

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



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The I'Ansons – A Dynasty of London Architects & Surveyors

The book which Peter Jefferson Smith left unfinished when he died late last year has now been completed and will be published by the Clapham Society as a tribute to Peter at the end of November. This book not only tells the story of the three Edward I'Ansons, father, son



and grandson, who all lived and worked at some time of their lives in Clapham, but also traces the development of architecture and construction throughout the nineteenth century.

Edward I'Anson, Jr, the most prolific of the three, was responsible for early purpose-built offices in the City of London, as well as many domestic and public buildings including in Clapham, the Alexandra Hotel, shown on the book cover, and the former Clapham Library, now Omnibus Theatre.

The I'Ansons – A Dynasty of London Architects & Surveyors, by Peter Jefferson Smith, price £20, will be available from Clapham Books, 26 The Pavement, SW4 0JA from late November and online.

We meet 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. Talks 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 18 November

One of our most popular speakers in the past, **Edmund Bird**, returns to tell us about the **Architectural History of the London Underground**. Edmund has been the Senior Heritage Advisor to Transport for London since 2006 working on projects to refurbish and adapt London Underground and Overground historic stations and Thames bridges together with highway schemes in conservation areas. He has also written five books on the architectural history of Lambeth between 1837 and 2000 on which he has given talks to the Clapham Society in previous years.

There is no talk in December.

The full programme for 2020 will be published in the next newsletter (December 2019/January 2020) which will be distributed at the end of November.

The first talk in 2020 will be on **Monday 20 January** when award winning Clapham-based landscape architect, Diana Armstrong Bell, will introduce her recently published book *Sculpting the Land : Landscape design influenced by abstract art*.

New members

We have welcomed the following new members recently: Michael and Fiona Cox, Philip Cuthell, Rajiv Jayaratnam, Anthony Lavelle, Azra Nicola (Mrs), and Tim Quick.

St Paul's Opera

A huge thanks to all who came to St Paul's Opera's *Musical Tales*. It seems our audience had as good a time as the performers. Mary Rose Beaumont told us, 'I was enthralled by the whole evening,' and Kerry Akerman emailed, 'just to say that I enjoyed the concert so much, both the choice of arias and the singers who performed them!'

The vibe from the singers was infectious and their obvious camaraderie was there for all to see. Soprano Davidona Pittock (who sang the role of Susanna in the summer production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*) commented, 'Performing for St Paul's Opera is always a delight. The friendships I have within the company and the constant heartfelt support from the audience make the whole experience thoroughly enjoyable.' Panaretos Kyriatizidis was MD and pianist for the evening but also entertained as compere.

Those keen to join in the future fun of a St Paul's Opera event can hold the date in the diary for the Christmas Concert – **Friday 6 December**. Details will be released within the next two weeks, and will also be in the next newsletter. If you would like to be kept in the loop please email info@stpaulsopera.org to be added to the mailing list.

Patricia Ninian

The St John Family A 17th-Century Life in Battersea

On **Thursday 14 November** at 6.30 pm for 7 pm, Sally Sellers, historian, will give a talk which has become unusually topical in the light of our current political situation. References to the English Civil War and the constitutional changes of the seventeenth century have been prevalent in what is said and written about Brexit and our political crisis. Members of the St. John family were prominent players in the conflict and political turmoil of the 17th century and the family was very much divided between Royalists and Parliamentarians just as some families today are conflicted between Remain and Leave.

St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Street, SW11 3NA, tickets £5 on the door.

Is this a Clapham football team?

We have recently received an enquiry about this photograph of a football team. Does anyone recognise the kit or anyone in the team? The photograph was taken by A. Arnold of Clapham Junction, which suggests it might be a local team, and the style of the kit, perhaps around 1920s? If you have any information or suggestions, please send to the Newsletter Editor (contact details on back page).

Social Media: Good or Bad for children and young people?

On **Tuesday 19 November** at 7.15 pm St Luke's Battersea is holding its Annual Debate/Discussion with a panel of expert speakers chaired by Sean Curran, Presenter on BBC's *Today in Parliament*.

The speakers are:

John Carr OBE, a leading authority on children's use of the internet and new technologies, an expert advisor to the UN, the European Union and the UK Government.

Andrew Przybylski, Director of Research at the Oxford Internet Institute, who has published research on both the positive and the negative effects of the internet on young people:

Claire Levens, Policy Director of Internet Matters which helps parents support their children to get the most out of the internet while keeping them safe.

Aaron Vallance, a consultant in Surrey's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Ravi Kothakota, Deputy Head of Emanuel School, Wandsworth.

Comments and questions from the audience will be warmly encouraged.

Tickets £5 from the website calendar stlukeschurch.org.uk or at the door.

St Luke's Church, 194 Ramsden Road SW12 8RQ. Further information from anna@aebwalker.com

Battersea's Empress of Hapsburg

A member drew my attention earlier this year to the death, at the age of 101, of a notable local 'character'. Hanna Barrington was born in Vienna, became an active Communist, was arrested when the Nazis seized power, fled to Paris and then to London. After working in an East end biscuit factory, on London buses, travelling to Guyana (where she married) for the Communist party and running a script-editing service for the commercial television company Rediffusion, in the 1960s she bought a rundown off-licence in Battersea, where until 1992 she ran a wine bar called The Corkscrew. Does anyone remember it, or know where it was?

There were said to be cats lying on the bar and prices so low that customers often insisted on putting them up. If Hanna liked you she was charming and extremely generous – if not she could be outrageously rude. A passionate supporter of gay rights, after the wine bar closed Hanna took in lodgers through the LGBT telephone helpline Gay Switchboard.

Her parties, reminiscent of a 19th-century Paris salon, were legendary. Artists and academics, socialists and socialites of every hue and sexual orientation would gather with the 'Empress of Hapsburg', as she danced on the tables well into her 70s.

Alyson Wilson





Frank Gardner and Simon Berthon trading great stories about their journalistic and writing adventures at the hugely popular 2019 Clapham Book Festival in October.

One Last Chance

Following Ian Bostridge's recent triumphant appearance, St Luke's Music Society presents another world class artist on **Saturday 14 December** – the much loved violinist Tasmin Little, accompanied by Piers Lane, a Clapham local.

Supported by Killik & Co. as sponsors, this is a very special concert, because Tasmin Little has announced her retirement from the concert platform in 2020, making this one of the last chances to hear her perform in London. Full details are available at slms.org.uk. The concert is already selling very well, but tickets are still available on the website or call the Box Office on 07951 791619. St Luke's Church, 194 Ramsden Road SW12 8RQ.

Robin Cooke-Hurle

Messiah at St John's Smith Square

The Whitehall Choir, conducted by Joanna Tomlinson, will be performing Handel's well-loved choral masterpiece, Messiah, on **Thursday 28 November** at St John's Smith Square, SW1P 3HA at 7.30 pm with the early music ensemble London Baroque Sinfonia and a stellar line-up of young operatic talent: Soraya Mafi, Anna Harvey, Nick Pritchard and Edward Grint. Tickets, £35, £25, £20 and £10, at the St John's Smith Square box office, 020 7222 1061 or online at sjss.org.uk. Booking fees: £2.75 by telephone £1.75 online.

photo by Tim Jenkins



The Heathwall

The first page of Jon Newman's book is hardly up-beat. It admits that compared with other south London streams, the Heathwall has always been 'over-looked and under-loved' and was once described as 'always dreary; in winter . . . inexpressibly dismal'.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that the book proves utterly gripping – as did Jon Newman's recent talk to a standing-room-only Clapham Society audience. He started by noting that the Thames was historically a 'braided' river, with many other water-courses flowing in and out, creating eyots and islands. One of these was Badric's ieg – now more familiar to us as Battersea – the southern boundary of which was the Heathwall, running from Battersea Creek (near the Price's candle factory) to Vauxhall. Because the area lies lower than the Thames high-water level, the river had to be carefully managed to meet the irrigation and drainage needs of what was until the mid-19th century largely agricultural land. A system of sluices was constructed to deal with the flows into and out of the river, initially by Westminster Abbey, the principal landholder. From 1554 the responsibility passed to a statutory Sewer Commission whose records show that they were permanently struggling not just with natural forces but also with disputatious landowners. Their efforts paid off, though, and by the 18th century the area was one of London's most productive market gardens, growing more unusual items like asparagus, lavender and melons alongside basic fruit and veg.

However, as more buildings were constructed and innovations such as the flushing WC were introduced, the nature of the watercourses changed: the Heathwall was described in *Building News* of 15 October 1858 (the year of the 'Great Stink') as being 'in a worse condition than any other sewer in or around the metropolis'. Enter Joseph Bazalgette of the Metropolitan Board of Works, who secured approval for a scheme that sent most of South London's rivers/sewers underground and diverted their flows into intercepting sewers that discharged into the Thames at the Crossness pumping station. This huge infrastructure project took twenty years to complete, and though its benefits were substantial it was not without its failings. Bad weather, and the fact that Bazalgette had underestimated the extent of new building, required emergency measures in the 1870s and a new Heathwall pumping station was built to cope with storm surges, opening in 1898. Further ameliorative measures were needed throughout the 20th century; they continue into the 21st with the Thames Tideway project.

And so we reach the end of the first part of Jon Newman's book with an understanding of why we cannot actually see its subject. The second part, though, provides us with the opportunity both to imagine what the area might have been like at various points in history, and to discover extraordinary and resonant facts about apparently everyday places and objects. It takes the form of an annotated walk that follows, as closely as possible, the course of the Heathwall – a walk that is extremely interesting and stimulating even for those who think they know the area pretty well. Happily Jon Newman has agreed to lead a walk along the route next spring – further details will appear in later Newsletters. In the meantime, this fascinating book is available from Clapham Books, and will probably be seen in the hands of many walkers in the back streets of Battersea and Nine Elms over the coming months.

Jill Cramphorn

World Homeless Day

We marked World Homeless Day (10 October) with a special story about a former Ace of Clubs client. Over the last two years, photojournalist James Hopkirk has been working with Mark, who we supported over a number of years and who is thankfully now doing really well.

James and Mark have published a very honest, unflinching and moving photo story that recounts some of Mark's experiences of rough sleeping and addiction. It has given Mark a chance to have his voice heard, and we hope it will help to challenge some of the preconceptions people have of homelessness. Please do read and share it if you can. southlondonstories.com/mark.

The story is part of James' ongoing South London Stories project. We've been working with James for several years now, and last year he held the first South London Stories exhibition here at Ace of Clubs. We look forward to continuing to work with him as he publishes more stories that highlight aspects of life in London that so many people simply never see.

Sarah Miles
Centre Manager, Ace of Clubs
Tel. 020 7720 2811

Jack and the Blingstalk

Clapham's favourite Pantomime Dame (Tim Gosling) is to tread the West End boards again this year in the sixth production of The Interior Designers' Pantomime, *Jack and the Blingstalk* playing at the Harold Pinter Theatre, Panton St, SW1Y 4DN.

Every year the pantomime grows, both the scale of the production and the sum of funds raised for the nominated charities. This year it is in support of William Yeoward's charity, Screw Cancer. From the outset William was a huge part of the Panto family and one of the main pillars of its success. His charismatic performance will be sorely missed. In his memory, the performers are delighted to support Screw Cancer in their mission to create an App to provide cancer sufferers with all the vital information they need in one place. William's remarkable legacy will be available through Maggie's and the NHS.

The pantomime will run from **Sunday 3 November** until **Thursday 7 November**.

All the costumes are designed from furnishing fabrics from an amazing range of fashion designers. In the past these have included Vivienne Westwood, Zandra Rhodes, Jasper Conran, Bruce Oldfield, Tomasz Starzewski and Oscar winning designer Jenny Beavan.

Tickets at designerspanto.com/



Tim Gosling as Dame Trott - Jacks mother!

Omnibus Theatre

November presents some heavy-weight plays at Omnibus Theatre. *The Match Box* and *Fiji* are two on the recommended list.

The acclaimed Strange Fish Theatre Company (*Quietly, The Turn of the Screw*) return with an extraordinary play by one of Ireland's greatest playwrights. *The Match Box* is a breathtaking story of love, hate and the desire for revenge by Frank McGuinness. It is a constantly surprising tale that is by turns shocking, humorous and moving. Critics say 'It is rare to find storytelling as sharply and simply involving as this' *Daily Telegraph*. 'Frank McGuinness' new play, *The Match Box*, is a stunner' *The Observer*. 'So brutally powerful it knocks the breath out of your body' *The Times*.

From **Tuesday 19 November** to **Sunday 24 November**, for six nights only is *Fiji*, a dark comedy about a relationship that is gorgeous and gruesome in equal measure, and a love not defined by sex or blood...so to speak. How far will two consenting adults go for their desire? Like most of us, Nick and Sam are hiding something. Except this is something taboo, even for you. This is something so appalling and pure it could never be acted on, until this weekend. This weekend will be the first and last time they'll ever see each other, for one a blissful beginning, for the other a euphoric end. So everyone's a winner... aren't they?

Grisly and gripping this production, by Winners of the Pleasance Futures Award 2018, Clay Party who team up with Cork's 'vividly stark' Conflicted Theatre, tell the most unorthodox of love stories. It's one you may have caught on the news or heard in a horror story; a relationship so off-limits it's enticing, and so enticing it's horrifying.

For more details and to book tickets go to omnibus-clapham.org, call the Box Office or drop in at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. And make sure you call in soon to see the splendid new café/bar, now in the front of the building, which will be open all day from November.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

Clapham Chamber Concerts season continues on **Friday 22 November** with a performance given by their ensemble in residence, Ensemble SW4. The evening opens with Strauss' *Sextet* from *Capriccio*, part of an opera that poses the question: 'which is the greater art, poetry or music?' Continuing with this theme, the programme includes Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, an emotive work based upon a poem of the same name by Richard Demel. The third work, Mozart's *Viola Quintet in C major*, is a more abstract work, although the influence of poetry is still evident in its operatic lyricism.

Amanda Lake, CCC artistic director and leader of Ensemble SW4, says 'The setting of St Paul's lends itself beautifully to string chamber music, from the elegant simplicity of Mozart to the lush colours and drama of Strauss and Schoenberg. This is a fantastic programme, I can't wait to perform it!'

The concert starts at 7.30 pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets available on the door at £15/£12 concessions and Friends of CCC/£5 children. For further information please email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com.

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

