

The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 336

April 2011

A VISIT TO WANDSWORTH MUSEUM

Wednesday 20 April

This meeting will be at Wandsworth Museum, 38 West Hill, SW18 1RZ. The 37 bus goes direct from Clapham Common to Wandsworth Museum. Routes 337 and 170 from Clapham Junction also go past the Museum. There is free parking in nearby streets after 6.30 pm. Admission to the museum is FREE on this evening.

The Museum café, which sells delicious cakes and snacks as well as coffee, tea, soft drinks and wine will be open from 7.30 pm. At 8 pm the Director of the Museum, **Ken Barbour**, will tell us about the history and formation of the museum and introduce the permanent collection which tells the story of Wandsworth from 25,000 years ago to the present. He will discuss future plans including forthcoming exhibitions and special events. The Chair of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum, **Sheila Allen**, will then outline the role and activities of the Friends. Members will be free to look round the museum in their own time, or to join the Director on a tour of the collection.

Following the closure of the former Wandsworth Museum in The Old Courthouse in Garratt Lane in 2008 this new museum was created in the former West Hill Library through a generous donation of £2 million from the Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, and support from the Friends of the Wandsworth Museum, Wandsworth Borough Council and others. The museum is a private charity and receives no direct support from any governmental funding bodies, but depends on the support of the local community through membership donations and its trading activities. Dorothy Hintze chairs the Board of Trustees of the Museum, and another Trustee, Professor Jack Loman, Director of the Museum of London, provides valuable expertise and links in the museum world.

Wandsworth Museum was opened in September 2010 by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, and Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt. Since then the Museum has developed an educational programme and links with local schools, as well as an active and enthusiastic group of Friends, who hold regular meetings and help at the museum. The Victorian-themed café which adjoins the Museum also houses a small Museum shop.

You are encouraged to come along to explore the Museum at leisure, free of charge, and at the same time socialise with other Clapham Society members and Friends of the Museum.

Camping on Clapham Common?

Lambeth Council have lifted their self-imposed restrictions on the size, length and frequency of events on Clapham Common. The impact of this change in policy is about to be felt.

The first event, which is causing great concern locally, is scheduled to take place from 28 April to 1 May. This will involve a screening of the royal wedding and 'family' events. There will be a campsite with 1800 tents to accommodate up to 4000 people, and food outlets on site. For full details of the event go to www.camproyale.co.uk. Surprisingly, there was no consultation about this event with either the Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC) or the Clapham Common Ward Councillors.

News of the proposed event led to a Press Statement from Lambeth Council to the effect that final approval had not been given. At the time of going to press a meeting is being arranged at which there will be full discussion of the proposed event between Ward Councillors, the CCMAC, the promoters and members of Lambeth Events Team. Members are encouraged to write to their local councillors and Member of Parliament with their views.

Other major events

Another event scheduled for the beginning of July, promoted by Rouge events and yet to receive a Premises Licence, is charging £75 per day. There is a strong feeling that such a cost is prohibitive and will mean that many local people will be excluded. Can this be an appropriate use of common land? The intention, when the Common was bought from the Lords of the Manor by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1877, was that it be 'free and uninclosed (sic) for ever'.

Yet another proposed event is causing even more consternation. Live Nation (Music) UK Ltd. are asking for a year long Premises Licence to last from March 2011 until March 2012. Linked to only one event, the date of which was not given, the application covered from Monday to Sunday from 9 am until 10 pm, with alcohol available from 10 am until 10 pm. The event would be attended by 52,000 people, plus staff, and would occupy a much enlarged event site. A blanket licence of this type would almost certainly open the flood gates to the further commercialisation of Clapham Common and have a huge environmental impact. The Clapham Society has lodged a formal objection to the granting of this licence.

It is clear that 2011 will see our Common put under great pressure. Please could we ask our members to show their usual vigilance, and let us know of any concerns during the year. Contact email annajs@mac.com.

The following meetings will be back at our normal meeting place, Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ at 7.30 pm with the talk promptly at 8 pm.

Wednesday 18 May

The Thames Tunnel. Malcolm Orford, Thames Tunnel Senior Project Manager, will talk about Thames Water's plan to build the Thames Tunnel. At present 39 million tonnes of sewage flushes into the River Thames in a typical year and the problem is getting progressively worse. It is proposed that the tunnel will run up to 20 miles, broadly following the path of the River Thames and will involve digging the deepest tunnel ever constructed in the capital. Along with the Lee Tunnel (under construction), the Thames Tunnel will ensure the city has a sewerage system fit for the 21st century and beyond.

Wednesday 15 June

Clapham Portraits. Members of the Clapham Society Local History Subcommittee will give short illustrated biographies of some interesting former Clapham residents. **Peter Jefferson Smith** will talk about the Revd Henry Whitehead (1825-1896), a curate at Holy Trinity Church, Clapham, who found the evidence to prove Dr John Snow's belief that cholera was transmitted by infected water. **Michael Green's** subject will be the ballet dancer, Katti Lanner (1829-1908) a former resident of his house on Clapham Common North Side. **Alyson Wilson** will talk about John Pinches and family, important 19th century medallists, whose works survived in Clapham High Street until the 1970s when the company was taken over by Franklin Mint.

Battersea Park

The new Winter Garden at Battersea Park was opened by Boris Johnson on a cold but bright 3 March, to the sound of a children's steel band. The garden was an ambitious initiative of the Friends of Battersea Park, with a fund-raising campaign supplemented by the financial support of Wandsworth Council and the support of the garden designer Dan Pearson who also did the planning work. It involved landscaping and planting a large area beside the Sun Gate which had fallen into neglect. The concept is of a tapestry of planting, with ribbons of bulbs interlaced throughout the space; a range of trees for winter interest with shrubs grouped beneath them; different moods for different areas. The project started in 2004 to provide a new garden of significance for this decade. It is well worth visiting when you are next in the Park.



Boris tries the steel drums!

Nones at Merton Priory

At 3 pm on **Sunday 1 May** the service of Nones will be celebrated at the Chapter House of Merton Priory. The Chapter House is all that remains of the Augustinian Priory founded in 1117 and dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538, which was once one of the most powerful religious houses in England, with connections in various parts of the country including Clapham.

The Chapter House now lies ignominiously under the A24 and a Sainsbury's car park at Colliers Wood, but once you find the door in the underpass you enter another world. The cave-like space is dark, mediaeval coffins and pieces of Gothic stonework line the walls, and the outline of the curved apse of the Chapter House survives.

Nones, the first service said by the Canons of Merton when they entered the Priory on 3 May 1117 and the religious office traditionally said at 3 pm, has now become an annual event at the Chapter House. This year the service focuses on Walter de Merton, the founder of Merton College, Oxford. This is a great opportunity to visit this unusual survival. The only other occasion on which the Chapter House is normally open is London Open House weekend in September.

The history of the Priory, pictures and details of the project to restore it as an education and information centre are on www.mertonpriory.org. The full address is **Merton Priory Chapter House**, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, London SW19 2RD (off A24 Merantun Way, near Colliers Wood tube station).

Book of the Blues

Acclaimed author Courttia Newland will be introducing his new book, *Book of the Blues*, on **Wednesday 13 April** at 7 pm at Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UH. The author of several successful novels, including *The Scholar* and *Snakeskin*, Newland teaches creative writing classes and workshops, and appears at leading book festivals and international venues.

Clapham Park Ladies Cycling Club

We have had an enquiry from a lady whose grandmother was captain of the Clapham Park Ladies Cycling Club from 1903 to 1910 and was given an inscribed silver dish 100 years ago. Does anyone know anything about this club? If so, please contact the Editor.

The London Maze

London's biggest, free history fair takes place this year on **Saturday 16 April** from 10 am to 4 pm at the Guildhall, London EC2P 2EJ. For this event the whole Guildhall complex is opened up to host displays by local societies, history groups, museums, archives and libraries. There are guided walks, tours of the Guildhall Art Gallery, the Roman Amphitheatre and film shows from the City archives. Walks, which are half hourly throughout the day include 'City Gardens', 'City Churches', 'City Architecture' and 'A Money Walk and Talk'. For more details Google 'London Maze'.

This is a fascinating day out for anyone interested in London's history. The Clapham Society will have a stand there, where we shall be answering questions and selling our publications, so do come and see us **during the course** of the day. The Guildhall is within a few minutes' walk of Bank or Moorgate Underground Stations. Parking is difficult.

Trinity's Coffee Challenge

To mark its 120th anniversary Trinity Hospice is asking supporters to host a coffee morning. Your coffee morning can be as adventurous or as simple as you wish and can be held at home or at work. Simply invite your friends, family or colleagues for coffee and ask them to make a donation to Trinity for your efforts. For more information contact Leah Bull on 020 7787 1085 or email lbull@trinityhospice.org.uk

The Clapham Sect

A well-attended meeting on 16 February enjoyed a very interesting view of the Clapham Sect, and of William Wilberforce in particular, offered by the historian, author and journalist Stephen Tomkins. His examination of the Sect's apparent tolerance of slavery in Sierra Leone in his recent biography of Wilberforce had created a certain amount of controversy, which he addressed in his consideration of the views, beliefs and actions of members of the Sect both in the context of their own times and in relation to 21st century attitudes.

Although it was tempting to see the Clapham Sect as Wilberforce's 'campaigning network' Stephen Tomkins thought this an oversimplification. Rather, he suggested, the Sect was an interrelated community whose members, while like-minded in some respects, brought a variety of perspectives to the issues that concerned them. He regarded John Thornton as the root of the movement: an early convert to Wesleyan evangelism whose twin guiding aims were the material improvement of people's lives and the salvation of their souls, Thornton put these beliefs into practice by, for example, co-founding the Magdalen Society, which helped prostitutes;

distributing bibles; contributing funds for the building of Holy Trinity Church; and giving away £3,000 a year, largely to church funds for the poor.

His ideals and example were taken up by his son, Henry Thornton, and nephew William Wilberforce, but with the significant difference that whereas John Thornton had not sought to influence people other than by example, his successors wanted to politicise and spread his notions of philanthropy: to convert the nation, preach the gospel and promote social justice. To help them do this, they recruited others with sympathetic views and, after the appointment of John Venn as rector, Holy Trinity became the group's focal point. They set in hand a wide range of activities, including founding and funding Sunday schools and benefit clubs for working women; writing and publishing improving tracts; campaigning for social reform and improved prison conditions; and establishing the Church Missionary Society.

The Sect's supreme achievement, its campaign against slavery, was a long slow process: the abolition of the slave trade followed 35 years of hard work, and another ten years' effort was needed before slavery itself was ended. That it succeeded was due in large part to the change the campaign brought

about in the underlying objectives and philosophy of the British Empire – from an essentially commercial set-up to one that aimed at the widest possible spread of spiritual, political, social and cultural enlightenment. While, judged by 21st century criteria, the Sect's approach might be thought to some extent paternalistic, oppressive and rigid, Stephen Tomkins suggested that they could equally be seen as clear-sighted pragmatists. Their apparent tolerance of slavery in Sierra Leone exemplified this pragmatism: the 1807 Act could not have been passed without the acceptance of a House of Lords amendment under which the 'apprentices' rescued from slaving ships became Crown property. And their private altruism was unquestionable: as well as money, Sect members routinely sacrificed aspects of their careers and personal lives to the demands of their overarching aims.

The many thoughtful questions, and the high level of post-meeting discussion, suggested that an already knowledgeable audience had found itself stimulated to think about this familiar subject from a fresh perspective, and had very much valued the experience.

The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain by Stephen Tomkins is available at Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UH.



On the Common

Members will have noticed the dramatic widening of the jogging track round the periphery of Clapham Common. On a cold, wet February day, members of the Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee went for a closer look with a view to putting forward possible solutions. It was clear that runners wanted to avoid the compacted earth and understandably moved over onto the grass. It was agreed that the time had probably come to formalise the track, using appropriate materials

Clapham memories A member recently noticed mention in *The Spectator* of the 100th birthday party of a lady who spoke about her early life in Clapham. She married in 1934. The wedding breakfast was beans on toast at a Lyons Corner House, costing 4d each. She and her husband lived in one room until their first child was born, and when they did at last get a house the roof was blown off by a flying bomb. She now has 25 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren!

Brixton Windmill Following a huge restoration programme Brixton Windmill is due to open on Bank Holiday **Monday 2 May**. A procession is planned from the centre of Brixton – with music, dancing and flowers – up Brixton Hill to Windmill Gardens, where Brixton Windmill's new life as a refurbished and working mill will be celebrated. The Windmill will be open to visitors on this date, and regularly throughout the summer. For more details go to www.brixtonwindmill.org or telephone 07587 170 029.

Choral Workshop If you love singing and would like to do more Battersea Choral Workshops may be the answer. Workshops take place in St Mary's Church, Battersea, SW11 3NA under the expert direction of top vocal coach, Ghislaine Morgan and Artistic Director, Scott Inglis-Kidger.

The theme for this year's workshops is Tallis to Whitacre, and the next workshop on **Saturday 11 June**, entitled Age of Enlightenment, includes music by Mozart and Lotti. For more details and to book up go to www.batterseachoral.co.uk.

Looking for Old Clapham

The Clapham Society recently commissioned a geophysical survey at three different sites in Clapham. For a few days in March a team from Stratascan used non-invasive radar techniques in an effort to locate brick foundations of important buildings which no longer exist. The discovery of some remains by Thames Water when digging trenches for the installation of new water pipes last year led us to believe that this would be a valuable exercise. Michael Green did extensive research on two of the sites for his book, *Historic Clapham*, which documents the history of the houses concerned.

The first site was in The Chase, where it seems likely that the south façade of Clapham Place, the mansion built by Denis Gauden in about 1660, is located under the back gardens of some houses, since remains of brick foundations were found in the adjoining road. Samuel Pepys died at Clapham Place in 1703.

The second site was in the gardens of three houses in Rectory Grove, where it is thought that the walls, chimneystacks and tower foundations of the Manor House, Clapham Court, built c.1580 may lie within a foot or two of the surface.

It was decided that while the team were in Clapham we should include in the survey an area around St Paul's Church, which has long been a subject of interest to local historians. It is hoped that the burial vaults of the medieval church, previously on the site, might be located. The church was demolished in 1814 and the funerary monuments of the Lords of the Manor were dumped in the manorial burial vaults below the old church. In 1886 those of the Atkins family were retrieved by JH Grover and can now be seen in St Paul's Church. However, other monuments are still missing and may survive in one of the hitherto unlocated burial vaults. The team were also looking for the foundations of the Norman Manor House which are believed to lie at the west end of the church.

The Manor House, the old parish church on the site of the present St Paul's Church and the Atkins monuments in the church are all described and illustrated in our book, *Discovering Clapham* (available on our website or from Clapham Books).

When we receive the results of the survey and a full report from Stratascan a detailed article will appear in the newsletter.



The team at work in St Paul's Churchyard

From New York to Dulwich

The 'Masterpiece A Month' series at Dulwich Picture Gallery continues and during April El Greco's *The Vision of St John* from the Metropolitan Museum in New York will be on display.

The gallery also has a programme of events for both adults and children over the Easter period. For details go to www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or telephone 020 8693 5254.

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

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Dates for your Diary

The Summer Fete at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove is on **Saturday 11 June**, The Common Fayre at Holy Trinity Church is on **Saturday 18 June** and the Abbeville Fete in Abbeville Road and the Church of the Holy Spirit is on **Saturday 25 June**.

Changing times

The following extract from the Headmaster of Clapham's Henry Thornton School letter to parents in 1959, might excite the interest of the Health and Safety Executive today:

'The increase in the number of accidents to boys carrying out experiments at home is a matter of deep concern which calls for immediate attention. While no one would wish to stifle the spirit which prompts such experiments it does seem that more supervision and advice are essential. Parents should take a lively interest in their sons' hobbies and be aware of any experimental work being undertaken. If there seems to be any risk in such experiments further advice should always be sought.

Experiments which boys see carried out with perfect safety in a laboratory under ideal conditions may well prove to be dangerous if attempted at home. The making of fireworks, explosives, the dismantling of grenades, mortar bombs, etc., which can still be found in some districts, should be forbidden. Experiments with rocket propellants can be dangerous unless carried out under expert guidance.'

(Quoted in the January 2011 newsletter of the Old Thorntonians)

Transport problems For eight weeks from 21 March, Clapham Park Road is closed to traffic near Clapham Common Station because of Thames Water road works. Transport for London tell us that Bus Routes 35, 37, 137, 417, 689, 690, N35 and N137 are all being diverted as a result.

See www.tfl.gov.uk for more information, or contact TfL's 24 hour travel information line on 0843 222 1234.

Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications are on **The Clapham Society** website at www.claphamsociety.com.