

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 462 December 2023/January 2024

Crowning achievement

Christmas is the time of year when we all enjoy good news, but especially this year. One of our committee members, **Alison Inglis-Jones**, a trustee of the Norwood & Brixton Foodbank, has been bursting to share her good news story. Luckily its release could not have been more timely, as the embargo on it was lifted just as the presses were about to roll. We are not the only ones who congratulate Alison and her volunteers on the tremendous work they do. Read on...

‘It is with great delight that we can announce that **Norwood & Brixton Foodbank** has been awarded the King’s Award for Voluntary Service 2023. This is the highest award that can be given to a voluntary group and celebrates the outstanding work of local volunteers in Lambeth. It is the equivalent of an MBE and is awarded for life.

‘The trustees of the Foodbank are so proud of the work of all the volunteers: from those who have donated and packed boxes to those who have driven vans and initiated food collection sessions. This award is for all of them, and so many are based in Clapham. Their work has been a shining light and a spark of hope for people in crisis in this area.

‘The work is by no means finished,’ says Alison. ‘We cannot rest on our laurels. The Foodbank [*Newsletter 455*] is providing food for over 1,000 people a week and we will struggle to provide food parcels through this winter as the cost of living crisis continues. Support in terms of food and/or financial donations is most welcome. For further information please visit norwoodbrixton.foodbank.org.uk.’



**The King’s Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

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. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks – an opportunity to socialise with other members before (and after) the meeting. The programme of talks for 2024 follows:

Monday 15 January

St Paul’s Opera Schools Outreach programme. Music education is becoming an endangered species, especially in the state sector, despite well-documented evidence that music ignites a child’s ability to learn across all academic disciplines. Determined to do its part to enhance music education, St Paul’s Opera is reaching out to local schools. Its founder, **Tricia Ninian**, along with baritone **Louis Hurst** (Schools Outreach Co-ordinator) and soprano **Louisa Tee** (Workshop Leader), will demonstrate the benefits of in-school workshops for local primary school pupils hungry to learn about opera, inside and out. They will also be presenting SPO’s plans for 2024 to dovetail with the company’s summer production of *Die Fledermaus*.

Monday 19 February

We need to talk about climate. **Robin Cooke-Hurle** moved to Clapham for two years in 1979 but then never moved on. Whilst neither an activist nor a campaigner, he has become increasingly interested in climate issues over the past 25 years. In this talk, with flooding, wildfires and heatwaves seeming to confirm that climate change is happening, he will outline the mechanisms which cause it and discuss how our modern lifestyles contribute and the potential impacts on us and the planet if we fail to accept that we must change. There will be an opportunity for members of the audience to make their own suggestions and, of course, to ask questions.

Monday 18 March

The Georgians: Exploring, creating and fiercely debating in 18th-century Britain. The 18th century was an extraordinary period in British history. The adventurous Georgians explored and settled around the globe. Its writers created masterpieces of world literature. Georgian scientists and engineers generated applied inventions that led to industrialisation and the steam train. British merchants participated in the controversial trade in enslaved Africans, while other Georgians (a number of them famously based in Clapham) campaigned firstly against the slave trade, and then against the institution of slavery itself. **Penelope Corfield** will explain how and why these changes happened, and what they all meant. Penelope is a Battersea-based historian and the author of *The Georgians: The Deeds & Misdeeds of 18th-Century Britain* (Yale University Press). (*Continued on page 2*)

Monday 15 April

The future of personalised nutrition. Professor of Genetics and author **Tim Spector** came to national prominence during the pandemic because of his role as lead researcher behind the world's biggest citizen science health project – the ZOE Covid study of over four million people for which he was awarded an OBE in 2020. His current work focuses on the microbiome and nutrition, and he is co-founder of the data science company ZOE Ltd, which has commercialised a home kit for personalised nutrition. Through his pioneering scientific research, he has been shocked to discover how little good evidence there is for many of our most deep-rooted ideas about food, and why almost everything we have been told about food is wrong. The community of around 100 trillion microbes that live in our colon is key to our digestion, appetite, mood, metabolism, and control of our immune system – and to how we respond to most drugs and foods. Understanding how our unique microbiome profiles are influenced by specific foods is paving the way for the new era of personalised nutrition, which is breaking the dogma of 'one size fits all' advice.

Monday 20 May

All change (for the better) on Clapham Common. **Gareth James** is a trustee of the Friends of Clapham Common and its representative on the Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC). He is also the lead for the recently registered charity Wild Clapham which, working in tandem with Lambeth Council, focuses on ecology and biodiversity on the Common. Gareth will speak about the changes in approach to improving biodiversity on the Common, the projects that have been implemented over the past three years, plans for the future and the challenges we now face with plant pathogens and alien invasive species in the context of a rapidly changing climate.

Monday 17 June

The Hibbert Almshouse, Wandsworth Road: Conservation and rehabilitation. The repair and rehabilitation of these eight almshouses for 21st-century use is a tale of research, investigation and appraisal in the pursuit of being faithful to the original. It is a tale, too, of design and construction, of challenges on site and the eventual restoration of a building designed by a local architect of national renown, Edward P Anson, and built in 1859 for Sarah and Mary Ann Hibbert in memory of their father. No one is better qualified to tell the recent story of the Hibbert Almshouse than architect **Sherry Bates**, Director of Bates Zambelli Chartered Architects, who are overseeing the conservation.

Monday 16 September

Keys to the City. Historian and author **Margaret Willes** will talk about her latest books on St Paul's Churchyard, and Southwark and its people. Society member **Helen Esmonde** and Margaret will also talk about their book on the Livery Companies of London, *City Unlocked*. Margaret Willes was, for many years, the Publisher at the National Trust and Helen Esmonde is a Past Master of the Stationers' Company. Helen hopes this book will enable others to share her experience of discovering the history of the Livery movement and its relevance in the 21st century. The working subtitle of their book is *From Wool to Digital*.

Monday, 21 October

Annual General Meeting. Guest speaker to be announced nearer the time.

Monday 18 November

Mr Atkinson's Rum Contract: Confronting a family's slave-owning past. An 18th-century genealogical odyssey, starting with a tumbledown house and a cardboard box full of old letters, culminating in the present day with the ruins of a Jamaican sugar estate and the results of a DNA test. **Richard Atkinson** is a book publisher and a founder member of Heirs of Slavery, a group supporting campaigns to tackle the ongoing consequences of transatlantic slavery. He lives in Clapham Old Town.



Ruth Eastman

Omnibus Theatre: 10 Years On

Marie McCarthy, artistic director of Omnibus Theatre, reflects on highlights of her conversation with Omnibus founder, **George Owen** (above left), at our AGM in October. It was an affectionate look back to the saving of a local building and the creation of a new theatre.

'It all started, believe it or not, 17 years ago,' George Owen began, 'when Lambeth Council decided to build a new library on Clapham High Street and open a leisure centre nearby. This made the Old Clapham Library surplus to requirements, so there was a suggestion they sell it off.' Lambeth was going to offer the community building as an asset transfer but due to the financial crash of 2009, the Council said the building was too valuable and they needed to sell it.

Considering that the building had been open to the community as a public library for more than a century, George galvanised a few residents and local celebrities, and set up a committee of dedicated trustees, including designer Tim Gosling, Michael Rolfe and former member of The Clapham Society Andrew Lorant. George led a seven-year campaign to ensure that this much-loved building would not be transformed into luxury flats and lost to the community for ever.

Thankfully, the group he had assembled refused to go down quietly and raised the money to put in their own bid. Miraculously, they managed to win, setting the wheels in motion for this community-driven venture to open in 2013.

Ten years later, more than 29,000 people have watched a play, listened to music, bought a drink, hired a room, sheltered from the rain, attended a free workshop, met their local councillor, listened to a talk, joined a debate, met an author, heard about a well-known rock band that took residence for a week, danced, sang, laughed and hopefully were inspired all within the walls of this much-loved red-brick building that was saved by its local community.

Royal Trinity Hospice

Come along to **Carols at Christmas** on **Thursday 14 December, 7pm**, at **Holy Trinity Church** on Clapham Common, hosted by Royal Trinity Hospice. All are invited to join in festive sing-alongs and to hear the Pegasus Choir, the Choir of St Mary's Primary School and a string quartet. Mince pies will be available afterwards; advance registration is encouraged but not essential. Free, but donations are welcome in support of Trinity's free care for Londoners and their loved ones. For more information visit www.royaltrinityhospice.london/Event/carols-at-christmas. **Anna Reid**



St Luke's Music Society

St Luke's Music Society's 21st season continues with two contrasting concerts by international artists to end 2023 and then ring in the New Year. On **Saturday 16 December**, the **Pasadena Roof Orchestra** brings us its unique programme of foot-tapping 1920s and 30s music which will have you dancing in the aisles. Then, on



20 January, we welcome back **Lucy Crowe** with **Anna Tilbrook**. Since her first appearance in 2006 early in her career, Lucy Crowe has established herself as one of the finest sopranos of her generation.

Anna Tilbrook needs no introduction, having often appeared in the St Luke's series. Their programme, entitled 'In Nature's Realm', combines



songs by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn with Alban Berg's *Seven Early Songs* and Judith Weir's *Natural History* before culminating with Richard Strauss's heart-wrenching *Four Last Songs*. Both concerts start at **7.30pm** and, as they are sure to sell out, do buy your tickets early from slms.org.uk. **St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8HQ.**

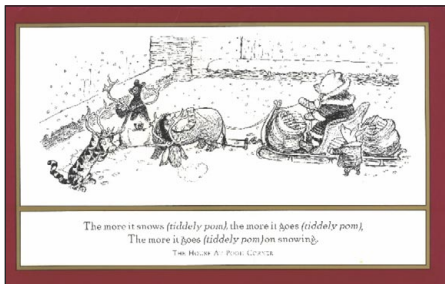
The Arts Society Clapham Common

• **Wednesday 13 December.** E H Shepard loved Christmas. **Shepard's Christmas** by **James Campbell** describes,

including in the illustrator's own words, much of the magic and joy of successive festive seasons, from those of his own childhood to others

throughout his long life. It also features familiar Shepard images from *Wind in the Willows* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

• **Wednesday 17 January.** The Stirling Prize has celebrated the very best contemporary buildings since 1996. In **The**



The more it snows fiddlyly, pond the more it goes fiddlyly pom!
The more it goes fiddlyly pom, the snowing,
The more it goes fiddlyly pom!

Stirling Prize: British architecture's Oscars, the speaker, **Brian Stater**, looks at some of the hits, some of the misses, and several of the buildings that arguably should have won but did not.



Both lectures are at the **Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT, 11am**. Visitor (non-member) tickets, £10, or contact us to join the Arts Society for free entry to this and future events. For information about a visitor ticket or membership, email claphamcommon@theartsociety.org or come and see us at the Clapham Picturehouse before the lecture starts (doors open at 10.30am). **Susan Holder**

Clapham Chamber Concerts

We are delighted to welcome brass ensemble **Quartet Menine** who will present an evening of eclectic music from recognisable classics by composers such as Schumann, Mendelssohn and Debussy to festive pieces guaranteed to get you in the Christmas spirit. **Friday 15 December, 7pm, St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX**. Please book in advance via Eventbrite at claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk. **Jonathan Parkin**



Want free tickets to shows?

Then join us at **Omnibus Theatre**. Volunteers play a vital role in the day-to-day running of Omnibus, so we are always on the lookout for passionate and enthusiastic team members to help us with front of house (box office, ushering) and fundraising. No experience necessary – we will train you! To join our team, email marie.mccarthy@omnibus-clapham.org or telephone us on 020 7498 4699. **Marie McCarthy**



Christmas opera panto? Oh yes it is!

St Paul's Opera invites you to this all-age production of *Little Red And The Big Bad*, a take on César Cui's operatic rendition of the classic fairytale. Little Red's mind wanders A LOT... and, every so often, her feet do too. **Friday 8 December, 7.30pm** and **Saturday 9 December, 3.30pm**. Tickets (£20 adults, £10 under-16s) are available at stpaulsopera.org. **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ.**

• **Save the date.** The **David Butt Philip and Friends Gala** on **Friday 9 February, 7.30pm**, is your chance to catch world-class opera in Clapham. Find details and tickets at stpaulsopera.org. **Tricia Ninian**

New members

We extend a warm welcome to Clinton Bell. If you know someone who would like to join The Clapham Society, email membership@clapham-society.com, visit claphamsociety.com/join-the-society or come to any of our events where we can tell you more. At Christmas time a subscription to the Society or any of our publications about Clapham (claphamsociety.com/publications) makes a great gift. **Jennifer Everett**

Christmas raffle

This is your opportunity to win one a special prize from our local community whilst supporting the Ace of Clubs and Royal Trinity Hospice. Prizes include a one night's stay for two with breakfast at The Windmill Hotel, a Christmas breakfast hamper from The Ginger Pig, a Christmas hamper from Venn Street Market and a large handmade ceramic bowl from North Street Pottery. To buy a ticket, £4 each, or make a donation, visit go.eventgroove-fundraising.com/claphamraffle2023. **Prize winners will be announced on Friday 15 December.** Please note: raffle winners' details will be shared with Venn Street Market in order to make contact regarding prize collection or delivery. **Kate Greening**





‘At home’ with antiques

Antique and contemporary furniture consultant **Christopher Claxton Stevens**, a long-standing member of The Clapham Society, invites members to a private tour of his SW4 home on **Wednesday 24 January, 6.30-8.30pm**; please arrive shortly before 6.30pm for a prompt start. Tickets cost £7 (cash only, payment on arrival). Numbers are limited to 18. Email, *but only if you know you can come*, events@claphamsociety.com before Thursday 18 January to sign up and for further details. This is a rare chance to see the colourful and atmospheric candlelit interiors of an 1890s house, along with a collection of 18th and 19th century, Arts and Crafts, and contemporary furniture; metalwork and other objects. There will be a talk about the house and its contents, followed by a tour when the furniture can be closely studied. The evening ends with wine and nibbles.



Unsung hero: Margaret Loudon, forgotten female surgeon

Margaret Loudon, FRCS, (1910-1998) worked as a consultant surgeon at the South London Hospital for Women from 1938 to 1975. During the Second World War an Act of Parliament had to be passed to allow the hospital to admit males over the age of six years; before then it had been a hospital strictly for women (and male children of six years

or less), who were treated by women. It was also a designated casualty hospital, and received emergencies from the bombing.

Loudon managed many casualties, and probably saved many lives, but she did not publish her work, which was innovative. A report in 1990 in the *British Medical Journal* describing her pioneering treatment of Crush Injury Syndrome is what led,

eventually, to her much-belated recognition. The syndrome occurs when the body is crushed under rubble or similar, as often seen in bomb damage, and although the patient appears unharmed, a few days later dies of a build-up of toxins. One of her patients was Sir James Martin, the inventor of the ejector seat; after the war she advised him on the effect of ejection on the human skeleton.

She was educated at St Paul’s Girls’ School, trained at the London School of Medicine for Women (now the Royal Free Hospital), and was one of only 30 women who became Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons between 1931 and 1939, of whom only six obtained consultant positions. In Margaret Loudon’s day, when educational and career constraints unfortunately held women back, this was an outstanding achievement.

After her retirement, she was Chair of the South London Hospital Representatives committee which co-ordinated the fight against the hospital closure, which ultimately failed.

Ms Loudon is a forgotten female surgeon who deserves much greater recognition. *Gillian Robinson*

A new local history series, Clapham street names – the how and why, will be introduced in the Newsletter in the New Year.

Subscriptions and Gift Aid: Important update

As foreseen in the Chairman’s message in the Society’s last Annual Report, membership rates will increase from 1 April 2024.

The new subscription rates are: Individual member, 20 per annum; Household (up to three named members), £30 pa; Business, £50 pa; Postage for Newsletter, if appropriate, £15 pa.

Please arrange with your bank to amend your existing Standing Order to the new rate. If it is not currently paid on 1 April, please correct the date. Members will see that there is a separate letter with this issue (or PDF attachment if you receive your Newsletter by email) from the Treasurer asking you to **complete a new Gift Aid Declaration**. Please do so and return this to him without delay so that he can make an accurate claim to HMRC early in the New Year to boost the finances of the Society. *Jennifer Everett*

Crafty ideas

If you haven’t finished your Christmas shopping yet, or maybe even started, take yourself off to the Clapham Makers Christmas Market at Omnibus Theatre on **Sunday 10 December** any time from **11am to 5pm**. You will find a wealth of reasonably priced gifts and tree decorations. As the flyer says, it’s dog friendly, too. Happy Christmas!



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

