



The Clapham Society

Newsletter

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Opera Gala

There is no Clapham Opera Festival this year, but Marie Soulier is organising an opera gala in collaboration with Rev Ruth Burge-Thomas of the Church of the Holy Spirit, in support of Refugees Welcome Lambeth, a charity working with Citizens UK in their efforts to welcome the 23 Syrian refugee families which Lambeth have agreed to take.

The event is on **Sunday 1 October**

at 4 pm at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Narbonne Road. Performers are Clapham Opera Festival favourites baritone Ricardo Panella, tenor Alberto Sousa, soprano Susanna Gaspar and mezzo-soprano Felicity Buckland, all accompanied on the piano by Kelvin Lim. Tickets are £15 (£9 concessions) on line at eventbrite.co.uk/e/generous-opera-arias-to-welcome-lambeth-refugees-tickets-37416270071, from the church office 020 8675 8094 (leave a message if necessary and your call will be returned) and a few tickets will be available on the door.

Contact Marie (marieshoe@gmail.com) direct if you would like to help further by sponsoring an artist, or sponsoring the Syrian buffet cooked by the refugees themselves to be served after the concert, or the drinks that will be sold on the evening.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

This season's first concert is on **Friday 29 September** at 7.30 pm when Jonathan Parkin presents a programme featuring two of the finest works for clarinet and string quartet: Mozart's popular *Quintet in A Major* and a work for the same forces, by English composer Arthur Bliss.

Venue: St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. £12, £10 CCC friends and concessions, £5 for children. For further information email claphamchamberconcerts@gmail.com



Ricardo Panella

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. Non-members are invited to make a donation.

PLEASE ARRIVE IN GOOD TIME TO ENSURE ENTRY. THERE IS A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER THE THEATRE CAN ACCOMMODATE AND YOU WILL NOT BE ADMITTED WHEN THAT NUMBER IS REACHED.

Monday 23 October

Annual General Meeting. Followed by guest speaker, **James Le Fanu**. For all the many impressive achievements of modern medicine, there is growing concern at the progressive 'medicalization' of people's lives to no good purpose. *Daily Telegraph* medical columnist and Vauxhall GP **James Le Fanu** will explore the ramifications and the reasons behind the massive threefold increase in drug prescribing over the past 15 years and its many potential harmful consequences.

Monday 27 November

Antibiotics and antibiotic resistance. For decades, antibiotics have been used to treat infections and have allowed advances in surgery and cancer treatment. Hand in hand with the increasing use of antibiotics is the rise in antibiotic resistance. There is rising alarm over the spread of 'superbugs' and the impact they could have on the future of medicine. The threat is deemed serious enough to be placed onto the national risk register. In this febrile and worried climate **Dr John Clark**, consultant microbiologist at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust will go through the history of antibiotics and the rise of resistance and attempt to bust myths and predict the future.

There is no meeting in December.

Rectory Gardens

This triangular site is on the corner of Fitzwilliam Road and Rectory Grove. It includes 28 late C19 houses, built to satisfy the growing need for cheap housing. Most were crammed into the interior of the site with little amenity space; they had outdoor toilets and a wide path allowing horse and cart access to their front doors. Those fronting Rectory Grove were larger and included some shops.

In 1969 Lambeth Council proposed acquiring 'an extended redevelopment area' which included Rectory Gardens and the area around Rectory Grove. They decided to compulsorily purchase 6.749 acres of mixed use land of which 2.443 acres were housing. Only the 0.76 acres of Rectory Gardens were justified for acquisition as slum clearance. In Clapham, local objections led to the formation of Rectory Gardens Squatters' Association (RAGS) and Clapham Action Rectory Grove (CARG), and a similar organisation in Ivey Road. Lambeth acquired Rectory Gardens in 1970 but could not develop it. Residents were moved out, the site was squatted and the Council refused to accept the occupation formally. In February 1971, as a result of massive objections, a Public Inquiry covering the remaining area was held (it also included Ivey Road). Before this some owners had sold out to Lambeth. At the Public Inquiry, Lambeth lost the appeal on the compulsory purchase of the adjoining houses, but by negotiation acquired enough industrial land for some new housing development.

The acquisition of the Rectory Grove area, including Rectory Gardens formed part of the Council's long term intention of acquiring as many properties as possible, particularly housing they considered unfit and 'added lands' in order to build up large development sites. Starting in the north, Lambeth compulsorily acquired land for new housing until they reached Clapham and Brixton. It was here that they began to meet more organised opposition. The arguments justifying acquisition were based on the existing population compared with that after redevelopment. This was a false argument, since the existing population was low leading to under occupation of the available houses. Redevelopment did not therefore provide adequate population gain (if any), when measured against the amount of housing accommodation (measured by habitable rooms) already existing in the area.

Within the last few years the houses in Rectory Grove have been emptied and eventually protected by security 'guardians' although they have continued to deteriorate. The Clapham Society heard that demolition for new build was likely and we lobbied to retain the existing buildings. In 2016/17, Lambeth marketed the site and sold off two of the houses. The remaining properties have now been sold to Lexadon Property Group.

The Clapham Society has always lobbied for retaining the houses for rent as a group, possibly by a housing association but they are now likely to be repaired and marketed. The retention of the quirky Rectory Gardens buildings is encouraging but doesn't achieve our ideal. However, we helped prevent demolition and played an important part in securing the future of this part of old Clapham.

Peter Copley

A full account of the fight against compulsory purchases in the area, as recorded in a series of articles in *The Times* between 1972 and 1979, and the story of the Public Inquiry, is in the Clapham Society book, *Clapham in the Twentieth Century*, price £5, available at Clapham Books, 26 The Pavement, SW4 0JA.

October at Dulwich Picture Gallery

Opening on **Saturday 28 October** is the first retrospective exhibition in the UK of the Finnish illustrator, Tove Jansson, best known for her illustrations of the Moomins, in a series of books. The exhibition will reveal how much more varied her art was than these well-known characters.

This month's Insight Series lectures, *20th Century Art and Architecture of South America* are on **Wednesdays 4, 11 and 18 October** at 10.30 am in the Linbury Room with expert speakers. Full details on dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or call 020 8693 5254.

Dulwich Pavilion, the temporary summer pavilion closes on **Sunday 8 October** so there is not long left to see it!



London Symphony

Don't miss this new silent film offering a poetic journey through the capital to be screened on **Friday 6 October**, followed by a Q&A with the film's director and editor, Alex Barrett.

Venue: London Shambhala Meditation Centre, 27 Belmont Close, SW4 6AY.

More details and tickets (£8)

at shambhala.org.uk/program-details/?id=316331 or 020 7720 3207.

Doors open at 7.30 pm, screening at 8 pm.

More Music at St Paul's

On **Sunday 8 October** at 7.30 pm Michael Christie is the performer in the first Amick Vocal Concert at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. Clapham-resident Michael Christie, shot to fame as a member of the vocal harmony group G4, and has sung on stages as diverse as opera, West End and pantomime. Songs include Rodgers & Hammerstein, Flanders & Swann, Elton John, Bob Dylan, Paul Robeson, Gershwin and many more. Later concerts feature Mary-Jess and soprano, Leslie Garrett, CBE. For details and tickets (£15) go to AmickProductions.co.uk or telephone the box office on 0870 780 0425.

Fresh blood for classic horror tale

Southside Players will be performing *Drakul*, a new version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, from **Wednesday 25 October** to **Saturday 28 October** at Chestnut Grove School Theatre, Boundaries Road, SW12 8JZ. Tickets: £10, concessions £7.50 (on Wednesday and Saturday only). Performances: 7.45 pm Weds-Friday, Saturday at 5.00 pm. Box office: 07914 657524 or book online at southsideplayers.org.uk.

The Plough Brewery



Anya Hindmarch and Caroline Marston of Marston Properties Ltd

Photo: Dana Kubick

On 6 September our 11th Green Plaque was unveiled by the distinguished designer of ladies' handbags, Anya Hindmarch, on the former Plough Brewery, where she has her offices. We enjoyed tours round the building including the undercroft, and a reception generously hosted by the owners, Marston Properties.

Café Delight is 21

Jim Grover, whose recent photographs of Clapham High Street at Omnibus, amazed, delighted or worried local residents, has another exhibition now on in Clapham.

This is at Café Delight at 19 Clapham High Street, SW4 7TS and it follows the daily life of the family-run café which opened in 1996. In 40 photographs Grover captures the wide variety of patrons, some of whom have been coming for the full 21 years.



Two customers at Café Delight

The exhibition is open until the end of October, daily (except Sundays) from 7 am to 3 pm.

For more details go to jimgroverphotography.com/cafe-delight-at-21-2/

If Walls Could Talk: Tours

At Battersea Arts Centre this month there are tours on **Wednesday 4 October** and **Saturday 21 October** given by guides recalling the past of the building, and personal memories. Both tours start at 6.30 pm. Tickets are free but advance booking is required as places are limited. Book your free ticket at: bac.org.uk/content/43175/whats_on/whats_on/events_and_workshops/if_walls_could_talk_tours or from the box office on 020 7223 2223.

Some like it Hot

Royal Trinity Hospice 'Icons of Cinema' film series, in conjunction with Clapham Picturehouse, continues with a screening of the classic *Some Like It Hot* on **Monday 2 October** at 6 pm. Tickets (£10) include entry to the show and

complimentary popcorn. Guests can also enjoy a 10% discount on food and drink at the Picturehouse, with a chance to win great prizes in the Trinity raffle. Tickets are for sale on the Trinity website: royaltrinityhospice.london/Event/trinity-cinema-series and also available on the night.

October at Omnibus

Omnibus has announced the line-up for Perception Festival, a month-long programme of thought-provoking drama, vibrant music, comedy and debate all exploring the discomfort, uncertainty, rebellion and bravery of going against the tide. It runs from **Tuesday 3 October** to **Saturday 28 October**.

The programme of 14 events includes the festival launch night, a new staging of Nickolai Gogol's *The Overcoat*, *Mary And Me* an inspiring five star production *And A Cracked Plaster Sky* a new play by Kay Adshead. For music lovers vibraphonist and Kenny Wheeler Jazz Prize winner Ralph Wyld returns with his band Mosaic and the much anticipated Beethoven's *Quartet Journey* by Dante Quartet with David Timson, as featured on BBC Radio 4. The full listings of all Perception events are on the website omnibus-clapham.org.

One for the diary. Pay day loans and the financial perils of a capitalist world are the themes in *The Trap*, a biting new play by Kieran Lynn, which runs from **Tuesday 31 October** to **Sunday 19 November**. Watch this space for next month's Q&A with the playwright.

The Streatham Sketchbook

This unusual look at our neighbours in Streatham is a dialogue between Japanese artist Jiro Osuga and French historian Mireille Galinou, both long resident in Streatham, on the artistic heritage, local history and current life of the borough.

Ten of Osuga's Streatham inspired paintings are matched by Galinou's ten articles on the same themes. Personal views and historical fact fit together. There are also lots of references to other works on the area. The photography by Torla Evans is excellent.

There is also a chapter on Osuga's work in general and one on multicultural Streatham.

I loved it but be warned: it is not a book just to read through strictly for information. *The Streatham Sketchbook* is available on the website yourlondonpublishing.co.uk at £ 17.99 including postage (uk).

Janet Johnson

Wandsworth Prison Museum

This museum telling the fascinating story of Wandsworth Prison has re-opened, at North Gate car park, Wandsworth Prison, Heathfield Road, London, SW18 3HR housed in a brand-new building. It is open for visitors by appointment.

To arrange a visit email wandsworthprisonmuseum@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk.

Barricades in Old Town

Possibly the hottest issue in Old Town at present is the huge hoarding surrounding the former public toilets at The Polygon that were closed about 14 years ago. The area around the toilets received substantial investment – principally from TfL – in 2013/14 resulting in the creation of a public piazza and revised distribution of bus stands around Old Town. For some reason the regeneration programme failed to incorporate the toilet block which was left to stand rather incongruously bereft of its railings and landscaping. The original planting plan for the new piazza (devised by local landscape architect Diana Bell), was also

only partially implemented initially, but this was finalised in November 2016 with funding from *This is Clapham*. In the meantime Lambeth Council came up with a somewhat controversial plan to renovate and convert the toilet block, which is legally a part of Clapham Common, into a café, together with a small exclusive 24/7 toilet facility for TfL staff, for which they have been seeking a commercial taker.

In April a high hoarding was erected around the building to accommodate the renovation works and contractor's storage and parking, and to widespread dismay a large area of the new piazza together with public seating and a number of the newly planted trees and shrubs was enclosed within the compound. The Council's contractors then proceeded to strip out the asbestos, the roof and tiles of the former WC and to remove all its timber trusses. The works abruptly halted for a period. The next anyone outside the Council knew, the toilet block had been demolished. We now have a very

large builders' compound enclosing a considerable area of public open space, within feet of residential properties and one of South London's finest restaurants, Trinity.

Since the demolition, local concern has been mounting about the blight caused



by the hoardings in this important part of Clapham, protection and watering of the planting that has been enclosed in this way, uncertainties over the future of the site – including some strong views on what should now happen, and the process that has resulted in the structure being demolished in this fashion with no prior notice or consultation. It should be noted that although the building was not listed, it sat within the Old Town Conservation Area and had statutory protection as a result. In normal circumstances planning consent to demolish would be required.

It is now understood that after the roof had been removed it was found that the building was structurally unsafe, even though a detailed structural survey as recently as November 2014 had determined it to be sound. A decision was summarily taken to demolish the remaining structure with immediate effect on safety grounds, and the Planning Department was notified only after the fact.

We have subsequently been informed that the Council is now considering what to do with the site, and how to honour the undertaking given to TfL for a 24/7 toilet facility close to the bus stands. No indication has been given to date on how long it will take for a decision to emerge

or what options are being considered, and the letting agent boards seeking a commercial operator remain in place.

There are serious doubts as to whether an independent café was ever going to be viable on this site, especially given TfL's requirements, the proximity of competing establishments in the vicinity, and the very limited floorspace

available. To erect a new facility on the site makes no sense at all.

The Society is keen to see this site reverting to open space as quickly as possible. The area currently enclosed by the hoardings is a gross intrusion. It should be reduced to the minimum required to enable safe removal of the remains of the former structure, and a remediation plan needs to put in place immediately to repair any damage done to Diana's landscaping plan and the immature trees that currently stand within the enclosure.

As for the requirements of TfL the Society is sympathetic to the needs of our bus drivers who have already had to wait a number of years for a 24/7 solution to be found. However, the solution to this issue is not dependent on reconstructing toilets on this particular site, and we consider other options should, and must be looked into in conjunction with the local business community.

Mark Leffler assisted by Maev Sullivan

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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