

The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 386

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Hidden London



Photo: Chris Nix, London Transport Museum

It was a completely full house at Omnibus for our February meeting, when Chris Nix from London Transport Museum, gave a fascinating talk about the history and current opening up of the Deep Shelters at Clapham South. The lengthy Q & A session which followed was testament to the huge interest in the project, and Chris's enthusiasm and extensive knowledge delighted his audience.

In 1940 the government, worried that the population might leave London during the war, decided to build air raid shelters, below selected tube stations. Ten sites were initially chosen with the aim of accommodating 10,000 people in each shelter. Two were soon dropped, and work started on four sites in north and four in south London – Stockwell, Clapham North, Clapham Common and Clapham South. Several years earlier a survey had been done with a view to building an express railway below the existing underground which explained the choice of the south London sites despite the known problems of tunnelling in the sand and gravel subsoil.

Once decided work proceeded quickly, though hampered by shortage of materials. We saw pictures of the huge piles of spoil by Clapham South Underground station, and the first parts of the tunnel which were constructed from pieces of disused cast iron railway track (on which the manufacturer's names could still be seen) and other materials from stock. Some pictures only Chris with his expert knowledge of the site and construction had recognised and retrieved from the USA!

Each tunnel was a mix of a figure of eight and a large bore conventional tunnel with upper and lower level. There was a staircase to ground level at each end, and a third one to link to the underground station. The shelter was divided into 16 sub-sections, each one at Clapham

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Our meetings are held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The bar at Omnibus is open from 7 pm, and meetings 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 the talk. Meetings are free and open to non-members, so please bring your friends along.

Monday 25 April

The race to save the sea. Charles Clover, chairman of the Blue Marine Foundation will tell us about the enormous opportunities for grand scale conservation in the British Overseas Territories. As an environment journalist with 30 years' experience, Charles has covered virtually every issue that arises out of man's treatment of nature. His book *The End of The Line* (2004) and the award-winning documentary film that it inspired brought the problems of overfishing and the impact it is having on life in the oceans into public focus. He also co-founded Fish2Fork, an online sustainable restaurant guide.

Monday 23 May

St Mary's Church Spire. Fergus McCormick of architects Thomas Ford & Partners, project architect for the recent repairs to the spire of St Mary's Church, Clapham Park Road will give a talk about the work involved. He will outline the problems encountered and describe how they were resolved. He will show some of the many detailed photographs taken of the work in progress, as well as remarkable views from high up the spire. To provide a context for the work a representative of St Mary's Church will summarise the church's history and its link to the community.

Spring Bird Walk

Sunday 10 April. A leisurely walk around Clapham Common with Dr Iain Boulton, Lambeth's Environment Officer (who spoke at our January meeting) to look at the main bird species present, as well as any unusual guests or exotics! Which parts of the Common do birds frequent and why? What can we do to encourage and protect them, and what does the future hold for our feathered friends? Meet at Clapham Common Bandstand for 10 am start. Duration about 1.5 hours.

Hidden London - continued

South named after a naval officer.

Although the shelters were built speedily, by the time they were finished the London Blitz of 1940-41 was over, and they were not required as shelters until the V1 and V2s in 1944. In the intervening years the shelters served as a valuable propaganda weapon – reassuring London residents that air raid shelters were there if needed, and the enemy that the population was protected.

In 1944 the shelters also provided sleeping accommodation for those whose houses had been destroyed by bombing. Shelterers had to vacate their bunks during the day because the government did not want them to become troglodytes! Nevertheless pictures show that they enjoyed dancing in the evenings, and the canteens were popular because food was unrationed in the shelters. Tickets were issued for bunks, and we saw a picture of one of the few surviving tickets.

The logistics of accommodating up to 10,000 people underground were interesting. We learnt about the sanitary arrangements, toilet blocks and the need to pump sewage up to the level of the sewers; the showers – 16 for the entire shelter; ventilation – four jet engine sized fans for each shelter; electrical supply – mercury arc rectifiers to convert AC current to DC. The cost of the shelters – eventually £3 m though estimated at £1.5 m (does anything ever change?) – was met by the government, who eventually sold seven of the eight shelters to London Transport in the 1990s. In fact, the shelters were never fully used, and the maximum number ever accommodated in one night in all the shelters was only around a quarter of their capacity.

After the war the shelters were put to various uses, most recently for archive document storage. The lease on the Clapham South shelter expired in 2008 and since it is the best preserved, and the only one that is listed, Transport for London decided that, as part of its Hidden London project, it should be opened up for tours and as a museum. Objects from other shelters, including elegant drinking fountains, are being conserved and will be brought in to enhance the exhibits.

Some visits to Clapham South Deep have already taken place, and more will be scheduled soon. To find out about them you need to sign up to the Hidden London newsletter. Go to lmmuseum.co.uk/whats-on/hidden-london and scroll down to 'Sign up to our newsletter'. But watch carefully for the arrival of the newsletter because the tours are very popular and sell out very quickly.

The Glebe House London

The Glebe House London is a converted Georgian coach house in Clapham Old Town, next to the gates of St. Paul's Church. It has been a boutique B & B recommended by Alastair Sawday's guide for the past three years, and the owner, Alix Bateman, has recently launched an exciting programme of events, talks, workshops and mini salons.

Recent events have included a Supper Club night from The Disappearing Dining Club that was hailed by *Timeout* as one of the coolest things to do in London that

weekend. March saw a One Day Sketch Book Club and art exhibition. Planned courses include An Introduction to Wood Carving, An Introduction to Gilding and Calligraphy classes.

The Glebe House is available to hire for private events and small parties and has been used for photo and film shoots.

Alix, an interiors writer and occasional gilder, utilises the talent of the various craftspeople she has worked with in her company Inkipin and Boot and that of locals such as Rebecca Hollweg, who is playing at an evening concert there on 9 April (See below). For details of forthcoming events sign up to the mailing list at theglebehouselondon.com/events.



In Concert On **Saturday 9 April** enjoy an evening of music with local singer/songwriter and guitarist, Rebecca Hollweg, whom *The Sunday Times* described as having 'Something of Joni Mitchell in her searing vocal lines and Suzanne Vega in her confessional ones.' London Cocktails and Events will be on hand with their delicious selection of cocktails. The concert commences at 8 pm at Glebe House London, 6 Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Tickets at £15 (to include a welcome cocktail) from theglebehouselondon.com/events.html.

Lambeth Palace Garden

The Archbishop of Canterbury is once again opening the garden of Lambeth Palace to the public on a regular monthly basis. This year the garden will be open on the first Friday of the month from **4 March to 7 October** from 12 noon to 3 pm. There is no need to book in advance. An entrance fee of £5.00 will go to a chosen charity every month. Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be available to purchase, together with plants from the garden, Lambeth Palace honey and souvenirs.

Brixton Windmill

The Windmill opened for the season at Easter. In preparation for the official launch of Brixton Windmill flour in May, the team of millers will be grinding flour on **Saturday 2 April, Sunday 3 April, Saturday 16 April** and **Sunday 17 April**.

What Omnibus can do

At the start of our February meeting, Clapham-born Felicity Paterson, one of the very first Omnibus interns, gave us a brief summary of her time at Omnibus, telling us about the invaluable experience she has gained in just over two years. Felicity joined the embryo arts centre in October 2013, with an arts degree, but no clear idea of how to break in to the notoriously difficult theatre world.

As an intern, she gained experience of theatre administration and production, so that she is now responsible for a whole programme of events, including a large family arts festival on the Common. Felicity's journey to a salaried position in the arts is an example of the opportunities that Omnibus can give to ambitious, hard-working young people. For more information about the 'Brighter Futures' campaign, please visit omnibus-clapham.org/brighter-futures

Books in April

On **Wednesday 6 April** Open Pen launch their new anthology. Open Pen has quickly become the coolest literary fiction magazine around, finding an enthusiastic readership in London's creative set. No longer just a short fiction magazine, Open Pen is a community of hungry readers with a belief in creative writing willing to take a risk; fiction with something to say.

Tuesday 12 April is the W.I. book evening when Irene Rosenfeld will introduce her new book *Geo Says No: Not a Dream*. This modern fantasy thriller is part of the forthcoming series and a stand alone novel in its own right. It provides powerful food for thought alongside an exciting adventure story, which will appeal to 10-15-year-olds with an interest in magical worlds, special powers and unexplored lands.

All are welcome to attend these free events, which commence at 7.30 pm at Clapham Books, 26 The Pavement, SW4 0JA.

Talks at BCA

In April the following talks will take place at the Black Cultural Archives, 1 Windrush Square, Brixton, SW2 1EF.

Friday 8 April *Black Sailors in Georgian England*. Historian and curator S. I. Martin explores the untold stories of the Black sailor communities that settled in Britain's port cities: London, Cardiff, Liverpool, Glasgow, and South Shields leading to the development of this country's first Black communities. Tickets £7.

Saturday 9 April *Freedom Writers*.

What is freedom writing? Join us as we explore the work, activism and legacies of freedom writers of the past and present. Explore the tradition of literary activism that emerged from the historical struggles, as many fought to create platforms where their voices could be heard. The panel includes Desrie Thomson-George, a founder member of the 1970's Brixton-based independent publisher Black Ink, Indigo Williams Slam Poet Winner, historian and curator S. I. Martin, and a guest appearance from award-winning poet, author and Black Cultural Archives patron Benjamin Zephaniah. Tickets £10, concessions £7.

Talks are from 7 pm to 9 pm. For more details and to book on line go to bcaheritage.org.uk or call 0203 757 8500.

Garden opening The garden of Royal Trinity Hospice will be open under the National Gardens Scheme on **Sunday 10 April** from 11 am to 5 pm.

Clapham Cricket Club

This picture is not dated, but I believe it was taken before 1889. My great uncle Arthur Winterbottom is the only one not in blazer and whites, back row right, with an 'interesting' hat on.

Does anyone recognise a Clapham ancestor in this photo, or know where I can find out more about the Clapham Cricket Club in the 19th century?

My email is:

jmstroud_brighton@yahoo.co.uk.



Jenny Stroud

Poetry in Beauty

This is the title of a small exhibition at the Watts Gallery, Compton, near Guildford devoted to the work of the Clapham-born model turned Pre-Raphaelite painter, Marie Spartali Stillman. The Greek Spartali family lived at The Shrubbery, a substantial mansion, set back at the extreme west end of Clapham Common North Side, which had long views to the Common until St Barnabas Church was built on the front garden. The house survives, now turned into flats, in Lavender Gardens.

The beautiful Marie and her sister modelled for artists including Rossetti and Burne-Jones, before embarking on her own artistic career. Following her marriage to American journalist William Stillman her work became popular in the USA, where much of it is still found. The exhibition continues until early June.

If you have not been to the Watts Gallery recently it is well worth a visit. It has been refurbished, the artist's house, Limnerslease, has been bought and added to the complex and this year the studios of both GF Watts and his wife Mary have been re-created. A short walk away is the Watts Chapel and Cemetery. Watts Gallery, Down Lane, Compton GU3 1DQ. Visit wattsgallery.org.uk or call 01483 810235 for details.

Priority on the Roads

A recent communication from Lambeth's Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability set out the council's priorities for allocation of road space as follows: 1) walking, 2) cycling, 3) buses, 4) taxis and minicabs, 5) powered two wheelers 6) freight transport, 7) cars.

April highlights at Omnibus

Sunday 3 April at 7.30 pm. Tom Harrison Quintet. Since graduating from the renowned Trinity College of Music in 2012, Tom Harrison has performed or recorded with a host of internationally recognised jazz musicians in 12 countries. Tickets £10, Under 25s £5.

Wednesday 6 April to Friday 8 April.

Storystock. A three-day children's literature festival with some exciting authors and readings. *The Clangers* is now being relaunched and introduced to a whole new generation. Various different events suitable for children up to 11 years. Go to the website (see below) to download the full programme and to book tickets.

Thursday 7 April at 7.30 pm. *Mrs Roosevelt Flies to London* is an exciting one-woman show starring Alison Skilbeck, who was granted special permission by the Roosevelt Estate to use Eleanor's writings. This one-woman show explores the public and hidden life of one of the most extraordinary women of the 20th century. Tickets £12, concessions £10.

Thursday 28 April at 7.30 pm. *So This is What Happened*. A regular monthly event and a thoroughly entertaining evening of real storytelling. It is held in the cafe/lounge area and has a lovely relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Tickets £5.

Tickets for all events are available on line at omnibus-clapham.org, by phone on 020 7498 4699, or by calling in at 1 Clapham Common Northside, SW4 0QW.

Exploring Mozart

On **Saturday 16 April** Howard Shelley, one of the finest pianists in the UK, with a major career as soloist and conductor all over the world, is joined by the string players of the London Mozart Players. He will introduce Piano concertos in A (K414) and Eb (K449), perform extracts with the string players and then perform the full work. In addition there will be a surprise Mozart work for the audience to guess!

The concert is at 7.30 pm at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ. Tickets £18, concessions £14 at slms.org.uk/2/book/ or call the Box Office on 07951 791619.

Clapham Chamber

Concerts The next concert is on **Thursday 21 April** when Paul Sheehan (baritone) and Clare McCaldin (mezzo-soprano) accompanied by Stephen Dickinson on the piano will give a recital with a Shakespearian flavour in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. Alongside Elizabethan songs a lighter selection from opera and musical theatre (Lehar and Sondheim) will be included. The concert is at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 ODX at 7.30 pm. Tickets on the door £12, Friends of CCC £10, children £5. Note that this concert is on a **Thursday**, not as is usual, on **Friday**.

Membership

Subscriptions for 2016-17 are due on 1 April and should be sent to the Membership Secretary. Members who pay by standing order are asked to check that the correct amount is being paid by their bank. Rates are as follows: Individual £6.00; Household £9.00; Business £15.00.

If you receive the newsletter by post please add £8.00 to cover the cost of postage. Alternatively you can choose to receive the newsletter by email at no extra cost. Please inform the Membership Secretary if you wish to opt for this method.

We continue to keep our subscription rate low, but we greatly welcome donations. If you are a UK taxpayer, please ask for a Gift Aid form so that we can increase your donation by 25% at no additional cost to you

South London Walks

Lambeth Local History Forum's Heritage Walks leaflet is now available and can be picked up at our meetings, at libraries and at Omnibus. This is a comprehensive list of walks organised by South London local history societies and other organisations such as West Norwood Cemetery and Brixton Windmill. The walks are led by local historians and most are free.

There is a tour of West Norwood Cemetery at 2.30 pm on the first Sunday of each month (this month's on **Sunday 3 April**), and amongst many others are Brixton Market Heritage Walk on **Saturday 9 April** at 11.30 am and Brixton Murals on **Sunday 24 April**.

On **Saturday 9 April**. Sound artist Dan Scott will work to create and experience the sounds of our natural landscapes, past and present, with projection, recording and interactive art installation. Some special guests, sheep from Vauxhall City Farm, will join the day.

Bandstand Beds

Bandstand Beds is gearing up for the growing season ahead and already has lots of tomato, chilli and sunflower plants growing in the polytunnel to plant in the raised beds when the weather gets warmer. The group meets on Saturdays at the food-growing corner of the green-waste site to tend the plants, and these sessions are now led by a qualified community gardener.



The next gardening session will be on **Saturday 16 April** when the group is also taking part in Capital Growth's The Big Dig. As well as seed-sowing activities in the polytunnel volunteers will be refreshing the raised beds at the Bandstand and planting the broad beans currently in cold frames. The morning's gardening will be followed by a bring and share picnic. Want to get growing? Pop along and say hello!

On **Saturday 30 April** Bandstand

Beds will be holding a Common People event at the Bandstand. As well as planting and other fun activities there will be live entertainment – music, dance, spoken word. This event is free and for everyone!

If you would like to get involved with food-

growing in the heart of Clapham, email cbandstansbeds@gmail.com.

BAC Moving Museum

Following the closure of Wandsworth Museum in West Hill last year the Museum joined up with Battersea Arts Centre and the new museum and its activities are gradually evolving.

The first BAC Moving Museum project and public adventure, entitled *Sheepscales* is in partnership with local historical societies and libraries. The borough-wide event during March will culminate with a day of family fun at Battersea Arts Centre

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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