

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 458 July/August 2023

Contractor of Thornton Park in administration



Henry Construction Projects has gone into administration, leaving hundreds of suppliers and sub-contractors without pay as soaring costs caught up with the company. Rumours indicate the amount owed could reach £100 million affecting about 400 firms.

Residents in Thornton Park, which consists of Numbers 11 and 13 Clevedale Place (*furthest two buildings, left*) and three unfinished blocks (*foreground block and two buildings behind, left*), first noticed that the site had been

at a standstill in early June. Suspicions were further aroused when it became clear that Henry workers were leaving other sites across London, having not received pay for work undertaken. An out-of-pocket sub-contractor said, 'It got to the point where the only way to get paid was to threaten to walk off the job or join the queue filing a winding-up petition.'

A Clevedale Place resident, having had no communication from Southern Housing, London Realty (the developer), or Henry Construction, asked a security guard for an update. The guard said that Henry was in the hands of insolvency experts from FRP Advisory, as subsequently confirmed by trade press reports. Residents still have had no group communication from any of the above although some are getting responses from Southern Housing after proactively making contact. Flats from the two 'completed' blocks have major snagging issues, including blinds that don't work, intercom and locking issues, unfinished play areas and a dangerous walkway. Residents also report anti-social behaviour on the estate and evidence of drug use.

London Realty has a planning application in to re-develop Lambeth College* (*foreground buildings, right*). It

is likely that any new contractor will be asking for payments much higher than the rumoured low quote previously offered by Henry to finish the work. The woeful lack of communication by London Realty to residents in Thornton Park following the collapse of Henry does not bode well for those in any future development. **Alison Inglis-Jones**
*Objections are still being taken until early July and conceivably well beyond. Visit bit.ly/42u2LNA.



Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts promptly at 8pm and our guest normally speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and discussion. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. Please arrive in good time before the start. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks – a great opportunity to socialise with other members before (and after) the meeting.

There are no meetings in July or August.

Monday 18 September

Jane Morris – the Pre-Raphaelite muse. Jane Morris's highly individual beauty, a symbol of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, was made famous through the many portraits of her by her long-time lover, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Ever in the shadow of her illustrious husband, William Morris, she has been unfairly neglected by posterity. **John Hawks**, founder of Merton Abbey Mills, director of Wandle Heritage Limited and curator of the Merton Priory Chapter House Museum, looks at the life and contribution of a woman who most certainly was 'not just a pretty face'.

Clapham Society Summer Party

A reminder that our Summer Party, the first since lockdown, is on **Thursday 13 July at 6.30-8.30pm**. Space allows for a maximum of 60 guests, so don't miss out. The party will be in the beautiful garden of two Society members, offering a wonderful setting to catch up with friends and meet new ones over drinks and canapés. In the event of rain, the party will move inside but, please, no stilettos or heels.

To book your place (**before 6 July**, please), scan the green QR code, visit claphamsociety.com/summer-party-payment, or email events@claphamsociety.com, giving your name and those of your guests, and how you would like to pay. Tickets will not be issued, but payment will be acknowledged by email and your names will be marked off a list at the door. Admission, £20 per person, payable online or by bank transfer to Account Number: 22217045; Sort Code: 60-05-34; reference: SURNAME (of Purchaser) followed by E (for Events), or post a cheque, made out to The Clapham Society, to: David Brown, Treasurer, The Clapham Society, 15 Turret Grove, SW4 0ES. Alternatively, you can telephone David on 020 7720 7536. We look forward to seeing you there.



Summer guided walks

If you are in London in August, Iain Boulton's walk, **Trees and Landscapes on Clapham Common – a Historical Perspective**, on **Sunday 13 August** leaving from the Bandstand at **2pm**, is a must. Many members are already Iain groupies and we are privileged to be able to share in his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Common.

On **Saturday 19 August** we welcome a new guide, **Nigel Bassindale**, to tell us about **Clapham Park: The Cubitt Connection**. His walk will leave from the junction of Emmanuel Road and New Park Road, SW12 0LL, at **3pm**.

Then on **Thursday 24 August**, starting at Holy Trinity Church at **2.30pm**, **Alison Wilson** will introduce **Some Clapham Common North Side People**. The walk finishes at The Shrubbery (*right*), where an English Heritage blue plaque was recently unveiled to commemorate Marie Spartali Stillman, Pre-Raphaelite artist and model. The plaque is on the Lavender Gardens side of the house, which is located behind St Barnabas Church and would when built have faced directly on to the Common.

Walks are free, but must be booked ahead with the guide whose contact details are at claphamsociety.com/walks, where you can also find more details. **Alison Wilson**



Ruth Eastman

Unsung hero: Jane Marcet, polymath

Jane Marcet (1769-1858) was the daughter of Anthony Haldimand, merchant and banker of Swiss origin, who lived on the western end of Clapham Common, roughly where Leathwaite Road now is. With her siblings she was taught mathematics and sciences by the best private tutors. She married a Swiss doctor, Alexander Marcet, a co-founder of what became the Royal Society of Medicine, with whom she conducted experiments in their home laboratory. In 1806 she published *Conversations on Chemistry, Intended More Especially for the Female Sex*, which in 50 years ran to 16 British editions, as well as several in France and America. The book helped inspire Michael Faraday to pursue scientific study.

Mary Somerville (born in 1790), the mathematician after whom the University of Oxford's first women's college was named, said of her: 'No one at this time can duly estimate the importance of Mrs Marcet's scientific works.' Her later work, *Conversations on Political Economy*, encouraged Harriet Martineau to introduce economic topics into her writing. After her husband's sudden death in 1822, Jane divided her time between London and Geneva. **Timothy Walker**
Next issue: Maud Chadburn, surgeon



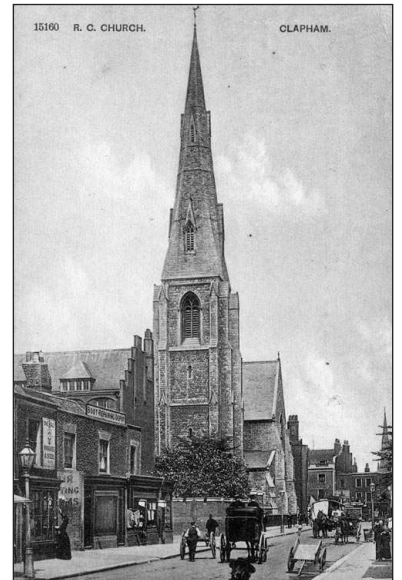
Members of The Georgian Group among you will be pleased to know that Timothy Walker, an active member in The Clapham Society's local history group, has published a major article about Clapham, 'Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Clapham', in the latest 'Georgian Group Journal'. The journal goes online three years after publication. If that seems too long a wait, we are advised that readers interested in joining the Georgian Group (at georgiangroup.org.uk/support-us) will receive the annual journal and latest magazine when doing so. Many thanks to Sinclair Johnston for bringing this news item to our attention.

St Mary's comes in from the cold

No, not a spy thriller but an exciting ending for the worshippers at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church near the Common and Clapham Common Tube station. For two consecutive winters, its hardy parishioners have attended Mass in the cold after the church's heating boilers packed up. There was little chance of either raising funds during the pandemic or getting realistic quotations from contractors. In 2022 the parish launched a fundraising campaign but could not get near the contractor's quote.

Into the breach stepped the Valencia Communities Fund, valenciacommunitiesfund.co.uk, an independent charity which provides funding for community, heritage and biodiversity projects around England through the Landfill Communities Fund. The award made by the charity covered a large part of the cost and, happily, the heating was turned back on in April 2023 which will help protect the fabric of the building and allow parishioners for generations to come to worship in a more pleasant and comfortable environment.

Father Casper Mukabva, CSSR, St Mary's parish priest, adds: 'Our special thanks go to the Valencia Communities Fund without whose support the heating project could never have happened. To them, we are truly grateful. We are also immensely grateful to our parishioners for their patience, petitions of support and financial donations towards the heating project, and to those in the parish who have worked behind the scenes to make this a reality.' The parish will be erecting a plaque in the church to mark the award from the Valencia Communities Fund. A very happy ending indeed. **Robin Landon**



The Clapham Society

Book launch

Michael Green (RIBA, FSA) was an archaeologist, architectural historian, former Inspector of Ancient Monuments with English Heritage and the author of *Historic Clapham* (The History Press). His new book, published by the Squeeze Press and entitled *The Great Turning: Crop Circles and their Message to Humanity* (ed. Mary Coales), charts his revelatory journey after a life-changing experience in a crop circle in 1989.

Members are welcome to attend the launch on **Saturday, 1 July, 2-4pm**, at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The book will be available, price £19.95, at Clapham Books. **Christine Green**

Open Garden Day in Turret Grove

Wayne Amiel's award-winning garden at 35 Turret Grove is open for the National Garden Scheme (NGS) on **Sunday 23 July, 10am to 5 pm**. The BBC *Gardeners' World* magazine's UK



Garden of the Year in 2018, which Wayne describes as Clapham meets Jamaica, is a north-facing garden where plants are allowed to show their wild side, and the unusual sits side by side with traditional cottage garden plants. Several borders have been re-designed since the last opening in 2021.

Admission £5, children free. Plants, teas and homemade cakes for sale. Proceeds go to NGS charities. Find more details at turretgrove.com, [@AmielWayne](https://www.instagram.com/AmielWayne) or email garden@turretgrove.com. **Wayne Amiel**

Battersea Society Photography Award and walks

The Battersea Past, Present and Future Photography Award, supported by the Royal College of Art, aims to celebrate and explore all aspects of Battersea life. The competition is open to the general public and entries must be photographed within Battersea and submitted by **31 August**. The winner of each category (Battersea Past, Present and Future) will receive £200. A further £200 will be awarded to the overall winner. Shortlisted entries will be displayed at the Royal College of Art in Battersea in October 2023. For more information visit batterseasociety.org.uk/photo-competition.

• Also look out for the **Sir Christopher Wren Walk** on **Thursday 6 July at 11am** which will include a lunchtime recital at St Mary-le-Bow or St Margaret Lothbury, £12 payable in advance (maximum 18 people) at batterseasociety.org.uk. On **Saturday 15 July at 12 noon** you can join the **Brian Barnes Murals Walk**, finishing at Battersea Power Station. More about both on the events page of the Battersea Society website, or email events@batterseasociety.org.uk. **Sara Milne**

Clapham Leaf Club and Imagine 2

Clapham Leaf Club is a project designed to enable pupils from Clapham's primary schools to learn about growing their own food, which they then sell at Venn Street Market in July. This year we are celebrating the summer harvest on **Saturday 15 July, 10am-3pm**, with a Grand Finale where the participating schools work side by side selling the plants they've grown from seed. All the funds raised go back into the schools.

The market will also be announcing the winners of its art competition, *Imagine 2*. The first took place in 2010, when pupils were invited to Venn Street during its redevelopment and encouraged to consider this urban environment and the new food market within it. This year, pupils have been invited to *Imagine* where their food comes from, their favourite foods and their market experiences.

To add to the fun there will be **Salsa dancing at 11am, 12pm and 1pm**. For more information, email kate@vennstreetmarket.co.uk. **Kate Greening**

The secret world of bees

In May Dr Paul Vagg enthralled us at Omnibus with his seemingly unending knowledge of bees. Facts and figures about these fascinating creatures were buzzing round the room. Did you know, for example, that a colony of honey bees may fly 55,000 miles and visit two million flowers to make just one jar of honey?

Honey bees carry pollen on their legs from one plant to the next as they search for food. The pollen is used to feed the larvae in the hive. They also swallow flower nectar and regurgitate it in the hive to make honey, their food stock for the winter.

Speaking of pollen, it helps build resistance to allergies, although how many people knew that? The Beekeeping Shop, Paul's family-run enterprise in East Dulwich, stocks a pollen that helps with hay fever. One audience member couldn't rush down there fast enough afterwards to get some.

In the hive bees perform many tasks, principally to ensure the wellbeing of the queen bee. Working as a team they can control the internal temperature to a constant of 35°C by one group ushering the air coming in and another wafting it out. As well as the fanning to cool the hive, they can work their thorax muscles without waving their wings, to produce heat in the hive when it is cold outside.

The waggle dance, the bees' unique language which directs other bees in the hive to the best food supply, was decoded by the Austrian ethologist Karl von Frisch in 1967; six years later he was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work.

Honey bees are vital. They pollinate 75 per cent of food crops, 90 per cent of fruit trees, cotton plants, trees and wild flowers. In the countryside pesticides (recently the government allowed the use of the particularly bee-unfriendly neonicotinoids) and the removal of hedgerows are threatening bee populations. Thankfully spraying does not take place on an industrial scale in the city. Hence they thrive. Avoid pesticides in your own garden to ensure they continue to and choose plants that attract bees.

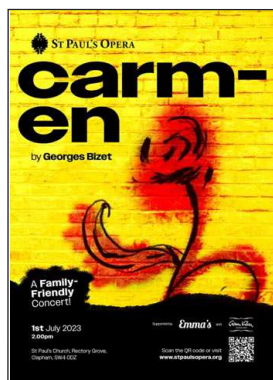
Should you see a swarm, contact an experienced beekeeper or bee professional, such as Paul Vagg, to have it returned to safety. When bees are in a swarm, they are usually docile and don't need to sting; as long as bees are not directly disturbed, they are unlikely to sting anyone. Bees generally only get aggressive when they are stressed or when their honey is threatened. A swarm is a sign of a healthy well-populated colony which is having to divide into two because of lack of space, but as it is out of the hive it is not protecting any honey. With the right equipment, it is usually easy to collect a swarm and transfer it to a new hive. If not collected, it will move on naturally in a few hours or up to one day, when the scout bees who are out looking for a new home find a suitable one, return and lead the swarm there.

To learn more, or for information on how to become a beekeeper yourself, visit the-beekeeping-shop.co.uk. The British Beekeepers Association, bbka.org.uk, is another good source of information. **Ruth Eastman**



Carmen for the whole family

The last tickets are on sale for all performances of St Paul's Opera's *Carmen*, including the **Family Friendly Matinée on 1 July at 2pm** at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ.



With the generous funding from the Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust, SPO has been taking *Carmen* workshops to four local state primary schools, including teaching the Children's Chorus in Act One. At the live opera matinée, the children will sing this with a full orchestra. This abridged performance (with narration and surtitles) is ideal for families in Clapham and beyond. Children **free**, accompanied by an adult; grown-ups, £15 (plus booking fee) online at stpaulsopera.org/carmen-for-schools or £18 at the door (subject to availability).

As well as the schools outreach programme, we are most grateful for sponsorship and grants to St Paul's Opera from both Emma's Estate Agents – and April Trust, who are supporting the Summer Opera Festival for the first time. Welcome to all at April Trust. **Tricia Ninian**

Lambeth Heritage Festival

Lambeth's annual celebration of local history takes place again in September. Throughout the month there will be walks, talks, exhibitions and events across the borough, starting with the Local History Fair on **Saturday 2 September** at West Norwood Library. The printed programme will be available **from 31 July**, and an online version will follow. **Alyson Wilson**

Omnibus Theatre

Get one jump ahead of **Edinburgh Festival Fringe** this summer at Omnibus Theatre. A dynamic mix of emerging and established theatre-makers preview their work in Clapham before heading to the largest theatre festival in the world, giving Londoners the chance to experience the best of the Fringe from **16-29 July** before anyone else. For the line-up and show times visit omnibus-clapham.org/Edinburgh-previews2023. Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side SW4 0QW. **Alicia Bridge**



Clapham Community Choir needs you!

This friendly and inclusive singing group meets every month except August on Tuesdays, 7.30-9pm, at Omnibus Theatre to sing everything from soul to folk. Open to anyone in the local community, we'd love to have you join us; no audition is required and first session is free. Email info@claphamcommunitychoir.org for details. Also take a peek at our fun activities on Instagram at [@claphamcommunitychoir](https://www.instagram.com/claphamcommunitychoir). **Felicity Brienza**



Music in the air

The summer concert season at the Clapham Common Bandstand started in June and continues every Saturday and Sunday in July. Grab a seat or park bench and enjoy. Organised by the Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC), the concerts offer musical styles from Afro-Cuban to classical and hip-hop to celebrate the community in which we live.

July's highlights include **Brass United Social Club**, a 17-piece act 'blaring out pop classics and party bangers'; **Tequila Brass**, bringing Mexican and Spanish influences to the American songbook; and **Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band**, a finalist in the National Brass Band Championship which takes place in Cheltenham this September. Here is the line-up:

Saturday 1 July – The Macaroons

Sunday 2 July – Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band

Saturday 8 July – South London Jazz Orchestra

Sunday 9 July – Junction Jazz

Saturday 15 July – Crystal Palace Band

Sunday 16 July – London City Brass

Saturday 22 July – Lambeth Wind Orchestra

Sunday 23 July – Brass United Social Club

Saturday 29 July – Tequila Brass.

All concerts are free, with a grant funded by Lambeth Council. They run from **2-4pm**. **Story and photograph Simon Millson**



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

Chairman

Mark Leffler

mark.leffler88@gmail.com

Vice Chair

Alison Macnair

vicechair@claphamsociety.com

Secretary

Gillian White

secretary@claphamsociety.com

Treasurer

David Brown

treasurer@claphamsociety.com

Membership Secretary

Jennifer Everett

membership@claphamsociety.com

Common and Open Spaces

Andrew Summers

openspaces@claphamsociety.com

Meetings and Events

Christine Armstrong

events@claphamsociety.com

Local History and Publications

Alyson Wilson

history@claphamsociety.com

Social Media

Alison Inglis-Jones

socialmedia@claphamsociety.com

Newsletter Editor and Instagram

Ruth Eastman

news@claphamsociety.com

Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at claphamsociety.com

