

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 416

April 2019

Winterville

The Society has a growing concern over Lambeth's recourse to Clapham Common to plug the dire financial situation it finds itself in. There is a real risk that in addition to the daily inconvenience of having significant parts of the Common cordoned off from free public access, long-term damage is inflicted by the structures necessary to accommodate various events on the Common. Anyone who has recently been to the area of the Common behind the skate park and along Long Pond will have seen its poor condition.

Prompted by the return of Winterville to the Common at the end of last year, on 5 December 2018, the Clapham Society, together with the Friends of Clapham Common and the Open Spaces Society, sent the following letter to Mr Travers, Lambeth's CEO,

"We write ... to object to Lambeth's current use of Clapham Common, the latest and most invasive use being the Winterville 2018 event. On Advice, we consider your granting of a licence for that event to be unlawful.

We enclose a copy of an Advice by Douglas Edwards QC in which he opines that the current use without ministerial consent is unlawful. Although his Advice is in respect of Winterville, you will appreciate that the ambit of his conclusions is much wider; any event requiring structures is unlawful without ministerial consent.

We require you to confirm that you will not in the future grant any licence or permission for use of the Common which engages the Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Order 1967 without first obtaining ministerial consent.

It is unfortunate that your decision to licence Winterville was made on 26th October 2018, by which point most of the preparation of the event itself was already well underway. Given the amount of preparation that had been commenced before the decision was taken, it appears that the event organisers must have been assured by Lambeth that they were going to receive a licence prior to the date when the decision was said to have been made on 26th October.

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Deane's the chemist

We are delighted to see that the original fittings from this former chemist's shop at 17 The Pavement are now in use again by the recently opened coffee shop. A welcome return!

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claphamsociety.com

Our meetings are held at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk will commence promptly at 8 pm and the bar will open prior to the talk at 7 pm. Our guest will normally speak for about 45 minutes, followed by around 15 minutes for questions and discussion, and the bar will remain open after the talk. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation.

Please arrive in good time to ensure entry. There is a limit on the number the room can accommodate and you will not be admitted when that number is reached.

Monday 15 April

Three years after it was destroyed by a devastating fire, **Battersea Arts Centre's** Grand Hall has reopened following a multi-million pound refurbishment and restoration by architects Haworth Tompkins. The first production was *Missing* the show that was running at the time of the fire. **Maddie Wilson**, formerly assistant to the Director of Battersea Arts Centre, now a producer and coordinator of their new co-working space, the Scratch Hub, will talk about the development of this atmospheric and iconic building.

Bugs and Beasties Hunt

Don't miss Iain Boulton's expedition on Clapham Common on **Sunday 14 April**, leaving at 2 pm from the Wild Life Pond, beside Eagle Pond in Windmill Drive. Full details are in the March newsletter which is on our website.

Subscriptions

Thank you to the many members who have updated their subscriptions before 1 April when the new rates come in to force, and a gentle reminder to those who have not yet done so. This needs to be done by you with your bank. If you do on line banking it takes only a few seconds to change your standing order, otherwise speak to your bank direct.

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Winterville

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Please disclose any correspondence or other communications in which any prior assurances were given (to the extent that it is necessary to do so, please treat this as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000).

The lateness of the decision has made it difficult to challenge given that if the matter had required litigation, it was more than likely that any judicial determination would not have been given until after the event itself had concluded.

Finally, we are aware that Lambeth's event strategy is under review and request that this letter and the enclosed Advice are taken into consideration in that review.

The objection is based on the limitation of what a local authority can do with a space such as Clapham Common, which legally is defined as a Metropolitan Common (importantly, it is not a park or other outside space) and its use is governed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks and Open Spaces) Act 1967. That prevents the erection of structures on the Common without ministerial consent.

No response has been received to the letter, yet the issue remains and the use of the Common remains restricted by the fencing that is still in situ 2 ½ months after the event. If last year is any indication, that area will be cordoned off for public use for another couple of months. As an aside, the event organiser does not pay any licence fee or rent for this additional period of non-use, it only pays a licence fee / rental based on the period of its activity.

In the meantime, Lambeth are reviewing their events strategy and it is hoped that they will take not only the legal limitations on the use of the Common into account, but also the impact that these events have on its day to day and long term use. We will press ahead with obtaining a response from Lambeth and will keep members posted in this newsletter.

Daniel Dovar

Clapham Society Honorary Solicitor

Brixton Windmill

The Windmill will reopen for the summer season on **Saturday 13 April**. There will be a Bread and Beer festival on Bank Holiday **Monday 6 May** and a full list of open days, walks and events for 2019 is now on the website (brixtonwindmill.org) and a new events leaflet for the year is available in local libraries.

An Irish Evening

On **Friday 26 April** Clapham Chamber Concerts present a short discussion panel to meet the composer, lyricist and performers and hear them talk about creating David Wallace's new work *Across The Water*, which will be performed in the second half of the concert. The first half will be a selection of Irish Traditional tunes, airs and poetry. The concert starts at 7.30pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets on the door at £12/£10 concessions and Friends of CCC/£5 children. For further information please email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com.

Pissaro in Dulwich

Commencing on **Tuesday 30 April**, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Dulwich College, Dulwich Picture Gallery will host a special display focusing on Camille Pissarro's view of the school's main building, painted in 1871. A special loan from the Fondation Bemberg, Toulouse, the work returns to Dulwich for the first time since it was painted. Further details of this, and of the current exhibition of the work of the Norwegian painter, Harald Sohlberg at dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or call 020 8693 5245.

Old Clapham by JWGrover

A copy of this early history of Clapham (published in 1887) and one of the first detailed histories of the area is being offered for sale for the benefit of the Peter Jefferson Smith Fund. The owner, the late Sir Nicholas Wall was a long term Clapham resident. The book is priced at £25. Please contact the Editor if you would like more details and to see the book.



Larkhall Railway Bridge

Our attention has been drawn to recent works carried out to the Larkhall railway bridge. Unsightly metal steel barriers have been erected on both sides of this bridge (see photograph) which makes an important contribution to and links the Conservation Areas either side of the railway lines. The Planning Committee has written to Lambeth Conservation team to ascertain for what purpose these barriers have been added, whether consent has been obtained and what action or consultation has been carried out.

Opera Volunteers

St Paul's Opera are looking for volunteers to help with many aspects of their production of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* on **Friday 5 July** and **Saturday 6 July**. If you'd like to help with marketing/PR, costume/wardrobe or on-site front-of-house, enquire at info@stpaulsopera.org.

Peter Jefferson Smith

Steady progress is being made with plans to publish Peter's book, which was almost completed at the time of his death. We have set up a fund to finance this project in memory of Peter who made a huge contribution to Clapham over more than 50 years. Full details of the scheme and how to contribute are at <https://claphamsociety.com/news/com-memorating-peter-jefferson-smith/>

Local Talent

On **Saturday 27 April** at 7.30 pm St Luke's Music Society presents an outstanding concert with a strong local flavour, when violinist Samuel Staples, a graduate from the Menuhin School and son of Andy Staples of Northcote Music, is joined by BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist Ben Goldscheider, playing the horn and Royal Opera House Principal Viola Andriy Viyovych. The programme will include Mozart's *Horn Concerto no. 2* and sublime *Sinfonia Concertante* and Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*. Tickets at £18 and £14 are available from www.slms.org.uk or from the Box Office on 07951 791619. St Luke's Church, 194 Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ.

Something To Sing About

If you enjoy singing and your Tuesday evenings are free, Whitehall Choir would love to hear from you. They're always looking for new talented singers. Rehearsals are on Tuesdays, 6.30 to 9 pm, at St Peter's Eaton Square – five minutes from Victoria station. Whether you want to join the choir, or just sing for the evening, why not attend their next open rehearsal on **Tuesday 23 April**, when work will be starting on a jazzy offering: *Songs and Sonnets: Shakespeare by Shearing, Mathias, Rutter and Diemer* for performance on **Thursday 27 June**, at St Peter's Eaton Square.

John O'Farrell

Twenty years ago, everything changed for John O'Farrell. It hadn't been too bad before that: he was a successful and quite well-known comedy and satire writer. But then: a million-selling author, partying with the great and the good, making a difference. How did that happen? A full house of Clapham Society members found out at our extremely entertaining and thought-provoking February meeting.

John came to London in 1985, and spent a couple of years living off Queenstown Road combining work on building sites with providing help to Alf Dubs, then MP for Battersea. He won a talent competition at *Jongleurs* and briefly became a stand-up comedian but soon realised he enjoyed writing much more than delivering his satirical routines. When Dubs lost his seat, thoughts of a political career evaporated but the writing gathered pace. He wrote for – and occasionally appeared in – many popular award-winning radio and TV shows including *Week Ending*, *Have I Got News For You* and *Spitting Image*, for which he came up with the notion of a totally grey John Major puppet.

In the 1990s, he and his wife Jackie (aka the lovely Samantha, she was the production assistant on *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*) moved to Orlando Road, fertile ground for Clapham writers. John became increasingly involved in politics and local issues until in 1998 he published *Things Can Only Get Better: Eighteen Miserable Years in the Life of a Labour Supporter*. It rapidly became a number one best seller. Everything took off after that, John said: when asked to name the book that changed his life, he would have to say 'mine'. Invitations flowed in to address the 1999 Labour Party conference; to dine at Chequers with the Blairs ('do we have to have them back?!').

Life since then has been increasingly focused on politics and writing books. In a no-hope 2001 campaign as Labour candidate in Maidenhead (John's home town) he was up against Theresa May, who won despite seeming to answer every question with '... the council have had to make some very tough decisions'. Sometimes fact and fiction have coincided: the novel *May Contain Nuts*, about parental concerns with education, was perhaps not unconnected with John's successful campaign for a new secondary school in Clapham. That brought him together with unlikely allies.

It was clear from John's talk and his full and thoughtful answers to the questions that followed that he is someone who enjoys what he does and where he does it. He has lived in Clapham for many years and still finds much to like about the place. One plus point is that we still have a real bookshop, which is why John didn't bring any books with him to sell but encouraged anyone who might be interested to head to Old Town and buy them there, something that many of those who were there will rapidly have done.

Jill Cramphorn



Photo by Dana Kubick

Lambeth whenever given the opportunity. The Society's view remains that any review of the events strategy must result in fewer residents being negatively impacted by the holding of events on the grass on Clapham Common, and the grass itself cannot be subjected to a third year of trauma caused by chronic overuse. This means a material reduction in the number of days events are 'on site' on the grass and cannot mean substituting long winter events (long but Common less used) for shorter summer events (shorter but Common much more used).

Events On Clapham Common

Whilst our legal fight against events continues we need to continue to press our message wherever possible. With that mind we encourage you all to participate in the following survey.

The council is asking for your views about events on Clapham Common! Go to bit.ly/2Jd273i to have your say. We are disappointed that this consultation doesn't provide residents with a more meaningful opportunity to say what choices they would make regarding balancing the need for revenue for much needed investment versus events, the terrible damage they cause the Common and broader commercialisation opportunities of this precious asset. However, we should engage with

Andrew Summers



Omnibus

This month, award-winning playwright Andy Barrett and director Giles Croft revive *Tony's Last Tape* a timely play based on the diaries of one of Britain's most respected, divisive and celebrated politicians. After a sold-out run at Nottingham Playhouse Philip Bretherton reprises his much-celebrated role as Tony Benn, revealing the struggle of a man who – having found himself no longer 'the most dangerous man in Britain' but something of a national treasure – realises that it is time to gracefully withdraw from the fight. If only it was that easy.

Coincidentally, only a few weeks ago, Benn hit the headlines, five years after his death, with the news that his personal archives are to be donated to The British Library. This play is a must-see. Post-show Q&A on **Friday 5 April** will give plenty of opportunity for debate. Running from **Tuesday 2 April to Saturday 20 April**.

For Sunday music fans, rising star saxophonists Tom Barford and Alex Hitchcock are joined on **Sunday 7 April** by a powerful rhythm section of bassist Ferg Ireland and drummer James Maddren. On **Sunday 14 April**, eclectic singer Esbe performs songs from her first two albums, accompanied by flamenco guitarist, Jeff Rodrigues.

Full details and booking at omnibus-clapham.org, or box office on 0207 498 4699 or call in at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.

The Plough Brewery, The Artesian Well and Lost Society

I'm sure that many will know the recent history of these Wandsworth Road properties on the corner of North Street and Silverthorne Road. The opening of a nightclub catering for 300 patrons until 3 am created local opposition which resulted in reduced opening hours and eventual closure in 2017. To the credit of the owners, The Artesian Well and Lost Society have been cared for since by 'Guardians' in order to safeguard the buildings.

Late last year we were contacted by the owners of the Plough Brewery, Marston Properties, telling us of their intention to purchase and bring them back into use. Two members of the Clapham Society were shown round the three buildings recently and asked for the informal views of the Society.

The proposals are as follows:

The Plough Brewery and **The Mist on the Rocks** (next door). A basement link to provide access to changing rooms and showers, a cycle store for tenants with access from the brewery, reopening of front lightwells, a ground floor public cafe, with a function room for adjoining tenants and the public. The buildings are all Grade II listed. It is proposed to enlarge the second floor within a mansard roof to the rear (not visible from the street) to create flats matching the next door listed buildings.

The Artesian Well (designed by J Parsons in 1876) will remain a pub at ground floor level and will probably be renamed by the eventual operator whilst the frontage will be tidied, retaining the existing railings. Internally the nightclub will be replaced by eight apartments.

The Lost Society, with the prominent No 697 on the gate, includes a building to the rear which had previously been incorrectly identified as the oldest building in Clapham. Originally this was a butcher's shop and abattoir, with the family living on the upper floors. The building is believed to date from the early C19. All this property is in poor structural condition and will be rebuilt on the same footprint but raised in height, for proposed office use.

The Clapham Society welcomes the proposals, particularly in bringing the prominent corner building back into use and as a pub. The next stage is for the developers to meet Lambeth for informal comments, a final scheme will then be submitted for planning and Listed Building consent when there will be an additional opportunity for public comment.

Peter Cobley

Social Media

Now that The Clapham Society is extending its social media reach, we need support from members – you! – to help spread our message by retweeting or replying. If you're not on Twitter or Facebook and would like to be, it couldn't be easier. Just enter <https://help.twitter.com/en/create-twitter-account> or 'How do I create a Facebook account' in your search engine and follow the prompts.

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

