

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 387

May 2016

Common People

This will take place around Clapham Common Bandstand on **Saturday 30 April**. Local singers, bands, choirs, poets, street dancers, cabaret and rappers will perform. Angel Band, a well-known folk music group, will open the show at 12.30 pm.

Bandstand Beds, organisers of the event, will launch 'Brighter Clapham' to celebrate the Clapham Food Route, an initiative linking various groups in Clapham committed to growing food or cooking with home-grown or locally sourced ingredients. The Spinney will be promoting its Saturday morning Mud Club and Natural Thinkers' Garden, its outdoor learning centre.

The Clapham Society will have a stand with books, walks leaflets and historical information about Clapham. (See page 4 if you can help on the stand).

Future of Vauxhall Bus Station Up in the Air?

For two and a half years local societies, amenity groups, businesses and individuals have battled to save the Bus Station at Vauxhall Cross. Our October 2014 newsletter carried an article, alerting members to the potential issues facing Clapham residents if the bus station (built in 2004) at this busy interchange is demolished. TfL's plans involve removal of the existing gyratory road system, and reversion to two-way traffic on the roads that encircle the train and underground stations.

Vauxhall is the second busiest transport interchange in London, following Victoria, and the underground station has some 80k passengers each working day. The bus station serves 14 routes, three of which are night services, and is used by 2,000 buses a day. TfL's proposals would involve relocating four of the bus stands back on to the Wandsworth Road and Kennington Lane, and redeveloping the existing bus station. This is likely to result in increased traffic congestion, and reduced convenience, amenity, and safety for bus passengers, especially if the site is redeveloped with high rise commercial developments, as depicted in illustrative material.

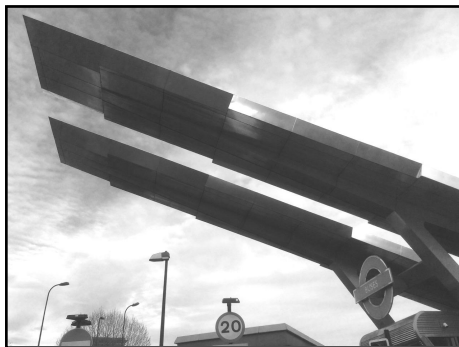


photo: Mark Leffler

It is understood that Lambeth Council has been the strongest advocate for demolishing the existing bus station to enable creation of a district shopping centre on the island site. Local organisations have questioned the need, but have also drawn attention to alternative siting for new shops that would not necessitate demolition of the bus station.

Our Vauxhall, a voluntary group of residents, local businesses and technical experts, submitted an alternative plan to TfL and Lambeth last autumn. This showed how the gyratory could be removed, and a new retail area created, as well as new amenity space, whilst retaining the bus station.

continued overleaf

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 normally speaks 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 23 May

St Mary's Church Spire. Paul Sharrock of Thomas Ford & Partners, project architect for the recent repairs to the spire of St Mary's Church, Clapham Park Road will talk about the work involved. He will outline the problems 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. A representative of St Mary's Church will summarise the church's history and its link to the community.

Monday 27 June

Lambeth Architecture 1965-1999. One of last year's most popular speakers, **Edmund Bird**, Heritage Advisor to the Mayor of London and former Lambeth Conservation Officer, returns to introduce the fourth book in his series on Lambeth's 20th-century architectural history. This book assesses the work of Ted Hollamby, the borough's chief planner and architect between 1964 and 1981, and his enormous output of council housing, as well as the major GLC estates of the 1960s and 1970s. It also covers leisure and community buildings, new schools and the completion of the post-war vision of the cultural hub of the South Bank.

A further (final) round of formal consultation was held over the Christmas period, and ended on 17 January. Requests to TfL by local groups to provide more time, and to extend the consultation outside the area were refused. TfL stated it was working to a tight timescale to enable key decisions on the preferred solution to be taken ahead of the Mayoral elections in May. Many queried this timing, pointing out that it is inappropriate for these decisions to be made by the outgoing Mayor, and that the controversial proposals merited debate with those standing for election. It also became clear that TfL had not evaluated the proposals from Our Vauxhall.

Local MP Kate Hoey has been an ardent and articulate supporter of the campaign to retain Vauxhall bus station, and on 6 January delivered an impassioned adjournment motion speech in Parliament criticising TfL and City Hall for overseeing a misleading and specious consultation with a view to railroading through their plans. She pointed out that their consultation never asked the simple question ‘Do you want to retain the bus station?’ and claimed among other things that ‘it would be an irresponsible waste of public money to knock down something that works’. She also pointed out that dispersing bus stops back on to the

main roads would disadvantage the most vulnerable – the old, disabled, parents with young children – all of whom make disproportionate use of buses.

On 18 March TfL issued a brief update on their website which put the timescales back for any decisions with the following comments: ‘We will now spend time reviewing and considering all points raised in the consultation and will publish a second report this autumn, in which we will set out our response to issues that were commonly raised in the consultation, and explain the next steps for the project.’ However, *The Evening Standard* the next day carried a short note stating that: ‘Separate proposals to demolish the Vauxhall bus garage have been put on ice after about a third of respondents opposed TfL’s proposed changes.’

It is certainly premature to expect there will be no attempt to revive plans to redevelop the bus station once a new Mayor is in post. Members of the Society and of our sister organisations in the area (Vauxhall, Kennington, Waterloo, Oval and Battersea) that have views on this might be well-advised to raise their concerns about the potential degradation or loss of this important facility with their local Councillors and with candidates in the coming election.

Mark Leffler

New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Alix Bateman, Sarah Derrig, Judy Harris, Rachel Jones, Bertha Roake, Debbie Scott, and Elizabeth Woods.

Clapham Literary Festival

This event will be hosted by Omnibus in partnership with Clapham Books, Clapham Library and Clapham Writers from **Tuesday 3 May to Sunday 8 May**.

Highlights include:

Wednesday 4 May Michael Glover, poet, art critic and long-time resident of Clapham Old Town reads from his forthcoming collection of poetry and talks about the petty triumphs and minor exhilarations of life as a poet. What kinds of skills are required? Who exactly will be paying the bills when the moment of accounting arrives?

Friday 6 May is Readers Afternoon, where a panel of local writers, including Leila Segal *Breathe: Stories from Cuba*, Roz Morris *My Memories of a Future Life*, John Taylor *Departing Vienna* and Julie Anderson *Reconquista* discuss their work with local readers and book groups.

On **Friday** evening Lorna Gibb recounts excerpts from her debut novel, *A Ghost's Story*, which explores the Victorian spirit world in a spooky séance setting.

Saturday 7 May includes a reading in sign language by Louise Stern and her interpreter, from her debut novel, *Ismael and his Sisters*. Julie Myerson discusses her new novel *The Stopped Heart*. Some members will remember that she spoke at one of our meetings about her previous book *Home* the history of her house in Lillieshall Road. Marcus Chown, author of several popular science books including *What A Wonderful World*, *Tweeting The Universe* and *We Need to talk about Kelvin* rounds off the week's events and invites the audience to ‘Ask Marcus Anything’ – Science related of course! Full programme and tickets at omnibus-clapham.org, call 020 7498 4699 or drop in at Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0DN.

Sunday 15 May. The Rogue's Gallery or Our Welcome

Guests? A walk on Clapham Common with Dr Iain Boulton to look for exotic or non-native wild plants and animals. From Japanese knotweed and lemon balm, through false acacia and sweet chestnut, to animals like grey squirrels and red-eared terrapins – are they bad for the environment and our native species, or is there another side to the coin? Come and learn about the constant battle being fought by nature, and the role we can play in preventing harm and doing good! Meet at Clapham Common Bandstand for 2 pm start. Duration 1½ hours.

Wandsworth Fringe

The festival which runs from **Friday 6 May to Sunday 22 May** includes the usual rich variety of events – theatre, poetry, dance, opera, music, art exhibitions and talks. Highlights include **Safe Ground's Criminal Justice Treasure Trail**, which uncovers the criminal justice history of Battersea, bringing fresh perspectives to well established landmarks and leading people to places, areas and buildings they would never normally visit. The trail takes around two hours and is on **Saturday 14 May and Sunday 15 May**. Tickets at £7 from grounded@safeground.org.uk.

The full programme is available at Omnibus and to download at wandsworthfringe.com.

More at Omnibus

Continuing until **Monday 9 May** is Ruth Dupre's exhibition *Embodiment: Fabricated paintings*, which is concerned with the relationship between the wearer and the worn – how dress is both self-concealment and self-expression. Each piece is a facade, unwearable; ostensibly a dress but made out of an odd assortment of materials from 150-year-old silks and velvets to bubble wrap and bin bags, yet with the appearance of elegance and sophistication. Ruth will host an evening on **Wednesday 4 May** from 6 pm. On **Friday 20 May** internationally acclaimed singer, pianist and songwriter, Joe Stilgoe, is at Omnibus. His shows combine virtuosic musicianship, breathtaking theatricality and witty interaction with the audience, and quick-witted improvisation. Book with Omnibus (details alongside).

Conscription and Conscience

At our March meeting Ben Copsey of Peace Pledge Union gave an interesting illustrated talk to mark the centenary of the introduction of conscription during WW1. He showed a graph indicating that the initial flurry of volunteers when the war started quickly fell away and it soon became obvious that conscription would have to be introduced if there was to be a useful army at all. The government therefore introduced the Military Service Act in January 1916, under which UK resident single men between the ages of 19 and 40 were conscripted.

People had various reasons for not wanting to join the army, and different levels of objection. One poster listed those who might object as follows: 'Are you a No-Conscriptionist, Socialist, Quaker, Witness, Methodist, Communist, Anarchist, German, Russian, Jewish, Buddhist, Catholic, Spiritualist, Theosophist, Independent Labour Party, Liberal, Trade Unionist, Libertarian, Plymouth Brethren, Anti-Capitalist and a Suffragist...or just a pacifist?' More than 50% objected on religious grounds, and most of the rest on political grounds.

Conscientious Objectors (COs) had to face a tribunal. If they were not granted exemption they were handed over to the military authorities and offered alternative service, or were court martialled which resulted in being sent to prison or a work camp, where life could be quite brutal. We saw a picture of a force-feeding suit used in prisons. Some men were imprisoned locally (Wandsworth Prison) and others further away, in particular at Dartmoor where they were not popular and we saw newspaper reports and pictures of local protests organised against the 'shirkers'. The sentence was usually two years hard labour. We saw a copy of a Discharge Certificate, which had to be carefully kept. One surprising fact is that COs were not released immediately at the end of the war, and the last were not discharged until 1921.

Absolute exemption seems to have been rare. The total number of men who refused to be conscripted between May 1916 and the armistice in 1918 was around 20,000. Many objectors joined non-combatant units, particularly medical units, and served in various countries. There was, however, a basic dilemma: 'The RAMC, [Royal Army Medical Corps] for instance, is an integral part of the Military Organisation – it heals men quickly so they may become fighting units again'.

COs were enlisted to do 'work of national importance' and records show that many worked on the land. We know that was the fate of one Clapham objector, John Battley, of the printing company Battley Brothers, who after WW11 became MP for Clapham.

We are grateful to Ben Copsey for an interesting talk on a still controversial subject. The Peace Pledge Union continues to remember and research 'The Men and Women who said No to WW1' as well as wider issues relating to peace. Full details are on their website ppu.org.uk.

Planning applications

Since the last newsletter we have made representations on the following:

159 Acre Lane. This involves the redevelopment of the present vacant site on the junction with Kings Avenue with a sixth form college for 480 students on basement, ground and first floor levels, with an eight-storey block of flats on top.

We think the building is much too large, overwhelming its more modest neighbours which include listed buildings, Victorian cottages and the Clapham Park and Northbourne Road Conservation Area. This is a poor site for a school. Teaching space is cramped with little natural light and safe access for pupils is inhibited by the narrow pavements. The site is so intensely developed that the access and traffic implications at this already congested junction will become unacceptable. In the Lambeth Local Plan this site is designated for industrial and business uses.

Audiology House, 45 Nightingale Lane. This is the conversion of a large villa by George Jennings back from commercial to residential use. However its grandeur is diminished by the size of the extensions proposed. With other consultees, we encouraged changes and as a result the size of the extensions has been reduced, their style changed and most importantly the space in front of the house restored to its proper role as a front garden rather than a car park.

10 Salcombe Gardens, Clapham Common North Side. Objection to an application to turn the front garden into a car park separated from the street by a high fence and gate.

Sports Zone, Rookery Road. Objection to the style of the proposed changes to the sports zone. The sports facilities are important, but the industrial style design with high railings and flood lighting, could have been better designed and more sympathetic to the surroundings. Despite our objection the application has been approved.

10 Rookery Road. Objection to an application to extend the café next to the sports zone. While this may have been fine if well designed, the information provided was so limited it was impossible to tell what the final product would look like. The application has been refused.

Ventilation shaft, Clapham Common South Side and The Avenue. Support for an imaginative scheme to provide a café on top of the rotunda and access facilities to this listed building, as part of TfL's proposals to open the Deep Shelter below to the public. The application has been approved.

Public Conveniences, The Polygon. Support for an application to change the use of the building to a shop, but with reservations expressed about how the physical changes were designed. The application has been approved.

19 Lillieshall Road. Objection to an application to rectify works already carried out to this listed building without consent. The replica components proposed to replace the originals removed without permission do not make up for their loss. The application has been refused.

We continue to keep a close eye on the houses that Lambeth is selling off in this street, and the changes, often excessive, proposed by new owners. We keep in close touch with the Council's planning department which we think has led to improved planning decisions. We also put forward no. 11 for Heritage England's listed buildings at risk register because it is vacant and in danger of becoming derelict.

88 Elms Road. Objection to an application to extend the loft by raising the ridgeline of the roof. This would affect the public view from the street. The application has been withdrawn.

We need help at Summer Fairs

The Clapham Society will have a stand at the following local events during the summer. We urgently need members to help on these stands, which are an important way for us to make contact with the local community and to promote the Society. The duties are not onerous – you just need to chat to passers by, hand out our free leaflets and maybe sell a book or a walks leaflets. If you have a free hour or two on any of the dates listed below and would be willing to help please contact the volunteer organiser shown below for the event. Car owners are needed at the beginning and end of each event to transport our stand, etc.

Saturday 30 April 12 noon to 6 pm. Common People. Around the Clapham Common Bandstand. Peter Jefferson Smith (peterjs1@mac.com or 020 7622 8285)

Saturday 11 June 12 noon to 4 pm. St Paul's Church Fair, Rectory Grove. Maev Sullivan (maevsullivan@gmail.com or 020 7498 9205)

Saturday 18 June 11 am to 5 pm. Holy Trinity Church Fayre, Clapham Common. Jennifer Everett (jeverett@waitrose.com or 020 7627 4770)

Saturday 25 June 12 noon to 4 pm. Abbeville Fete, Abbeville Road. Bill Emmett (bill@perlem.demon.co.uk or 020 7622 9234)

Sunday 10 July 11 am to 6 pm. Northcote Road Summer Fete, Northcote Road SW11. Derrick Johnson (derrick45johnson@hotmail.co.uk or 020 7223 1172)

Saturday 3 September 12 noon to 6 pm. Clapham Village Fete and Fire Station 150th anniversary celebration, Clapham Old Town. Alyson Wilson (alysonwilson.sw4@gmail.com or 020 7622 6360)

Sunday 4 September 3 pm to 5 pm. Clapham Society Bandstand Concert. Alyson Wilson (alysonwilson.sw4@gmail.com or 020 7622 6360)

Do you know anyone who used Clapham South Deep Shelters?

Following his excellent, and very popular talk about the deep shelters at our February meeting Chris Nix recently took two groups of members on a tour of the shelters. Knowing that demand would greatly exceed capacity we invited those who regularly help the Society on a voluntary basis. The shelters are fascinating, and Chris a brilliant guide. Keep an eye on the website and be sure to book a tour as soon as you can.

In connection with his continuing research Chris Nix is contacting those shelter users whom we interviewed for our 2008 talk (now on our website claphamsociety.com/Articles/article5.html) and he is very keen to find anyone else with relevant information. If you know of anyone who may have used the Clapham South Deep Shelters during WW1 or just after when they were hostel accommodation, please contact Alyson Wilson (details alongside). All memories are important!



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

US army whistle-blower comes to Balham

Southside theatre group will perform *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* by Tim Price from **Wednesday 1 June to Saturday 4 June** at 7.30 pm (Saturday at 5 pm) at Chestnut Grove Academy, Chestnut Grove SW12 8JZ. Tickets: £10 from 07914 657524 or at southsideplayers.org.uk.

In 2010, US Army intelligence analyst, Private Bradley Manning was responsible for the largest leak of secret military documents in history. Manning was court-martialled and sentenced to 35 years imprisonment. The play charts his teenage years in Wales, recruitment in the US Army and deployment to Iraq in the War on Terror. How did these events occur, and who was responsible for Manning's radicalisation?