

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 373 December 2014/January 2015

Omnibus celebration

On 31 October 2014, 125 years to the day since Clapham Free Library was opened on Clapham Common North Side by Sir John Lubbock, Vice-Chairman of the London County Council, his grandson Lord Avebury helped celebrate the opening of the building as Omnibus arts centre. To mark the change of use the Clapham Society's sixth Green Plaque was unveiled by local actress, Geraldine James.

After the unveiling guests entered the building for an evening of free entertainment, presented by Omnibus and featuring local performers and supporters.

In an introductory address Lord Avebury gave some details of the career of his distinguished grandfather, who as an MP for 29 years pioneered 28 Acts of Parliament including the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882, which led to the formation of English Heritage. He was a passionate advocate of universal free education and vigorously promoted the spread of free libraries. Lord Avebury went on to remark that his grandfather, as a typical Victorian polymath would have welcomed the new incarnation of the former library as a cross-disciplinary arts centre covering art, music, science and poetry. And in his name he warmly congratulated George Owen and the Omnibus team for their achievement.

Actors Neil Pearson, Geraldine James, Doon Mackichan and David Calder then read from an account of the Opening Ceremony of Clapham Free Library on 31 October 1889 from the *Clapham Observer* of 2 November 1889. More short readings in the studio theatre followed, before the audience dispersed for the various 'pop-up' performances which took place in different parts of the building, including the stairwell, the lift, a dressing room and the Greene Room. Junction Jazz provided music in the bar, where Peter Jefferson Smith also gave a brief history of Clapham.

It was a very varied, thoroughly enjoyable and successful evening, masterminded by artistic director, Marie McCarthy and her team of stalwarts, to whom huge credit and thanks are due.



photo: Dana Kubick

There is no meeting in December. Our meetings will recommence in January 2015 at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The full programme for the year is shown below. We hope you will put the dates in your diary to ensure that you do not miss the meetings.

Monday 19 January

The History of the French in London.

Isabelle Janvrin and Catherine Rawlinson will speak (in English) about their recent book, *Les Français à Londres*. The French have been coming to London since William the Conqueror, and their contribution has been very important. They have come from all walks of life, often in waves, as refugees or exiles: from the Huguenots to the émigrés during the French Revolution, from the political exiles of the 19th century to the Free French during the Second World War. London has also attracted many French artists, writers and intellectuals over the centuries. Traces of their presence are all over London.

Monday 16 February

How Fair is Fairtrade? This topical and controversial issue will be explored to mark FairTrade Fortnight 2015. **Nicolas Mounard**, Managing Director of the pioneering ethical trading organisation Twin and its business arm, Twin Trading, will critically assess what fairtrade is and how it works. He will examine if buying fairtrade products such as tea, coffee and chocolate really does support economic transformation in rural and agricultural communities across developing countries. In addition, he will discuss what impact fairtrade has on women farmers, who disproportionately represent the majority of farmers across the globe.

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Monday 16 March

The NHS in Lambeth. **Dr Adrian McLachlan**, Chairman of the Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group and a local GP, will discuss the organisation of healthcare services in Lambeth, the demands on GPs and local A & E departments, and progress with moving more services into the community (integrated care). There will be plenty of time for questions.

Monday 20 April

A Brave New World. **Edmund Bird**, Heritage Advisor to the Mayor of London and former Lambeth Head of Conservation, will introduce his recently published book about the architecture of Lambeth in the 20 years following the Second World War (including Clapham which was then in Wandsworth). The book analyses the different architectural styles and evolving building types, changing public housing policies, public and civic building, transport structures, leisure and entertainment venues and public sculpture. A final chapter is on buildings of this period which have already been demolished. His talk will look at the whole of the present borough, with particular reference to Clapham.

Monday 18 May

'My name is not Wigs'. **Angela Cobbin**, MBE, theatrical wig designer, and Clapham Society member will talk about her 40-year international career designing and making wigs for West End, Broadway, TV and film productions. Her credits include Spitting Image, Madame Tussauds, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and Royal National Theatre: *Guys and Dolls*, *Richard III*, *The Madness of George III*, *The Seagull*, *The Becketts*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *Lulu*, *Ivanov*. *Orpheus Descending*, *To the Green Fields Beyond*, *The Graduate*, *Chicago*, *Lenny*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Cameron Mackintosh Productions: *Witches of Eastwick*, *Mary Poppins*, *Les Miserables*, *Oliver*, *Phantom of the Opera*. 'Best wig I've ever seen', Barry Humphries.

Monday 15 June

The Garden Museum. **Christopher Woodward** has been Director of the Garden Museum since 2006. The Museum was set up in 1977 to rescue from demolition the former parish church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, where John Tradescant is buried in a celebrated carved tomb. Tradescant was a 17th century scholar, gardener to King Charles I and a keen collector – he displayed his collection of 'curiosities' from his travels at his house in Lambeth. The Museum recently received funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund for modernisation and improvement of the facilities. Christopher will be speaking about the Museum, and the story of the Tradescants.

Thursday 9 July

Summer Party. Save the date! More details later.

Monday 21 September

Nobby Clark Talks Photographs. **Nobby Clark** has worked as a photographer with all the major English theatre, opera and ballet companies and has been production photographer for many theatre directors, including Peter Hall, Trevor Nunn and Richard Eyre on their plays. He has also worked for several UK broadsheets, including *The Observer*, *The Guardian* and *The Times*. He will be showing some of his powerful photographs of actors during rehearsals and production and will have some entertaining stories to tell about the captured moments.

Monday 19 October

Annual General Meeting. The guest speaker will be **Edward Stourton**, one of Radio 4's leading presenters of news and documentaries, who will reminisce on his successful career to date. He was a founder member of Channel 4 News, scripting, producing and presenting.

Monday 16 November

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home. **Shaun Opperman** is the Veterinary Director of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home. He heads up a team of six veterinary surgeons, 25 veterinary nurses and two animal welfare assistants, across three sites, and is responsible for the health and welfare of the animals under the Home's care. He will talk about his work and the Home's future and his experiences as a co-presenter on Paul O'Grady's *For the Love of Dogs* television programme.

There is no meeting in December

Green and Ethical Christmas Fayre

On **Saturday 6 December** from 10 am to 4 pm, Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common will again host South London's only Green and Ethical Christmas Fayre. Stalls will sell fairly traded, green and ethical gifts, organic food and recycled wrapping. There will be live festive music, a green café, Father Christmas' grotto, beeswax candle making and a nativity with animals from Vauxhall City Farm. Tickets are £2 for adults and children are free.

Holy Trinity Environment Group holds the fair to raise awareness of environmental issues within our community and to raise funds for work to improve energy efficiency in the Church. You can also buy your British Christmas tree in the churchyard from the Macaulay School Christmas Tree sale.

Stuck for a Christmas Present?

Membership of the Clapham Society (from a mere £6 per annum) or a book about the area makes a perfect gift for a local resident, particularly someone new to Clapham. A good introduction is *Discovering Clapham* – a concise history of Clapham followed by many coloured pictures, old and new. Full details on our website: claphamsociety.com.

Christmas Lights Switch On

On **Friday 5 December** at 5.30 pm a carol procession will start at Clapham North Underground Station, led by professional and community singers carrying lanterns and pausing at several points along the High Street to perform a carol and distribute song sheets to encourage the public to join in. The procession will finish at The Polygon where the Christmas lights will be switched on at 6.30 pm by a special guest and a jazz band will play for 20-30 minutes. TomTen, a Scandinavian mythological character will distribute free Christmas gifts and mulled wine and festive food will be on sale.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The concert on **Friday 5 December** celebrates the season with a performance by Baroque Strings of Vivaldi's *Winter* and *L'Estro Armonico*, Corelli's *Christmas Concerto* and the *Concerto Grosso* by Boyce. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX at 7.30 pm (doors open 7.00 pm). Tickets at the door: £12, £9 concessions and students, £5 children. More information at claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk.

Giant of Africa

Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, celebrated its centenary in October 2014. The Clapham Society marked the occasion with a talk entitled *The Nigerian Centenary: 100 degrees and rising? A voice from the Diaspora* given by Onyekachi Wambu, former Clapham resident, print journalist and specialist broadcast media expert.

The well-attended event was a great success with Onyekachi providing an enthralling and concise insight into the country's history, from its origins as a kingdom and the British colonisation, the creation of the state in 1914 to its present day development and economic growth. The country was named after the River Niger in the late 19th century.

The speaker outlined the impact of the slave trade during the 17th and 18th centuries on Nigeria's earlier population. Along with an outline of the country's journey to independence in 1960 and a brief analysis of the Biafran war in 1970, we learned that when Nigeria was initially established, for economic purposes, the British created the country's geographical split, with Muslim nationals residing in the north and Christians inhabiting the south.

Onyekachi, a most engaging and informative speaker, also noted that Nigerians outside the country now generate over £24 million per annum in remittances. He highlighted the fact that although oil is seen as its main product the country boasts a booming and highly profitable telecommunications industry. He revealed that today Nigeria has overtaken South Africa to become the largest African economy in the 21st century.

Onyekachi also explained why the Federal Republic, with a population of over 174 million, is an emerging economic giant and one of the fastest growing global economies. It is hotly tipped to be one of the four MINT countries: Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey.

Coinciding with the UK's Black History month, the talk provided an often unheard and fascinating account of Nigeria's conception and ongoing economic rise.

Ebuni Okolo

Clapham Community Choir BBC concert

Clapham Community Choir's concert on **Saturday 13 December** will be different and special. The choir, led by Jessie Maryon Davies, was selected in 2013 to take part in the Adopt a Composer scheme run by Making Music UK, which pairs amateur choirs, orchestras, and ensembles with a composer for a year to create a new piece of music for broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Mak Murtic is our composer under this scheme, and the piece he has composed for the choir is *Encounters*, a short, intense evocation of the emergence from icy chaos at the beginning of time. With Mak Murtic's jazz ensemble Mimika, the choir will give *Encounters* its first performance. The concert will also include a varied programme of traditional folk songs and modern songs, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, a song from an opera by Handel, and music for Christmas.

St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Tickets at the door £7, £5 concessions, children up to 12 free. Drinks and refreshments available. Doors open at 7.00 for a 7.30 start. Enquiries to claphamcommunitychoir@gmail.com.

Trinity Hospice Free Concert

On **Wednesday 10 December** at 2 pm Orpheus Sinfonia will be giving a free concert in the outpatients centre, Mulberry Place, at Trinity Hospice, 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN. The hour-long concert will include festive pieces and the stories behind them. All are welcome to this informal event. You can turn up on the day, or reserve a place by contacting Grace Lodge: glodge@trinityhospice.org.uk or 020 7787 1089.

Hermione Hobhouse MBE, FSA (1934-2014)

With the death of Hermione Hobhouse on 17 October a further link with the foundation of the Clapham Society is broken. In the 1960s Hermione was living in Crescent Grove with her husband, Harry (Graham), and two young children, Francis and Harriet. She had worked as a television researcher and writer before having children and afterwards undertook the research for her seminal work, *Thomas Cubitt: Master Builder* (1971) for which she won the Society of Architectural Historians' prestigious award, the Hitchcock Medal. Her contributions to the Clapham Society were as Joint Hon Secretary (with Harry) until 1972 and as Hon Secretary 1972-73 before serving as Vice Chairman 1973-74. She was a strong organiser and it was under her lead the Society's Planning Sub-committee came into being in 1974. Prior to this Hermione had been a prime mover in the creation of the Clapham Preservation Group in 1967 which published the first *Buildings of Clapham* later that year and an exhibition 'Care For Clapham' in June 1969. Her industry continued with *Lost London* in 1972, another ground-breaking book recording many important buildings lost in recent years and a *History of Regent Street* (1975).

She left Clapham in 1976, becoming Secretary of the Victorian Society before being appointed General Editor of the *Survey of London* (1983-94) during which time the two-volume Parish of Poplar was published. During this time she also served as a Commissioner of the Royal Commission of the Great Exhibition of 1851, publishing a biography of Prince Albert in 1983 and a history of the Commission in 2002. One of her last Clapham links, apart from returning to visit friends, was assistance with the editing of the Clapham Antiquarian Society's *Saints and Sinners*, for which her son Francis provided the index. In recent years Hermione suffered poor health, particularly sad as in earlier times she had been so active and energetic.

A *Daily Telegraph* obituary succinctly described Hermione as having 'had an incisive intellect and a strength of personality that occasionally led her into confrontation, but she had an infinite capacity for sociability with a wide circle of friends'. That was a true reflection of her, but in Clapham it was her friendship and knowledge that are most remembered.

Nicholas Long

Trinity Hospice bees

The bees have done well again this year and local honey makes a good Christmas present. Jars come in three sizes: small (50g), medium (125g) and large (250g) and are priced at £2, £5, and £10 respectively. The honey has a fantastic taste – unrecognisable from supermarket honey – and every purchase supports Trinity Hospice which receives a percentage of sales. To buy, contact local beekeeper Nic Pursey on 020 8675 0587 or email nic.pursey@virgin.net who will deliver anywhere in SW4 or SW12.

The next newsletter will be the February issue, available at the end of January.

A Happy Christmas to all our readers!

Irony?

Vauxhall Bus Station is included in the Royal Academy's current exhibition (running until 1 February 2015) of the 100 best buildings of the last 100 years, and is nominated the best building of 2005. Despite this Lambeth Council and TfL appear to be determined to demolish it in their controversial plans to redevelop Vauxhall Cross.

There is another opportunity to view the proposals and speak to representatives of TfL and Lambeth Council on **Tuesday 9 December** from 10 am to 6 pm at Carmelita Centre, 41 Vauxhall Walk, SE11 5JT. Or you can see the proposals on line and leave comments at consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/vauxhall-cross. The final date for comments is **Friday 19 December**.

December at Omnibus

Friday 5 December at 8 pm. **Acoustic Night** with Lánre and special guests, singer-songwriter Hannah Robinson who transfixes audiences with her stunning voice and laid-back guitar, and the Vita Quartet who infuse smooth atmospheric spirit into well-loved jazz repertoire. Tickets £5 on the door.

Saturday 6 December at 11 am and 2 pm and **Sunday 7 December** at 11 am
Curious Things: The Fir Tree. The new season of interactive storytellings are a delight for the curious-minded, both young and old alike. Celebrate the joy of reading as we explore stories through shadow puppetry, soundscape and hands-on activity. Our storytellers will bring Hans Christian Andersen's lesser-known tales to life, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. Join this curious cast of characters as they reveal the secret adventures of everyday objects.

Fir Tree is a festive tale of a little fir tree with big ideas about the future. Accompany us on our wintry journey to hear about the ambitious young fir tree, and the lessons it learnt along the way. Afterwards you can create your very own fir tree to take home! Suitable for children 3+ and their carers. £5 children, accompanying adults and under 1s go free. Only one free ticket for every paid ticket.

Sunday 7 December at 7 pm. **Cello Cabaret Revue-Z** features Zoë Martlew – cellist, performer, writer and composer – playing her own music and that written for her. Tickets £12, £10 concessions, £5 under 25s.

Wednesday 10 December to Sunday 14 December at 11 am and **10, 12 and 13 December** at 1.30 pm. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. The classic fairytale is magically brought to life with Swedish carols, live music and beautifully crafted puppets. What happens on Christmas Eve when the Troll is fishing for his dinner? Join Garlic Theatre by a little stream in Sweden to find out! Tickets £9 adults, £7 children and concessions, under 2s free.

Saturday 13 December from 12 noon **OmniXmas Open House**.

Start the festive season with carols and a few Christmas treats. The café will be serving hot drinks, mulled wine and Stacy's famous snowflake cookies! The Omnibus Choir will be singing carols and inviting you to join in. Two local community groups, the Omnibus After School Art Club and Café Art, will be showcasing their original cards and calendars to buy for family and friends. The Art Club has been looking at connections between art and science through historical and modern images, and the children have produced beautiful paintings, mono-prints, collages and cards. And Café Art has created a unique calendar using photographs taken by homeless people as part of a competition and exhibition supported by The Royal Photographic Society. The event will help to raise funds for Omnibus Visual Arts and our exciting programme for 2015. **FREE** event.

For more information and tickets email enquiries@omnibus-clapham.org, call 020 7498 4699 or visit omnibus-clapham.org.



Above: Nicholas Merryweather as Alidoro (the Fairy Godmother character!) Ricardo Panela as Dandini (the servant, pretending to be the 'prince') and Alberto Sousa as Ramiro (the 'prince' disguised as the servant) in Clapham Opera's recent production of *La Cenerentola*.

photo: Dana Kubick

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.