating.

He then showed examples from the herbarium, which has been described as 'a treasure trove of plants'. (Should the term be unfamiliar a herbarium 'is a collection of preserved plant specimens and associated data used for scientific study'.) This collection, which contains 20,000 specimens of pressed plants, mostly over 100 years old, as well as a seed collection, is mainly used for reference by botanists. It can, however, be seen by visitors who are also welcome to use the extensive botanical library.

Roy showed us several pictures of the botanical garden, with various trails concentrating on differing types of plants, and pointed out that the medicinal one attracts the most attention, along with the unusual moss trail. A surprising number of plants are crammed into the space of a relatively small Victorian suburban garden.

The Institute is well worth a visit as a local gem and has Open Days and special events, which include drawing classes and walks on nearby Commons. All details can be found on the website: slibi.org.uk. It is also open every Thursday, without appointment, from 10 am to 4 pm. South London Botanical Institute, 323 Norwood Road, SE24 9AQ. Tel: 020 8674 5787.

Wandsworth Prison Museum

A series of talks to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Wandsworth Prison Museum has been organised by the Director of the Museum, Stewart McLaughlin. They are as follows:
Sunday 8 July The Ronnie Biggs Escape
Saturday 8 September Wandsworth's Last Hanging
Sunday 4 November Oscar Wilde at HMP Wandsworth
For more information and booking contact wandsworthprisonmuseum@hmps.gsi.gov.uk.

Wandsworth Prison Museum which is housed in a garage, a few metres away from the perimeter of the prison, must be one of London's smallest attractions and possibly the only former garage to have been opened by a royal, with the Duke of Kent cutting the ribbon in 2008. Inside, a huddle of cabinets and curiosities tell the story of the 160-year-old jail, which has held the famous and infamous over the years, including, Ronnie Kray, Derek Bentley and escapee Ronnie Biggs. To visit, by appointment, email the address above.

Open Air Shakespeare

On **Friday 10 August** at 7.30 pm Changeling Theatre presents William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* in the churchyard of St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Changeling's *Measure for Measure* is inspired by the Moulin Rouge with more than a hint of the Burlesque. This bawdy and witty Shakespeare comedy has a storyline full of twists and turns as sin meets virtue and good battles against evil.

Bring chairs or rugs, seating is not provided. Cash tickets (£20 adults, £10 10-18 year olds, under 10 years free) on the door, or in advance from changeling-theatre.com.

Speakers for 2019

In late summer the Clapham Society's Events Subcommittee will be meeting to make plans for the 2019 programme. Have you heard or do you know of any good speakers, preferably local or who speak about a fairly local subject. Please have a think about it, and send your suggestions to Christine Armstrong christinearms52@hotmail.com.

Brixton Windmill

In June the Friends of Windmill Gardens, who provide guided tours and education workshops at the Grade II* listed Brixton Windmill, started campaigning to raise £29,000 to fit out and furnish a new education centre.

Lambeth Council has appointed Logan Construction (SE) Ltd to construct the new centre in Windmill Gardens which has been designed pro bono by architects Squire and Partners. Building work starts in late June and is due to be completed in December. The Friends of Windmill Gardens will then sign a lease with the council and take over management of the centre.



For more information about the new education centre, free guided tours of Brixton Windmill and events the Friends organise in Windmill Gardens check out the Brixton Windmill website: brixtonwindmill.org.

The Windmill's stone ground wholemeal flour, made from local organically sourced wheat, can be bought during Windmill open days. There are also local stockists including the Old Post Office Bakery in Landor Road.

A Clapham Poet

We often receive information about former Clapham residents sent by those who find our website quite by chance. Some time ago we received an email from Martin White whose father Eric Wilfrid White moved to 25 Englewood Road at the age of 9 and lived there from 1912 to 1925, attending Aristotle Road Central School until 1918. Jack Hobbs lived at 17 Englewood Road and his sister Ada married Eric's brother Frank. Eric spoke little of his years in Clapham. A long poem, written some time between 1965 and 1973, is the only record we have of his memories of the Common.

Martin wrote: 'The poem was written by my father and is a kind of reminiscence of his experience of the area as a child and young man. He wrote many poems during the course of his life and had a couple published in Penguin New Writing in the 1940s but lacked the confidence, I think, to push for more success. I feel it is quite evocative of the Common of those days, the passing trams, the young couples, the horses and milk carts. I think it conveys successfully the memory.'

Martin added that he had always wanted to see the whole poem published. We can't do that but we can print an extract:

The Clapham Sundaes

Come along to *The Clapham Sundaes* at Holy Trinity Clapham on **Sunday 1 July** from 10 am to 3 pm! It's going to be an amazing day starting with breakfast together and great coffee at 10 am. There will be a church service from 10.30 – 11.45 am. In this service there will be interviews with a politician, a policeman and a pastor. From around midday there will be food trucks serving sourdough pizza, gourmet burgers and delicious noodles. There will be live music, inflatables, interviews and of course ice cream. There's loads going on and there will be something for everyone! Find out more at holyltrinityclapham.org.

The Common

by Eric Wilfrid White (1903-74)

Let memory conjure up a scene
Of summer light on tennis green,
Of swaying bodies hitting out,
Of boys running roundabout,
Eyes on the skimming ball
Lest the wrong court for it call,
Of flannelled figures and hot faces:
So fancy an old time traces,
Conjuring from the years ago
What only I and old ones know.

In those days across the Common
On the avenue no-one was dumb on
You could hear where now the traffic
Roars and riots with its maffick
Voices of lovers on parade
Where sex plied a frisky trade,
Girls arm-in-arm for boys to glance at,
Click maybe and a new love chance at;
Many a fancy was met there,
Many a wife from one soft stare.

Those were the days when dresses
whispered
Love-messages, or for a kiss purred
Velvet voices on the parade;
Up and down pursued the trade
Every Sunday evening, walking
Up and down the darlings hawking;
Sweet ones, cheap ones, true ones, light
ones,
Shady, innocent dark and bright ones,
But they are gone, there's no-one there
now,
The Common's love-parade is bare now.



Accentuate the Positive

On **Thursday 12 July** Clapham Community Choir will be accompanied in its summer concert by a piano, bass and percussion trio. The choir and trio will accentuate the positive in a varied programme – with songs about fields of gold and wild mountain thyme, lullabies and love – celebrating musical expression in every way.

The concert will be at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, starting at 7.30 pm (doors open 7.00 pm). Admission is free and all are welcome to enjoy the music and celebrate the evening with the choir and friends.

For more information about Clapham Community Choir see the website, singclapham.org. The Choir will also be singing at the Clapham Society concert on the Bandstand on **Sunday 23 September**.

Omnibus Theatre

This July Omnibus Theatre is hosting a gaggle of emerging talents and a riotous big name comic before they tear up to Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August. Why venture to Edinburgh when you can see the most hotly anticipated Festival highlights right here in Clapham before anybody else? There are a total of seven shows from **Tuesday 17 July** through to **Sunday 29 July**.

Marcus Brigstocke, multi-award winning stand-up, presents a work in progress show, performing a brand-new hour of hilarious comedy. As seen on *Live At The Apollo*, *Have I Got News For You* and *Mock the Week*. *The Rockford File* is one of renowned Theatre Critic Lyn Gardner's picks of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It's a funny, poignant evening with two likeable misadventurers. Home truths, outright lies, jokes, exaggerations and superlative live Rocking Country music. Writer/director Kat Woods, returns following her ***** star success with *Mule* to preview her new show *Killymuck*, inspired by real events in Ireland in the 1970s. Please see the website for the full line-up omnibus-clapham.org.

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

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Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications are on our website at claphamsociety.com