

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 441 November 2021

Building a new neighbourhood

Many people research the history of their house, but few do it with the same enthusiasm, zeal and endless research as Mike Tuffrey (*below*), who kept digging deeper and deeper into the story of Lynette Avenue and surrounding area. The result was a fascinating talk given to the Society in September. Starting with his title deeds showing the developer, Edward Hammond Thompson (EHT), and builder George Harris who, he uncovered, redeveloped the site of Clock House in 1885, he went back in time with maps to show the growth of Clapham and name some of its important residents, including those who lived in Clock House for its life span, and forwards to the development of today's grid of streets between Cavendish Road and Narbonne Avenue. (Clock House – see below – was situated on the site of Lessar Avenue today, facing the Common.)



Dana Kubick

On the way we met the five owners of the house, from Charles Eyre, the King's Printer whose name survives with the publishers Eyre & Spottiswoode, to John Kemp-Welch who owned Schweppes. We heard about the colourful life of the developer EHT, a linen draper from north London who made his way south of the river, ran several drapery-related businesses and after two bankruptcies, a trial at the Old Bailey and one year in Holloway jail reinvented himself as a developer in the Clapham area, with the Clock House site one of five between Clapham North and Nightingale Lane. Unravelling EHT's complicated personal life, which included three separate 'wives' and families, gave Mike considerable problems, and yet he managed to trace some surviving family members who were intrigued by their history.

We also heard about the demolition of Clock House, details of the sale of materials – including 2 million bricks and 14 tons of lead – the laying out of streets and the building of houses as well as a police station (on the corner of Cavendish Road and Klea Avenue now disused), a school (Bonneville) and finally a church (Holy Spirit). Mike investigated the lives of the Board of Works' superintending architect Lewis Vulliamy who approved the development and whose wider family lived just along South Side, builder George Harris, surveyor Frederick Wheeler, the lawyer (a fraudster) and those who financed it including Henry Corsellis. In each of these fields Mike had dug deep to find details of who these people were and their contribution to the development.

Finally he analysed how the project may have worked out financially and concluded that, in fact, it is unlikely that EHT made much money after taking his many expenses into account. This may be why he undertook no further developments in Clapham and eventually retreated out of London by 1910 to reinvent himself again in the newly fashionable cinema business. Mike's verdict on EHT is that, despite his brushes with the law, his bankruptcies, and his serial infidelities, he judged the market well, providing the type of housing required at the time which has not only survived but is still a valued and thriving neighbourhood.

This informative and entertaining presentation is now available on the Clapham Society website at claphamsociety.com/news/edwardiansuburb-talkmiketuffrey. If you missed the talk, I urge you to watch it. You will be fascinated! *Alyson Wilson*



Lambeth Archives

Clock House, Clapham Common South Side, c 1800. Etching by W Thane, with watercolour wash by John Constable, RA

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts at 8pm and our guest normally speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and discussion. The bar is open before and after the talk so people can mingle. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. Please arrive in good time before the start, and book your place in advance by emailing history@claphamsociety.com if you want to attend live, and events@claphamsociety.com to attend on Zoom; login details will be sent out a few days beforehand. There is no meeting in December. Next month we will announce the meetings for 2022.

Monday 15 November

Dr Sue Demont, author of *Battersea's First Lady – The Life and Times of Caroline Ganley MP*, will introduce us to this remarkable but overlooked public servant who lived at Thirsk Road, off Clapham Common, from 1910 until her death in 1966. Ganley's work spanned this entire period and comprised an astonishing range of roles at local, national and international level. These included serving as a borough and county councillor, sitting as MP for Battersea South from 1945-51, and becoming one of the earliest women magistrates and the first female President of the London Co-operative Society.

New members

We extend a warm welcome to Valerie Forson; Barbara Linder; Rosalind Mathieson and Marc Kerr. *Jennifer Everett*

What a transformation

One day last August, while waiting for new tyres to be fitted at Zaks near the Brixton end of Ferndale Road, I bought a cappuccino at Volcano. If the coffee was perfection, the interior (*below left*) was a revelation. Rough-hewn wood, steel beams, hi-tech lighting and bare brick, it bore all the trappings of clever renovation. This was not just any cool coffee shop but the headquarters of Volcano Coffee Works, purveyors to, among other discerning UK customers, the new Pear Tree Café on the Common. The barista told me that the building had begun life as one of Lambeth's horse and cart fire stations. Intrigued by its pedigree, I was keen to learn more and eventually I did.

Last month, I drove past Volcano again, this time from the direction of its adjacent 'parent' building, The Department Store, where I'd tripped the night fantastic (not literally) celebrating a friend's birthday in the contemporary top-floor space, Upstairs. Stepping out onto the roof terrace to savour the autumn night air, I



was struck by the sweeping views of south London rooftops. Adding to the nocturnal theatre was a glass-domed tower, which rose up like a mighty lighthouse on an urban rooftop. A peek inside this iconic Brixton landmark revealed an elegant circular dining room (no diners!) beneath a chandelier.

The Department Store, formerly part of the Brixton emporium Bon Marché (London's first purpose-built department store), is dripping in architectural interest, including leaded and Crittall windows, majestic tiled staircase and original mahogany and teak floors. Squire & Partners, who renovated the building in 2017 and the adjacent premises, have



Ruth Eastman

their practice on the first, second and third floors, and lease other parts of it to businesses such as Volcano and restaurants Canova Hall and Sushi Revolution. 'Upstairs', also run by the practice, is a fabulous members only club (£240 pa), the ideal venue for a Clapham party. On

the ground floor 'Downstairs' is an event and exhibition space, while the recently launched Department Store Studios at the back offers spaces for small businesses and houses Bellefields restaurant.

Full marks to Squire & Partners (whose head partner and founder, Michael Squire, lives in Clapham) for this imaginative transformation. One can only hope that Bon Marché's Clapham Junction counterpart, Arding & Hobbs, will be as exciting. Its restoration is currently due to be complete in 2023. *Ruth Eastman*

Find out more about The Department Store at upstairsbrixton.com and downstairsbrixton.com. If you are interested in renting a studio space, contact lettings@thedepartmentstorestudios.com.



James Jones (also above and right)

A look ahead to Christmas at Omnibus

Next month Omnibus Theatre is excited to welcome back award-winning Garlic Theatre with *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. This festive twist on a familiar tale will fire up imaginations and get tummies rumbling. A perfect day out for ages three to seven, it runs from **14-19 December**. Then, hot on the heels of three sold-out winter concerts, **Seven Steps Big Band** is back to get us into the Christmas spirit. Expect everything from swinging Sinatra to distinctly-not-classical carols (and maybe even a bit of Mariah)! Tickets are available now for **19 December**.

You can buy tickets for both events on the website, omnibus-clapham.org, or telephone 020 7498 4699. While you're on the website, don't forget to sign up to the newsletter for updates. *Ellie Grice*

If you love the Fauré Requiem...

Hop across the river to St Peter's Eaton Square, SW1W 9AL, on **Thursday 18 November at 7.30pm** to hear the Whitehall Choir perform the Fauré Requiem in a new arrangement for strings and organ with the Dionysus Ensemble, Ian Tindale (organ) and soloists Jenny Bacon, Stephen Anthony Brown and Colin Campbell. Stunning works by acclaimed living American composers **Libby Larsen** (*Alaska Spring*) and **Jake Runestad** (*The Hope of Loving*) complete the programme. Tickets cost £20, £15, £10 from whitehallchoir.org.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The autumn season continues on **Friday 12 November at 6pm and 8pm** with Dmitri Shostakovich's powerfully emotive Piano Trio No 2, composed in 1944 in memory of victims of the Holocaust. CCC founders Amanda Lake (violin) and Jessie Maryon Davies (piano) are joined at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ, by cellist Sophie Rivlin for two performances of this extraordinary work together with equally moving pieces by Ernest Bloch, Arvo Pärt and the prolific Lithuanian composer Vytautas Barkauskas. To book via Eventbrite, please visit claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk.

School applications welcome

Macaulay Church of England Primary School is a one-form entry, Church of England primary school in Victoria Rise, near Clapham Common. The school's website, macaulaycofeschool.co.uk, contains information on the educational provision offered as well as giving a flavour of the ethos of the school. Macaulay welcomes applications from local families. Parents and carers interested in their children attending the school are warmly invited to meet members of the staff and tour the buildings (including the new classrooms) and grounds. Contact the school office on 020 7622 1355.

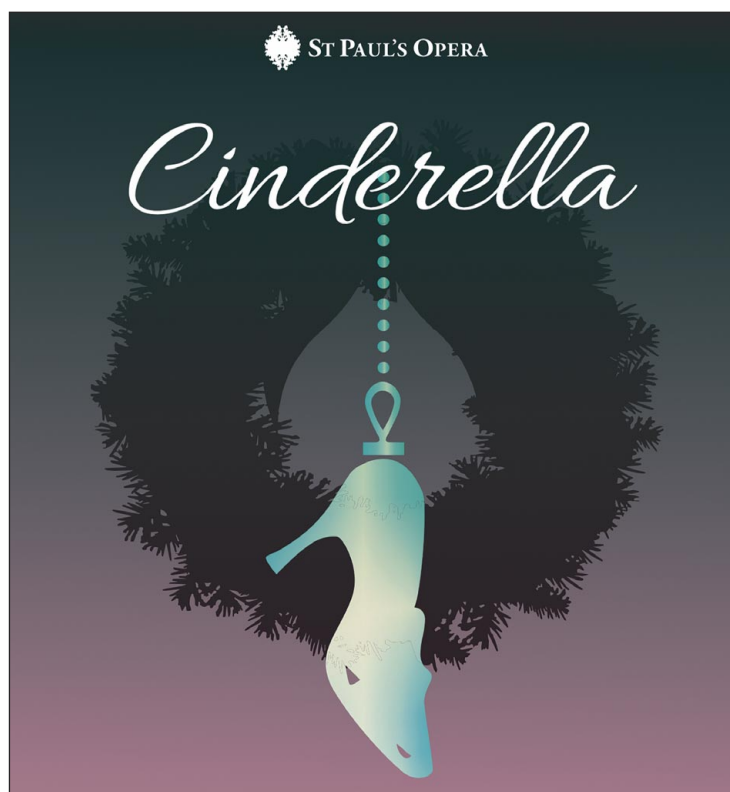
You shall go to the ball... with St Paul's Opera

It's a pleasure to walk around Clapham and meet Society members who are already excited about the Christmas concert, *Cinderella (Cendrillon)* by Pauline Viardot. We are hard at work making sure this is a real celebration for the start of the festive season, with an operatic version of the classic fairytale complete with a healthy dollop of panto, including some vital audience participation.

We will have two shows, **Thursday 9 December (evening)** and **Saturday 11 December (matinee)**. Children are welcome at both but the matinee may be more appealing for families, or indeed grandparents looking to give their young a seasonal family outing.

Tickets on sale in early November. Full details, including cast list, prices and performance times, will be confirmed so please subscribe to the SPO website at stpaulsopera.org to make sure you are first in the queue for reserving seats. Assuming we continue to enjoy the freedom of the current Covid situation, we will be able to have a full capacity at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove where the shows take place, and refreshments will be on offer for all ages.

We'll all have a great time – oh, yes, we will!
Tricia Ninian



The Battersea Society

On **Thursday 4 November** local historian Jeanne Rathbone presents a talk on **Three Gentlemen of Battersea**: artist and cartoonist H M Bateman (example of his work *below*);



The Builder Who Finished on Time, The Tatler
© H. M. Bateman Designs

sculptor Charles Jagger, best known for his war memorials; and Irish dramatist and memoirist Sean O'Casey.

Later in the month on **Tuesday 30 November, An Evening with Flanders & Swann** is an exclusive performance by actor and pianist Stefan Bednarczyk of the songs of Flanders & Swann with a special introduction by Alison Smith-Swann, widow of Donald Swann. The Battersea Society unveiled a commemorative plaque to Donald Swann in 2013.

Both events are at **6.30 for 7pm** at St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA. Tickets costs £5 per person payable in advance at batterseasociety.org.uk/the-battersea-society-events or on the door.

Clapham Common Film Club

The next screening of the Clapham Common Film Club will be on **Monday 22 November**. It is the 2018 Japanese film *Shoplifters*, directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda. This Cannes Palme d'Or-winning drama about a Japanese family of crooks who lift a lost little girl from the streets is complex, subtle and mysterious – another of the intricate and nuanced family dramas in the classical Japanese style of which Kore-eda has made himself a modern master. The screening will be at Omnibus Theatre at **7.30pm**. For more details about the coming season and Covid-19 precautions for the club, please email ccfilmrb@gmail.com. *Roger Booker*

Royal Trinity Hospice Christmas Fair

The Wandsworth Friends of Royal Trinity Hospice Christmas Fair Committee is delighted to announce the return of the fabulous Christmas Fair this November. With more than 50 stallholders, it will be your one-stop shop for jewellery, gadgets, Christmas cards and decorations, fashion items, beauty products, books, food and more, as well as the traditional auction and a prize draw, all in support of Trinity. Since 2010, this well-loved event has raised over £290,000 for the hospice. The first in-person event since 2019, it's not to be missed! The fair takes place at St Luke's Church, 194 Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. **Preview evening: Tuesday 16 November, 6-9pm**, tickets in advance from royaltrinityhospicechristmasfair.org. **Christmas Fair: Wednesday 17 November, 8.30am to 3.30pm**, tickets on the door. *Polly Balsom*



A High Street stuck at 12.02

A longstanding concern, shared by the Society and local businesses, expressed through This is Clapham, a Business Improvement District (BID), is the poor appearance of the High Street, its shabby street furniture, clutter, graffiti, lack of trees and greenery, redundant signage and tired railway bridge, all of which contribute to a depressing experience for pedestrians. To cap it all, our magnificent town clock, one of Lambeth's heritage assets, has for a very long time been stuck at 12.02.

The pandemic has been a torrid time for High Streets everywhere, and its impact will play out for some while to come. During October certain longstanding fixtures in Clapham (Barclays, Nationwide, Superdrug) closed their doors, just as many hospitality businesses have spilled out onto the pavement in an attempt to capture custom.

Decisions by Transport for London (TfL), reeling from the severe impact of the pandemic on its operation and finances, have curtailed night services, deferred a wide range of improvement projects, and introduced a host of temporary measures to curb traffic and prioritise cyclists on the main road network to secure government funds to bridge its yawning deficit.

Over the summer, TfL indicated that it had managed to allocate a small budget for environmental improvements in Clapham. This is Clapham and Lambeth also seem ready to add to the pot. To kick this off, a low-key walkabout took place on 21 September to review the many issues faced by pedestrians along the High Street in order to identify what might be expedited within a reasonable time frame.

Graffiti, some of it offensive, is a constant problem and costly to remove. TfL has an important role in clearing the graffiti on its assets and street furniture, mainly the bus stops, and says it has stepped up its efforts to deal with this. The assorted phone boxes, several of which are inoperable, are another significant target. These are the responsibility of the phone operators, and the best solution would be their removal, especially those sited in the middle of the footway. In neighbouring Wandsworth, the Council has recently negotiated BT's agreement to remove 24 street phone boxes, and locally two boxes have been removed near Clapham Common tube station (one beyond The Alexandra along from its South Side entrance), although BT is not the only proprietor.



The Clapham North end of the High Street around the railway bridge remains very much the poor

relation in environmental terms, and has been a topic in Newsletters past. The bridge itself is Network Rail's responsibility, together with the Overground station, and discussions continue on improvements this body should consider funding, but there seems to be a shared appetite by all parties for a multi-funded programme to raise the area, including Voltaire Road if and when resources allow. One of the issues that needs to be sorted is the removal of a TfL loading bay to enable a redesign of the highway to benefit the businesses and residents on the south side of the street.

A specific issue with the bridge is the restricted height warning, and TfL will not allow any scheme that might distract the attention of drivers of high vehicles. In years gone by the road dipped under the bridge to provide better clearance, but this resulted in frequent flooding.

The other area for improvement that has been sought for many years is increased planting – of trees and shrubs – where the pavement allows, such as in the vicinity of the Royal Shakespeare Company's rehearsal studios at 35 Clapham High Street, and opposite Clapham Common tube station on South Side.

And our clock? Well, time has frozen at just after 12 – noon or midnight – for too long. For a while there may have been arguments between Lambeth and TfL as to who has responsibility for its upkeep. Someone got it working all too briefly recently, but it came to rest again at 12.02. It seems a pity to have such a fine monument that tells the correct time just twice a day, but then again we wait to see when some of these other looked-for improvements take shape. *Report and photographs by Mark Leffler*



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

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