

# The Clapham Society Newsletter



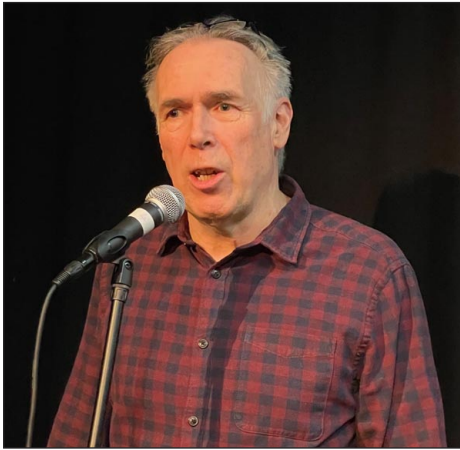
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Issue 476 May 2025

## Renoir's acrobats in Paris and Clapham too

On the evening of 17 March, **Charlie Holland** shared a remarkable story of the Wartenberg family, their artistic performances and varied talents. We were introduced to sisters Franziska and Angeline Wartenberg. As children they had posed for the French Impressionist Pierre-Auguste Renoir and some years later Angeline confirmed this to a niece in America by letter.



Dana Kubick

Renoir was familiar with the Cirque Fernando in Paris as evidenced by the inclusion of the circus ring with its red border in his paintings. The sisters' parents were noted performers. Father Carl was known for the surprising feat of rotating a huge barrel with his feet whilst lying down. All the Wartenberg siblings were artistes, with skills spanning from ballet to juggling to contortionism. Franziska was

lauded for her strength as she lifted her younger siblings during shows.

The family travelled and performed extensively, not only in Paris but also in Denmark, Germany and Russia. They settled at 54 The Chase in Clapham during their time in London, when some of the younger family members became British nationals. The parents stayed in London for the rest of their days.

Charlie illustrated his fascinating talk with rare photographs of the Wartenbergs, linked with programmes of shows they had participated in. At the end of his talk he added to our knowledge by answering a range of questions from the audience. His forthcoming book, *Acrobats and Aerialists in Circus, Music Hall and Beyond, 1850s-1900s*, is eagerly anticipated. Thank you, Charlie, for revealing the history of this hitherto unknown talent in Clapham. We wish you well for future talks and publications. **Nicky Long**

## Clapham Park Road Post Office and stationery shop

We hope lots of you have been enjoying the new post office at 82-84 Clapham Park Road, SW4 7BX. As you read here last month, it opened on 17 April (the photograph was taken while work was still underway inside 10 days before). Clapham Councillors and the Clapham & Brixton Hill MP have been in regular contact with the Post Office about the new branch.



Ruth Eastman

The Post Office is delighted that our local Member of Parliament, **Bell Ribeiro-Addy**, will be cutting the ribbon at the new Post Office branch on **9 May at 3pm**. All are welcome. **Alison Inglis-Jones**

Our meetings take place at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW, at 7.30pm. The talk lasts for about 45 minutes, followed by questions and discussion. Meetings are free for members and open to non-members, who are invited to donate. The Café Bar is open from 6pm for drinks and snacks, and after the talk for further mingling and conversation. You can find our 2025 talks at [claphamsociety.com/events](http://claphamsociety.com/events). There are no talks in July, August or December.

### Monday 19 May, 7.30pm

**'Behind the Blue Doors': The bicentenary.** Jim Grover is a social documentary photographer based in Clapham. In the past eight years he has staged 12 exhibitions and his work has featured in *The Guardian* and on the BBC. Drawing on his interest in local stories about everyday life, he will reveal the 200-year history of Trinity Almshouses on Acre Lane. Aspects of his talk will include life as an almshouse resident in the 19th century compared with today.

## Looking for an exciting volunteer post? Why not become our next Events lead

One of the benefits of being a member of The Clapham Society is the chance to hear our talks at open meetings, held at Omnibus ten times a year. In the pivotal committee role as Events lead you are the linchpin for lining up or responding to suggestions for great speakers. There's lots of backup from other members of the committee and from the in-house team at Omnibus beforehand and on the night. September's talk is organised by the Local History group so not part of your remit.

Speakers who have shared their experiences with us include historians, actors, novelists, medics, opera singers, gardeners, environmentalists and, this month, a local social documentary photographer extraordinaire. Speakers are arranged a year ahead and the full list appears in our December/January Newsletter and on the Events page of the website. Occasionally small visits or tours crop up, announced in these pages when members are invited to attend. The role is as varied as it is important, so great fun.

After 10 years, I am handing on the reins but I can tell you more any time and will ensure my successor has a smooth handover. Running Events for the Society is a way to give back to the community and meet not just the speakers but also other people who live in Clapham. If you're interested in stepping forward and would like to learn more, we'd love to hear from you. Please email me at [events@claphamsociety.com](mailto:events@claphamsociety.com) or contact a member of the committee (email addresses on Page 4). **Christine Armstrong**

## A very special relationship

We are delighted to announce that **Audley Nightingale Place** has generously offered to renew its sponsorship of The Clapham Society Newsletter for another year. We first featured news of their involvement in June 2024 (Newsletter 467), and we are excited that our ties can continue. In addition to providing high-end, purchasable or rentable apartments for its residents, Nightingale



Place has much more to offer to the local community. The No3 Bistro is available to all for a coffee, afternoon tea or Sunday roast. The state-of-the-art pool and sauna, as well as the health club with regular fitness classes, and the cinema room are accessible as well for a small membership fee. Society members might also enjoy the weekly quiz nights and bridge.

The Audley team has offered to run helpful downsizing events for Newsletter readers who are thinking of moving into a smaller house or flat – not necessarily to Nightingale Place – although the same processes would apply. For more details about what is on offer scan the QR code (right) or visit: (health club membership) [audleyvillages.co.uk/audley-club/nightingale-place](http://audleyvillages.co.uk/audley-club/nightingale-place); (cinema and restaurant bookings) [audleyrestaurants.co.uk/no3-clapham](http://audleyrestaurants.co.uk/no3-clapham); and (residential enquiries) [audleyvillages.co.uk/retirement-villages/nightingale-place](http://audleyvillages.co.uk/retirement-villages/nightingale-place). **RE**



## Rainwater beds for the Common

**Friends of Clapham Common** and **Wild Clapham** have been working with Lambeth Council Highways department on the planting design for nine rainwater beds on Windmill Drive, similar to others appearing all over London. The result will be a pollinator corridor joining up the wildflower meadows to the north and the wetlands to the south. Seven hundred new plants in a palette of oranges, blues, purples and whites are included. These plants have been chosen by **Gareth James**, project lead, to flourish in both downpour and drought conditions.

We will see yarrow, woodland sage, the wayfaring tree and garlic mustard. The last two are key to encouraging more butterflies, including the **Orange-tip** on to the Common. The project will be completed within the next few weeks. **Alison Inglis-Jones**



Butterfly Conservation/Iain Leach

## Battersea Society events

• **Beating the bounds of Battersea, Sunday 4 May, 9.45am.** This joint initiative with the Friends of Wandsworth Common recalls the quaint custom, which took place on Rogation Sunday, when a procession of church parishioners would walk around the boundary of their parish and pray for its protection. You can complete the whole 11 miles or join at a designated time. There will be staging posts at Nine Elms, on Clapham Common and on Wandsworth Common. Find more information and registration details (please register in advance) at [batterseasociety.org.uk/events-list/beat-the-bounds-of-battersea-walk-nzkne](http://batterseasociety.org.uk/events-list/beat-the-bounds-of-battersea-walk-nzkne). The walk will start and end at St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA.

• **Book Club, Thursday 22 May, 11am.** Duke of Cambridge, Battersea Bridge Road, SW11 3AA. The set book is *Hoodwink!* by Susan Ekins. Free, but email [events@batterseasociety.org.uk](mailto:events@batterseasociety.org.uk) if you would like to join. **Sara Milne**

## St Paul's Opera: If music be the food of love... ...an elixir seals the deal

Donizetti's comic opera *L'elisir d'amore* is St Paul's Opera's 2025 Summer Festival offering (3-5 July), and it comes with a Clapham twist. On **Wednesday 28 May, 7.30pm**, an **insight event** will look at the staging and compare interpreting an opera to writing a book. Panellists include opera director **Eloise Lally**, soloists from the cast of *L'elisir d'amore* and author **Julie Anderson**, whose Clapham Trilogy locations, in particular the South London Hospital for Women and Children, will be used in the production. The invitation-only event is also the launch of book two in the trilogy, *A Death in the Afternoon*. An exhibition of photographs and other memorabilia will be at St Paul's and other Clapham venues throughout June.

We have a handful of spaces available for Clapham Society Newsletter readers. Please contact us to claim your invite at [info@stpaulsopera.org](mailto:info@stpaulsopera.org). **St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove SW4 0DZ.** **Julie Anderson – Author, Patricia Ninian – St Paul's Opera**



## Studio Voltaire

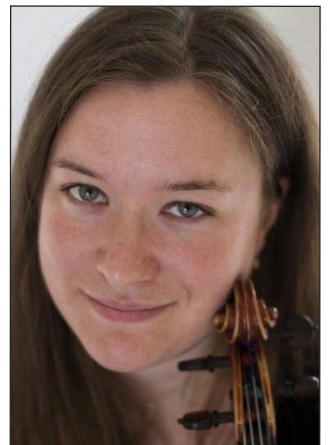
- **In House: Ree Bradley and Pete Gomes.** Until Sunday 25 May.
- **Caspar Heinemann, Sod All.** Wednesday 7 May to 3 August. Preview, Tuesday 6 May 2025, 6pm. Free, all welcome.
- **Screening of The Moon and the Sledgehammer and Wax Or The Discovery Of Television Among The Bees.** Wednesday 28 May, 6-9 pm. Standard tickets £5, concessions available.

**Studio Voltaire, 1A Nelsons Row, SW4 7JR.** Open Wednesday to Sunday (except for this month's event on Tuesday the 6th), 11am to 6pm. Details and tickets at [studiovoltaire.org/whats-on](http://studiovoltaire.org/whats-on).

## Clapham Chamber Concerts

Founder and artistic director **Amanda Lake** is joined by colleagues from the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales for an evening of **20th-century string quartet repertoire**. The programme opens with the dramatic String Quartet No 7 by Shostakovich, an emotive work dedicated to the composer's wife after her death. This is followed by Scandinavian folk song arrangements and original works by the Danish String Quartet from their album *The Last Leaf*. Finally, Ravel's enchanting String Quartet in F is an impressionist masterpiece, creating a magical world of exquisite textures and harmonies. Join us for another wonderful evening of music making.

**Friday 16 May, 7pm. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX.** Tickets, £18 (including OAPs), £12 concessions and Friends of CCC, £5 children under 12. Book on the door or in advance at [claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk](http://claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk).



## St Luke's Music Society

The 2024/25 season concludes with a visit from **The Swingles**, one of the world's most original vocal groups. Touring globally, they give very few concerts in the UK, although they did appear at the Proms in July 2024. Arrangements of classical, folk, jazz and popular music are sung a capella in their distinctive style. As Jazz History online wrote, 'Their ensemble singing – including group phrasing, breathing, dextrous passion – was immaculate', while jazz legend Jamie Cullum just said, 'Talented, talented people.'

Tickets are available from [slms.org.uk](http://slms.org.uk). **Saturday 17 May, 7.30pm. St Luke's Church, Ramsden Road, SW12 8RQ.**



## The Arts Society Clapham Common

**Venice through Carpaccio's Eyes with Dr Antonia Gatward Cevizli.** Vittore Carpaccio's paintings of Venice vividly transport us to that beautiful city in the years around 1500. He painted in what has been described as an eyewitness style. As well as hearing why he painted in this way and about the serious purpose of these paintings (*Hunting on the Lagoon, below*), we will enjoy a world of visiting ambassadors, bustling streets, tranquil interiors and rooftop terraces.

Dr Cevizli is an independent art historian specialising in both Italian Renaissance and Ottoman art. Her interests are wide ranging. She also worked as a guide at Tate Modern and Tate Britain.

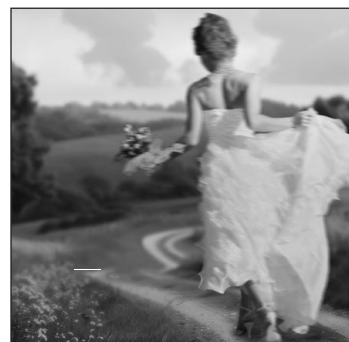
**Wednesday 21 May, 11am** (doors open at 10.30am). **Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT.** Visitor (non-member) tickets, £10, or email [claphamcommon@theartsociety.org](mailto:claphamcommon@theartsociety.org) to join the Arts Society. **Susan Holder**



J. Paul Getty Museum

## Omnibus Theatre

• **Blood Wedding, 30 April to 24 May.** Tension runs high in a village on the edge of Salisbury Plain as the happy anticipation of a wedding turns ominous. Georgie, 22, and the bride-to-be, is torn between her fiancé and her ex. The seeds of disaster are sown. Barney Norris's dark comedy brings Lorca's Spanish classic blazing into 2025 England. [omnibus-clapham.org/blood-wedding-2](http://omnibus-clapham.org/blood-wedding-2).



• **Cul-de-Sac, 27 May to 14 June.** A quiet street. Zone 6. Secrets unravel, tensions flare and wine-stained chaos erupts. This world premiere from award-winning playwright David Shopland is a razor-sharp, darkly funny exploration of fragile civility in contemporary Britain. Suburbia like you've never seen it before. [omnibus-clapham.org/cul-de-sac](http://omnibus-clapham.org/cul-de-sac).

• **So, This Is What Happened, 2 May.** Our popular storytelling night returns. We invite you to laugh, cry and celebrate stories from the lives of real people. [omnibus-clapham.org/oto-so-this-is-what-happened](http://omnibus-clapham.org/oto-so-this-is-what-happened).



## Royal Trinity Hospice Summer Garden Party

Join the **Wandsworth Friends of Royal Trinity Hospice** for an evening of fun, laughter, live music, fizz and canapés. Their much-loved Summer Garden Party, in support of your local hospice, will take place on **Wednesday 21 May, 6.30-8.30pm**, in Trinity's award-winning gardens at 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN.

Tickets are £55 per person and thanks to the generous sponsorship of Savills, every penny raised will go directly towards Trinity's vital care. Guests will have the chance to win exciting prizes at the Live Auction and Wishing Tree.

Royal Trinity Hospice provides support and end-of-life care for people living locally and across a further six London boroughs, making it a hugely important charity. For further details and to book, visit [www.royaltrinityhospice.london/events](http://www.royaltrinityhospice.london/events) or call 020 7787 3224. Tickets are selling fast so don't miss out. **Anna Reid**

## New members and current contact details

We extend warm welcomes this month to John and Jacqueline Mair; Harry Waight; Naomi Hossain and Samer Al-Samarrai; Christine Macqueen and Nick Ville; and Antonis Stamatiadis.

Does the Society have your current email address or telephone number? We like to keep members informed of any last-minute changes or urgent news and our records show that we do not have contact details for some of you. Please let me have your current email address and/or telephone number so that you can be kept up to date.

If you would like to join the Society, visit [claphamsociety.com/join](http://claphamsociety.com/join). Subs are a very reasonable £30 for a household; £20, individual; and £50, business membership. **Jennifer Everett**

## Clapham street names: Crescent Grove

In the early 1820s solicitor Francis Child purchased a house on Clapham Common South Side set in extensive grounds. The boundary on one side was Brixton Lane (now Crescent Lane between Abbeville and South Side), the curve of which dictated the crescent shape of part of the development that followed. On this relatively long narrow site Child built as a family investment an estate of 39 'capital messuages', messuage being the legal term for a house with its land and outbuildings. The arrangement consisted of two rows of houses: The Crescent, a crescent-shaped terrace with central pediment and larger end houses; and, on the other side, The Grove, semi-detached houses each linked by two-storey coach houses. The houses were modest compared with the mansions around the Common and the architect is unknown, but there are interesting features such as the high-quality balcony railings and crescent-shaped railings around the basement areas.

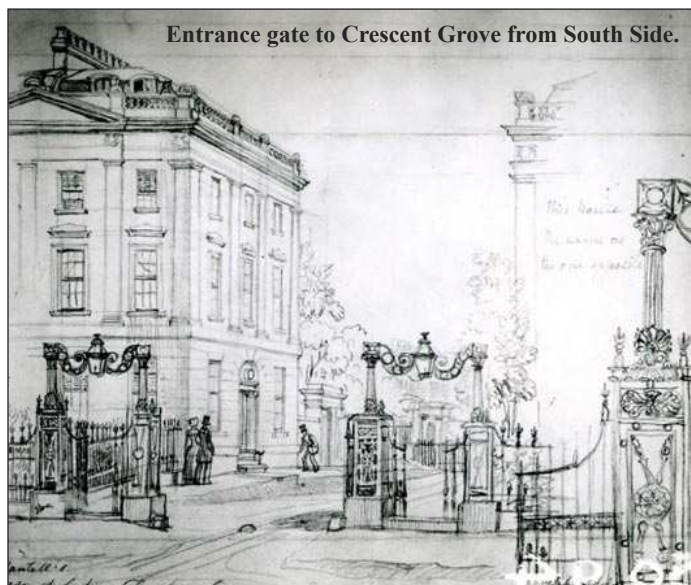
At the far end Child built a large, detached house for himself, Grove Lodge, with a garden stretching to the present Abbeville Road. An elaborate gate bridged the two imposing houses at the entrance from Clapham Common South Side. There was a central garden surrounded by railings, removed during World War II, and a garden adjacent to Crescent Lane, now known as the Long Garden. At the end of The Crescent there was a well, a pump house, a playground and additional stabling.

On completion the houses were conveyed to family members, several of whom rented them out for investment income. A trust, set up in 1830, has been updated over the years and the trustees,



Entrance to the original Grove Lodge.

1851 Watercolour by H Hopley White



Entrance gate to Crescent Grove from South Side.

Drawing by G Scharf, c. 1840

together with a residents' committee, still manage the estate. In the 1890s The Crescent and The Grove were joined and re-numbered; the name seemed obvious.

Crescent Grove is unique in that, unlike central London garden squares on which it was modelled, it is still privately owned and is responsible for its own maintenance, in particular the road and gardens. There have been no major changes in 200 years. In 1938 a small block of flats was built behind the house at the entrance gate on The Grove side, close to the present number one. Grove Lodge had been bought the previous year by the Union of Post Office Workers, who demolished it to make way for union offices. These in turn were converted recently to flats, Metropolitan Crescent, with access from Crescent Lane. This is no longer part of the estate. In the 1960s, to raise money for a tarmac road, a lease was granted on the site of the disused playground and pump house, and two discreet residences were built to blend in with the surroundings. To learn more about the history of Crescent Grove, visit [crescent-grove.co.uk](http://crescent-grove.co.uk). **Alyson Wilson** If you would like to find out more about your street, email [history@claphamsociety.com](mailto:history@claphamsociety.com). **Next month: Grafton Square**

## The Guided Walks season begins

On **Sunday 11 May Tom Jansz** will lead a tour entitled **Clapham in World War II**, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the War. It centres on Clapham Common but will leave from the Clock Tower by Clapham Common Tube at **2.30pm**. Further details and booking are at [claphamsociety.com/walk-type/guided/](http://claphamsociety.com/walk-type/guided/), where you will also find the Guided Walks Programme for the Year. The same page, if you scroll to the bottom, carries a link to the 'Local History Walks in South London' leaflet, which is available in hard copy in libraries, leisure centres, gyms and several local shops and cafés. **AW**

## Beating the bounds of Clapham

The Society's Local History group has added an interesting new event to its guided walks programme this year. On **Saturday 24 May** they will lead a nine-mile circuit, starting and ending on the Common and including a lunch stop at the Brixton Windmill. This revives an ancient Anglo Saxon custom and coincides with events on the same day by the Streatham Society and Lambeth Archives around the three historic parishes of the modern borough. For more details, time and to book your place on the walk, please visit [claphamsociety.com/walk-type/guided/](http://claphamsociety.com/walk-type/guided/). **Mike Tuffrey**

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

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Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at [claphamsociety.com](http://claphamsociety.com).

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