

The Clapham Society

Newsletter

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Issue 469 September 2024

One enchanted evening

Many thanks to the fabulous 50 of you who came to our summer party on 18 July. After the rains that had come before, we could not have been luckier with the weather. Even the forecast did not let us down, and warm sunshine and dappled shade bathed the magical garden of our hostess, Pamela Price (*below left*), who could not have been more accommodating. Her garden, a series of rooms abloom with roses and other colourful plantings, looked even more floral in feel thanks to the generous spirit of Juliet Poyser who dotted the place with rustic arrangements. (Top tip: if you want to fill a bucket with flowers, criss-cross the top with sellotape and poke the stems through the gaps.) A huge debt of thanks to Society chair Mark Leffler (*right*) who masterminded the occasion, including lining up the caterers, Jimmy Garcia Catering, based in Battersea's Gartons Way. The canapes were mouthwatering, plentiful and inventive, and Jimmy's staff never let a mouth – or a glass – go empty. The soft strains of classical violin and piano music emanating from David Wallace and Shelagh Sutherland (*below right*) in a shady nook of Pamela's garden ensured further magic still. Definitely an enchanted summer evening. *Report and photographs by Ruth Eastman*



September is local history month

The **Lambeth Local History Fair** will be held on **Saturday 7 September** at St Leonard, Streatham, SW16 1HS, **10am to 5pm**. At this popular annual event organised by Lambeth Archives and members of Lambeth Local History Forum, you can see displays, stalls, books and more from local history societies around Lambeth. Experts will be on hand to answer questions. The Clapham Society display will focus on the history of the area through maps. There will be also be talks, walks, a tour of the church including crypt and maybe the tower, and lots more – not forgetting the home-made cakes!

Lambeth Heritage Festival lasts all month. With so many talks, walks and exhibitions you could go to a different one each day. Clapham Society walks include: Clapham Ghost-signs on **Sunday 1 September**; History of Clapham Common, **8 September**; Abbeville Village, **22 September**; and on **Wednesday 25 September** a talk at Omnibus at **7pm** about the local surveyor, Daniel Gould (*left*), whose lost map of Clapham in 1815 has recently been found. The talk will include details of residents of some of the houses shown on it.

The full programme is available at Lambeth libraries, leisure centres and lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk. *Alyson Wilson*



Gould Family

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk starts promptly at 8pm and our guest normally speaks for about 45 minutes, followed by questions and discussion. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to donate. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks. Find the list of our 2024 talks at claphamsociety.com/events.

Monday 16 September

Keys to the City. Historian and author **Margaret Willes** will talk about her latest books – on St Paul's Churchyard, and Southwark and its people. Society member **Helen Esmonde** and Margaret will also talk about their forthcoming book on the Livery Companies of London, *City Unlocked: From Wool to Digital*, due to be published next spring. Margaret Willes was, for many years, the Publisher at the National Trust and Helen Esmonde is a Past Master of the Stationers' Company. Helen hopes their book will enable others to share her experience of discovering the history of the Livery movement and how it mirrors the growth of our nation's economy.

Monday 21 October

Annual General Meeting. The AGM is your opportunity to hear what your Committee has achieved over the past year and also to join it and become more involved in the Society's activities. We are especially keen to recruit people with knowledge of the built environment, admin, IT and communication skills. If you would like to talk – informally and with no obligation – to one of our committee members about what would be involved, email secretary@claphamsociety.com and we will arrange this.

The formal part of the meeting is brief. Members are then invited to enjoy nibbles and a glass of wine before our guest speaker, **Gareth James**, talks about 'All change for the better on Clapham Common'.

Nominations for the election of Officers and Committee Members are open until Monday 7 October. See back page for details.

Membership update

We extend a warm welcome this month to new members Anne and Davis Harriss. *Jennifer Everett*

Hibbert Almshouse conservation



Dana Kubick

This terrace of eight houses bequeathed by two Hibbert sisters and designed in French Renaissance style by Edward l'Anson has graced Wandsworth Road since 1859. However, time had taken its toll and the need for substantial repairs required the trustees, led by Euan Kennedy, to embark upon a daunting fundraising initiative and to appoint an architect to mastermind the works. **Sherry Bates** (*above*) of Bates Zambelli has ably fulfilled this task and he gave us a fascinating insight into his continuous involvement from 2013 to the present day. His amply illustrated talk described the difficulties faced in providing much-improved accessible facilities as well as focusing on the complexities of the extensive renovation of the exterior of the building. The residents were able to remain in occupation throughout the works.

Despite many problems with below-ground services, the approaches to the building were improved to help overcome steep gradients which had been created by the realignment of the tramway in Wandsworth Road in 1909. Access to the houses from the rear has been made step-free, as has an approach to the delightful garden.

Sherry Bates produced designs to introduce small toilets with washbasins to the bedroom floor of each house but, because of the impact on the rear roofline, the proposal was rejected by Lambeth conservation officers and on appeal by an inspector. In discussion after the talk it was agreed by all present that this proposal, which had been supported by the Society, had been a sadly lost opportunity.

We learned about the problems of repairing and replacing the rooftop finials and corbels representing mythical creatures, as well as being introduced to an extensive lexicon of specialist terms: crockets, gablets and sprockets. The attention to the details of the necessary works was impressive and Sherry gave credit to the knowledge and craftsmanship of the contractors, DBR, whose contract manager, Brendan Foley, was in attendance. Heating and plumbing systems were also improved, the result being a sound building smartly able to provide comfortable accommodation for its residents well into the future. **John Haworth**

Battersea Society talk

Bolingbroke Hospital provided medical services to residents across Battersea and Wandsworth until it closed in 2008. In her talk, 'A Harley Street for the poor? The life and times of the Bolingbroke Hospital', **Sue Demont**, Chair of the Battersea Society's Heritage Committee, will explore the hospital's architecture and operation over 128 years, including the contributions of some illustrious patrons. Free, but please register by emailing history@wandsworthcommon.org.

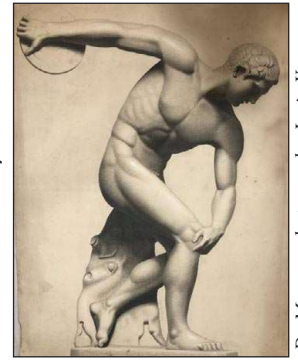


Wandsworth Heritage Service

Tuesday 24 September, 6.30pm for 7pm, NatureScope, Wandsworth Common, Off Dorkote Road, SW18 3RT.

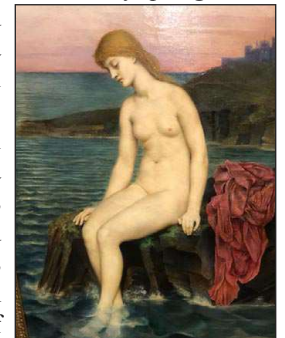
Three cheers to...

The curator of the De Morgan Foundation **Sarah Hardy** for showing a group of us the hidden treasures of the De Morgan Collection in June. On the tour Sarah sprinkled her specialist knowledge of William and Evelyn liberally as she talked us through a store of graphite drawings (*right*) and tiles by William (*below*) and exquisite drawings and paintings by Evelyn. Present was an artist in her own right, **Janie Yang**, who was quietly taking notes which she has kindly permitted us to share here:



De Morgan photographs Janie Yang

'Evelyn was born into a wealthy family. Her mother, Anna Maria Wilhelmina Spencer-Stanhope, was raised at Cannon Hall, Barnsley, which has a wing dedicated to Evelyn and the creative women in the family. Evelyn had the advantage of being educated alongside her brother, and her interest and talent in art led to a scholarship at the Slade School of Fine Art which, unusually, accepted women students. There she had a fabulous training that included anatomy. She continued her studies in Florence, where she painted *Flora, Goddess of Spring* in true Pre-Raphaelite style. Evelyn was interested in spiritualism (fairies and mermaids) – a trend of that era – and made some beautiful paintings such as *The Mermaid* (*right*).



'William De Morgan studied at the Royal Academy School. He and Evelyn met at a fancy dress ball, where she went dressed as a tube of red madder paint. He announced he was madder! They married and Evelyn's fortune enabled the couple to live in Chelsea (Old Church Street), near some of the Pre-Raphaelite set and Oscar Wilde. George and Mary Watts were also friends and there is a collection of the De Morgans' work at the Watts Gallery in the charming Surrey village of Compton.



'William De Morgan was instrumental in designing the Arab Hall at Leighton House from 14th and 15th century antique tiles; he recreated any that were missing to complete the scheme, adding to his understanding of pattern and repeats. This inspired him to work on the white lustre backgrounds which made the colours pop; he researched and designed a special kiln to create the effects and finesse he wanted. Evelyn set up a factory for him in Sands End, Fulham and his original tiles can be seen at The Tabard pub in Bedford Park. His daisy motif tiles were all



the rage, representing a flattened medieval style reminiscent of the *millefleurs* in tapestries.

'After their deaths, Evelyn's sister, Wilhelmina, amassed many original artworks of the De Morgans, including tiles and glazed *objets*. We are indebted to her for the range of her collection.' We in turn are grateful to Janie for her excellent notes on Sarah's talk. To support the De Morgan Collection, visit <https://www.demorgan.org.uk/support-friend/>. Thanks, Christine Armstrong, for organising. **Ruth Eastman**



Above: Andrew Kelly, Julian Tollast, Linda Bray, Christine Armstrong, Sarah Brady (holding a De Morgan 'corner' tile), Ruth Eastman, Janie Yang, Mark Leffler, Karen Elliott.

Die Fledermaus: Joie de vivre, champagne and bats



Blustery wind and rain did little to encourage opera-going picnickers on their way to St Paul's Opera's short summer season in early July; yet, in true south London fashion, hardy souls sat beneath dripping gazebos and turned their well-covered backs to the chilly breeze to enjoy

food, wine and good company, sure in the knowledge that more pleasure was yet to come. They were not disappointed.

Strauss's 1874 confection of wacky disguises, champagne, marital hijinks, glorious music and more champagne was just the thing to lift any drooping spirits. This production was placed some years later during the Golden Age of Hollywood, and the transposition allowed for plenty of slapstick and wit. A series of silent movie title cards introduced the characters, almost all of whom pretend in the opera to be someone else. They also doubled as surtitles for new dialogue by director Jonny Danciger as well as the translated libretto.

Die Fledermaus centres on a fancy dress party and the party atmosphere was much in evidence. The singing, from an international cast, was stunning, with the two sopranos, Lithuanian Rusne Tuslaite (*top, and below second left*) and Lancastrian Olivia Singleton (*below centre back*), giving stand-out performances as respectively Rosalinde and Adele. English/German countertenor Jean-Max Lattemann (*above far left*) was commanding as Prince Orlofsky and



the Chaplinesque-clad Bulgarian/American baritone Thomas Litchev (*above centre*) almost made one feel sorry for Eisenstein, who blames the whole charade on champagne. The small chamber orchestra was excellent under the direction of George Ireland, and the redoubtable SPO chorus gave us jolly waiters, cinema scene shifters, camera operators and partygoers with zest and fizz.

After giving the performers a tremendous reception a smiling, laughing audience spilled out into the damp July night (dry on opening night!), humming Strauss's wonderful tunes. How lucky we are to have this company in our local community, or as the SPO tagline has it: 'Opera in the heart of Clapham.' **Julie Anderson** *Julie Anderson's 'The Midnight Man', the first in her Clapham Trilogy, was one of the prizes generously donated in the raffle. Next up in the busy St Paul's Opera calendar: Friday 18 October, Autumn Gala; Thursday 7 November, David Butt Philip Masterclass; Thursday 5 and Saturday 7 (matinée) December, Handel's 'Messiah'.*

Big Green Day

This year's event will be held on **Sunday 22 September, 11am to 3pm**. Come along to St Paul's Church Yard and Eden Nature Garden at Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ, and help us celebrate local action on climate change, and protecting nature and the environment. Find out more about what we all can be doing to reduce our carbon emissions and live more sustainable lives. There will be guest speakers, workshops, stalls, a nature quiz, a seed swap, children's activities, a 'bring and share' lunch, plus musical entertainment and more. Admission free. Contact us at bgdclapham@gmail.com. **Cynthia Woodhouse**

Clapham Book Festival

Hope you've saved the date of **Saturday 12 October** for this year's Festival, which is looking exciting. The day starts at **11am** with a Guided Walk round the literary high spots of Clapham, led by local thriller author **Julie Anderson**. At **3pm** bestselling crime writer **Simon Brett** talks with highly successful publisher-turned-author **Elly Griffiths**. At **5pm**, bestselling novelists **Lissa Evans** and **Elizabeth Buchan** will discuss story-making and historical fiction. Then, at **7pm**, one of the UK's best-known political historians and educationalists, **Sir Anthony Seldon**, and esteemed broadcaster, writer and journalist **Gavin Esler** will explore politics, contemporary history, education and life in general.

Come and meet the authors and have your books signed (authors' works will be on sale, thanks to the support of the Festival's partner, local independent bookshop Clapham Books). **Tickets go on sale from 1 September** at <https://payhip.com/claphambookfestival/tickets>.



Royal Trinity Hospice

• Rogue Opera proudly presents *Carmen Re-Imagined* in the award-winning private gardens of Royal Trinity Hospice at 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN. Bizet's dramatic story of love and passion will be brought to life by Rogue Opera's four professional singers and a pianist in this intimate setting. With an original script, fantastic singing and acting, and a clever use of props this is one not to miss.

Tickets are £45 per person, with all money raised in support of the Hospice's free palliative and end-of-life care. The ticket price includes refreshments (wines and soft drinks) before the performance and during the interval. **Saturday 21 September, 6pm**, no parking on-site, wheelchair accessible. Children are welcome to attend at their parents' discretion but operatic depictions of passion and violence may not be suitable for all children. For more information visit www.royaltrinityhospice.london/Event/opera-at-the-hospice-2024 or call the events team on 020 7787 3224.

• Royal Trinity Hospice's gardens will open for their final **National Garden Scheme (NGS) Open Garden Weekend** event of 2024 on **Sunday 15 September, 11am to 4pm**. Visitors can wander the hidden oasis enjoying the shrubs, roses, sculptures and pond before the arrival of autumn. Tickets, £4 per adult, can be booked through the NGS website, ngs.org.uk. The splendour of Trinity's gardens is thanks to the year-round commitment of our Head Gardener and team of volunteers. **Anna Reid**



Courtesy of Rogue Opera

Charity gala with George the Poet

Devas Youth Club champions young people in the community. Show your support for this excellent local charity by helping them celebrate their 140-year history at a gala on **Monday 2 September**. The special guest is George the Poet, who will be giving a poetry reading followed by an interview. The London-born poet of Ugandan heritage, if you've not encountered him before, is a multi-talented spoken-word artist, rapper and podcast host with an interest in social and political issues. Visit devasclub.org to see the good work they are doing and book your ticket, £80 per person, by email to info@devasclub.org or through Eventbrite. **7-10pm, The Grand Hall, Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN.**

Clapham street names: Rectors of Clapham

A number of streets are named after past rectors of Clapham. The original rectory was built in the 17th century, in what is now known as **Rectory Grove**. Over the years it deteriorated and by 1811 was described by a local builder as 'a very ancient building erected at different times, the newest part having been built a century ago'. The Rev John Venn, rector and member of the Clapham Sect, had it rebuilt in the contemporary style but it was pulled down in 1886. An image of the Venn rectory from a watercolour by Hassell in 1827 is shown *below*.



© Wandsworth Libraries and Heritage Centre

John Venn or possibly his father, Henry, who was curate in 1755-58, are commemorated in **Venn Street**, formally constituted in 1903. A plaque claims that John Venn's grandson and logician, the John Venn who invented the Venn diagram, is also commemorated there. Venn Street runs into **Stonhouse Street**, renamed in 1919 from Wirtemberg Street after John Venn's predecessor as rector, James Stonhouse. He inherited a baronetcy from his brother and, although rector for almost 40 years from 1753, never lived in Clapham. Venn's successor, William Dealtry, has no street named after him in Clapham but there is a **Dealtry Road** in Putney.

Finally, the Lordship of the Manor of Clapham, who had the right to nominate the rector, was owned by the Atkins family and its descendants for more than 300 years, but it was not until well into the 19th century that one of the family became rector, Rev William Atkins-Bowyer, who also built a new rectory in Macaulay Road. There is an **Atkins Road** in Clapham Park with building from the 1830s. **Timothy Walker**

Next month: Larkhall to Clapham Rise

If you can suggest how your street was named or want to find out more about it, email history@claphamsociety.com.

Historic property at risk

At 64 Clapham Common North Side, half-hidden from the road by a substantial weeping willow, stands one of the oldest and probably most neglected properties in Clapham. This modest cottage probably dates back to the 1780s. It was once incorporated into North Side (now demolished), which was one of the grandest properties fronting the Common, erected in the early 1800s, to provide servants' accommodation.



Following the refusal of planning permission to redevelop the cottage in the 1980s, the owners left it vacant and deteriorating, and it is now largely derelict. New proposals to demolish the cottage and replace it with a larger building have once again been turned down by Wandsworth Council, following strong representations by, among others, the Clapham Society, the Battersea Society, the Georgian Society and local residents.

Throughout the early post-war years through to the 1970s the house was used as a doctor's surgery, locals will recall, with living accommodation above, and at one time Dr John Dunwoody, later MP for Falmouth and Camborne, and husband of Baroness Gwyneth Dunwoody, practised here.

Recently the cottage has been marketed by Fresh Aspects Property, and the Society hopes that a buyer has been found to rehabilitate and restore the property in a manner that is sensitive to the heritage it represents and its contribution to the Conservation Area. **Report and photograph by Mark Leffler**

The 60th Annual General Meeting of the Clapham Society

will be held on **Monday 21 October 2024** at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW, at **8 pm**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM (16 October 2023), published with Newsletter 462 (December 2023/January 2024) and available to share at the meeting.
3. Adoption of the Annual Report for the year 2023/24.
4. Adoption of the Financial Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.
5. Election of the Officers and Committee Members for the year 2024/2025

Chairman	Treasurer
Vice Chair	Legal Counsel
Secretary	Membership Secretary
A maximum of 10 further Committee Members.	
6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner.
7. Any other business and announcements.

The formal business will be followed by a talk (*see front page*) and other matters arising.

Nominations for the election of Officers and Committee Members must be sent to the Secretary at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting. If you wish to stand please email secretary@claphamsociety.com, with the names of your proposer and seconder by **Monday 7 October**.

Gillian White, Secretary

If you have any queries about The Clapham Society or have news of local events, please email the appropriate person below:

Chairman	Mark Leffler mark.leffler88@gmail.com
Vice Chair	Alison Macnair vicechair@claphamsociety.com
Secretary	Gillian White secretary@claphamsociety.com
Treasurer	David Brown treasurer@claphamsociety.com
Membership Secretary	Jennifer Everett membership@claphamsociety.com

Meetings and Events	Christine Armstrong events@claphamsociety.com
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Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at claphamsociety.com

