

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 323 December 2009/January 2010

PROGRAMME FOR 2010

The programme arranged by the Events Sub-committee for next year is shown below. We hope that you will find this is a well-balanced variety of talks, with subjects to appeal to many different interests. If you have ideas for future events or know of good speakers on topics of local interest please contact Maev Sullivan (details on back page).

In 2010 our meetings will again be held in the Lower Hall at **Clapham Manor Primary School**, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ. The hall opens at 7.30 pm, the talk begins promptly at 8 pm and the evening finishes around 9.30 pm. Our meetings are free of charge and open to all, so do bring your friends along.

Wednesday 13 January

Common Voices: Past and Present. **Tricia Holland**, co-ordinator of this oral history project in which several members of the Society took part last summer, 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, which will focus on memories of the Second World War in Clapham. If you would be interested in becoming involved with this project make sure not to miss this meeting. A small exhibition and map will also be on display at the meeting.

Wednesday 10 February

Sycamore House, Old Town. **Tim Gosling** who lives and works from his home at Sycamore House started the concept of a working museum four years ago. The history of the house, built in the 1790s, provided the perfect space and background for his passion for designing classical furniture. Tim will talk about the furniture designs that he creates here alongside the history of the house.

The talk will be illustrated with pictures from his recent book – *Gosling, classic design for contemporary interiors* – published with the V & A and the Wallace Collection and which has pictures of Sycamore House as it is now with Tim's bespoke furniture designs in situ. The foreword was written by Tim Knox, Director of the Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn which has provided much of Tim's inspiration.

Wednesday 17 March

Safer Neighbourhoods. Since 2006, every London ward has had its own Safer Neighbourhood team, involving the police and local people. This meeting will provide more information about how these teams work and an opportunity to discuss matters relating to community safety and crime reduction.

Wednesday 21 April

Lambeth College Sixth Form Centre. **Peter Doble**, Vice-Principal of Lambeth College and **Chris Harding**, a partner at BDP, one of the UK's leading architectural firms that designed the recently-opened building overlooking Clapham Common, will talk about its design and construction. This new building accommodates 1200 students and features a performing arts centre and information learning technology centre, amongst many other 21st century educational facilities.

Wednesday 19 May

The Garden Museum. **Christopher Woodward**, Director of the Garden Museum formerly the Museum of Garden History, which is housed in the church of St-Mary-at-Lambeth, tucked away beside Lambeth Palace, will talk about the history and development of the Museum which re-opened in 2008 after a dramatic transformation. He will go on to trace the history of gardening in Britain through works of art from the Elizabethan period to the 20th century.

Wednesday 16 June

Animals and Battersea. **Dr Hilda Kean**, FRHistS author of *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* and Dean of Ruskin College, Oxford, will explore why the Dogs' Home, the Brown Animal Sanatory Institution, the Anti-Vivisection Hospital (which refused to employ any staff who experimented on animals) and a controversial statue commemorating a brown terrier dog killed at University College, London, were all in Battersea in the early 1900s. She will discuss what this aspect of the past adds to our understanding of this part of London. (NB. There will be no images of dead animals.)

Wednesday 7 July

Summer Party at 82 Clapham Common West Side by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Richard Roxburgh.

Wednesday 14 July

North Side Walk. An evening walk along the North Side of Clapham Common, led by Mary Coales.

Wednesday 18 August

Clapham Old Town. An evening walk round the heart of Old Clapham, led by David Perkin.

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Wednesday 15 September

The Eric Smith Lecture. Professor Andrew Saint, the General Editor of the *Survey of London*, will talk about the Survey and about one of its current projects, on the Parish of Battersea. The *Survey of London* is a monumentally comprehensive architectural and topographical description of London, being published parish by parish. The Battersea volumes will include the western part of the Common and the streets nearby.

Wednesday 20 October

Annual General Meeting – Guest speaker to be announced.

Wednesday 17 November

A life in the theatre. Many members will know **Maurice Stewart**, a long-time Clapham resident who has masterminded some of the Society's more memorable events of recent years, including the celebrations of Noel Coward and Samuel Pepys and the exploration of the history of the music halls. We have now persuaded him to tell us something of his own life and times, from his early years as a child actor through a long and varied theatrical career. A fascinating evening is guaranteed!

There is no meeting in December

Gateway Project

On 4 November a well-attended special meeting arranged by the Clapham Society discussed the Gateway project.

The meeting started with a presentation by Urban Initiatives, the project designers for Lambeth Council. The scheme is intended to improve the environment in the area between Old Town and Clapham Common Underground Station; a key feature is reducing unnecessarily wide road space, for the benefit of pedestrians. The scheme would have to be financed by a bid for capital to Transport for London (TfL), and if the bid is approved, work could start next autumn.

The major change, and the major area of contention, would affect the bus stands in Old Town. The designers have offered two options. Option A would relocate all the bus stands (for four routes) to the roadway which is part of The Pavement, between the Library and the junction by Trinity Close. Option B would keep the bus stand in Old Town. On both options, the east side of Old Town would become access only for vehicles, and on the west side the road would become two-way; on the west side also the pavement would be widened. Under Option A there would be

Planning News

Since September we have been notified of some 55 applications, reviewed 12 and made representations on the five summarised below.

36 Old Town. Objection to a proposal to change the use of the first and second floors and extend the building for storage and staff space for the ground floor restaurant, because of the loss of residential accommodation and the effect on neighbouring residents' amenity.

55 Clapham Common South Side. Support for a proposal to remove the present clumsy and disfiguring roof extension on this prominent building.

15 Lillieshall Road. Objection to alterations to this listed building because they fail to use traditional materials and building techniques.

47 Larkhall Rise. Objection to a proposal to turn the front garden into a car park in association with the conversion of the building to flats.

27 Clapham High Street. Comments to improve the design of a proposal to convert this building into four flats and to make associated alterations.

We have also provided pre-application comments to developers preparing plans to convert **2 Rectory Grove** and **94 Larkhall Rise** back into family houses.

Lambeth are continuing to review and update information and management plans for the borough's conservation areas, and we will be contributing to their current draft on the Clapham Road conservation area. Full details of the numerous conservation areas in Clapham and their descriptions can be found on Lambeth's website.

space in the centre of the area to create a large pedestrian piazza; under Option B there would be increased space for pedestrians, but the centre would still largely be filled by the buses.

Under either option, passengers would not be allowed to board buses at the stands (as they can now). TfL's policy is to separate stands from alighting and boarding stops, and the boarding stop would be moved to the area between Trinity Close and Pond Gallery. (This would inconvenience older people who board buses at Old Town to ease their journey to and from the High Street.)

Most of the discussion and the most passionate argument focused on Option A. The designers say that the bus stands have to accommodate a maximum of seven buses at any time, with an average of 4.2; but there was very strong criticism of the visual impact of the buses between The Polygon and the Common, noise, smells and hazards to children, as well as questioning whether all four routes needed to terminate here. There are already times of serious congestion along The Pavement, caused in part by parked vehicles, and endangering progress of emergency vehicles; some speakers feared that the addition of bus stands, with drivers manoeuvring to get on and off the stands, would make the situation worse.

Against this, there seemed little enthusiasm for a bus-free piazza in Old Town. Some speakers commented that we do not have a continental café culture, but we do have an excessive drinking problem. Councillor Haselden said that Lambeth have now made the whole of

the borough a Controlled Drinking Area, and this got a round of applause; but some still questioned how the policy would be enforced.

Time permitted no more than brief discussion of the other end of the Gateway – the approaches to Clapham Common Station. There are plans to open the area out by removing railings; but the small green pieces are part of the Common, so their total size cannot be reduced. The environment could be improved, but there are issues over cycle parking and the possibility that removing the railings would result in the grass being worn out. A previous 'improvement' had attracted anti-social drinkers.

The meeting was a discussion, which ended when it was time to leave the hall. But if I had to sum up, my personal sense of the meeting was this: The disadvantages of the bus proposals in Option A are clear and certain, while the advantages of the Old Town piazza are intangible and uncertain. The proposals for the area by the station need more thought.

During the meeting, as the criticisms were flying, John Adams, who chaired the meeting, said that we could go for a third option – which was to do nothing. But it would be shame if as a community we could not improve the area in some way. This was applauded. But at least on what was being said, it is easier to see the downsides of the schemes on offer than to reach any consensus on what would be real improvements.

Peter Jefferson Smith

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2009

The 46th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 21 October 2009 at 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. The Society's President, Martin Drury, took the chair and 48 members were present.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from the Treasurer of the Society, David Brown, from Annabel Allott, Claire Brown, Jenny Cobley, Anna Jefferson Smith, Janet Johnson and Val Johnson.
2. The Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting (22 October 2008), which had been previously circulated, were unanimously approved.
3. The Chair of the Society, Alison Macnair, first wished David Brown a speedy recovery from his sudden illness. She then presented the Annual Report, which had been circulated with the October newsletter (No. 321). Alison pointed out that the report summarised the Society's activities during the year, acknowledging the work undertaken by members of the Society and in particular

by members of the main committee and the various sub-committees. She referred members to this written report, adding that she did not intend to go through the Report in detail at the meeting. There were no questions on the Report, which was unanimously adopted.

4. In the absence of the Treasurer, Euan Kennedy presented the Financial Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009. He thanked David Brown for his hard work on the Accounts and said that there was nothing of particular note to draw to the attention of members: the Society's financial situation is healthy and membership stable. He answered several questions on the Accounts, before inviting the meeting to adopt them. The Accounts were unanimously adopted.

5. The following were then elected as officers for the year 2009-2010:

Chair Alison Macnair

Secretary Jill Cramphorn

Treasurer David Brown

Membership Secretary Jennifer Everett

Solicitor Alison Macnair

Also elected as **Committee Members** were: John Adams, Annabel Allott, Bill

Emmett, Michael English, Anna Jefferson Smith, Maeve Sullivan and Alyson Wilson.

6. Euan Kennedy FCA was reappointed as **Independent Examiner**.

7. Announcements. Peter Burke-Murphy, Chairman of the Friends of Clapham Common, drew attention to the AGM of the FoCC on 3 November at Clapham Manor Primary School, at which, after the business part of the meeting, there would be a presentation of the feasibility study on the future of Mount Pond. He invited members of the Clapham Society to attend this part of the meeting.

John Adams announced that there would be a special meeting to discuss the Clapham Gateway project at Clapham Manor Primary School on 4 November. He urged members to go to Clapham Library to see the display about the proposals and to attend the meeting to learn more and exchange views. He added that the consultation period had been extended until mid-November.

At the conclusion of the business there was a break for refreshments before the guest speaker, **Martin Linton MP**, addressed the meeting.

Martin Linton first mentioned the confusion surrounding the fact that the geographic centre of his constituency, known as Clapham Junction, is actually in Battersea. The origin of this anomaly dates back to the early 1860s when a name was sought for the major new railway junction in Battersea, an area which was fast changing from its traditional market gardens to industrialisation, and nearby Clapham with its Common seemed more attractive. This choice still rankles with many and an organisation, SW11tch, is campaigning to change the name, but local businesses are reluctant.

Mr Linton addressed several issues which are causing controversy locally. The first was tall buildings. Wandsworth Council, he said, had granted permission for blocks between 32 and 42 storeys high on the old Ram Brewery site, but the application has been called in. Redevelopment plans for Clapham Junction station area also included two tower blocks. These are strongly opposed by local amenity societies. In the past there were height guidelines – basically stating that no building should be significantly higher than its neighbours – but the local development framework for Wandsworth no longer includes these.

Transport is a major cause of concern for local residents. Despite the busy mainline station there is no link to the underground system, nor any direct bus service from Clapham Junction or Balham to the West End. The East London line is due to be extended to Clapham Junction in 2011, but the South London line, which already has very short platforms at Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street, is under threat. Aircraft noise causes much distress locally, and is likely to be increased with the possible arrival of the third runway, though it is claimed that the main impact of this will be north of the river. Mr Linton said that the technology was in place for the introduction of electric cars, and car clubs and bicycle hire schemes also were being developed as ways of cutting down on congestion locally.

In answer to a question about the future of Battersea Power Station we heard that since its closure in 1983 there have been several owners and different schemes. These have become progressively less ambitious and the present, scaled-down application includes mostly housing and some offices. An application for a 350m high building on the site had been rejected. Plans for the relocation of the US Embassy adjoining Covent Garden market were being developed. We were assured that it is a condition of all planning applications along the river that a riverside walk is included.

We are grateful to Martin Linton, whose constituency includes a significant number of our members, for coming to update us on his part of Clapham (or Battersea?!).

Join the party in Eden

Clapham's best-kept secret garden is having a party! Every year Eden at St Paul's Community Garden celebrates the winter and summer solstice with a garden party. On **Monday 21 December** from 3 pm to 5 pm, Eden's volunteers invite you to join them for a glass of mulled wine, music, and toasted marshmallows

and chestnuts round the fire. Children can make bird feeders and decorate the trees in time for Christmas. Tucked behind St Paul's Church SW4 0DX, Eden sits alongside Matrimony Place between Rectory Grove and Wandsworth Road. www.stpaulssw4.org

A Christmas Gift

Have you thought about a gift membership to the Clapham Society for a local friend – possibly a new neighbour? Or a book about Clapham? *Discovering Clapham* is a colourful brief introduction to the area. Full details are on our website www.claphamsociety.com or contacts on the back page of this newsletter.



Tree planting

On Saturday 24 October members of the Society were joined by family and friends of Norman Marsh and John How for a tree planting ceremony. A London plane tree was planted near Holy Trinity Church, within sight of Norman's former house on North Side, to commemorate his association with the Clapham Society over more than 40 years until his death in 2008. A black poplar was planted near Eagle Pond, not far from the former home of John How, who left Clapham this year after serving the Society in several roles for about 30 years.



Dedication Ceremony

In a moving ceremony on 31 October the Reverend Deborah Matthews, Vicar of St Paul's Church dedicated a plaque at Lambeth College Sixth Form Centre to former pupils of Henry Thornton School (the school which was previously on that site), who were killed in the Second World War. The memorial plaque had been provided by the Old Thorntonian Association, and members of the association read out the names of the 54 men from the school who lost their lives. The Mayors of Lambeth and Wandsworth, local councillors and school staff joined in the short service, and visitors were later shown round the new building by students.

Light Up A Life

On **Thursday 10 December** at 6.30 pm the Christmas tree outside Trinity Hospice will be lit and a carol service at Holy Trinity Church will follow at 7.15 pm. Many people take the opportunity to remember a loved one by joining in this touching service. Everyone is always welcome. To make a donation and add a light to the tree in honour of someone special go to www.trinityhospice.org.uk or telephone Ibbie Omideyi 020 7787 1085.

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

The Clapham Society web site at
www.claphamsociety.com

New Members

We welcomed the following new members this month: William Hill, Barry and Susan Keegan, Nigel and Alison Newbery, Lee and Sarah Roberts, George Reeve, Fran Welby and Nick Jones