

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 439 September 2021

September is a busy month, bringing with it, especially after what seems the worst of the pandemic, a heady sense of new beginnings. July and August were lively too. If you were at our party, thanks for coming. Read on...

The Summer Party in Clapham's best garden



Neither pandemic nor weather could stop this long-awaited and much-postponed (because of restrictions) summer celebration on 5 August. The first half hour saw rain, as forecast, but a stream of stalwarts came, bearing brollies, wearing macs and smiling broadly at the prospect of catching up with friends in a glorious setting. It's been a lean period for so many in that respect so the almost messianic joy in people's faces was delightful to see.

Our hosts were the extremely generous and energetic Richard and Suzanna Roxburgh (*below*) who opened up their amazing garden for the occasion. Some members will remember it from past Summer Parties, but this was the first held with Friends of Clapham Common. Shirley Kermer, Chair of Friends, deftly chaired the party planning committee, too, which included Gill White, Mark Leffler and Yours Truly from the Clapham Society; and from Friends, the uber-efficient and helpful Emma de Cassan and Margot de Dominicis, who was still texting us in the first stage of labour! During the lead-up to the party we wondered if we'd get 50 people but, as the day neared, numbers grew like topsy and on the night 180 came.

The party was held as a fundraiser for Wild Clapham (Newsletters 437, 438) and just over £5,000 was raised. Had the sun shone and the silent auction table been more accessible (more about which overleaf), we might have raised even more but, along with the packed bar and jostling guests keen to stay dry, the auction displays were sheltering under the terrace awning, a very bustling place indeed. When the clouds lifted and people drifted onto the Roxburghs' lawn to mingle, that was more how we'd pictured it.

Massive thanks to Richard and Suzanna Roxburgh; to Shirley Kermer for her clear-headed leadership and hard work; to Waitrose, Hayman's Gin and North & South Wines who contributed so (*Continued on page two*)

We are pleased to be meeting again – finally – at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts at 8 pm and our guest normally speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and discussion. The bar is open before and after. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. Please arrive in good time before the start. In current circumstances we will continue to offer meetings on Zoom as well as in person.

All places must be booked in advance (in the appropriate month, please). To book at Omnibus, email history@claphamsociety.com. For Zoom, email events@claphamsociety.com; logins will be sent a few days before. The September meeting will be recorded from Omnibus and may be available later on YouTube and our website. Watch this space!

Monday 20 September

The man who made an Edwardian suburb. In the 1880s and 1890s the large mansions around the Common were being demolished and new roads were laid out. In his talk, local resident **Mike Tuffrey** will recount how the neighbourhood around Abbeville Road, with a church, school, police station and shops, came to be built by 1910. He will reveal the decisive role played in the development by an elusive land agent – a linen draper from Tottenham and sometime felon, later a cinema proprietor – and discuss what this tells us about how Clapham continues to change.

Monday 18 October

Annual General Meeting. The formal business will be followed by an informal discussion about the recent Survey and any other issues members may wish to raise.

Wanda Pratt

We were saddened to hear of the sudden death, on 12 July, of local architect Wanda Pratt, wife and business partner of Martin Pratt, who was co-convenor with Martin of the Society's Planning Subcommittee. We offer our sincere condolences to Martin and to their sons, Adam and Benjamin.



Lambeth Heritage Festival

As promised last month we bring you more about the festival. **Lambeth Local History Fair on Saturday 4 September, 10 am to 4.30 pm**, at St Mark's Church, Kennington, Kennington Park Road, SE11 4PW (almost opposite Oval tube station), is the opening event, where local society stands, local history experts, bookstalls and refreshments will be on hand. Make sure to drop in on the Clapham Society stand! Talks throughout the day include the history of the church and postcards as a local history source; there is also a walk of nearby Kennington Park.

The festival runs for the whole of September, with at least one event each day, some online and many others in person, restrictions allowing. Online tours of the Van Gogh house in Brixton; the story of the Shot Tower at Waterloo; and a discussion about moving the 20 km of manuscripts, archives and rare books of Lambeth Palace Library into a brand-new purpose-built building opposite St Thomas' Hospital promise to be interesting highlights. For the full Festival programme and booking details, visit beta.lambeth.gov.uk/heritage-festival-2021. *Alyson Wilson*

Omnibus Theatre

The autumn season kicks off with *Small Change*, a long-awaited revival from celebrated playwright Peter Gill, and *The Duration*, a new American play exploring the impact on one family of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Keep an eye on omnibus-clapham.org and sign up to their newsletter for all the latest updates.

The Café Bar is open for eat-in and takeaway, so come and treat yourself to hot drinks, light bites and tipples. Friday, 6 pm to midnight; Saturday, 9 am to midnight; Sunday, 10 am to 5pm.

Battersea Society news

On **Thursday 16 September, 6 pm**, local historian Sean Creighton will give an on-site talk exploring the beauty and history of the churchyard at St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA (bus route 170). With one of the best collections of monuments in south London, it is laid out as a garden with historic tombs set within the grass as well as gravestones against the boundary walls. Botanist William Curtis (d.1799) is among important people buried here. Cost: £5. *Sue Demont*

Clapham Book Festival

Terrific news. The festival will be back at Omnibus on **October 16** so save the date! More in the next Newsletter and at claphambookfestival.com.

(Continued) generously on the catering front and to all who kindly donated prizes: Villa Mantineo, Harvey & Brockless, St Luke's Music Society, St Paul's Opera, Omnibus, Moen's, Mori, Headmasters, House of Beauty, Cook Clapham, MacFarlane's, M&S, Diba Dry Cleaners, Bellissima, Palmer, Pear Tree Café, Clapham Books, The Clapham Society, BM Active, Hayman's, Nue Ground, Dan Ellerton, Elizabeth Buchan, Julie Anderson, John O'Farrell, Isabella Tree, Helena Ware and Jessie Ware. Thanks, too, to jazz keyboard artist Gabe Piers-Mantell who played on in an open marquee! The next day, as the tents were dismantled, the Roxburghs, unbidden, were out there helping us. Crazy cloudbursts followed so we were glad we hadn't delayed.



Dana Kubick



Richard Roxburgh

We hope that those who came enjoyed the party as much as we did. You've helped Wild Clapham accrue a good 'pot' for new trees – and that pot can still grow if you would like it to by donating to Account 22217045, 60-05-34.

PS The painting by Philip Sutton, RA, that Richard Roxburgh (left) offered for the silent auction is still available. If you want to bid **please contact Richard direct**; phone 020 7223 1182 or email roxactionbequia@gmail.com. *Ruth Eastman*
More party pictures and auction details on our website.

Autumn walks

Guided walks are proving popular this year, so we are repeating three in October and here is the programme for September. All need to be booked ahead at claphamsociety.com/walks.

- **Sunday 5 September, 2.30 pm, The History of Clapham Common.** Tom Jansz leads this new walk, tracing the history of Clapham Common from medieval grazing ground through to place of recreation for 18th-century incomers who built villas around it, associations with the Clapham Sect who were witness to transformation from rural village to Victorian suburb, to its important community role in World War Two, and finally to today's green recreation heart of our thriving and multicultural area.
- **Friday 17 September, 7.10 pm. Autumn Bat Walk** led by **Dr Iain Boulton** from Lambeth Parks and Open Spaces. We'll use bat detectors and our own eyes to look for, listen to and be amazed by these fascinating creatures and, who knows, we might find some new and interesting species among them! Wrap up warm and comfortably.
- **Wednesday 29 September, 6.30 pm, The Man who Built an Edwardian Neighbourhood.** Mike Tuffrey will lead a walk round the streets between Cavendish Road and Narbonne Avenue exploring how they came to be built. (Also the subject of our 20 September meeting.)

Open House Weekend, 4-5 September

Two of our members brought to our attention exciting highlights in this annual festival, one a short 137 bus ride from Clapham to Sloane Street, the other footsteps from Temple tube.

• **Holy Trinity Sloane Square**, writes member *Christine Green*, celebrates its **Arts & Crafts Festival** this month. The 'cathedral to the Arts & Crafts Movement' in the words of



John Betjeman, it is famed for its Burne-Jones windows (*Adam and Eve*, from The Great East Window, left). Highlights of Open House Weekend include guided tours, organ recitals and a talk by geometer and author Tom Bree on 'Nature, Cosmos and Church Design'. Lambeth artists feature too. There will be watercolours by RWS

artist Janet (Jan) Quintrell Treloar, entitled 'In my beginning is my end', from T S Eliot's 'East Coker' (second of his *Four Quartets*), and on **10, 17 and 24 September, 10.30am to 12 pm**, Cecil Collins-trained artist Lily Corbett Gale will offer online workshops. There will also be dance, music and poetry, with a talk on **25 September, 7.30 pm**, by Martin Palmer on the legacy of HRH Prince Philip. Visit holytrinityartsandcrafts.org for details and bookings.

• **Two Temple Place** is an architectural gem near Middle Temple, where longstanding member *Helen Widgery* volunteers, as she does for us by delivering our Newsletters! Built in 1895 as the estate office of William Waldorf Astor, it boasts exquisite oak panelling, a carved mahogany staircase, solid ebony columns and, like Holy Trinity (above), exquisite stained glass. It is open from **11 am to 4 pm both days** of Open House Weekend but numbers are limited. To book a timed slot, visit twotempleplace.org/events/open-house-london-2021.

Will he or won't he (no pun intended)? Likeable rogue Schicchi creates a stir at St Paul's



St Paul's Opera responded to the pandemic constraints this year with another outdoor show at its home ground of St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove. After picnicking in front of the church, the audience descended to the open-air 'auditorium' where we were treated to a truly delightful production of *Gianni Schicchi*, Puccini's final one-act opera from his triptych *Il Trittico*. The story, taken from Dante, is about a family's greed when their wealthy elderly relative is dying, leaving all his best assets to the church. They conspire to falsify a new will, but against their better wishes realise they cannot without the help of the most cunning rogue in town, Gianni Schicchi. Schicchi is engaged and, aping the now dead man, dictates a new will but leaves the best bits to himself. The family are enraged, but can't reveal why. Uproar!

It is a silly story (of course – it's opera!) and the show played that aspect to the hilt. Director Annemiek van Elst made clever use of the lower churchyard and its links with the upper, at one point having the male love interest, Rinuccio (Daniel Kringer, a true tenor), climbing a tree from lower to higher. Witty anachronisms were deployed too, with cast members glued to their mobiles much of the time. Also notable was the great ensemble work and clear enjoyment of the singers to be back on stage. Surtitles were not possible but the antics told the tale!

There were some fine singers among the ghastly family. Edwin Kaye as Simone has a rich and clear baritone; Alexandra Dinwiddie (La Ciesca) possesses a honeyed mezzo voice; and Stephanie Hershaw as Lauretta, who gets the only aria 'O mio babbino caro', has a pure soprano tone, to name but three. It was a joy to see local talent too – Tony Bell, who excelled as a near dead and then deceased Buoso, the man with the money; and Jonathan Boardman (aka the vicar of St Paul's) as Spinelloccio, Buoso's bumbling doctor who the family con into thinking the old man is fine, even when dead. It was Schicchi, though, who stole the show. Louis Hurst, a wonderful Figaro for SPO in 2019, was again born to the role. A natural comedian, he can sing a rascal and act one too. The four-piece orchestra, Bridge Tower Music, masterfully directed by Panaretos Kyriatzidis, was perfect for the setting.

Enormous preparation and commitment are needed to pull a production like this together. Changes of restrictions earlier in the summer meant that the company had only six weeks from audition to performance, but Patricia Ninian saw it through. How she found time to sing as beautifully as she did, as well, beggars belief. Hats off to Tricia and to all who took part or assisted. Bravissimo! *Sparafucille*



Photographs Ali Wright

TOP Jenny Samuel (Zita), Alexandra Dinwiddie (La Ciesca). **ABOVE RIGHT** Patricia Ninian (Nella), Robin Whitehouse (Gherardo), Jenny Samuel, Hector Bloggs (Marco), Alexandra Dinwiddie and Edwin Kaye (Simone) in full vocal flood, giving Gianni Schicchi (cowering, sung by Louis Hurst) everything he deserved!

Clapham Common Film Club reconvenes at a theatre near you!

The aim of the club is to present internationally celebrated films, both recent and not so. Last season finished successfully on 20 June with a socially distanced screening of Jacques Deray's *La Piscine* at Omnibus. The new season starts on **Sunday 25 October** (a month hence, but now is a good time to join or renew membership) with the 2007 Swedish film *After the Wedding* directed by Suzanne Bier. Membership is £85 for a season of 10 films, shown in a friendly community setting at Omnibus Theatre with a large screen and excellent sound system. It can also be acquired for £20 with a £10 admission per screening. Films start at **7.30 pm** and are usually on a Sunday or Monday. The bar is open beforehand. More details from Roger Booker at ccfilmrb@gmail.com.

Royal Trinity Hospice garden open for NGS

We are delighted to reopen our award-winning garden to the public on **5 September, 10.30 am to 4.30 pm**, the first time since March 2020, as part of the National Garden Scheme (NGS) Open Garden Weekend. Trinity's extensive and fully wheelchair-accessible grounds span nearly two acres of cornflower and wildflower meadow areas, and include mature trees, mixed flowerbeds an ornamental pond, greenhouse and beehives. There is no need to book the Open Garden event unless new restrictions mean we have to limit numbers in which case check the web page nearer the time, royaltrinityhospice.london/open-garden. Suggested donation upon admission: £3 for adults (children free). *Polly Balsom*



New members

We extend warm welcomes to Zoya and Robert Anderson; Sam Fenton-Whittet, Juliet Samuel and Noa Fenton; James Hall; Janice Price and Catherine Sackville. *Jennifer Everett*

Friends of Windmill Gardens

A range of events is in store this month. On **4 September** we will have a stall at the Lambeth Heritage Fair. On **11-12 and 25-26 September, 1-5 pm**, there are open afternoons at Brixton Windmill with free guided tours (booking essential). And **12 September** is Harvest Festival, a mini food fest celebrating how wheat and flour are a food staple around the world; the children can enjoy arts and crafts activities too. Details at brixtonwindmill.org. *Lucy Bridal*

Radical departure at Dulwich Picture Gallery

'Helen Frankenthaler: Radical Beauty' is the first major UK exhibition of this leading Abstract Expressionist. Shining a torch on her groundbreaking woodcuts, which include 'Madame Butterfly' (*shown*), it runs from **15 September to April 2022**. Visit dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk for further details and to discover more about this artist (1928-2011), a luminary of the New York art scene who pushed the boundaries by inventing bold new paint techniques, such as soak-stain, in the 1950s.



Ace of Clubs Silver Jubilee

On 29 July there was celebration in the air as Ace of Clubs had a relaunch, attended by His Excellency the Most Reverend John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark.

Rev Bro Mike Taylor C Ss R (Director) has sent us this report

The Ace of Clubs is a Redemptorist initiative that began as a response to the many people in need who knocked on the 'little red door' of the monastery on St Alphonsus Road. Twenty-five years on, the Club has developed into a sophisticated one-stop shop, offering services that address immediate human needs of the homeless, vulnerable, dispossessed, isolated and otherwise marginalised but that also constitutes transformative support that helps to change peoples' lives permanently for the better.

The Ace of Clubs mission statement is: 'Safe off the street, help onto your feet... support for the homeless and vulnerable.'

Over its 25 years of operation I estimate that Ace of Clubs has 'served more than 500,000 meals and helped more than 10,000 clients to get off the streets and back onto their feet. This has all been achieved without statutory funding and with a minimal but inspiring team of local staff and volunteers. The centre relies heavily on volunteers and the generosity of Clapham residents and local businesses.'

During Covid lockdown, Ace reconfigured its services into a hot food takeaway service. From 23 March 2020, apart from a short two-week break over Christmas, that service has operated continually and served up until the date of the relaunch (29 July 2021) a total of 50,245 meals.

The Ace of Clubs relaunch, with a party and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque by the Archbishop of Southwark, is not just a celebration of 25 years but also a statement of intent for the future. In my speech that day I said, 'As we reopen and relaunch the centre, my sincere intent is to provide not just the satisfaction of basic needs but also life-changing transformational assistance, particularly through education and training.' Here's to the next 25 years!



The Archbishop of Southwark unveils the plaque with Bro Mike Taylor (left)

The 57th Annual General Meeting of the Clapham Society will be held on **Monday 18 October 2021** at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW, at **8 pm**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM (14 October 2019), published in Newsletter 431 (November 2020) and available at the meeting.
3. Adoption of the Annual Report for the year 2020-21.
4. Adoption of the Financial Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.
5. Election of the Officers and Committee Members for the year 2021-2022

Chairman	Treasurer
Vice-Chairman	Solicitor
Secretary	Membership Secretary

A maximum of ten further Committee Members.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner.
7. Any other business and announcements.

The formal business will be followed by a discussion on the results of our survey earlier this year, led by Andrew Summers, Common and Open Spaces, and other matters arising.

Nominations for the election of Officers and Committee Members must be made to the Secretary at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting. Every nomination must be in writing, supported by a seconder. The consent of the person nominated must be obtained.

Gillian White, Secretary, 2a Sibella Road, SW4 6HX

Website gems on local history

Have you ever explored the Articles on the Clapham Society website? There are 40 and they are fascinating, ranging from the Historians of Clapham to the former use of the Thornton Park development site by Batger's sweet factory, to stories of local 'bad boys' such as Adam Worth (aka Henry Raymond), Conan Doyle's inspiration for Moriarty. On a more edifying level, you can learn about the former Clapham resident and founder of *The Times*, John Walter, or the local connection with Dr Ward, inventor of the Wardian case for transporting plants from overseas. Our latest article is about the Hanbury family of botanists; Thomas imported many species from China, where he made his fortune that enabled him to donate the gardens at Wisley to the RHS.

Walking around Clapham, you must have seen some of the 12 Green Plaques the Society has put up to mark the former use of a notable building. Find out their history on the Green Plaques page of the website by clicking on the building name. Read about Sycamore House in Old Town as a laundry and Omnibus Theatre as a library. Can you find the other 10 plaques, and check up on their stories? There's lots to learn about the rich history of Clapham here as well as in the books we've published and our guided walks. Visit claphamsociety.com if you haven't already. *Alyson Wilson*



To celebrate the end of sweet rationing in February 1953, sweets were handed out at the Batger's factory

Let's go green together!

Get involved with your local community in the fight against climate change by coming to our **Big Green Day on Sunday 26 September, 11 am to 2.30 pm**, at St Paul's Churchyard and Eden Nature Garden, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. There will be wonderful guest speakers, green workshops and delicious food in our bring-and-share lunch. We'll also have green advice on tap and special activities for children so that being more green can be a family thing. Visit stpaulsclapham.org for the schedule of events or telephone 020 7622 2128. *Allison Clark*

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

Secretary	Gillian White secretary@claphamsociety.com	Planning Matters	Martin Pratt planning@claphamsociety.com
Treasurer	David Brown treasurer@claphamsociety.com	Roads and Transport	Mark Leffler transport@claphamsociety.com
Membership Secretary	Jennifer Everett membership@claphamsociety.com	Local History and Publications	Alyson Wilson history@claphamsociety.com
Common and Open Spaces	Andrew Summers openspaces@claphamsociety.com	Newsletter Editor	Ruth Eastman news@claphamsociety.com
Meetings and Events	Christine Armstrong events@claphamsociety.com	Social Media	Dave Cross digital@claphamsociety.com

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

