

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 339

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Wednesday 6 July

Summer Party – drinks and nibbles at La Baita café by the Bandstand on Clapham Common from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm. At the start of the evening music will be provided by Lambeth Academy Steel Pans. There may still be a few tickets available for this event by the time you receive this newsletter. Telephone Maeve Sullivan on 020 7498 9205 to check.

A mystery local celebrity will unveil the first Clapham Society plaque, on Sycamore House, 4 Old Town, on **Friday 12 August** at 6.30 pm.
Come and join in the celebration!

Our July and August meetings are replaced by the following walks.

Wednesday 20 July

Historic Clapham. This walk will go to the historic centre of Clapham around Old Town, and will also include some new buildings which are altering our townscape and will provide new facilities. Led by Peter Jefferson Smith. Start by the clock tower outside Clapham Common Underground Station at 6.30 pm.

Wednesday 17 August

The Secrets of South Side – with a mystery interior and a Royal visit. Led by Mary Coales. Start at Clapham South Underground Station entrance lobby at 6.30 pm and finish near Clapham Common Underground Station at about 8 pm.

Our regular meetings at Clapham Manor Primary School will recommence on

Wednesday 21st September

The right way to improve the thermal performance of traditional buildings. Iain McCaig, Senior Architectural Conservator at English Heritage will explain ways in which the energy efficiency of traditional buildings can be improved, whilst maintaining their special character. He will discuss the range of renewable technologies available and consider their financial implications and grants available. This is the talk that was postponed from January this year.



Church Buildings

Two readers have correctly identified the location of the picture published in our June newsletter. It showed 22 and 23 Clapham Common North Side (formerly 12 and 13 Church Buildings) the part of the terrace which was demolished in 1934 and replaced by Okeover Manor. The photograph above shows the terrace in 1910. A reader who lives at 21 North Side recognised the house which formerly adjoined hers from a photograph she owns.

In researching her family history Jenny Stroud found that her great-grandfather, Robert Stroud, ran Durham House School at 12 Church Buildings, and that his wife was part of a well-known Clapham musical family. Jenny will write about her Clapham family connections in our next newsletter.

All about sewage

At our May meeting Malcolm Orford, Senior Project Manager of Thames Tunnel held members engrossed with his talk about the problems of disposing of London's sewage and the chosen solution. He started with a brief history from the early days of cess-pits which by the early 19th century regularly overflowed and discharged in to London's 'lost' (i.e. covered over) rivers and brooks, and then into the River Thames, for the contents to be taken out with the tide. We learned that anything taken out by a tide returns on the incoming tide to within 120 yards of where it started!

Following regular outbreaks of cholera and the realisation that these were due to contaminated water and not, as had been believed previously, to air-borne 'miasma' a government commission was set up. After the inevitable procrastination over expense, following the famous 'Big Stink' of 1858 the largest civil engineering project of the century, the system of underground sewers devised by Joseph Bazalgette was finally initiated. The brick built sewers intercepted the 'lost' rivers and allowed overflow into the Thames carrying the sewage downstream beyond the built-up area. Built when the population of London was 2.5 million, but

allowing for an increase to 4 million the sewers are still in use today.

However, with London's population now in excess of 8 million and much increased water use, up to 39 million tons of untreated sewage can flow in to the Thames in a year. Whereas outside London properties normally have separate rainwater and sewage outlets, in most parts of London this is not possible and there is only one drain, so that in the event of heavy or sudden rain there is a huge discharge in to the river. A mere 2 mm of rain can cause an overflow.

Some years ago now research started into solutions to the problem. After consideration of various alternatives the Thames Tunnel has been chosen as the most cost-effective and efficient. The tunnel will run for about 20 miles from west to east, mainly underneath the river at a depth of around 75 metres and will be 7.2 metres in diameter. It will link up with the Lee Tunnel coming from north-east London. At present there are 57 overflow points: these will be combined and reduced to 34 Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) – underground storage tanks which will discharge into the main new tunnel to be carried to the treatment works at Beckton. This is a huge, complicated and expensive civil engineering project, comparable

with Crossrail. At present you may see platforms at various point on the river. These are taking samples of the subsoil which along the length of the tunnel includes clay, chalk and gravel.

Malcolm Orford showed us detailed plans of one of the nearest CSOs to us which is where the River Effra joins the Thames near Vauxhall Bridge, just by the MI6 building. When completed this, like all CSOs, will be completely submerged and the only surface evidence will be a vent and a walkway projecting a little way in to the river. Other CSOs are planned in Battersea, as well as Wandsworth and Putney. In response to a questioner Mr Orford admitted that the construction work would inevitably cause disruption locally, since it will involve heavy traffic and machinery: he showed an illustration of the enormous boring machine which will be used for the main tunnel. The cost of the scheme will be met by Thames Water customers, with an additional £60 per year on their water bills. The Vauxhall CSO should be completed within two to three years, and the main tunnel will take about five years to complete, with 24-hour working.

This presentation put into perspective the issues facing a constantly developing city, and the detailed research going on to resolve them.

Share your Food Memories

The Queen celebrates 60 years on the throne with her Diamond Jubilee next year. To mark this, Slow Food UK is collecting food memories and wisdom from people of all ages, covering the period 1952 to 2012, on a public website. Can you help by writing a few lines about your memories? We are gathering stories of special events – the Coronation, street parties, Christmas, Easter, weddings or holidays – but everyday eating, food shortages and shopping memories are equally important.

Do you have a special recipe, or excerpts from a favourite cook book or a food writer who made an impression? Of particular interest are recollections of lost skills in preserving, bottling and pickling as well as forgotten occupations in food growing, harvesting and preparation. We are also interested in recording how our national favourite dishes have been influenced by immigrants during the Queen's reign and we would welcome your input.

Slow Food UK, a branch of the International Slow Food organisation, was established to promote sustainability and to protect good food and drink traditions. For details go to www.slowfood.org.uk. Please email your memories, preferably with some date reference, to annabel@allott.plus.com.

Annabel Allott

Bandstand events

Sunday 3 July at 12 noon. Methodist Ladies' College Perth Concert. Jazz, choral, barbershop and symphony orchestra.

Saturday 9 July at 3 pm. Southwark Concert Band. Rousing marches, show tunes, children themes and modern interpretations of classic works.

Sunday 10 July at 3 pm. Incredible Sax Band. An eclectic performance including swing, funk, blues, pop and classical.

Sunday 31 July at 3pm. New London Concert Band. Varied light entertainment.

Saturday 6 August at 3pm. Lambeth Wind Orchestra Concert. Traditional wind performance of light hearted music and toe-tapping melodies.

Sunday 7 August at 3pm. South London Jazz Orchestra. Classic swing, modern jazz and Latin.

Sunday 14 August at 3pm. Merton Concert Band. Big band favourites.

Saturday 20 August at 3pm. Becontree Brass Band. Traditional brass band marches, jazz standards, classical and popular repertoire.

Sunday 21 August at 3pm. The Blowpipes. Contemporary and traditional jazz from a trombone trio.

Saturday 3 September at 3pm. Merton Concert Band. Big band favourites.

Sunday 4 September at 3pm. London Consorts of Winds. Classical, popular and easily recognisable tunes.

Poetry in Music

On **Saturday 9 July** at 7.30 pm the Festival Chorus will present a programme of Poetry in Music with songs by Vaughan-Williams, Elgar, Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian, and Tom Peterson. The concert is at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets: £10 (Concession £6) on the door, from Northcote Music, 155 Northcote Road, SW11, or via website www.festivalchorus.co.uk. With an active membership of over one hundred singers, the Festival Chorus always welcomes new members. There are no auditions – membership is open to all.

Clapham Library

A series of events is to be held during the next few months, prior to the closure of the library on North Side in the autumn. The object of these is to raise funds, to consult with residents and stakeholders and to give a flavour of what Omnibus (the name of a group of local residents proposing to take over the library building) will aim to offer the community as an arts hub.

On **Saturday 3 September** Miriam Margolyes will launch the series with 'An Evening with Miriam Margolyes - Charles Dickens and Others', which will include extracts from her acclaimed one-woman show 'Dickens' Women', followed by a Q and A session.

Further concerts in September and October, which will all take place on the ground floor of the library, will include performances by artists from the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music, lectures, play readings and poetry readings including, we hope, one by Benjamin Zephaniah. John O'Farrell has also agreed to appear. Further details will appear in the next newsletter.

George Owen

London Open House

Remember to keep **Saturday 17 September** and **Sunday 18 September** clear to enjoy London's great festival of architecture when hundreds of buildings are open to the public free of charge. More details will be available in mid-August, but if you are interested in being a volunteer steward or guide at a building check out how to apply at www.londonopenhouse.org/images/volunteering.pdf

Pat Tindale

We were sad to learn of the recent death of Pat Tindale, a distinguished architect, Clapham resident and member of the Society for around 40 years.

After training at the Architectural Association Pat joined the Ministry of Education, where she was involved in developing prototypes for a new generation of schools. In 1960 she transferred to the Ministry of Housing. Here she soon rose to prominence and was instrumental in diverting funding away from tower blocks towards smaller scale prefabricated housing. She finished her career as chief architect to the Department of the Environment from 1982-86.

Pat had a particular interest in timber-framed buildings and spent a sabbatical year in the USA researching them. It was as a result of this interest that the adjoining houses which she and her close friends, John and Ann Kay, built in Crescent Grove, have the distinction of being the first timber-framed houses built in London since the Fire of London in 1666. Last year Ann Kay kindly allowed some members to visit her house which had been designed for a growing family: Pat's house, in contrast, was smaller, single-storey, mainly open-plan with a dedicated area for her enduring passion – weaving. For many years Pat played an active part in the management of Crescent Grove and was Treasurer and a Trustee from 1987 to 1997.

Sadly, following a stroke, Pat spent the last years of her life in a nursing home, but she remained a regular reader of our newsletter to the end!

Three Clapham Churches

The spire of St Mary's Catholic Church in Clapham Park Road is an important landmark, the last survivor of three spires which once dominated the Clapham skyline. (The other two, at the Methodist Church in the High Street, and the former Congregational Church

in Grafton Square, were casualties of the Second World War.) If you have been gazing upwards recently (perhaps unwise in view of the Clapham traffic) you will have seen that the spire has acquired a protective ring of scaffolding. The upper section has serious structural problems, and the scaffolding is necessary to prevent debris falling, while funds are raised for repairs. The spire is of Kentish ragstone, which has not weathered well; but the real problem is that it is tied together by iron bands, which have corroded and must be replaced by steel.

The Church has launched an appeal for £500,000, partly for the spire and partly for the rest of the fabric. There are also plans to refurbish the monastery and open it up for greater parish and community use. We hope to arrange a visit for the Society in 2012.

St Mary's is described by Pevsner as one of the finest Victorian churches in South London. Built in 1851 to designs by William Wardell, it was enlarged and enhanced by JF Bentley, who lived in Old Town, and was also architect of the monastery. More information at www.stmarys-clapham.org.uk.

In the High Street, the Methodist Church has completed a new entrance. This has been built over most of its forecourt. It looks good, and restores a more uniform frontage to the street. It is being opened and dedicated on 25 June, at a service at which the preacher is Lord Griffiths, the Minister at Wesley's Chapel.



Restoration work is also needed at St Paul's Church in Rectory Grove. It is appealing for funds towards the £400,000 cost of the works, mainly for the roof over the community centre which is in a bad state, but also for rewiring, much needed redecoration and a new crèche and kitchen. More information at www.stpaulssw4.org/appeal.

Peter Jefferson Smith

The Localism Bill

A bill currently on its way through Parliament includes provisions aimed at people who are interested in what their local area looks like, how its historic features and character are conserved, and what new development goes forward. Since you are reading this newsletter, that almost certainly applies to you.

The Localism Bill will probably complete its passage through Parliament later this year, and come into force gradually after that. The government says it 'marks the beginning of a power shift away from central government to the people, families and communities of Britain'. It is a substantial Bill, containing over 200 clauses and 25 schedules. Most of it is very technical and perhaps only of real concern (or, indeed, comprehensible) to those of us well-versed in the running of local government. This article is a very broad outline of how the Bill is intended to affect the way local planning decisions are made, and our role in them.

Town and Parish Councils, which already exist, and Neighbourhood Forums, which are new entities, will be able to draw up Neighbourhood Plans. No-one yet knows what exactly will amount to a 'neighbourhood': this is intended to be a bottom-up process whereby people in a locality get together and put themselves forward. Officers in the local authority have to co-operate with Forums in developing their plans, providing them with the data and know-how they need. The point of a Neighbourhood Plan, embodying as it will

local people's own vision of what their area should be like, is that once the Plan is adopted, the Neighbourhood Forum itself is able to determine what kind of development goes ahead on the basis of the Plan.

Before you get too excited about this, you should know: (i) the Plan has to follow central government law and guidance, and the policies adopted by local government. For instance, there can be no favouring local family grocery businesses over the big supermarket chains, or refusing applications for high-density housing development where the strategy adopted by the local authority is for it to be built; (ii) a Forum has to consist of at least 21 people, so the group that happens to be assembled around a table at one of our local pubs, putting the world to rights, is likely to need wider support; and (iii) the Plan has to be submitted for checking for its legality, and then subjected to a local referendum, in which it has to get at least 50% of votes in favour.

There are a number of serious questions about the extent to which these ideas are workable. The idea of a 'neighbourhood' with a single voice and point of view may work in a homogenous community such as, say, Ambridge. (How long can it take before Lynda Snell is running a Neighbourhood Forum?) But somewhere like Clapham is far more socially, economically and ethnically diverse. Also, if an area like Clapham is to constitute a 'neighbourhood', it includes parts of both Lambeth and Wandsworth.

How can a 'neighbourhood' negotiate a plan with not one, but two or more local authorities?

Cost may, in the end, be the decisive issue. Even if we accept the government's assurances that localism is not merely a pretext for reducing expenditure on local government, the new arrangements are bound to be affected by budget cuts. According to government estimates, each neighbourhood plan will cost between £17,000 and £63,000, and running referendums will amount to £3,000,000 a year, but these figures must be highly speculative and may well be too optimistic. If the arrangements cost more rather than less, developers will not be asked to meet the difference, so where is the money going to come from?

A number of pilot projects or 'front-runners' up and down the country are testing neighbourhood planning. In London, there are schemes run by the Chelsea Society and Markham Square Association in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum in Southwark, and Hackbridge Community Forum in Sutton. The experiences of these groups will show us more about whether there is potential for neighbourhood planning in our own area.

To find out more about the Bill, you can download *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill* from the Department of Communities and Local Government website www.communities.gov.uk or telephone DCLG on 030 344 0000 and ask for a printed copy.

Alison Macnair

Events on the Common

The following events will take place on the Common during the summer:

Saturday 18 June to Sunday 17 July
The British Gas Big Dip, to be held on the circus site, includes a temporary swimming pool and beach. See bigdip.co.uk/london

Friday 1 July, Saturday 2 July and Sunday 3 July
Jamie Oliver's Big Feastival – an extravaganza of food and music. See www.jamieoliver.com/thebigfeastival

Saturday 23 July and Sunday 24 July
Ben and Jerry's Sundae 2011. See www.benjerry.co.uk/sundae

Saturday 27 August and Sunday 28 August
SW4 Event. www.southwestfour.com

Saturday 10 September
Sainsbury's Super Saturday celebrating paralympic sport. www.sainsburys.co.uk/supersaturday

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