

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



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Notre Dame Playground

Lambeth Council through the Play Pathfinder programme has recently secured funding to improve and develop 11 play areas across the borough over the coming year. The purpose of the Play Pathfinder funding is to develop exciting and safe play facilities which are accessible to all children, use natural design and focus on 8- to 13-year olds.

The Notre Dame Estate has been selected as one of the sites to receive investment by 31 March 2011, and **erect architecture** has been appointed to develop the scheme on the green space next to the Orangery building.

The proposed design divides the space into two areas: the main play area and a quieter landscaped zone near the residential properties for community use.

The play structure stands adjacent to the Orangery building and responds to the 18th century structure in regard to scale and to the idea of a romanticised folly. Found trunks and branches come together to create false trees, which hide the play equipment within an artificial woodland while providing idyllic tree houses and dens.

The informally landscaped area allows the wild wooded corner to creep out into a tamer, rolling landscape similar to the original grounds the Orangery was built in – with mounds, meadow grasses, and a small orchard. Incorporating planting areas, table tennis and seating to complement the Orangery and forecourt, the new design encourages the whole community to use the space.



Gateway Project Exhibition

The exhibition showing details of the Clapham Gateway proposals continues at Clapham Library on North Side until **Friday 15 October**, during normal library opening hours. On **Thursday 30 September** from 6 pm and 8 pm and on **Tuesday 12 October** from 1 pm to 4 pm staff will be present to answer questions and give more information. On **Saturday 16 October** there will be an outdoor exhibition from 1 pm to 4 pm on The Pavement, outside Trinity Close.

Do go along to find out what is proposed and to give your feedback. A summary of the proposals and the Society's view is shown in the Annual Report enclosed with this newsletter.

Our regular monthly meetings are held at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ. The entrance to the school in Stonhouse Street, through the new building, is **NOT open for our evening meetings. Use the Belmont Road entrance, cross the playground and enter the building on the right. The hall is open from 7.30 pm when coffee and tea are normally available. The talk begins promptly at 8 pm and most meetings finish by 9.30 pm.**

Wednesday 20 October

Annual General Meeting. The guest speaker is **Councillor Steve Reed, Leader of Lambeth Council.** In his talk, entitled *Lambeth – the Co-operative Council*, he will talk about the new 'co-operative' approach to be adopted by the council in the place of the usual structure of local government. (See article in the September newsletter).

Wednesday 17 November

An Unpredictable Life. In 1948 at the age of 16 **Maurice Stewart** bought a house in Clapham with his earnings as a child performer in grand opera, films and theatre. If you remember Clapham Society evenings with Noel Coward, Samuel Pepys and Victorian Musical Hall put together by this man of many parts, you will expect the unexpected. We have invited Maurice to tell us more about his 60-year international career working in many different branches of the entertainment industry from a base in the Old Town. No songs and other actors this time, just a few unlikely stories set in Clapham between 1945 and 2009.

There is no meeting in December

Planning News

Since May we have been notified of about 105 applications, reviewed 20 of them and made representations on 12. The principal ones are summarised below.

121A Park Hill. Objection to a scheme to convert and extend the old coach house to create two houses, because it fails to retain as much of the building's historic character as it could.

173-175 Abbeville Road. Design comments on a new application to build a single storey dwelling in the rear garden fronting onto Crescent Lane. The reduction from two to one storey was a big improvement on previous schemes, but still left scope for further improvements.

Site next to 8 Rozel Road. Design comments on a scheme to replace a garage building with a single storey house.

25-33 Macaulay Road. Objection to an application to redesign Building J, part of the large and presently stalled redevelopment of the Cannon's site, for residential instead of the previously consented office use. Block J is located immediately behind George West House; it is very close to Orlando Road so will damage those residents' amenity, as well as providing poor quality living accommodation for its own residents.

Kings Head, 100 Clapham Park Road. Objection to a proposal to replace historic industrial buildings at the back of the pub with five new houses and some office space. In addition to the loss of the historic buildings, the development tries to cram too much on to the site, creating a poor residential environment.

35 Crescent Grove. Objection to an over large and dominant side extension to this listed building.

35-51 Bedford Road. Comments on a scheme to redevelop the present builders' merchant site with new housing and some office space. The design raised issues about the visual relationship with existing neighbouring buildings and impact on their residents' amenity. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

25 Larkhall Rise. In response to the application to approve changes to the original planning consent to reflect the new house as actually constructed in the rear garden of no 25 we maintain our previous viewpoint that any new building should be positioned so as to be virtually invisible from the street.

Open Studios Weekend

On **Saturday 2 October** and **Sunday 3 October** studios and workshops throughout Lambeth will be open to the public. Amongst them is our local craft venue The Papered Parlour at 7 Prescott Place, SW4 6BS. There you will have the chance to meet 17 top designers and exchange ideas with leaders in their design fields, and spend a relaxing afternoon meeting and buying from local artists as they make and sell their beautifully hand crafted pieces at the Parlour's designer market. There will also be a café serving scrumptious homemade cakes and tea in vintage tea cups. From 10 am to 6 pm – free!

Other local studios open during the weekend include portraitist Rebecca Fontaine-Wolf's at 7 St Luke's Avenue, SW4 7LG and Plough Studios at 9 Park Hill, SW4 9NS, whose resident award winning photographers include James Mann, a leading car and motorcycle photographer. There will be a display at the British Home, Crown Lane, SW16 3JB of the works of residents and many artists unable to show in their own homes or studios. Full details of all the studios open with a map showing locations can be found at www.lambethopen.com.

More lectures...

Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society has produced an interesting lecture programme for the coming season. On **Tuesday 12 October** Julian Bowsher of the Museum of London Archaeology will speak about recent work on the Shakespearean Playhouses of London, and on **Tuesday 9 November** David Watts will trace the history of glass making on the Thames Southbank. In 2011 lectures include Edmund Bird on the Edwardian Architecture of Lambeth and Stephen Humphrey on History Reflected in Churches.

All meetings are held at The Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut (opposite the Old Vic Theatre) starting at 7 pm. Non-members are asked to make a £1 donation. For more details telephone 020 8764 8314.

A Literary Month

Are you a writer?

Jenny Mitchell is leading her popular Creative Writing course for new and experienced writers at Clapham Library again this November. Workshops are on **Thursdays 11, 18 and 25 November** from 6.15 pm to 7.45 pm at the library at 1 Clapham Common North Side. The cost of the course is £24. To reserve your place call Jenny on 020 7274 8414.

Clapham Books

Will Self will be talking about and reading from his new book, *Walking to Hollywood*, on **Monday 4 October** at 7 pm at Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UH.

These were our sons:

Stories from Stockwell War Memorial

For her recently published book Naomi Klein has researched the 574 names which appear on the Stockwell War memorial, and unearthed secrets from the archives to paint a portrait of life in South London at the time.

She identified the men through the 1911 census, military records, rolls of honour, family letters and personal accounts, and has pieced together aspects of their lives enabling us to see the people and the personalities behind the names.

The stories that have emerged are rich and varied – they include jack-the-lads, fraudsters and underage volunteers, as well as seasoned soldiers, steady family men and hardworking artisans. They were bank clerks, printers, prison officers, railwaymen, barmen and plumbers, Christian and Jew, volunteer and conscript, young and old, brothers, fathers and sons.

These were our Sons is published by Elefant Books, price £9.99.

The Icarus Diaries

On **Sunday 24 October** at 2.30 pm at Clapham Library Kate Hoyland will introduce her powerful debut novel – a literary thriller set in a fictional Asia, that asks whether we can truly escape from the past or from ourselves. In 2007 over 400,000 people in Britain emigrated. Thousands more left a job, a bad relationship or an unsatisfying life, in order to travel. *The Icarus Diaries* looks at how escapist dreams can turn sour. Kate is a journalist and counsellor and for many years she was a producer at the BBC World Service. *The Icarus Diaries* is published by Cinnamon Press, price £8.99.

House research uncovers hidden histories at Westbury Court

'Oh! Golly. Do you mean to say people actually live *there*?' trilled the woman I'd just met at a summer BBQ. I mention this in passing because although there are also several other possible beginnings this is one story of how the Westbury Court house research project began.

Another beginning was provided by a certain local picture framer who sells and frames old photographs of the local area. He was rather sniffily of the opinion that I would be hard-pressed to find any photos of Westbury Court. As it turned out he was quite wrong.

Now admittedly, the apartment block above Clapham South tube station with its neo-Flemish *speklagen* architecture may not be one of the most attractive of 1930s apartment blocks in the Clapham Common area, particularly since the old virginia creeper that once covered the north façade met its end around the turn of the millennium. The building's architect Edmund Cavanagh FRIBA, who lived in Nightingale Lane, had indeed planned something grander. Even the balcony doors at the south end of Westbury still open precariously on to thin air, suggesting that part of the building was never quite finished. And unlike other buildings Westbury cannot claim to have ever had a roof garden, ballroom, cocktail lounge or even a swimming pool. It did however, have its own restaurant. Now in its 75th year, it already has quite a bit of history to tell.

In its heyday in the 1930s Westbury had a staff of eight, including a gardener, and night porters who cleaned and glided down the green carpeted corridors with trolleys taking the bins from specially designed hatches to the refuse elevator.

Built by private enterprise as pieds-à-terre for commuters and single City types, the building eventually became home to the bohemian set, some of whom either were, or eventually became well-known.

Take for example, Mr and Mrs Victor King. Their family archive laid gathering dust in a storeroom for more than 35 years and narrowly escaped the skip. Violet King (née Storey) was a stage actress, and daughter of the actor and early screen star Fred Storey (1861-1917). Her husband Victor was a well-known tenor and comedian on the revue and Empire touring circuit in the interwar years. During the last War, with Harry Mooney, he went from factory to factory entertaining the workers. Famous for their hits such as *You Can Be Sure of Me* and *Someday You'll Want Me to Want You*, Mooney and King were a regular feature on the Forces Radio and on the BBC's Worker's Playtime and other variety shows, broadcasting always from a 'certain factory somewhere in England', its name never mentioned in case the Germans used the radio beam to bomb it.

'So who's lived in *your* house?'

The woman at the BBQ went to get herself another drink.

This is what investigative history is made of, little 'hidden' histories. There were other beginnings. But that's another story. Perhaps the building has other secrets that will lie hidden for just a little longer... but hopefully not for too long!

For more information and pictures go to www.westburycourt.wordpress.com.

Kevin Allen



Westbury Court: View from Clapham Common

Children's improvisation music workshop

On **Saturday 13 November** Clapham Chamber Concerts, and its dynamic team of young professional musicians and amateurs, will be holding another workshop. Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* will be used as inspiration to create a unique masterpiece through improvisation and group composition in a supportive and friendly environment. The morning's session will culminate in an informal performance for parents and carers.

For those aged from 8 to 11 years who play an instrument, the session runs from 11.15 am until 12.45 pm. Those aged from 4 to 7, who will NOT require instrumental skills, should join us from 9.30 am to 11 am. The venue is St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets cost £15 per child or £25 for two siblings. There are limited places on each course so book early! Email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com or call 07766 910880 to reserve a place or for more information.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

On **Thursday 14 October** Romola Smith, Amanda Lake and Jessie Maryon Davies will perform a delightful programme of hidden gems including Horowitz's beautiful Clarinet Sonata and works by Milhaud and Kachaturian as well as Massenet's much-treasured Meditation, arranged for violin and piano. The recital starts at 7.30 pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets, available on the door, at £9 include interval refreshments.

The Sixteen

On **Saturday 9 October** starting at 7.30 pm St Luke's Music Society presents a concert by The Sixteen, one of the great choral ensembles, directed by Harry Christophers. They will perform music by Tallis, Byrd, Tippett, Macmillan and Britten at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets at £18 and £12 are available from the Box Office on 07951 791 619.

New members

We have been pleased to welcome the following new members this month: Anne Chapman, Shirleybelle Corrigan, Jason Damon, and Charlie, Mary and Rosie Dickinson.

Lambeth City Learning Centre: new life for an historic building

This month, the Lambeth City Learning Centre (CLC) reopens in the old Parochial School building in Rectory Grove, after a three-year exile at the South Bank. During that time, the old building has been completely remodelled for its new purpose.

City Learning Centres were set up under an initiative of the previous government, all in areas of urban disadvantage, and there is one in every London borough. They act as centres for innovative technology and the arts, providing a level of resources for schools which individual schools could not achieve on their own. They also aim to be a community resource.

The Lambeth CLC is equipped with the most modern computer technology. It has rooms for group work, a big study room and studios for podcasts and TV. School groups can attend for courses or study days, and there are facilities for teachers. Equipment can be loaned to schools, and staff provide an advisory service. There are family learning courses, in which parents and children learn together, and these are specifically directed to families where there is no computer at home. The Centre has its own specialist staff, as well as partnerships with other arts bodies in London. To see the wide range of what they offer, visit their website at www.lambethclc.org.uk.

As with so many public sector projects, there is now a financial cloud on the horizon. Central government funding finishes in March 2011, and after that, local education budgets will have to take the strain.

The adaptation of the old school building, by Wendy Bishop of Architype, shows how even the most unpromising old buildings can be adapted for a new era. The old building was a cluster of 19th century schoolrooms, apparently unsuited to any sort of educational activity today. Outside, some untidy accretions on the North Street side have been replaced by a plain wall hiding the toilets, and on the Rectory Grove side there is new entrance porch, in a style sympathetic to the old building, but in no way a pastiche.

Inside, the old rooms have been transformed. The tiny village school turns out to have so much space that it feels like stepping into a Tardis. All the furnishing is new, but the old high roofs can still be seen, and in some places unplastered walls and bricked up apertures are reminders that this is building which has had many lives. (There is some continuity, since the staff office is in the room where one former pupil at the Clapham Parochial School remembers taking unruly boys to see the head teacher.)

When the work was commissioned, it was assumed that computers and other equipment would require air-conditioning. The architect thought otherwise, and the only air-conditioned room is that housing the computer servers. There is under-floor heating, therefore no radiators, and under each window are vents which circulate air from outside. To cater for very hot weather, there are louvred ventilators on the roof – another stylish addition, since they are just what the Victorians might have put on the roof if they had thought about it.

The CLC occupies one of the oldest sites in Clapham. In 1648, Sir Richard Atkins, the Lord of the Manor, gave this land for a village school. Originally a Grammar School, by the nineteenth century it had become a Church-run free school for the poorer villagers, supported by voluntary contributions from the parishioners. It remained as Clapham Parochial School, for pupils of all ages, until in 1950 it became a primary school and was renamed Macaulay. In the 1970s, the school moved to a new site in Victoria Rise, and the old building passed to the local education authority.

The new CLC is a triumphant demonstration of how old buildings can receive new life. Although he could have no comprehension of computers, voice recording or video, Sir Richard Atkins would find his gift still in good use. I would like to thank Sarah Horrocks, Tim Jacques and their colleagues for their warm welcome and tour of the building which enabled me to write this report. We look forward to co-operation between the Clapham Society and the CLC on future projects related to Clapham.

Peter Jefferson Smith

Black History Month

October is the month when Black History is celebrated by a number of events throughout the country. As we go to press Lambeth Council has not yet finalised its programme, but details should be available soon in Lambeth libraries and on the council website.

Wandsworth Council has published a full programme of activities including several talks at Battersea Library in Lavender Hill and some walks starting at the new Wandsworth Museum. Details can be found in Wandsworth Libraries, at Wandsworth Museum or on the council website.

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 website at

www.claphamsociety.com

Walking the Dog

Dulwich Picture Gallery is 200 years old in 2011. To commemorate the occasion the gallery has acquired its first ever piece of contemporary sculpture. *Walking the Dog*, by the distinguished British sculptor Peter Randall-Page, has been purchased and presented to the gallery by the Art Fund, and was installed in September. The current exhibition at the gallery is entitled *Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) Bandits, Wilderness and Magic*. For more details and gallery opening times go to www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or telephone 020 8693 5254.