

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter

Issue 307

May 2008

**Our regular monthly meetings are held at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. The hall is open from 7.30 pm when coffee and tea are normally available. The talk begins promptly at 8 pm and most meetings finish by 9.30 pm. Please try to arrive before the talk starts as latecomers are disturbing for both audience and speaker.**

**All meetings are open to non-members and are free of charge. Please bring your friends along.**

### Wednesday 21 May

**Future Clapham.** In view of the importance of this major new development this meeting will be a presentation of the final plans for the new leisure centre in Clapham Manor Street and the library and health centre on the site of Mary Seacole House in Clapham High Street. We understand that this is the proposed date for the planning application to be submitted to Lambeth Council. The presentation will be made by Martin Wood, Project Director of the developers, *Cathedral Group*, Mike Lawless of the architects for the leisure centre, *LA Architects*, and Christopher Egret of *Studio Egret West*, architects for the library. We hope that Lambeth Officers will also attend.

### Wednesday 18 June

**Biodiversity, trees and the Common.** An illustrated talk presented by members of the Clapham Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee which will cover urban wildlife, Clapham's trees and their history, and the future.

### Wednesday 2 July

**Summer Party.** This year's party will be held at 21 Clapham Common West Side, by kind permission of Annabel and Stephen Allott. There will be a ticket application form in the June newsletter.

## A London Artist

The Society's April meeting was the Eric Smith Memorial lecture, our annual celebration of the eminent historian of Clapham, whose lifetime's research and several books on Clapham have provided a rich resource for all subsequent historians of the area. We welcomed as our guest speaker Nicola Moorby, Curator at Tate Britain, who is currently working on a research project to re-catalogue the Turner Bequest. Her subject was the painter, JMW Turner, and in particular his links with the Thames and South London.

Our lecturer traced Turner's journey from his birth in 1775, the son of a barber in Maiden Lane to his burial in St Paul's Cathedral in 1851, as one of England's most celebrated artists. He was the precocious child of 'pushy' parents, whose mother exhibited his early works in the window of the barber's shop. At the age of 14 he joined the Royal Academy schools, and the following year exhibited at the annual summer exhibition. We saw examples of his early work – self portraits and topographical works – and heard how he learnt about landscape drawings and watercolours, together with his fellow student, Thomas Girtin, by copying works in the collection of Dr Munro. Munro was a mental health specialist whom Turner had got to know as his mother was in Bedlam, the mental hospital which was on the site of the present Imperial War Museum. Girtin was an equally gifted young artist, whose early death prompted Turner to remark that had Girtin lived he (Turner) would have starved.

Turner travelled extensively, at first only in Britain, but after 1802 when continental travel was possible again following the Treaty of Amiens, all over Europe. Apart from his huge body of finished watercolours and oil painting, there are over 300 sketch books filled with scraps of information and details. His particular love was London and especially the Thames, which he liked to depict at various seasons and times of the day.

We saw two Turner pictures of Clapham – one an early oil painting of the north-west corner of Clapham Common, showing a pond which has since been filled in, and the other, *London: Autumnal Morning*, a delicate, evocative watercolour showing the Thames with London landmarks in the distance, painted from a point on Lavender Hill near to the present Debenham's store at Clapham Junction.

One of Turner's early patrons was the wine merchant, John Allnut, who lived in a large house on Clapham Common South Side, where he built an art gallery to house his distinguished collection of paintings, which included commissions from John Constable and Sir Thomas Lawrence as well as Turner.

Nicola Moorby showed us paintings of the Thames ranging from Greenwich to Richmond and Isleworth, including several of the river painted from Turner's one time home in Chelsea, and from St Mary's Church, Battersea where he loved to sit (his chair is still preserved in the church) to paint the sunset. Another house near the Thames, which Turner built for himself is Sandycombe Lodge, Twickenham, which survives and is sometimes open to the public (see our newsletter No. 295 March 2007)

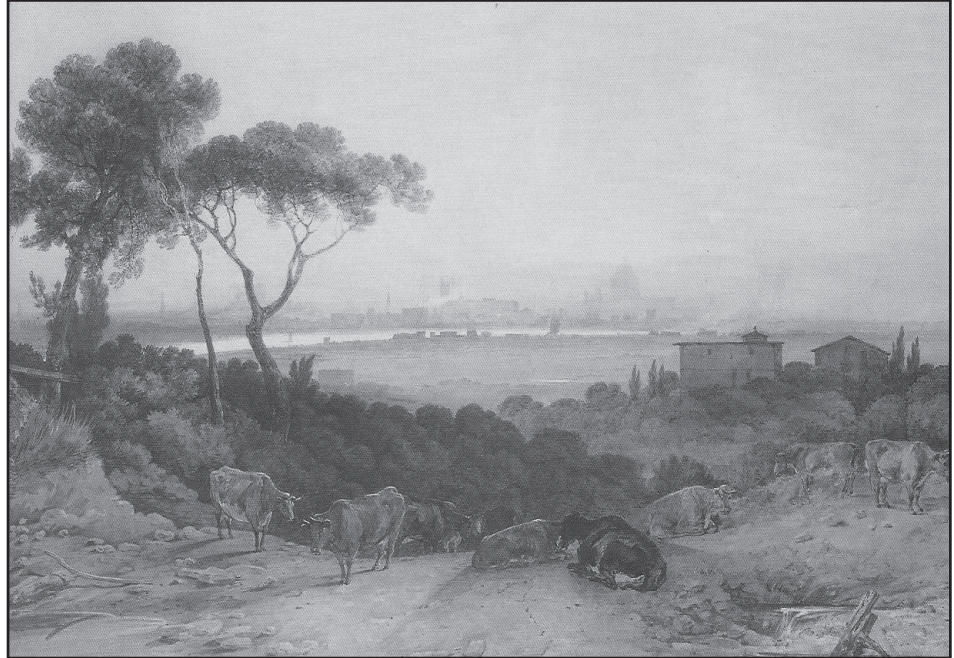
We heard of amusing incidents and saw cartoons poking fun at Turner's perceived excessive use of yellow – one showing a lady emerging from a mustard pot and another showing him using as his paintbrush a mop dipped in a mustard pot. We saw

*continued overleaf*

watercolours and oils from all periods of Turner's career, including his record of the fire which burnt down the Houses of Parliament in 1834, iconic pictures of snowstorms, sunsets and mists, which anticipated the impressionists, and topical pictures like the *Blue Rigi*, recently purchased for Tate Britain.

It was a fascinating and stimulating presentation and our speaker encouraged us to explore Turner's work further by visiting the extensive collection of prints and watercolours, which can be seen by appointment at Tate Britain.

*London: Autumnal Morning. Watercolour by JMW Turner. A view looking north from Lavender Hill, close to Clapham Junction, in 1801.*



## Planning News

Since February we have been notified of 71 applications. We reviewed 35 of them and made representations on 14, most of which are described below.

**44 Clapham High Street.** Objection to a new type of free standing public phone attached to an illuminated advertisement. BT claims it needs the advertising revenue to fund the phones; fortunately refused by Lambeth.

**5 Clapham Common North Side.** Objection to turn the garden in front of this prominent house in the conservation area into a parking area.

**12 Kings Avenue.** Design comments on a proposal generally supported to replace the existing shop building with a two-storey residential building designed in the style of the Cubitt house next to it.

**27 and 27A Crescent Grove.** Objection to an overlarge rear extension insensitive to the character of this listed building.

**44 Clapham Common North Side.** Support for some roof alterations which include the welcome reinstatement of the decorative cast iron ridge along the top of the roof.

**1 Scout Lane.** Design comments on a poorly designed two-storey office building to replace the present idiosyncratic building.

**St Anne's Hall, 31 Bromell's Road.** Support for some sensitively handled alterations to improve accessibility to the community hall.

**Pepys Court, 84-86 The Chase.** Objection to a proposed mansard roof extension, the scale of which would overwhelm the smaller houses immediately behind in Mackay Road.

**9-11 Macaulay Road.** Support for the principle of converting this building into a school (preferable to it being redeveloped with new housing), subject to the ability to manage the traffic impact at school start and finish times.

**The Farm House, Broadhinton Road.** Continued support for a proposal for a new house in the garden of the so-called Farm House which has been refined to reduce its impact on neighbours.

Lambeth has again been consulting on draft planning policy documents and comments have been returned on §106 Planning Obligations (about how developers mitigate the effect of development by planning obligations), and on the core strategy for the Local Development Framework.

New Planning legislation has now come into force which allows the Mayor of London rather than the local council to take decisions on planning applications for very large developments. The Society currently plays an active role commenting, lobbying and taking part in meetings about planning applications at the local level, and as a result has some influence. There is likely to be less opportunity to do so if the Mayor centralises the decisions. We objected to the draft of the transfer of powers from local to city/region level and the consequent loss of local democracy at the consultation stage on this legislation change some 15 months ago, but to no avail.

**There are no meetings in July and August, but they are replaced by the following walks.**

### Wednesday 16 July

**Historic Clapham.** A repeat of our popular walk round the centre of historic Clapham, including The Polygon, Old Town, Rectory Grove, St Paul's Church, Trinity Hospice and Holy Trinity Church. Led by David Perkin. Meet at 6.30 pm outside Clapham Library, Clapham Common North Side.

### Wednesday 20 August

**Changing Clapham.** A new walk visiting sites of the current major leisure and housing developments. Led by Peter Jefferson Smith. Time and meeting place as shown above.

## Open Garden Squares Weekend

This annual opportunity to discover London's secret gardens is on **Saturday 7 June** and **Sunday 8 June**. This year 174 gardens will be open over the weekend and one ticket allows admission to as many as you can fit in. Tickets are available from early May on the internet (go to [www.opensquares.org](http://www.opensquares.org)) at £6 or during the weekend from most participating gardens at £7.50. The website gives full details of all gardens open, timings and other events.

## Beguiling Time

An exhibition of innovative hand-made lace inspired by music and poetry, the 10th Anniversary Exhibition of 98 Lace Group continues at the De Morgan Centre, 38 West Hill, SW18 until **31 May**. For details telephone 020 8871 1144.

## Clapham Supports Médecins Sans Frontières

Once again the ever popular MSF Clapham Treasure Hunt returns, taking place this year on **Saturday 7 June**. Sarah Turtle of Lavender Hill and her team of volunteers are again running the MSF Treasure Hunt, now in its fifth year. With the continued support of the Clapham community, the organisation team are hoping to beat last year's impressive total of £6,546. The MSF Clapham Treasure Hunt enjoys strong support from local businesses, and any wishing to donate for 2008 should please contact Sarah and her team at [msfclaphamhunt@gmail.com](mailto:msfclaphamhunt@gmail.com). Prospective Treasure Hunters should visit [http://www.justgiving.com/msf\\_hunt\\_v](http://www.justgiving.com/msf_hunt_v) or email their team details to [msfclaphamhunt@gmail.com](mailto:msfclaphamhunt@gmail.com). Alternatively, arrive at the Microbar, 14 Lavender Hill at 2 pm on **Saturday 7 June** for the chance to raise money for MSF and win prizes into the bargain. There will also be a raffle at 7 pm should you not be able to attend the main event. All donations are welcome, so if you are unable to participate, please visit [http://www.justgiving.com/msf\\_hunt\\_v](http://www.justgiving.com/msf_hunt_v) and give whatever you can for this tremendous cause.

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## On the Common

Paul Bassi, who has been Area Parks Officer for Clapham for over six years, is leaving Lambeth for a more senior post in Hammersmith and Fulham. Paul has been an enthusiastic champion for Clapham Common. We shall miss him.

## London Open House

Remember to keep the weekend of **Saturday 20 September** and **Sunday 21 September** free for this architectural bonanza. Over 600 buildings will be open, there will be tours of the Olympic Site and Channel 5 television plans a special series of programmes about Open House in the week leading up to it. More details later.

## Dulwich Festival

This annual festival of concerts, exhibitions, debates, readings and open studios commences with a peal of bells at Christ's Chapel on **Friday 9 May** and continues until **Sunday 18 May**. Events include an evening of film, croquet and jazz in the garden of Dulwich Picture Gallery and events for children. For the full programme go to [www.dulwichfestival.co.uk/2008](http://www.dulwichfestival.co.uk/2008) or write to: Dulwich Festival, PO Box 26999, London, SE21 8YX

*Susan Sandars, who left Clapham last year to join MSF in Nairobi, describes her job highlighting the scope of the organisation's activities.*

Working in Nairobi as Regional Information Officer for the medical humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières is challenging, interesting, sometimes very tiring, but always rewarding. I am part of a two-person team that covers communications for seven countries and over 50 different projects.

MSF has a long history of providing medical care in East Africa; we have worked in Sudan for over 20 years and Somalia for 17. The needs in this part of world are immense. MSF teams provide everything from primary health care, HIV/AIDS care, surgery, to treatment for neglected diseases like kala azar or sleeping sickness and also respond to frequent emergencies, such as flooding or outbreaks of cholera and meningitis.

As a medical organisation, the focus of MSF's communications can often be the doctors and nurses that provide this life-saving medical care. The work of MSF's logisticians – the support staff who do everything from transporting drugs, to fixing car engines and supplying hospitals with electricity – often goes unreported. In my work I write about MSF's logistical work regularly, but even I have to admit that it was only recently, during MSF's response to the post-election violence in Kenya, that I truly came to understand the impact of this logistical work.

MSF has worked in Kenya for more than 16 years, so teams were able to respond immediately to the violence that rocked the country and caused an estimated 300,000 people to flee their homes. Medical teams supported hospitals and health centres and organised mobile clinics that visited different locations, providing on the spot consultations and treatment where possible. Yet in many of the areas that MSF teams went to the most immediate needs were for shelter, food and clean water rather than drugs and medical care.

In late January I visited two camps in western Kenya, where MSF logisticians were providing shelter for thousands of people. Most of the people I met there had fled violence or the threat of violence. Many had seen their houses destroyed and had arrived in the camps with only the clothes on their backs. A number of them were incredibly traumatised by what had happened to them, but at that time they were not actually ill. They did not need medical assistance, but if left to sleep out in the cold with no blankets, toilets or clean water they soon would.

When MSF logisticians gave out plastic sheeting people wrapped themselves up in it and slept on the ground. They either didn't have a machete to cut down wood or they just didn't know how to build a tent. So MSF built the tents for them. At the same time, teams installed latrines, showers and taps for drinking water and gave out blankets, cooking sets, buckets and soap. I have written about distributions of these 'non-food items' many times. But it was only in Kenya, seeing people who literally had nothing and were starting from scratch, that I understood the difference that something as simple as a blanket or a piece of soap can make. These logistical activities are a crucial part of MSF's work. Without them our medical impact would be quite limited.

*Susan Sandars*

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## Timothy West and the Dante Ensemble

On **Saturday 17 May** Timothy West will read from Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and the quartet will perform music by Ravel and Cesar Franck, at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW11 6QB. The performance starts at 7.30pm. Tickets are £16 (£12 concessions) from the box office 020 8673 9285 or book online at [www.slms.org.uk](http://www.slms.org.uk).

## New members

We have recently welcomed the following new members: Ms J Merry and Dr FEP Bernard, Dorota Holowiak, Susan Howe, Jennifer Pearson, Ivor and Catherine Rawlinson.

## Access to Art

Senior students from the Royal Academy of Music are giving two concerts at Christ Church United Reformed Church, Barry Road, Dulwich, SE22 0JT in aid of this charity which enables disabled and frail older people to visit galleries and museums in London. On **Saturday 24 May** the woodwind Quintet Zambra will give a recital including music by Mozart, Dvorak and Poulenc.

On **Friday 6 June** the Salieri String Ensemble will perform music by Mozart, Haydn and Schubert. Both concerts start at 7.30 pm. For tickets (£10) telephone 020 8761 4898 or for more information go to [www.access2art.org.uk](http://www.access2art.org.uk).

## Wartime memories

*Ron Morfee's wartime reminiscences conclude with his report of winning a scholarship to Henry Thornton School and some memories of school life.*

Like many working class parents of that time, my parents were convinced that 'education' was the way to a better life for their children, and so when it became clear that I was doing well at the junior school it was taken as essential that I should 'get the Scholarship' to go to the nearest grammar school, which was Henry Thornton School at Clapham Common, about two miles away.

This was to be in 1943, the year before the 1944 Education Act that introduced the 11+ examination for all State pupils. The way for children like me to get a place at a grammar school was to win competitively a Junior County Scholarship administered by the London County Council. If successful, this provided free tuition and a small means-tested maintenance grant for uniform and other essentials. The examination consisted of several numerical and verbal reasoning papers, and an essay. Beforehand at school we practised on lots of previous papers. In 1943, just before I became eleven, I sat for this. As I recall, I quite enjoyed the exam and I was duly awarded a place and a grant.

So, from being the star in junior school, I found myself in the 'A' stream of the first year with a lot of able boys. I still have all the school reports for the next eight years and so it is easy to track what happened. The environment was intensely competitive. Every two weeks there were positions in the form published, based on marks for all work done. End-of-term reports gave positions in the term and in the exam for each subject, with an overall position in the form.

At the end of the first year my brother and I were evacuated again, this time to Leeds, and I had to go to the nearby all-age school – not a happy experience!

Early in 1945 it was judged safe for us to go home, particularly since we not happy. In fact, it was not as safe as all that because by then the second weapon, the V2 rocket, was being used against London. The first of these supersonic rockets with explosive warheads was used on 8 September 1944, but the authorities did not announce what they were until 10 November. Because they came down almost vertically faster than the speed of sound, the explosion followed by the roar of their flight was the first you knew of it. On one occasion I was in a Latin lesson at school when a V2 struck not far from the

school, and all the boys who lived in that direction were allowed to go home to see if home was still there.

*(After Higher Schools – the equivalent of 'A' levels – Ron stayed on for an extra year to be coached for entrance to Oxford. In this final year he was School Captain)*

This was a great honour, since the Captain, Vice-Captain and about a dozen prefects effectively ran the school outside the classroom. The day started with a parade on the main asphalted playground, where all the school lined up in forms until they were quiet and were then given the order by the Captain to walk in to the school building in form order to start the day's work. Discipline was then maintained at all times outside the classroom by a rota of prefects who had the sanctions of detention after school or written 'impositions' to assist compliance with the rules.

*Ron Morfee*

*An extended version of this article originally appeared in the newsletter of The Old Thorntonians Association (Clapham). For information about the association go to [www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk](http://www.oldthorntoniansclapham.org.uk)*

## Keeping in touch

Our current membership form asks members for an email address, but we are aware that we do not have email addresses for many who have been members for years – emails probably did not even exist when they joined! There are rare occasions when we would like to contact members about some special event or news when it would be very useful (and economical) to do so by email. If you think we do not already have your email address it would be most appreciated if you could send it (by email) to the Membership Secretary: [jennifer@jennifereverett.demon.co.uk](mailto:jennifer@jennifereverett.demon.co.uk). We promise that we shall not bombard you with emails. Your address will only rarely be used by us and it will certainly not be passed on without your permission.

We also have occasional reports that members have not received their newsletters. The newsletter is published and distributed on the last weekend of each month (except July and December). You should receive your newsletter within a few days. If you have not received it in the first week of the month please contact either Jennifer Everett or Alyson Wilson and we will look into the matter. Some newsletters contain information of events early in the month, so we are anxious that you receive them promptly.

## Run for Trinity Hospice

Trinity Hospice has a limited number of guaranteed entries for the 2008 ASICS British 10K London Run on **Sunday 6 July**. These are available for people, aged 15 and over, who are willing to join Team Trinity and raise a minimum sponsorship of £150.

The race, which is usually sold out well in advance, runs through the heart of historic London, past many of the city's world-famous landmarks, along a route dressed with Union Jacks. Tens of thousands of runners take part, including Olympic athletes and celebrities, to raise funds for charity.

This will be the fifth year that Trinity Hospice has had a team taking part in the British 10K; nearly £20,000 has been raised to date.

For more information contact Laura Williams on 020 7787 1054.

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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)

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