

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 363 December 2013/January 2014

NEW VENUE AND DAY FOR 2014 MEETINGS

From January 2014 our meetings will be held at Clapham's new arts centre, Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW on the following MONDAY evenings. The bar at Omnibus will be open from 7 pm, and meetings will commence at 8 pm. Our guest will normally speak for about 45 minutes, followed by around 15 minutes for questions and discussion, and the bar will remain open after meetings. Meetings are free and open to non-members, so please bring your friends along.

Monday 20 January

Prisonomics: Behind bars in Britain's failing prisons.

Local resident and Clapham Society member, **Vicky Pryce**, served an eight-month sentence at East Sutton Park prison near Maidstone, for perverting the course of justice when she admitted taking speeding points for her ex-husband. She will talk about her book based on the diary in which she recorded her experiences and her views on how the prison system works, especially with regard to how it treats women. The book provides a compelling analysis of the cost to the economy, as well as the human cost, of keeping women in prison.

Monday 17 February

Sir Frank Baines. Chris Pond (formerly of the House of Commons Library and chairman of Loughton Historical Society) traces the life of Frank Baines, long-term, if part-time, Clapham resident, eminent architect, arts and crafts exponent,

and world conservation expert. He was an East-end boy who became the friend of George V – his private life was a web of enigma.

Monday 17 March

Sustaining the High Street. Jeremy Keates, the Clapham and Brixton Town Centre Manager at Lambeth Council will talk about the Council's current approach to town centres and work led by the local business community being done in Clapham, .

Monday 14 April

Pursuing Politicians. It is said that the five words politicians most fear are 'Michael Crick is in reception'. Local resident **Michael Crick**, political correspondent for Channel 4 News, ex-Newsnight presenter, biographer of Arthur Scargill, Jeffrey Archer, Michael Heseltine, Michael Howard and Alex Ferguson, and member of the Clapham Society will reveal some of his encounters with politics and politicians. Most recently he was attacked by Godfrey Bloom of Ukip who said afterwards he was thinking of taking up shooting and 'Crick might be the first cartridge'.

Monday 19 May

Clapham and the Bicycle. Clapham has a little known but important place in the early history of the bicycle. There were several local manufacturers, the earliest (whose machine was appropriately called the Pioneer) in 1879. Perhaps the best known was Claud Butler, operating from Manor Street between the Wars. Clapham Society member **Roger Armstrong**, cyclist and historian, will tell the story.

continued overleaf

Common Land or Cash Cow?

In recent years the Society has often expressed its concern about the increasing commercialisation of Clapham Common. The decision by Lambeth Council in 2011 to discard its own restrictions on events on the Common in favour of maximising income generation, is now giving rise to an increasingly worrying situation. There are a number of areas of doubt about the legality of some events within the laws affecting Metropolitan commons, which we are seeking to clarify. Some of these relate to the current Freeze Festival.

Yet more important is the decision by Lambeth Council to enter negotiations with Live Nation, the biggest music business in the UK. There is talk of a three-year contract for an annual three-day rock festival in June with an attendance of 45,000 covering an extended Event Site. We have just learned that Live Nation have applied for an open ended Premises Licence dated 1 January 2014. The hours requested are 10 am to 10.30 pm daily, with attendance figures up to 50,000. They claim that it is only for five event days in a calendar year. So far we have only been told about the proposed three-day rock festival. Since the Licensing Sub-committee is the only interface with the public for events such as these, we are assuming that Lambeth Council and Live Nation are hoping that a non-time-limited licence will shelter them from a lot of unhappy citizens.

We are all aware of the need to respond constructively to the current financial climate, however we do not think that our much-valued green space should be put under this level of pressure. Other sources of funding need to be pursued, such as enforcing and monitoring licences for lucrative commercial fitness groups.

Monday 16 June

Helen Fisher, Programme Director of **Nine Elms on the South Bank**, will give us an overview and update on the regeneration of this huge area between Lambeth Bridge and Chelsea Bridge – by far the largest regeneration zone in central London, which includes over 20 development sites.

In 2013 we heard about the new US Embassy, in 2014 Helen Fisher will speak about some of the other developments planned, including New Covent Garden Market and Battersea Power Station, which will become a new town centre for London. Helen will also provide an update on some of the projects that are being delivered within and alongside the developments, including new parks and open spaces, improved transport links and an exciting culture and arts programme that will make Nine Elms on the South Bank a place where people will want to live, work and visit.

Wednesday 10 July

Clapham Society Annual Summer Party. Details to be announced later.

In July and August our regular meetings are replaced by walks.

Wednesday 16 July at 6.30 pm Central Clapham.

Sunday 17 August at 3 pm Some Clapham Plaques.

Additional walks will be held in conjunction with Wandsworth Heritage Festival (May) and Lambeth Heritage Festival (September) - details later.

Monday 15 September

Annual General Meeting, followed by **Commemorating the First World War**. Few British families were unaffected by the first of the twentieth century's great turmoils. Many still have memories of parents or grandparents who fought in that war, perhaps of uncles and great-uncles who died, and of women whose lives were changed. In this meeting, Clapham Society members will look back on the experiences of their own families. An invitation to contribute will appear in our February newsletter.

Monday 20 October

The Nigerian centenary: 100 degrees and rising? A voice from the diaspora. In 2014, Nigeria commemorates its centennial anniversary. With its name inspired by the principal West African waterway, the River Niger, today Nigeria stands at a volatile cusp of change. **Onyekachi Wambu** – a specialist in print as well as broadcast media and former Clapham resident – will provide a historical account of Nigeria's cultural, political and socio-economic development since 1914. He will also explore the importance of the Nigerian-British diaspora in shaping the country's future.

Monday 17 November

Local Issues. An open evening, at which members can raise topics of local concern related to planning and the environment and air their views. Representatives from Lambeth Council will be invited, and members of the Society's committees will be able to explain the Society's work.

There is no meeting in December.

Hospice Honey

Bees are big news at the moment. With pesticides, varroa disease and swathes of land given over to monoculture, they are seemingly under threat from all sides. And yet they are doing well in the capital and especially here in Clapham.

Despite some bee-unfriendly weather over the past couple of years, they have thrived in Trinity Hospice's flower-packed garden – resulting in some prized pots for Clapham residents. So much so, that last year's Hospice Star Ball saw one pot fetch an amazing £350! Then last month, 'Hospice Honey' was tickling the taste buds of Londoners and tourists alike as part of Fortnum and Mason's London Honey Festival. That all but cleaned out this year's harvest save for a single 250g pot.

A gorgeous yellow colour, it has a fabulous aroma and tang – reminding anyone who has visited – of a warm summer's evening in the Hospice's hidden idyll. With Christmas just round the corner, I thought I would offer that pot to the highest bidder among the Society's newsletter readers in aid, of course, of Trinity Hospice. I don't expect bids to reach the dizzying heights of £350 but, whatever the amount, I'm sure it will be appreciated by residents having to spend Christmas away from friends and family.

So, if you fancy trying your luck, send your bid to honey@npp.me.uk before 15 December and you could be spreading a bit of Clapham's finest amber nectar on your toast this Christmas. Best of luck and Merry Christmas!

Nic Pursey

Omnibus Update

On Thursday 14 November The Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Mark Bennett, officially opened Omnibus by unlocking the door, rather than more traditionally cutting a ribbon. Our guest of honour, Blanche Marvin, who has been involved in all aspects of the London theatre scene for over 50 years, gave an interesting overview of theatre today, particularly emphasising the growing importance and success of the 'fringe' as West End theatres present more and more musicals, and ticket prices soar. Our guests were able to see round our completed building, with music, dance and visual arts in the various spaces.

Our doors are now open from Monday to Friday between 11 am and 5 pm. Please do drop in to see us, have a tour of the building and book tickets for our forthcoming events.

December Programme

The run of *Woyzeck* continues until **Saturday 7 December**.

Sunday 1 December at 4.30 pm. The multi-award winning young Fournier Trio – violin, cello and piano – play Haydn, Arensky and Mendelssohn.

Sunday 8 December at 7.30 pm. *Tales of Christmas*. Daughters of Elvin present an eclectic programme of music, songs and masked dances from medieval to present times, played on period instruments including hurdy-gurdy, shawm, pipe and tabor, saltario, gothic harp and citario! Kindly sponsored by Michael and Christine Green.

Friday 13 December at 7.30 pm. *Tales of Christmas: The Mezzotint*. Maggie O'Neill brings to life MR James' chilling ghost story, transformed using music and animation, with the action starting on Clapham Common.

Saturday 14 December at 7.30 pm. Mike King Collective (MKC). An innovative group of 35 talented singers in a programme of soul, jazz, gospel and R & B, directed by a leading vocal coach.

Sunday 15 December at 4.30 pm. Jesse Sebastian's Flamenco Trio present an afternoon of flamenco song and dance.

For more details of all events, recent updates and added events go to omnibus-clapham.org. Tickets for all performances are £15, concessions £12, available at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, on our website, or from the Box Office 020 7498 4699.

Marie McCarthy
Artistic Director Omnibus

Planning News

Since May the Planning Sub-committee has been notified of some 180 planning applications, reviewed 30 of them and made representations on those and on the planning projects listed below.

Holy Trinity Church. Planning Sub-committee members have recently been shown the latest proposals of the church's Living Stones project. In addition to internal changes to the church the project involves constructing a new building at the eastern end. The design was causing concern a year ago and has been much improved since. We have made suggestions to the church to improve it further before it is submitted as a planning application.

13 Clapham Common North Side. Objection to an application (temporarily withdrawn) to create a large underground wine cellar taking up much of the rear garden of this important listed building. Amongst other things, it will involve felling a particularly fine protected sycamore tree which is widely visible from Macaulay Road and the Common.

Lambeth College, Clapham Common South Side. Comments on an application to replace the present portacabins at the back of the site with a new teaching and sports building – welcomed in principle but the design of the new building is uninspiring and could be improved.

638-640 Wandsworth Road. Objection to an application to demolish the old Temperance snooker hall and build a large hotel on the site. The design involves retaining the arts and crafts style facade and front part of the building which is to be welcomed, but the scale of the new hotel building behind it is overwhelming.

95-99 North Street. Comments on a proposal to demolish the industrial buildings (of no architectural or historic interest) in this mews and replace them with housing. Some commercial space is retained in the Victorian houses fronting North Street. The effect on neighbouring residents' amenity is critical.

Brook House, 47-48 Clapham Common South Side. Objection to an extension at roof top level. Coupled with alterations to the front elevation it damages the roof line of the terrace seen from the Common.

10 Lillieshall Road. Objection to an application to over-extend this listed building. The special interest of this and other similar buildings in the street are rare examples of remaining early 19th century workers' cottages in Clapham; those characteristics will be lost if these works go ahead.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

Amanda Lake (violin) and Jessie Maryon Davies (piano) continue their sixth series with a programme of sonatas by Beethoven (The 'Spring' Sonata), Schumann and Elgar, on **Friday 31 January 2014** at 7.30 pm at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets at door: £12; Friends & concessions £9; children £5.



The Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Mark Bennett, George Owen (left) and invited guests listen to an address by guest of honour, Blanche Marvin, at the official opening of Omnibus

Light up a Life

Trinity Hospice's annual carol service is on **Thursday 12 December**, beginning at the Hospice for the lighting of the Christmas tree at 6.45 pm, followed by a procession to Holy Trinity Church, for the service at which Trinity patron and broadcaster Huw Edwards will be among the celebrity readers.

Sing Christmas!

Join Clapham Community Choir and special guest instrumentalists on **Wednesday 18 December** at 7.45 pm for an evening of seasonal music, including songs by Benjamin Britten to celebrate his centenary year, at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets £5 at the door; children under 12 free. Cash bar and refreshments.

Venn Street Market

The market is now open every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm until Christmas, then closed until 4 January. In addition to the many fresh food stalls there will be handmade arts and crafts, Christmas trees and floral decorations. For details of all stalls go to vennstreetmarket.co.uk or follow on Twitter: @vennstmarket or Facebook: Venn Street Market.

More Christmas Events

Clapham's Green and Ethical Christmas Fayre will be held at Holy Trinity Church on **Saturday 7 December** from 10 am to 4 pm. There will be handicrafts, fair trade products, organic skincare products, a Green Café, Father Christmas, and lots more... including Macaulay School Christmas tree sale in the churchyard.

Saturday 7 December is also Small Business Day, and Under The Greenwood Tree have their Christmas Fun Day. More details at underthegreenwoodtree.co.uk.

On **Thursday 12 December** Abbeville Road has its annual Christmas Fair, with the traders joining in the festivities.

And presents...

What about membership of the Clapham Society as a gift to a local friend this year? It's only £6 for a single annual membership. Or a book about Clapham? Details at claphamsociety.com.

Other ideas: make your own Christmas stocking and decorations, or give a class as a gift – details at sewoverit.co.uk, or a perfumery class, your own hand-made screen print or gift vouchers from thepaperedparlour.co.uk.

And remember you can still buy your Christmas books at Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street. More details about their move next year.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2013

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 16 October 2013 at 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. The Society's President, Martin Drury, took the chair and about 70 members were present.

1. The Secretary had received apologies for absence from Bill Emmett and Sue Perl, Euan and Rosemary Kennedy, Anna Long and Maev Sullivan
2. The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (17 October 2012), which had been previously circulated, were unanimously approved.
3. The Chairman of the Society, Annabel Allott, presented the Annual Report which had been circulated with the October newsletter (No. 361). She reiterated her thanks, made in the report, to all those who help with the running of the Society, and singled out Michael Green who was retiring from the Local History Sub-committee. She noted, in particular, his organisation and supervision of the geophysical survey of the sites of Clapham Manor House and Clapham Place, and his detailed reports on these and other historical topics. In recognition of his sterling work for the Society the new Survey of London volumes on Battersea would be presented to him when they were published. There were no questions and the Report was unanimously adopted.
4. The Treasurer, David Brown, presented the Financial Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013. In response to a query from Dr Alan Bevan as to why the chairs donated to Omnibus did not appear in the accounts, the Treasurer pointed out that the donation was after 31 March 2013, so outside the period of these accounts. The accounts were unanimously adopted.

The Treasurer noted that Euan Kennedy, who had been the Independent Examiner for ten years, was standing down and that Anna Long had kindly agreed to take on the role. David thanked Euan, who was unable to be present, for his long service; the customary gift to a retiring officer would be delivered to him in due course.

5. The following were then elected as officers for the year 2013-2014:

Chairman Annabel Allott

Solicitor Daniel Dovar

Vice Chairman Maev Sullivan

Treasurer David Brown

Secretary Jill Cramphorn

Membership Secretary Jennifer Everett

Also elected as **Committee Members** were: John Adams, Jenny Cogley, Bill Emmett, Michael English, Anna Jefferson Smith, Mark Leffler, Ebuni Okolo, and Alyson Wilson.

6. Anna Long FCA was appointed as **Independent Examiner**.

7. There was no other business.

After the refreshment break Baron O'Donnell of Clapham (Gus O'Donnell) gave a lively and entertaining talk about his life, and his rise from a modest background (his great-grandfather came from Ireland to Durham where he was a miner) to be Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, with responsibility for 450,000 employees. Born in Wimbledon, he has lived most of his life in the Clapham area, attending the Holy Ghost Primary School in Nightingale Square (which his daughter also attended) and the Salesian College in Battersea, before reading Economics at Warwick University and then going on to Nuffield College, Oxford.

He gained his PhD at Glasgow University where he then lectured before joining HM Treasury in 1979. Thereafter his career led him to a post in the British Embassy in Washington, service as Press Secretary to Nigel Lawson and then to John Major, a return to Washington, Permanent Secretary at the Treasury and finally to the position of Cabinet Secretary from 2005 until his retirement at the end of 2011. Lord O'Donnell gave us an entertaining high-speed run through his career, with discreet comments about the politicians he had served. He gave thoughtful answers to his attentive audience's questions, suggesting in conclusion that coalition, though a new experience for most politicians, civil servants and voters, had proved both workable and effective.

The Positive Effect of Spending Money Locally

Many of us feel that shopping locally is a good thing, and a study made in the US last year showed that choosing a locally owned business generates almost four times as much benefit for the region as shopping at a chain. It also found that eating at a local restaurant produces more than twice the local economic impact of eating at a chain restaurant. Independent

businesses spend more on local labour, are more likely to procure goods locally and rely more heavily on local providers for services like accounting and printing. Chains have little need for local goods and services – most of the revenue that these shops and restaurants make leaves the community.

Clapham Old Town is having a facelift at the moment and will look amazing next year but you might have to put up

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 our website at claphamsociety.com

There is no newsletter at the end of December. The next newsletter (February 2014) will be distributed at the end of January 2014.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year to all our readers!

with all the barriers and roadworks to find the lovely local businesses selling books and toys, flowers, hair and beauty products, vintage furniture, handmade pottery, designer furniture and clothes to fresh food and restaurants. There will be late night shopping at a number of local businesses on Thursdays in December.

*Sophie Greenwood
Under The Greenwood Tree*