



# The Clapham Society *Newsletter*

Issue 303 December 2007/January 2008

## Programme for 2008

**The Events Sub-Committee has put together the following programme for 2008. We aim to cover a wide range of interests, including both current and historic topics. If you have any comments on the programme or suggestions for future events please contact John How.**

Our regular monthly meetings are held on **Wednesday evenings at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4**. The hall is open from 7.30 pm when coffee and tea are available. The talk begins at 8 pm and meetings usually finish by 9.30 pm. Please try to arrive before 8 pm, as latecomers are disturbing to both speaker and audience. Meetings are open to non-members and are free of charge. Please bring your friends!

### **Wednesday 16 January**

**Up the Junction.** Proposals are afoot to make significant changes to the area around Clapham Junction. Although this is on the periphery of our parish, a lot of members use the shops and the station and will be interested in the proposals.

We are holding a joint meeting with the Battersea Society to hear about these and to have the opportunity to air our views. Speakers will include David Lewis and Harvey Heath from the Battersea Society and we hope also to have a Wandsworth Councillor.

### **Wednesday 13 February**

**Historic Clapham.** Clapham resident, historian and archaeologist, Michael Green will talk about his new book, due to be published this month. *Historic Clapham* covers the early history of Clapham from prehistoric times to the 18th century. It includes histories of the village, the manor, the church and the building in 1660 of the first great

mansion, Clapham Place, where Samuel Pepys spent the last years of his life. Michael has spent ten years on the study of this period of Clapham's history which has never before been fully researched.

### **Wednesday 19 March**

**Eric Smith Memorial Lecture.** This year's lecture in memory of local historian, Eric Smith, will be given by Nicola Moorby, Curator at Tate Britain. Her subject will be the artist JMW Turner and his links with South London. Turner is remembered as the great painter of colour and light in landscape and he loved to depict the changing conditions along the River Thames, particularly from Chelsea and Battersea where he lived at the end of his life. One of his early oil paintings shows Clapham Common, whilst at least one of his patrons lived in Clapham.

### **Wednesday 23 April**

**Southbank Centre.** Ian Blackburn, Project Director of the Southbank Centre, will talk about the recent refurbishment of the Grade I-listed Royal Festival Hall, which restored the original features whilst upgrading amenities and acoustics to 21st century standards. He will also focus on the continuing programme for improving the 21-acre Southbank Centre site.

### **Wednesday 21 May**

**Conservation.** Killby and Gayford, the conservation contractors based in Macaulay Road, who carried out the work on the restoration of Clapham Common Bandstand, will talk about this and their other work in the conservation field.

### **Wednesday 18 June**

**Trees on the Common.** Recent events have shown the value set on trees,

particularly those on the Common. An illustrated talk on this subject will also include issues surrounding urban wildlife and biodiversity.

### **Wednesday 17 September**

**Underground London.** A talk on the numerous tunnels and underground workings, including the deep shelters under Clapham.

### **Wednesday 22 October**

**AGM.** Guest speaker to be confirmed.

### **Wednesday 19 November**

**Hatfield's,** a leading antique furniture resoration company, and now part of the Mallett group, recently moved to an historic building in Clapham. This evening we shall hear about the history and work of the company, as well as the history of Scholars House, 49 Clapham High Street, and their recent refurbishment of the building.

In **July** and **August** our meetings take the form of walks.

### **Switch On**

Clapham's Christmas lights will be switched on at the Christmas tree near Clapham Common Tube Station at 6 pm on **Thursday 29 November** by comedian, writer and TV personality Harry Hill. He will introduce an outdoor screening of a Christmas animation made by children of Clapham Manor School with the help of Studio Voltaire, and Lambeth Academy Choir will sing carols. The event will last until 6.30 pm, when Harry Hill will go to Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street to sign copies of his recent books.

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2007

The 44th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 16 October 2007 at 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. The Society's President, Martin Drury, took the chair and some 50 members were present.

Apologies for absence had been received from Kath Derrig and Jennifer Everett.

The Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting (17 October 2006) were unanimously approved.

The Chairman presented the Annual Report, which had been previously circulated. He summarised the Society's activities during the year, acknowledging the work undertaken by the sub-committees and warmly thanking the convenors and committee members. He also thanked the members of the main committee for their support and efficiency in their many tasks.

The major issue to concern the Society during the year had been the proposals for *Future Clapham* (formerly known as *Revitalise*) which relate to the future of the Library, Clapham Manor Baths and Mary Seacole House sites. The current situation was that 'consultation' (such as it was) had finished and developers were now submitting tenders. The Chairman expressed his concern about the proposals and would have liked them to be subjected to an Independent Design Review Panel, such as exists in Southwark. He noted that two disappointments during the year had been the rejection of applications to list both the library building on North Side and the small Cubitt lodge in Clarence Avenue. The latter had now been demolished. One success had been that the monitoring of the noise of the Bank Holiday weekend event on the Common had resulted in lower noise levels.

In reply to a question as to whether the Roads and Transport Sub-Committee had been wound up following the departure of the convenor earlier in the year, the Chairman stated that it was in abeyance awaiting a new convenor. The Annual Report was unanimously adopted.

The Treasurer presented the Financial Report and Accounts. He was happy to report a healthy financial situation, with a steady membership and good sales of publications. There were no questions and

the Financial Report and Accounts were unanimously adopted.

The following were elected as officers for the year 2006-2007:

**Chair** Alison Macnair

**Vice-Chairman** John How

**Secretary** Jill Cramphorn

**Treasurer** David Brown

**Membership Secretary** Jennifer Everett

**Solicitor** Alison Macnair

Also elected as **Committee Members** were: John Adams, Annabel Allott, Bill Emmett, Michael English, Anna Jefferson Smith and Alyson Wilson.

Euan Kennedy FCA was reappointed as

**Independent Examiner**.

The Vice-President, Peter Jefferson Smith, paid warm tribute to the retiring Chairman, John Adams, thanking him for the great contribution he had made to the Society over the last nine years. As a token of the Society's appreciation John was presented with a boxed three-volume set of the recently republished *The English House* by Hermann Muthesius and *Thomas Cubitt, Master Builder* by Hermione Hobhouse. He was absolutely delighted with these.

At the conclusion of the business there was a break for refreshments before the guest speaker, the Rt Hon Keith Hill MP, addressed the meeting.

**Keith Hill** joined the Clapham Society in 1991 and has read the newsletter and followed Society events closely since then. About one fifth of his Streatham constituency falls within Clapham. He plans to retire from Parliament at the next election and now that he is a backbencher, following the change of leadership, he looks forward to having more time to address local issues. In particular, he is concerned about the restoration of The Orangery in the Notre Dame estate, and intends to make this one of his projects on which he hopes to work with the Clapham Society.

He rejoiced in recent local successes, especially Lambeth Academy, one of the first academies to open, and the massive Clapham Park estate project which between 2008 and 2015 will provide 1200 new private homes and 200 social houses. He welcomed the rôle of the Clapham Society as a statutory

consultee in the planning process and shared our concern about the conversion by developers of single dwellings to flats, which is often achieved by bending the rules and by stealth. Whilst recognising the demographic changes which result in demand for more small housing units, he was not happy about the relaxation of planning rules about extensions. The impact on the streetscape, on adjacent properties and the neighbourhood needs to be considered, as well as the design itself. Local authority planning departments have difficulty with the abuse of permitted development rules, applications for retrospective planning permission and attempts to pre-empt the planning process. There is a presumption in favour of developers and cash-strapped councils tend not to give sufficient attention to enforcement. It is hoped that the new planning bill due this autumn will address some of these issues.

Mr Hill went on to talk about 'urban densification', and the presumption that this is preferable to losing the countryside. This is fine if all housing is of a high quality, as for example in Chelsea which has the highest population density in London. 'Brown-field' development includes building on back gardens. It is estimated that 3,500 homes have been built on London back gardens in the last three years, and the pace is increasing. But what is the alternative? Is it more high rise buildings and higher density, which will change the cityscape, or building deep in the countryside, or a rethink of the Green Belt? He felt that the solution might be to breach the Green Belt by putting extensions, which spread like fingers, through parts of it. He acknowledged that this would be controversial, and might lead to the revival of applications to build on the Green Belt that have already been refused. He conceded that we need to reflect on the problem.

Mr Hill's talk prompted several questions from his audience, about social housing especially in relation to the Clapham Park homes, and about the Green Belt. It was a stimulating presentation, which focused our attention on how we see the future of our area and of London. We are most grateful to Mr Hill for his time and interest in the Society.

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### New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members this month: Bronwen Ackhurst, Jonathan and Katharine Davidson, Louisa Steensma, Mary Steensma, and Maev Sullivan.

### Award winner

We have just heard that our recent publication, *Discovering Clapham*, has won the publications award in the London Forum Walter Bor Media Awards 2007. Have you bought a copy yet?

### Gift Membership

Why not give a membership of the Clapham Society as a gift this Christmas? Membership taken out now runs until 31 March 2009. To arrange telephone the Membership Secretary on 020 7627 4770.

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## Planning News

Since September we have been notified of some 70 applications. We reviewed 21 of them and made representations on 12, most of which are described below.

**55 Clapham Common South Side.** Objection to a scheme for a two-storey side extension and large rear dormer, which spoil the proportions and form of this prominent building.

**359 Clapham Road.** Criticism of an application to create more flats but fails to take the opportunity to restore some of the lost architectural features of this listed building.

**24 Macaulay Road.** Objection to a revised scheme for a front extension at lower ground floor level, which continues to damage the character of the conservation area.

**3 and 14 The Chase.** Objections to two similar applications, both of which turn the front gardens into parking areas, changing the character of the street.

**The Farm House, Broadhinton Road.** Qualified support for a controversial scheme to extend the Farm House and build a new family home in the garden. Our research suggested that its historical significance is limited and, having viewed the site from several adjoining homes, that the effect on neighbours' amenity is reasonable. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

**28 Turret Grove.** Objection to a full width dormer roof extension because of its size, prominence and effect on the character of the area.

**1A Elms Road.** Objection to a scheme to demolish the present single storey garage and replace it with a part one- and part two-storey building, the design of which is poor, bears no relation to its surroundings and damages the character of the conservation area, as well as neighbours' amenity.

**73B Larkhall Rise.** Support for a well designed scheme for a three storey residential building to replace the existing garages.

**Clapham Park Estate.** Outline planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the estate, and approval is now being sought for the detailed designs of individual buildings. The Society supported the overall scheme (with exceptions such as the demolition of the Cubitt house in Clarence Avenue), but the detailed designs for precinct B5 lack distinctiveness and there were doubts about the quality of the residential environment.



## Our New Chair

At the AGM in October Alison Macnair was elected Chair of the Society. Alison has lived in Clapham for 11 years, and has worked in the voluntary sector, the Civil Service and for a public body in law and policy. Among her interests is Clapham Common, where she is frequently to be seen with her labradoodle Flossie. In the next newsletter Alison will introduce herself more fully.

## Carols on the Bandstand

On **Friday 14 December** at 7 pm there will be a carol concert on the Clapham Common bandstand, featuring choirs from local secondary schools. The concert has been organised by Lambeth Events. It is free, and all are welcome.

## The Society's Constitution

Like all organisations, we need to review our constitution from time to time so as to take account of legislative changes. Our current constitution came into being in 1976, and we believe that the best way to take the last 30 years' worth of changes on board is to prepare a revised constitution rather than seek to make piecemeal amendments. So with this newsletter, we are circulating a new proposed constitution.

The changes are, in fact, relatively modest. They have been made in the light of advice from the Civic Trust and the Charity Commission. Most of them simply tidy up the current constitution or make explicit revisions that would have been deemed to be made as a result of legislation since 1976. None of the changes would have any significant effect on the way the Society, its officers and its committee currently operate.

The new constitution cannot come into force without Members' agreement at an Annual or Special General Meeting. Accordingly, **the first part of our meeting on 13 February 2008 will be a Special General Meeting** at which members will be invited to give their approval.

If you have any questions about this, please get in touch with the Hon Secretary.

## Congratulations!

Clapham Books have recently won the LBC/Lloyds TSB Small Business competition. This gives them £20,000 to invest in their business and they also appear on LBC's James Max show over the next few months, to share their business experiences and get advice from James and guest experts from a variety of business backgrounds.

You can read about the award, the history of the bookshop, hear how Nikki Kastner won the award, and follow her blog by going to [www.lbc.co.uk/lloyds](http://www.lbc.co.uk/lloyds). For those who like to browse online, rather than in the shop, Clapham Books has also launched a new website: [www.claphambooks.com](http://www.claphambooks.com). You can create an account here, choose and order books, many at a discount, and postage is free for orders over £25.

One small stocking-filler worth looking for is *Green Up!* a handy pocket guide to making your home more eco-friendly, written by Will Anderson, the local author who spoke to us last year about his Clapham eco-house.

## Future Clapham

Lambeth Council's Cabinet was to have chosen developers and plans for the *Future Clapham* redevelopment on 26 November. Because of concerns raised by the Society, described by John Adams in the last newsletter, Lambeth has agreed to put off the decision until 20 December. We now have several weeks for discussions with members and officials. We hope our representatives will be able to see the actual proposals, generally withheld from the public because of commercial confidentiality.

## Lambeth 1807: a local history of abolition

Lambeth Archives have recently published a short booklet under this title, by the local historian SI Martin. It is free from the Archives or Lambeth Libraries.

Although it covers all of Lambeth, its main focus is on Clapham, and as much on the defenders of slavery and the slave trade as on the abolitionists. Eighteenth century Clapham was the home of many wealthy members of slave and plantation owning families. They lived side by side with the abolitionists and all moved in the same social and commercial circles. Wilberforce's Parliamentary colleague Henry Thornton was a Director of the Bank of England, and as the author points out, 'throughout the eighteenth century the "sugar and slave" men were the Bank's favourite customers'. He also draws attention to the long overlooked involvement of the East India Company (which had two Clapham Sect members as leading Directors) in the trafficking of people from East Africa to Indonesia via Bombay to work as slaves in the pepper industry.

Supporters of slavery and abolitionists even sat together in Holy Trinity Church.

In my own researches a few months ago, I was astonished to find that one of the leading Trustees of the Church in 1807 was Wilberforce's Parliamentary opponent, George Hibbert. 'Because of the direct social contact,' Martin comments, 'Clapham's abolitionist bankers, global traders and MPs were better placed than most to comprehend the weaknesses and strengths of the pro-slavery campaign ... Their cultural and business proximity to their opponents that inevitably led them into compromising positions makes the result of the Clapham Sect's combined labours even more of a remarkable achievement.'

A large part of the booklet is about the Sierra Leone connection, mostly through the African Academy, the school Zachary Macaulay set up to teach the group of young boys he brought with him from Sierra Leone in 1799. It used to be thought that the English climate proved fatal to most of them, and indeed some died and were buried in what is now St Paul's Churchyard; but we now know that at least half of them, perhaps more, returned to Sierra Leone.

Even the brief entries in our Parish records reveal remarkable lives, none more so than that of John Thorp, baptised here in 1805. His father was born in West Africa, near the Gulf of Guinea; enslaved and taken to Jamaica, he had escaped and joined one of the Maroon communities of escaped slaves in the Jamaican hills. John was born there in about 1790. Captured by the British after the second Maroon War of 1795-6, the family was deported to Nova Scotia, whence they found their way to Sierra Leone – the story told by Simon Schama in *Rough Crossings*. John Thorp returned home from Clapham in 1806; he became a respected Christian preacher, and one of his sons is believed to have been the first black lawyer to have qualified and practiced as a barrister in Britain.

This little book brings to life the society of 1807 in all its compromises and complexities. As it should be in this bicentenary year, it is both a history and a challenge: 'Perhaps the greatest contribution made by the Clapham Sect to the story of abolition was their recognition that 1807 marked the beginning of the campaign against the slave trade and not its end.'

*Peter Jefferson Smith*

After years of wrangling over planning, work is finally under way to redevelop the former Cannons site at the top of Macaulay Road. It is said that the frontage building was a film studio during WW2, used to produce films for the Ministry of Information.

*Photo: John Adams*



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 **The Clapham Society** web site at [www.claphamsociety.com](http://www.claphamsociety.com)