

The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 322

November 2009

CLAPHAM SOCIETY CONCERT

St Cecilia is the patron saint of music and for our last meeting this year on **Wednesday 18 November** – shortly before the day on which she is celebrated – musicians from the Clapham Chamber Concerts team will give a recital of music by a range of English composers. Songs by Purcell (whose 350th birthday we are celebrating this year), Vaughan Williams, Walton, Gurney and Britten will be sung by soprano Aoife Miskelly and baritone Marcus Farnsworth. Amanda Lake and Jessica MaryonDavies will play music for violin and piano by Vaughan Williams and Elgar. The concert will start at 8 pm prompt in the **Upper Hall at Clapham Manor School, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ.**

The first half of the concert will be about 45 minutes, followed by a 15 minute interval and then another 45 minutes of music. The evening will finish by 9.45 pm.

This is an excellent opportunity to hear outstanding young musicians performing some wellloved music, and tickets (£10, which includes a glass of wine during the interval) are going quickly. If you have not yet ordered your tickets there is a booking form on the back page of this newsletter.

In view of the current postal uncertainties, rather than risk the post you may prefer to contact Maev Sullivan by telephone (020 7498 9205) or email (maevsullivan@gmail.com) to arrange to collect tickets from her, or she would be happy to deliver them locally.

January meeting

At this meeting Big Up Films, a Claphambased organisation made up of local filmmakers and artists, will present the results of their successful heritage project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, entitled *Common Voices: Past and Present*.

The project brought together Year 6 pupils from Bonneville School and older people to capture memories of growing up in Clapham in the years after the end of World War II. This culminated in a film, artwork illustrating the stories and a mixed media map of Clapham Common, facilitated by tours and talks by members of the Clapham Society Local History Sub committee and Lambeth Archives. The project was celebrated at Clapham Picturehouse in July. A member of the audience commented: 'This was a much needed community project. It is hopefully a link in a chain of many projects to follow. A great intergenerational start'.

We hope to continue and build on the community links and relationships that have been developed and we are keen to hear from anyone who is interested in taking part in further developments of the Common Voices Project; these will be presented and open to discussion at the meeting.

To find out more about the Common Voices Project or to request a DVD please contact me by email: triciaholland@talktalk.net

Tricia Holland, Project Coordinator

There is no meeting in December. Our normal meetings will resume at Clapham Manor Primary in January. The full programme for 2010 will be published in the next newsletter.

Wednesday 13 January

Common Voices: Past and Present. Tricia Holland, coordinator of this oral history project in which several members of the Society took part earlier this year, will talk about the development of the project and show the DVD which resulted from it. She will go on to outline the next project proposed by the group. A small exhibition and map will also be on display at the meeting. See details on the left.

A special meeting will be held on **Wednesday 4 November** starting at 7 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School to discuss the Clapham Gateway proposals. The plans can be seen at the library on Clapham Common North Side and the consultation period has been extended until mid-November.

We urge you to go to the library to see the proposals and come and make your views known!

Fireworks

The spectacular free annual fireworks display on Clapham Common starts at 7.30 pm on **Thursday 5 November**. Lambeth Council will also be putting on displays at the same time on Streatham Common and in Brockwell Park.

In Battersea Park the fireworks are on **Saturday 7 November**, when the bonfire is lit at 7.30 pm and the fireworks start at 8pm. Admission is £6 for adults and £1 for children under 10.

These events are very popular, so turn up early and expect a big crowd!

Drawing Attention

The current exhibition (running until January 2010) at Dulwich Picture Gallery is of drawings from the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada. There are over 100 works by a variety of artists including Tiepolo, Rembrandt, Degas, Matisse, Gauguin, Picasso and Henry Moore. For full details and opening times telephone 020 8693 5254 or go to www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk.



Among several interesting new buildings in Clapham which could be visited during London Open House was this unusual garden pavilion in The Chase.

South London Line

The campaign to save the South London line – the overground train service between Victoria and London Bridge which stops at Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street – continues to attract interest and support. For those in Clapham who use either of those stations, current proposals would bring an end to the direct, rapid journeys to Victoria and London Bridge; instead, passengers would have to take the (already overcrowded) tube or travel via Clapham Junction. Sharon Grant, Chair of London TravelWatch – which has undertaken a survey of current usage – has warned that its withdrawal would result in ‘thousands of angry passengers with significantly longer journey times and inconvenient interchanges...and a very real risk of overcrowding’ on other rail, bus and tube services.

For more information visit the Facebook site (<http://apps.facebook.com/causes/277087>); and consider signing the online petition (www.tinyurl.com/SouthLondonLine). The Mayor of London’s next ‘People’s Question Time’ – on 9 November in Brixton – is likely to attract questions on the topic. Tickets may still be available – apply to peoplesquestions@london.gov.uk.

Christmas cards We do not have our own new Christmas card this year though we still have available a limited number of the card produced a few years ago with the sepia picture of The Drinking Fountain on Clapham Common in the snow in 1906. The cards cost £4 for a pack of 10. The picture can be seen and cards bought on our website or contact Alyson Wilson (details on back page).

For local cards we would recommend

with neighbours and visitors and by using the Gateway project consultation process. In pilot closures for occasional French markets, Venn Street has proven to be a good venue with little impact on the area’s traffic flow, but we wish to see full consideration of all aspects of the operation built into the final form.

In its current form the street can only be closed on a monthly basis for a fee, so the aim is to design and implement a pedestrianised layout with market infrastructure which would allow application to be made for a weekly market. We hope this will bring the full benefits of the farmers’ market, broadening the commercial activity of Clapham, adding a significant environmental improvement to the streetscape and bolstering the aims of the Gateway project, should the council be successful with that bid.

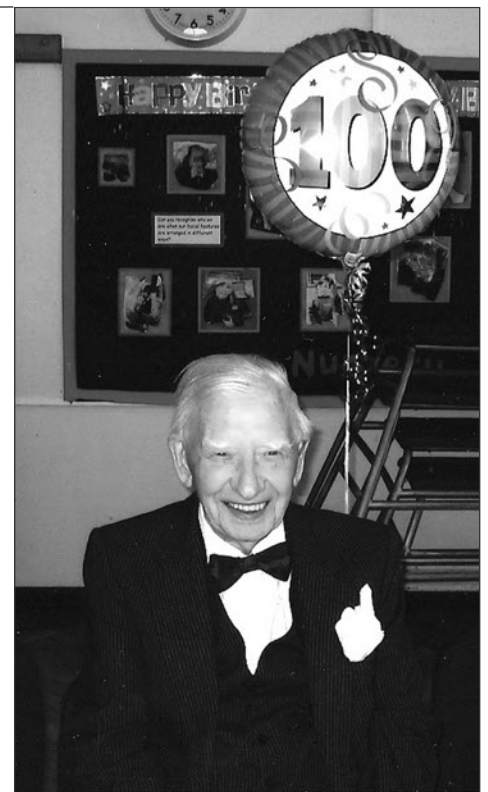
I am grateful for the chance to contribute to the newsletter and would welcome comments, questions and ideas from members.

Councillor Nigel Haselden nhaselden@lambeth.gov.uk: 07946 219 232

100 years young!

On Sunday 13 September Edward George Turner of Abbeville Road celebrated his 100th birthday. This was marked by the cutting of a cake and a drink after the morning service at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Narbonne Avenue, which he has attended for many years and where he has been a long serving Treasurer and server. In the afternoon a large party of family, friends and colleagues celebrated with a party at Clapham Manor Primary School, where his wife still teaches on a parttime basis. Alongside Ted’s birthday card from the Queen on his mantelpiece is a second one from her congratulating the Turners on their 60th wedding anniversary!

Ted was born within the sound of Bow Bells and is therefore a Cockney, but he has lived in Clapham for 73 years and is a longstanding member of the Clapham Society.



that you look at the Trinity Hospice cards, in particular a photograph of the hospice garden in the snow. Details are available on the website www.trinityhospice.org.uk or by telephoning 020 7787 1084.

New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members this month: Big Up Films, Diana Calvert, Glyn Chambers and Harvey Pettit.

Farmers’ Market

At the end of November Clapham will host its very own farmers’ market in Venn Street. Marcus Weedon and Ben O’Brien of Sourced Market (www.sourcedmarket.com) are working closely with Lambeth Council to offer high quality British and European foods and flowers to our local residents and to visitors to the area. The market will take place monthly from **27, 28 and 29 November**. The emphasis will be on organic, freerange, seasonal produce that comes from within about a 100mile radius of London. Sundays will focus on delivering a flower market similar to the Columbia Road market offering a wide variety of indoor and outdoor plants, cut flowers and herbs.

Councillors wish to foster the market as an important new presence in the area, helping to support trading in and around Clapham High Street. It is intended that the market operation will be shaped in its early editions by direct engagement

The Naiades Wind Quintet

On **Friday 20 November** at 7.30 pm the Clapham Chamber Concerts Autumn Series will close with a concert at St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX by the Naiades Wind Quintet. The programme will include Holst's Wind Quintet and pianist Lisa Garson will join the quintet in Poulenc's glorious Sextet.

Members of the quintet have worked professionally with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, English Chamber Orchestra and Southbank Sinfonia.

Tickets available on the door are £9, concessions £6 and children under 12 £3. To join Clapham Chamber Concerts mailing list, or for information, email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com.

Learn something new

The Papered Parlour in Prescott Place continues its series of autumn classes with 'Screen Printing: Design a Bag' on **Sunday 8 November** and 'Make a Book' on **Saturday 14 November**. Or on **Sunday 22 November** you can 'Make a Dress' and on **Sunday 29 November** 'Make your Own Christmas Cards'.

For full details telephone 020 7627 8703 or go to their website: www.thepaperedparlour.co.uk.

Email addresses

We know that many members have email addresses which are not on our records, probably because they have been members for a long time, and before they had email. There are rare occasions when it would be convenient for us to contact members in this way, for instance when important local meetings are announced at short notice. We promise that we shall not bombard you with trivial and unnecessary emails!

If you think that we may not have your address could you simply send an email to the Membership Secretary, Jennifer Everett (jeverett@waitrose.com) so that she can add this information to her records.

Mendelssohn's 200th

anniversary On **Saturday 21 November** at St Luke's Church, Thurlleigh Road, SW12 8RQ the Festival Chorus will celebrate the 200th anniversary of Felix Mendelssohn's birth with his choral masterpiece, St Paul. Mendelssohn's music has more than a hint of JS Bach, as

The Man on the Clapham Omnibus

Iain Aitch is a journalist, author and broadcaster. Three years ago, he thought that it might be interesting to write a book on – or around – the subject of 'The Man on the Clapham Omnibus'. For various reasons, the book did not materialise, but Iain had quite a lot of fun looking into the subject. Some of the research he turned into an article (which also did not reach publication stage) and he shared this with us at our September meeting.

Basic research revealed that the phrase itself probably derived from the suggestion by the 19th century political writer Walter Bagehot that 'public opinion...is the opinion of the baldheaded man at the back of the omnibus'. In the legal profession, it has come to mean 'a reasonable man', the first reported legal quotation of the phrase being in a 1903 libel case in which the Master of the Rolls attributed it to Lord Bowen, who had died nine years earlier. And it has travelled: the phrase has been incorporated in Canadian jurisprudence, and has inspired a (rather clunking) Australian equivalent: 'the hypothetical person on a hypothetical Bondi tram'.

When Iain started to look for the presentday Clapham Omnibus man, his first call was of course to the Clapham Society's Secretary. They met for coffee on the Common, where the preponderance of baby buggies plus their occupants and drivers suggested that a more appropriate phrase for today's typical Clapham inhabitant might perhaps be 'the woman in the Clapham Common Bandstand café'. Thereafter, Iain proceeded to Old Town to look at the buses themselves (and shudder at the house prices in the local estate agents' windows); and thence to Clapham High Street in a further search for 'the ordinary man'. His hopes were raised by the discovery of the Socialist Party of Great Britain's HQ, but dashed when he found that its occupants (two men and a ferret) were no more typical of the average reasonable person than anyone else he had so far met.

Finally, Iain concluded that his quest was probably futile. He went on, instead, to write an A to Z on the broader concept of Britishness (*We're British, Innit*), inspired by the official guide for wouldbe British citizens. But he did not entirely abandon the idea of omnibus man: the entry in his book under 'Double Deckers' suggests that this bus provides 'a neat guide to your place in life.... As a teenager the only place you should be sitting is at the top and at the back. This allows you to try out all the ring tones on your mobile phone while you draw graffiti on the back of the seats and glower at other passengers. As you move into your twenties and thirties you will slowly move forward towards...an easy escape route in case anyone should start to look at you a bit funny.... From the age of 40...you should sit downstairs and contemplate life's complexities....'. So while, as in Bagehot's time, your average, reasonable, baldheaded man may still travel on the Clapham omnibus, he probably no longer occupies the same seat.



The Clapham Society stand at Lambeth Archives Day. The Mayor of Lambeth, Christopher Wellbelove and Mayoress, Emta Griffith, with Jennifer Everett, Membership Secretary and Alison Macnair, Chair of the Society.

well as some great solo arias and choruses. David Fawcett conducts the choir and Sinclair Sinfonia, joined by Elodie Kimmel, Patricia Orr, David Webb and Paul Sheehan. There will be a preconcert

talk on Mendelssohn and his music. The concert starts at 7.30 pm. Tickets are £16 (£12 concessions) from the box office 07951 791619 or book online at www.slms.org.uk.

Clapham Deep Shelters

One of the most popular meetings we have ever had was the presentation in September last year on the development and various uses of the deep shelters beneath some London underground stations, in particular, the three Clapham stations. We have adapted this slightly so that the text and pictures can be seen in the Local History section of our website – go to www.claphamsociety.com and click on Article 5 in the Local History Series.

At the meeting we played recordings of the memories of three people who used the shelters. Full texts are on the website, but below are some reminiscences of Margaret Barford, who lived with her family in the deep shelter at Clapham South after their home had been destroyed by a V1.

‘I was born in a nursing home in Nightingale Lane, and lived in Balham with my parents and grandmother. I was six years old when the war started, living in the road adjacent to the old St James’ Hospital and the railway line at Wandsworth Common, which made us a target for bombing. We had our cellar reinforced and a Morrison table shelter installed in the dining room, and survived the Blitz when it started fairly well. Then the V1s or doodlebugs as they were known changed everything. When I was nine years old, I think, a daytime doodlebug came over, and the engine cut out and it crashed on about five houses in a row in our road. I was at school, my father at work. My mother, grandmother and uncle who were in the cellar were safely dug out and rescued. I came home from school to find the shell of our house leaning over and most of our belongings destroyed. We moved to my uncle’s house, also in Balham, but two weeks later the same thing happened there, so we then had two families homeless....

Being homeless our two families were allocated shelter passes, and so about a year of this type of living began. We were allowed to go down to the shelter from 6 pm onwards and had to come up by 7 am next morning. My father managed to find two rooms for us to use during the day. I was sent to school, he was at work and mother and grandmother stayed in the rooms all day. Then after tea we began the trek to the

shelter. We were allowed to leave bedding on our allocated bunks but nothing else, so personal things were packed and unpacked daily. We caught the bus to Clapham South station, used our passes to go down on the escalator to underground level and then through a door we had never noticed before in the corner, and down spiral stairs to the shelter. These stairs wound round a small lift which the elderly and disabled could use. There were a great many stairs, and these all had to be climbed again in the morning.

Once down, we made our way to our allocated section of bunks. These sections were named after British admirals. I think ours was Grenville. The steel bunks we had been given were positioned in sixes, so a family could be as private as possible. We had two sections for our two families; one chair to each six bunks. I slept at the bottom, opposite my grandmother. The floor was concrete and rather cold. There was a tannoy system which relayed news, information and canned music which could be quite annoying after a while. We could not hear anything at all from above ground, although we knew air raids were going on which was quite frightening.

At the head of each section were block toilets and basic washing facilities, rather like a camping site with no real privacy. Each section had a canteen run by Red Cross volunteers and I particularly remember the jam tarts – a real treat in those days. These and other edibles and endless cups of tea were on sale.

Frequently a section would have a free concert party to entertain them; it was great fun. Other sections were invited and it was like a big party. Sometimes there would be dances or singsongs to keep us occupied and as happy as possible.

Children were eventually persuaded to bed and sleep and the airconditioners would be turned up full strength; it was



very cold during the night. Lights were dimmed but never out, so we were not in the dark. My mother always put me in a nightdress and I went to bed as usual, but most of the adults did not undress fully. They just had shelter clothes.

It was always an early start in the morning which I hated, but we all had to be out by 7 am. We must have looked like a stream of refugees emerging into the daylight. Then back to our own two rooms for breakfast, hoping they were still standing! I presume cleaning took place in the shelters during the day, but I really did not worry much at that age...

However, we were lucky. We were the privileged ones with passes to comparative safety. We all survived and on the whole were fairly happy and optimistic. I remember the time with affection. I was a child and thought everyone lived like this.’

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

Chair **Alison Macnair**

119 Clapham Manor Street SW4 6DR

Email: alisonmacnair@fastmail.co.uk

Meetings and Events **Maev Sullivan**

2 Fitzwilliam Road, London SW4 0DN

Tel: 020 7498 9205

Email: maevsullivan@gmail.com

Treasurer **David Brown**

15 Turret Grove, London SW4 0ES

Tel: 020 7720 7536

Membership Secretary **Jennifer Everett**

30 Trinity Close, London SW4 0JD

Tel: 020 7627 4770

Secretary **Jill Cramphorn**

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Tel/Fax: 020 7720 3343

Planning Matters **Philip Ashford**

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Common and Open Spaces

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Newsletter and Publications

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Email alysonwilson.sw4@virgin.net

Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications are on

The Clapham Society web site at

www.claphamsociety.com

TICKET APPLICATION FORM

A musical entertainment for St Cecilia’s Day on Wednesday 18 November at 8 pm. A glass of wine in the interval is included.

Please send me tickets @ £10 each. Cheque, payable to The Clapham Society, for £..... with a stamped addressed envelope to Maev Sullivan, 2 Fitzwilliam Road, London SW4 0DN

Name..... Telephone number.....