

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 342

November 2011

Moving On

Deciding not to stand again as Chair of the Society, I'm aware of how much I'm giving up. The work the Society is doing is as valuable and necessary as ever. There have been a lot of changes in Clapham since I became involved with the Society, and here are a few I'm most aware of – from my bedroom window I can see Clapham Manor School extension, glowing through the trees; I join other dog walkers for a coffee by the restored bandstand; parks staff, councillors and local people know each other and chat about what's being done – or possibly isn't – to the Common; here on my laptop I can access the Society's website, loaded with its members' knowledge of the area's history and the fruits of their research.

I'm delighted that Annabel Allott is taking over – she will do an excellent job. Thanks to everyone I've had the pleasure of working with and my very best wishes to the Society for the future.

Alison Macnair

Venn Street opening

The sun shone brilliantly for a festive opening of the newly pedestrianised Venn Street on the afternoon of Friday 30 September, prior to the first day of the street market on 1 October. Councillor Nigel Haselden introduced Daniel Moylan, Deputy Chairman of Transport for London who cut the tape and gave a short address. Music was supplied by a jazz band and excellent refreshments provided by local businesses – Venn Street Records, Clapham Picture House, Gastro and Macaron.



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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 your 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 16 November

Planning the new US Embassy has been postponed. Instead, Karen Sorab, nominated for the 2011 Woman of the Year award, will talk about her independent, non-profit making Rainbow School in SW London, dedicated to helping children and young people with autism thrive and achieve their full potential in society. An acknowledged centre of excellence, it draws pupils from boroughs across London, including Lambeth. It is a personal story as her daughter started life with no communication skills but is now doing her Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. Karen will talk about their Verbal Education system and her ambitions to support young autistic adults in the future.

There is no meeting in December.

Wednesday 18 January

Twixt the Commons. Why did so many bankers and merchants choose Clapham for their homes in the 18th century? How did their villas get replaced by rows of terraced housing? Why does the street grid take its present form and who used to live in the houses? Why did lowly South Battersea emerge as the upmarket 'Twixt the Commons'? **Timothy Walker**, a long standing resident and member of the Society, will answer all these questions and more in an illustrated talk based on his recently published book.

The full programme for 2012 will be published in the next newsletter

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Planning News

Since April we have been notified of 200 applications and reviewed about 50 of them. Most have involved minor developments with little impact on Clapham's character so we have made representations on 10, and these are summarised below.

118 Gauden Road. Support for an application for a new house which neatly extends a modern terrace with no negative impact on its Victorian neighbours.

The Alexandra, Clapham Common South Side. Comments on an application for a large advertisement shroud to hide restoration works to the façade; reasonable in principle but the timescale sought seems a lot longer than is needed for the building works.

49 Clapham Common South Side. Objection to an application to create an oversized roof terrace which damages the architectural fabric and integrity of this historic group of South Side houses.

26 A & 26 B The Pavement. Qualified support for scheme to change the use of the ground floor from a dwelling back to the commercial use these ground floors were originally designed for. A shop would have been preferable to yet another restaurant and a good quality design is needed.

Rookery Road Café. Continued objection to an amended, but still poorly designed, scheme to enlarge this café prominently positioned on the Common.

24 Clapham Common South Side. Objection to a badly designed rear extension which damages the appearance of this listed building.

12 Rodenhurst Road. Continued objection to a revised scheme to redevelop this now vacant plot; this time with a pastiche approach which fails successfully to reproduce the richness of the detailing and materials of its neighbours.

100 Clapham Common South Side. Qualified support for a proposal to construct a small new house in the rear garden, with scope to improve aspects of the design.

24 Abbeville Road. Criticism of a boring and poorly executed pastiche approach to the redevelopment of this site, in a street which deserves something better.

George Hibbert

An exhibition entitled *The Slave-owners of Bloomsbury*, which opened last month, offers a free guide to George Hibbert's London. The exhibition is part of a project in the Department of History of University College, London (UCL) exploring the significance of slave-ownership to the formation of modern Britain, and traces the lives and legacies of many slave-owners, including the Clapham-based Member of Parliament, George Hibbert. The exhibition continues until 14 January in the South Cloisters of the Main Building of UCL, Gower Street, WC1E 6BT and is open daily from 8 am to 9 pm. For full details of the project go to www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/

Be Creative

On **Sunday 20 November** you can learn how to hand print a book at Clapham's popular centre for creative arts, The Papered Parlour, and there is a photography master class on **Saturday 26 November** and **Sunday 27 November**. For full details call 020 7627 8703, email claire@thepaperedparlour.co.uk or go to www.thepaperedparlour.co.uk.

Bonfire Party

St. Paul's Bonfire Party is on **Saturday 5 November** from 6 pm. This annual event is great fun for the family. About 700 people attend each year to enjoy a hot dog and soup supper whilst watching a rather large bonfire in the Lower Churchyard of St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. This is followed by the requisite fireworks display.

Tickets are £8 for adults (including hot dog and soup), £4 for children (including hot dog and soft drink) available from the St. Paul's parish office or by telephoning 020 7720 3240. They always sell out, so book early! There is a cash bar available on the night, plus sparklers and glow-in-the-dark novelties.

Battersea Choral Workshops

The next workshop, on **Saturday 19 November** and the following one on **Sunday 27 November** will feature Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* – a chance for sopranos and altos to sing this wonderful music with a live harpist. The final workshop this year on **Saturday 3 December**, Music for Advent, will include music by Archer and Whitacre.

Workshops take place at St Mary's Church, Battersea and are directed by Scott Inglis-Kidger, supported by expert vocal coach, Ghislaine Morgan. For all details see www.batterseachoral.co.uk/home.

Stockwell War Memorial

The Stockwell War Memorial lists the names of 547 local men who lost their lives in the First World War. As some of the names are becoming illegible, the Friends of Stockwell War Memorial are hoping to raise a petition of 1,500 signatures to press Lambeth to consider restoring this Grade II listed building. More information can be found by emailing stockwellwm@gmail.com or at the following websites: www.stockwellwarmemorial.co.uk/friends & www.gopetition.com/petition/38985.html

Marie Kendall – Music Hall Star

Those with sharp eyes may have noticed the appearance of another commemorative plaque but this time the Clapham Society is not responsible. The plaque is at the entrance to Okeover Manor, the block of flats at 22-23 Clapham Common North Side. It celebrates Marie Kendall, a star of music hall, and was put there by the Music Hall Guild of Great Britain and America.

Marie was born on 27 July 1873 in Hackney to William and Mary Holyome, part time opera singers of Huguenot descent. At 5 years old her father had renamed her Marie Chester and she was singing sentimental songs in local pubs. Renamed again as Marie Kendall at 16 she was playing principal boy in *Aladdin* at Drury Lane. In 1912 she appeared in the first Royal Command Performance and topped the bill at the 1932 Royal Variety Performance.

Older members will remember her most famous song *Just Like the Ivy* and others with which she is associated – *I'll Be Your Sweetheart* and *Sweet Rosie O'Grady*. Marie Kendall lived in Clapham for many years, finally at Okeover Manor where she died on 5 May 1964, aged 90.

Her granddaughters were Kay Kendall (1926-1959), the film actress, and Kim Kendall, a successful West End theatre actress. It was Kim who unveiled the plaque on 25 September in the presence of other members of the Kendall family including her cousin Fiona who gave an appreciation of Marie which included a recorded medley of her most famous songs.

Derrick Johnson

Friends of Clapham Common

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Clapham Common will be held on **Wednesday 23 November** at Clapham Manor Primary School at 7.30 pm. The speaker will be Adrian Smith, Lambeth's new Divisional Director, Culture and Communities, who will outline his plans for the borough's parks and open spaces.

September meeting

Our September speaker, Iain McCaig, was introduced by John Adams as a friend, architect and former colleague at English Heritage (EH), where he established an enviable reputation in the field of technical research and development for the depth and integrity of his advice, knowledge and experience in the science and practice of building conservation. As Senior Architectural Conservator at EH, he takes a particular interest in the practical application of sustainable development principles to the conservation of traditional buildings.

His first slide illustrated what is certainly the quickest and cheapest way of keeping warm in older buildings: a woolly jumper. Beyond that, though, things get more complicated. Global climate change is certainly a threat to us all, not just because of temperature changes per se, but because of the increased risk of problems such as flooding and subsidence. We need both to minimise our energy use and to find ways of keeping our homes comfortable and safe in what might be a wider climatic range than we are used to. But for older buildings some measures intended to improve energy performance risk real damage to their fabric, as well as unwelcome changes to their appearance.

The first essential is to grasp the scale of the problem. Pre-1919 buildings make a relatively small contribution (around four per cent) to the country's carbon emissions; so retrofitting all our historic buildings with energy-saving measures is not going to solve the nation's problems; though given that energy costs continue to rise, such measures can help to keep

expenditure down. Recent work has, interestingly, suggested that the energy performance of traditional buildings may be better than had been assumed, while that of newer buildings is not always up to the standards they aimed for. In the latter case, the difference may result in part from the behaviour of buildings' inhabitants: disinclination to turn appliances off or to wear appropriate clothing can thwart designers' intentions. But the reasons for older buildings' better performance need to be explored in order to avoid the widespread adoption of measures that might be at best unproductive and at worst harmful to the buildings' fabric.

EH has therefore embarked on a research project which is examining in detail the thermal performance of particular aspects of traditional buildings and the effects of various ameliorative measures. A 19th century terraced house in Bolsover is currently the subject of a year's intensive work which aims to analyse its thermal weaknesses and assess the pros and cons of various ways of addressing these. Among interesting provisional results is the finding that heavy curtains, close-fitting roller blinds and internal shutters can all make a significant contribution to cutting down heat loss through windows – so replacement with double-glazed units should not be taken as the best solution. A growing range of detailed EH publications offers guidance on these matters (see www.english-heritage.org.uk). This very thought-provoking presentation made it clear that improving the performance of older buildings should start with an understanding of how the buildings and their occupants work, and the identification of what can be done without radical (and potentially risky) adaptation. In short – don't forget the woolly jumper.

On the Common

The first Sunday in October was warm and sunny, and the occasion for a dual celebration at the bandstand. It was led by Victor Chin-Kit, our Area Parks officer, along with Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee, Clapham Society and Friends of Clapham Common.

One celebration came as a surprise. We were very pleased when Clapham came first in the Commons category of London in Bloom, judged earlier this year. The award was sponsored by the Metropolitan Parks and Gardens Association, and we were delighted to welcome Joyce Bellamy, their Secretary, a long-term enthusiast for and supporter of London's commons.

The other celebration was the completion of the much-admired berm of granite setts which surrounds the bandstand – the work was ably carried out by Conway. A series of speeches, led by Kate Hoey MP, was compèred by Joyce Guiste, Project Officer for Lambeth Council. The South London Jazz Orchestra played (see right) and there were many thanks and acknowledgements. We are very fortunate in the present climate of uncertainty to have such people as Victor and other Lambeth staff, as well as Jeff and Hector of Veolia, who value our Common and work so hard to maintain it.

A sculpture for the library

The artist Andrew Logan is creating a monumental sculpture for Clapham's new library. The sculpture will feature a mosaic of mementos gathered from the community. You can participate by donating a few personal mementos...a broken watch, chipped tea cup, old keys, wooden toy, spare buttons, anything small enough to fit in your palm and made of a hard material. Put your forgotten little treasures into one of our three Memento Collection Boxes, which are in the hole in the hoarding of the new Library in Clapham High Street, at Clapham Family Practice, 51 Clapham High Street and at Clapham Library on Clapham Common North Side.

For more information about the scheme go to the blog andrewloganinclapham.wordpress.com/2011/09/20/



Festival Chorus

Festival Chorus is a community choir based loosely in the area between Clapham and Wandsworth Commons. From modest beginnings in 1975 it has grown to a thriving body with more than 120 singers. Membership is open to everyone regardless of ability and experience: there are no auditions. Under its conductor David Fawcett, the choir clearly relishes challenges, and occasionally commissions new works, generally with some local relevance, from young composers.

This enterprising approach was exemplified in their concert at St Luke's, on 9 July. The programme included the première of one new work and a second performance of an earlier commission. The concert began with *Vocal Shore*, commissioned by the Chorus from Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian and first performed by them in 2008. Horrocks-Hopayian's body of work is large and eclectic: here she sets 'tough' words about slavery, emancipation in its widest sense and the struggle for equality in a musical idiom that draws 'on the great British choral tradition to make the path sweeter'.

The new piece was *Three Wandsworth Songs* for chorus and harp by Tom Peterson; based in Phoenix, Arizona, he recently completed a postgraduate course at the Royal College of Music. In the first song, *Ages Ago*, to words by Algernon Swinburne (who lived in Wandsworth) rich vocal harmonies gradually tame an initially spiky, febrile harp accompaniment. In *Broken Harp*, a verse from *The Miller of Wandsworth* by Richard Lovelace, a two-string single-note harp ostinato illustrating the title underlies a lyrical chromatic vocal line. *Repeat that, repeat* to words by Gerard Manley Hopkins (another Wandsworth resident) is, with its cuckoo calls, an interestingly idiosyncratic take on English pastoral. Challenging but attractive, these songs showed what enterprising choirs can achieve if they keep open ears and minds.

The Vaughan Williams piece that ended the concert also took the choir *Toward the Unknown Region* – but literally rather than metaphorically, in his setting of words by Walt Whitman. In between, there was rather more familiar territory in the shape of two sets of part songs by Elgar and Wagner's sultry *Wesendoncklieder*, the latter ably and sensitively performed by Patricia Orr (mezzo) and Elspeth Wyllie (piano). In all, a most pleasurable and satisfying evening for all concerned.

The programme for the Festival Chorus's next concert, at 7.30 pm on **Saturday 10 December** at St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ includes Haydn's *St Nicholas Mass* and Britten's *St Nicholas*. Tickets £10, concessions £6, are available on the door, from Northcote Music, 155 Northcote Road, SW11 6QB or from St Luke's Music Society box office 07951 791619 or www.slms.org.uk. And see www.festivalchorus.co.uk.

And before that, there's more music to enjoy in Wandsworth: at 7.30 pm on **Saturday 19 November** the Wandsworth Symphony Orchestra will play music by Weber, Delibes and Dvorak in St Andrew's Church, Garratt Lane, SW18 4ST. Tickets £11, concessions £6 are available on the door. *Jill Cramphorn*

Stirling Prize winner

The prestigious Stirling prize for architecture was won this year by a local secondary school – the Evelyn Grace Academy in Brixton, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. Pictures of this unusual building can be seen at www.zahahadid.com/architecture/evelyn-grace-academy/

Wandsworth Prison

On **Wednesday 2 November** from 6 pm to 9 pm there is a special free evening at the De Morgan Centre and Wandsworth Museum – an opportunity to see the work of prisoners trained in needlework by Fine Cell Work, to see the exhibition about the prison, *Separation and Silence*, and to visit both permanent collections. There will also be talks by the curator of the De Morgan Centre and a guest speaker from Fine Cell Work. The beautiful tapestry cushions, many of William de Morgan patterns, are all for sale.

Richard Jones

We were sorry to learn of the recent death of Richard Jones, a Clapham Society member of very long standing. Richard had a particular interest in Clapham Common, for several years he convened the Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee and was a member of the early Common management committee. He had a deep interest in anything to do with Clapham, and would frequently call to impart some fascinating nugget of information about the area that he had just learned, or to comment on something in the newsletter.

What many of us did not know until reading his obituary in *The Guardian* was that Richard was a journalist and author of five novels, with a reputation which earned him a visiting lectureship at Stanford University in California. Many will surely miss his cheerful, witty comments on life and, in particular, on Clapham.

On **Wednesday 16 November** at 7.30 pm there will be a talk about the history of Wandsworth Prison given by the curator of the Prison Museum, in the exhibition. Tickets £5. Both museums are located at 38 West Hill, SW18 1RX. For more details telephone 020 8871 1144 or 020 8870 6060 or go to www.wandsworthmuseum.co.uk. On both evenings the museum café and shop will be open.

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

Kitchen Bridge

I would love to join a group in the Clapham area who need a fourth for some light-hearted and fun bridge. If you are interested, please contact me on 020 7627 4296 or monhood@gmail.com.

Monique Hood