

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter



Issue 464 March 2024

### The Post Office campaign

The last week of January was not a happy one for Clapham. On the 31st there was the horrific corrosive alkaline attack at the Common end of Lessar Avenue, perpetrated against three residents of the Clapham South



Belvedere Hotel, as well as members of the public who intervened. The day before – and minutes before the petition with 6,000-plus signatures to save the post office was delivered to 10 Downing Street – the Post Office announced its response to the consultation. As most readers will know that response was negative and, despite

1,448 comments on the consultation, the Clapham Common Crown Post Office doors will shut at 5.30pm on Wednesday 6 March. The response from the Post Office with alternative branches, including services, can be found at [bit.ly/3w76bLr](https://bit.ly/3w76bLr). Although not unexpected, this is a huge blow for the community and local businesses. Residents and councillors were not and are not, however, taking the decision lying down. Nor are we.

On Saturday 10 February, a large group of people chanting ‘Save our Post Office’ marched down Clapham High Street in the rain, past the post office and on to the Temperance Fountain on Clapham Common where MPs Florence Eshalomi and Bell Ribeiro-Addy and CWU officials spoke of their outrage at the closure. By this stage there must have been 300 people. We can only hope a new Crown post office will be opened nearby. The former NatWest building (*right*), only footsteps away, could be the perfect site for an alternative; the old Nationwide Building Society across the road also lies vacant.

‘As referenced in our consultation proposal,’ the closure announcement reads, ‘we...will consider applications to run either a new local or mains branch service in the immediate area of the Clapham Common branch location.’ We like to think that the mention of a ‘mains branch service’ could indicate that the Post Office *is* open to establishing an alternative nearby. Far less appealing is the notion of a post office in a shop. Is there a shop in the vicinity large enough to fit the bill of its predecessor, or accommodate the vast number of customers? We think not. The Post Office must deliver. **Ruth Eastman**



Ruth Eastman

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 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 – a great opportunity to socialise with other members before (and after) the meeting. Our list of talks for 2024 is available at [claphamsociety.com/events](https://claphamsociety.com/events).

### 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).

### Going underground

**Edmund Bird**, who last spoke to the Society in November (NL 463), has generously offered to lead a tour of the disused **Aldwych Station on Monday 18 March at 1pm**. Please email [events@claphamsociety.com](mailto:events@claphamsociety.com) for a place (maximum 25 people) before Monday 11 March if you know that you can attend – and can manage the 160 steps on the spiral staircase. **Christine Armstrong**

### New members and subscriptions

We extend a very warm welcome to new members Jim and Ruth Grover, and Jenny Thomas and Stephen Aldridge.

**Annual subscriptions are due on 1 April and, as announced at the last AGM, the rates have been changed.** If you have a standing order please amend it to pay the correct amount for your subscription. The annual rates from 1 April 2024 are: Individual, £20; Household, £30; Business, £50; Additional Postage (for members who receive their Newsletter by post), £15.

If you have any questions about your membership, please email me at [membership@claphamsociety.com](mailto:membership@claphamsociety.com).

**Jennifer Everett**



## SPO Schools Outreach Programme

Was it a lecture, a concert, or a passionate polemic? On Monday 15 January we were treated to all three by **Patricia Ninian** and colleagues from St Paul's Opera. Founded a little over a decade ago at St Paul's Church in Rectory Grove as a fundraiser, this small opera company has grown into a busy and thriving enterprise with a mission to present accessible programmes, while also providing opportunities to young professional singers supported by more experienced performers. The company is well known to Clapham Society members for its annual productions within the church and its grounds, but it has become increasingly aware that the future of opera in the UK looks vulnerable. In her introduction, illustrated by some worrying statistics, Tricia explained how the steep decline of



Ruth Eastman

musical education in state schools threatens the future not only of opera but of music in general. She told us how in the past 13 years the number of music teachers entering training has more than halved. Quoting Plato, who wrote: 'I would teach children music, physics and philosophy, but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning,' Tricia also invoked Hans Christian Andersen, Albert Einstein,

Daniel Barenboim and others who have expressed the benefits of music as a vital element in education. The financial statistics tell a grim tale; music budgets in state schools are one fifth of those in the private sector; GCSE Music entrants have fallen by 37% since 2008; A-level Music is heading for extinction.

All of this explains the impulse behind St Paul's Opera's current and growing campaign to take opera into schools, initially in Clapham. It not only formed the focus of the evening's presentation but also paved the way for the entertainment to begin.

St Paul's Opera's Schools Outreach Programme is designed to introduce children to opera in accessible chunks, built around well-known operas and carefully curated arias. Cue baritone **Louis Hurst's** spirited rendering of 'Non più andrai' from *The Marriage of Figaro*, which he performed for Macaulay C of E Primary School in 2019.

Like so much in the arts, the schools venture was stalled in 2020 as the pandemic took hold but resumed in 2021, with Macaulay and Clapham Manor schools participating in and enjoying (as did we) Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Britten's *Albert Herring* (2022). Next up: mezzo soprano **Alexandra Dinwiddie** (cast member in both), whose introduction followed by rendition of 'What would Missus Herring say?' was an absolute treat. In 2023 Bonneville and Reay schools joined the tour, and the children took part in the Toreador Song from *Carmen* – sung for us on this occasion by Louis Hurst.

This year the company will be working with schools on *Die Fledermaus*, as well as featuring the opera at its summer festival in July. The mellifluous **Tanya Hurst** delighted us with 'Csárdás' as a taster, before a final reminder from Tricia that SPO is always looking for sponsorship for its schools programmes. Last year they reached 160 children which their main sponsor, the Cosman Keller Trust, described as 'at £18 per child, very good value for money'.

The evening came to a close with a thrilling Champagne Chorus performed by all the assembled singers – including Tricia – accompanied by pianist **Adrian Salinero**. For more information and details about tickets and donations, visit [stpaulsopera.org](http://stpaulsopera.org). **Roddy Gye**

**STOP PRESS** *St Paul's Opera has been nominated for the Tesco Stronger Starts scheme and you can help them receive up to £1,500 by voting for them in store. Look out for participating local stores. Voting is under way and finishes at the end of March.*

**The Glass Heart: Art, Industry and Collaboration** If you are interested in glass – is anyone not? – this must-see exhibition at **2 Temple Place, WC2R 3BD**, is a Tube ride away from Clapham and **runs until Sunday 21 April**. Open Sunday, 11am-4.30pm; Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 11am-6pm; Wednesday, 11am-9pm. Visit [twotempleplace.org](http://twotempleplace.org) for further details and Easter opening hours.

## At home with Christopher Claxton Stevens

Many readers of our December/January issue seized the chance to visit the period home of Christopher Claxton Stevens. He restored it impeccably to its former Victorian glory and has since lined it with both antiques and modern pieces, as befits a consultant in antique and contemporary furniture. The Past Master of the Worshipful Compan(ies) of Furniture Makers (2002-03) and Arts Scholars (2012-13) talked us through the restoration and showed us highlights of his collection, which extended to the top of his house.

The event was so well subscribed that a second date was arranged. Lucky us. Now let us hope we might be asked back! Thank you, Christopher, and thanks, Christine Armstrong, for organising. **RE**



## Clapham Chamber Concerts

**Counter's Creek** is a London-based folk band specialising in original music inspired by the folk music of the British Isles. Expect foot-tapping jigs and reels, traditional songs and four-part harmony, dance grooves from Eastern Europe and West Africa, and a whole lot more from **Ben Cox** (voice/flute/whistles/harmonium), **Jonathan Taylor** (flute/whistles), **Tom Newell** (violin/banjo) and **Moss Freed** (guitar). This will be an evening of virtuosic performance delivered by engaging and witty musicians who convey their passion for contemporary British and Irish folk music in their playing as well as through (occasionally) encouraging the audience to join in – in harmony! Between them they have performed at most of the UK's leading folk and jazz festivals, played with pop acts Muse and One Direction, and appeared on television shows including *Strictly Come Dancing* as well as on the West End stage. **Friday 8 March, 7pm**. **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX**. Tickets are available via Eventbrite at [claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk](http://claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk) and on the door.



## Omnibus Theatre

Can you separate the art from the artist? In this searing drama, art curator Yasmin embarks on a journey delving into the enigmatic life of the late artist Ray Blackwood and uncovers the haunting truth behind the mysterious painting *Scarlet Sunday*.

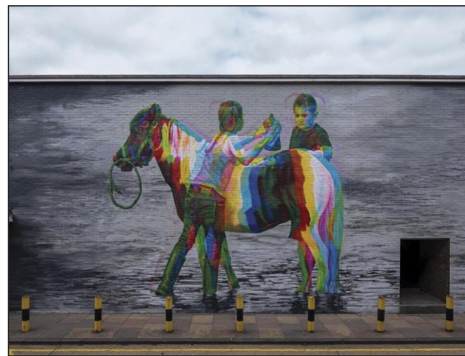
The eponymous play explores the blurred lines between art and its creators, questioning our complicity in idolising their creations. **28 February to 17 March.**

**Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.** For tickets – £10 (previews), £16, £18 – and show times, visit [omnibus-clapham.org](http://omnibus-clapham.org).



## The Arts Society Clapham Common

There's more to street art than Banksy. **Hidden Canvases: Street Art and the City** is a beginner's guide to the biggest art movement since Pop Art. From train writing in New York to interactive technology that brings murals to life, the concept of uncommissioned public art is a different beast to what it once was. This talk explores street art's growth, examining the



variety of elements and styles that comprise the scene with no rules. From the international superstars to the local underground heroes, you're guaranteed to

leave knowing your Invader from your Arys and, who knows, you might even look at the world a little differently. The speaker, **Doug Gillen**, is heavily involved in documenting the street art scene in London and abroad through his project Fifth Wall TV. Who better to offer insight into this world?

**Wednesday, 20 March, 11am. Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT.** Visitor (non-member) tickets, £10, or contact us to join the Arts Society for free entry to this and future events. Email [claphamcommon@theartsociety.org](mailto:claphamcommon@theartsociety.org) for further details, or talk to us at the Picturehouse before the lecture (doors open at 10.30am). **Susan Holder**

## Growing demand for hospice care: Royal Trinity Hospice's response

Royal Trinity Hospice has launched a major £4 million public fundraising campaign, entitled **Every Person Matters**, with the goal of launching new services and reaching more people living in central and south west London in the years to come. Trinity receives only a quarter of its funding from the NHS and has to raise an additional £12 million a year currently to provide its services, with costs expected to rise.

The UK's oldest hospice is predicting that demand for palliative and end-of-life care will increase by 55% in the next seven years but it has set itself the target of reaching 70% more patients and carers over the next three years through service expansion. Demand for Trinity's care is growing rapidly, and at a time of increasing costs.

The Every Person Matters campaign is the hospice's future-proof plan to reach more people with the compassionate and expert support it is known for, ensuring anyone can access Trinity's care when they need it. The Trinity team hopes that people who hear about the campaign will get behind it throughout 2024.

To find out more about the new services, and how you can support the hospice's work, email Campaign Manager Phil Cuthell at [pcuthell@royaltrinityhospice.london](mailto:pcuthell@royaltrinityhospice.london) or visit [www.royaltrinityhospice.london/epm](http://www.royaltrinityhospice.london/epm).

## St Paul's Opera: The Rose upon the Briar

Journey through the realms of love and nature as husband and wife team **Margarita Wood** (soprano) and Jette Parker Young Artist **Michael Gibson** (tenor) grace the SPO stage for an enchanting



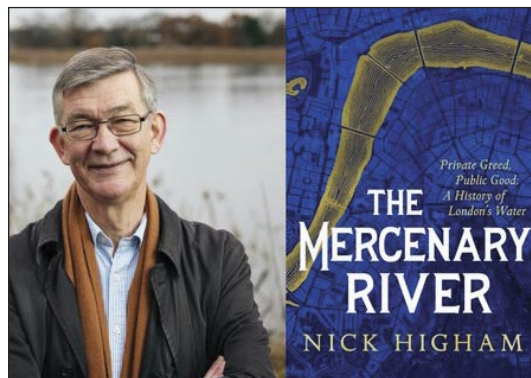
evening of Lieder and song. Savour the melodies of Strauss, Liszt, Debussy and Britten among other great composers as they take us on a musical tour invoking the vibrant spirit of spring. Joined by pianist **Lucy Colquhoun** providing sparkling accompaniment, the pair capture the essence of romance and the beauty of the season. **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Friday 22 March, 7.30pm.** Tickets, £18. Bookings and further information at [stpaulsopera.org/the-rose-upon-the-briar](http://stpaulsopera.org/the-rose-upon-the-briar). **Tricia Ninian**

## Battersea Society events

Two entries for your diary:

• For centuries London, one of the largest and richest cities in the world, struggled to supply its citizens with reliable, clean water.

**The Mercenary River – Private Greed, Public Good: A History**



**of London's Water** by **Nick Higham** is the story of that struggle, from the Middle Ages to the present day. A journalist and former BBC correspondent, Nick tells a tale of remarkable

technological, scientific and organisational breakthroughs; but also a story of greed and complacency, high finance and low politics. Incredibly, Chelsea Waterworks was the first in the world to filter the water it supplied its customers; the same technique is still used today to purify two thirds of London's drinking water. £5 payable in advance online at [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk) or on the door. **Thursday 14 March, 6.30pm for 7pm, St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA.**

• **The Coach House at Kelmscott House** was William Morris's final London home and the William Morris Society's collection includes furniture, wallpapers, textiles and the Albion press used to print the Kelmscott Chaucer. In addition to looking at the Society's premises, there will be a talk with one of its guides who will bring out items not usually on display, including original wallpaper, watercolour designs and other items. Maximum 20 people. £13 payable in advance at [batterseasociety.org.uk](http://batterseasociety.org.uk). **Wednesday 20 March, 11am. William Morris Society Archives in Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, W6 9TA. Sue Demont**



## Clapham street names: a French connection?

Many and varied are the explanations given for the cluster of French-sounding street names around the southern end of Clapham – refugee Huguenots, perhaps; Belgian nuns; or even Empress Eugénie, exiled with husband Napoleon III? Sadly, the truth is more mundane.

In 1872, Clock House Farm (roughly where Abbeville Road meets Cavendish Road on the South Circular) came up for sale and was bought for housing by Isaac Bugg Coaks, a Norwich lawyer and land speculator. He planned to call the development Cavendish Grove, naming the streets by the points of the



compass. Building work in the area slowly began two years later. By the start of 1878, the Metropolitan Board of Works took an interest in the naming of the streets and dismissed the Cavendish Grove geographic references as too confusing. It offered Lysaght, Ouseley, Riseldine and Sarsfield instead, formally adopted after agreement from one of the builders.

When he found out, Coaks protested that no one had asked him and angrily rejected the names, saying they were 'difficult to pronounce, difficult to spell and difficult to understand'. He counter-proposed Trouville for Lysaght. Once that was accepted, he asked for Beauville (later spelling it Belleville), Clairville and Deauville. When the second was found to be used elsewhere, he asked for Bonneville. The first was in use, too, and so rejected; this time, the exasperated MBW official himself proposed an alternative: Abbeville. Coaks agreed.

Letters in the files at the London Metropolitan Archives indicate that the official was none other than George Vulliamy, superintending architect at the Board of Works, who would have known the area well since his uncle Lewis previously lived on Clapham Common South Side, at number 53, which still stands today.

Finally, on 18 April 1878 after four months of correspondence, the Board approved Abbeville along with its neighbours, Bonneville, Deauville (later incorporated into Elms Crescent) and Trouville. Others, such as Narbonne and perhaps even my own, Lynette, later tagged along with their classly Continental connotations. As for Bugg Coaks, he was subsequently struck off for embezzling his clients' money – but not before naming six streets in Norwich after his many daughters.

**Michael Tuffrey**

**Next month: Nightingale Lane**

*If you can suggest how your street was named or want to find out more about it, please email [history@claphamsociety.com](mailto:history@claphamsociety.com).*

## Clapham Model Yacht Club

Have you ever noticed the small green building between Long Pond and the basketball courts, clad with flaking paint, barbed wire and metal security fences? This forlorn structure on the Common pre-dates even the Bandstand (1890), having helped locals enjoy the Common for over 140 years. Intrigued? I was, and couldn't help but take a peek when the usually shut doors had swung open over Christmas.

Inside, it's a child's treasure trove, with a flotilla of yachts, their sails towering overhead, crammed into every bit of available floor space. Signs of the club's engineering past, with model aircraft and other oddities tucked amongst the rafters, are everywhere you look.

This pondsides tardis is the home of Clapham Model Yacht Club



(CMYC), founded in 1882 and second eldest such club in the country, the oldest one based at the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens. Racing takes place on the first and third Sunday of the month, 11am to 2pm. If you're interested in a race, want to see inside the clubhouse or simply find out more, visit [cmyc.wordpress.com](http://cmyc.wordpress.com). **Daniel Mayo**



Photographs: Jack Lawson, [jacklawsonphotography.com](http://jacklawsonphotography.com)

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](http://claphamsociety.com)

