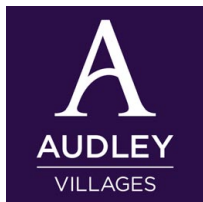


The Clapham Society

Newsletter

With many thanks
to our sponsor:



Issue 480 October 2025

They're booked! Are you?

The phrase 'economical with the truth' is now part of our political and general lexicon, but do you remember when and where it came from? Refresh your memory and find out at the 2025 'edition' of the **Clapham Book Festival** on **11 October** at Omnibus Theatre.

The day begins when local crime author **Julie Anderson** will be leading the ever-popular **Clapham Literary Walk at 11am**. Do you know which Nobel Laureate honed his trade at a kitchen table in Clapham? Or which playwright, once a resident of Clapham, argued with a famous film director about his Clapham-set play and film? All will be revealed on this walk.

At **3pm**, **Oyinkan Braithwaite**, whose debut novel *My Sister the Serial Killer* was listed for both the Booker and the Costa prizes and went on to win a host of other prizes, will be discussing her next book, *Cursed Daughters*. Like the first, the story is set in Nigeria. Engaging Oyinkan in conversation will be best-selling local author **Elizabeth Buchan**.

Moving on to **5pm**, the much-decorated and celebrated novelist **Joanne Harris** (OBE, FRSL) discusses her latest novel, *Vianne*, the long-awaited prequel to her blockbuster *Chocolat*. Ms Harris will be talking about her new book, writing and all things French with former Booker nominee **Michèle Roberts**. The two authors share a French heritage.

And now back to the original question... The phrase was coined by Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary under Margaret Thatcher, when representing the government in a Sydney courtroom in November 1986 during the case *United Kingdom v. Peter Wright*. Under cross examination by barrister Malcolm Turnbull (later Australia's Prime Minister), Armstrong devised the phrase 'economical with the truth' to describe being misleading as opposed to actually lying. Revisiting that case, **Tim Tate**, award-winning documentary film-maker and best-selling author, will examine, with writer, television presenter and journalist **Gavin Esler**, the secret history of the 'Spycatcher' affair. Tim draws on previously undisclosed material in his recent book *To Catch a Spy*, retelling the tale of when all the resources of the British state were brought to bear in order to prevent, unsuccessfully and at vast expense, the publication of the memoir of a former MI5 ace spy-catcher. This is the evening session at the Festival. It starts at **7pm**.

Saturday 11 October. Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. Events at 11am, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm as above. More information at claphambookfestival.com and tickets at payhip.com/claphambookfestival.



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. You can find our talks at claphamsociety.com/events. There are no talks in December, July or August.

Monday 20 October, Annual General Meeting

The AGM is your chance to hear what your committee has achieved over the past year and to join the committee. If you have skills that you can contribute, from social media and IT skills to knowledge of the built environment, we would like to hear from you. Email secretary@claphamsociety.com and we can arrange a chat. **Nominations for the election of Officers and Committee Members are open until Monday 6 October. Copies of the 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts** will be available at the meeting and in the Newsletter section on our website from 26 September.

The formal part of the meeting is brief. Members are then invited to enjoy nibbles and a glass of wine before our guest speaker, **Sarah Langford**, describes her path from criminal barrister to farmer and why it made her believe that how our food is grown affects us all, whether or not we ever set foot in a field. A leading advocate for the regenerative farming revolution, Sarah will tell us why she believes that what she has learned in a field might offer solutions for planetary health, human and mental health, and what the natural world teaches us about the power of connection and community.



Monday 17 November

Clapham's historic street nameplates. These markers tell us more than just street names. The stories of how they were erected show civic endeavour trying to bring order to the growing suburbs. Their designs reflect community pride. **Simon Morris** is Publications Secretary of the London Topographical Society. He has cycled round the streets of London photographing the old street signs which, supplemented by archival research, will form the basis of his talk.

Book launch

Members who attended our talk in September 2024 (Newsletter 471) will remember **Margaret Willes** and Society member **Helen Esmonde** talking about their upcoming book, *The City Unlocked: London Livery Companies From Wool to Digital*. Come and enjoy a glass of wine at its launch on **Monday 27 October, 6-8.30pm** in the magnificent surroundings of The Stationers' Company where the authors are members, Helen a Past Master. Limited tickets are available; £15 for the chance to hear about the book and see Stationers' Hall, or £40 which includes a signed copy of the book, to be ordered when buying your ticket. (The book currently costs £30 and is only available to Livery Companies; when on sale to the public it will be £35.) For more details and to secure a place, visit stationers.org/events/detail/6334. The book 'is a must buy for anyone with an interest in the history of the City', proclaims former Lord Mayor Vincent Keaveny CBE.

In other book news

Congratulations to another local author, **Tara Wigley** (Newsletter 461), on her second literary confection, published in September, *How the cookie crumbles and other culinary confusions*. 'Rhymes about food' is how she describes the book. It landed on my doormat the other day in a jiffy bag that also contained the best chocolate chip cookie ever (wrapped, not crumbled). The recipe, she revealed when I asked, is from Yotam Ottolenghi's *Sweet*.

Tara is a consummate cook, wordsmith and cookery book author. Indeed, she is one of Ottolenghi's main collaborators. Her latest book, to borrow from the inside plaudits, is 'part Dr Seuss, part Ogden Nash, part Julia Child'. Leafing through, I could imagine reading it to a little person, particularly one keen to don a chef's hat when they grow up.

If you're looking for a stocking filler for a foodie of any age, look no further. £16.99 at good bookshops. You might see Tara on the Common walking her labradoodle, Molly. **Ruth Eastman**



Village life at Nightingale Place

Owners at Nightingale Place and guests recently gathered for a special event in the private cinema to enjoy a screening of *The Thursday Murder Club*. The event proved a great success, bringing together the community with the excitement of seeing the much-anticipated adaptation on the big screen.



The small cinema within the village created the perfect atmosphere, with a comfortable and intimate setting that allowed everyone to immerse themselves in the film. Centred around a group of spirited retirees who solve mysteries together, the plot resonated particularly well with the audience, sparking laughter and lively discussion throughout the evening.

If you would like to hear more about the events at Audley Nightingale Place (you do not have to be a resident), or to discover what life at the village is like, get in touch with the team on 020 3802 1585 or email sales@nightingaleplace.co.uk. Overlooking Clapham Common and adjacent to Clapham South tube station, the luxury retirement village offers 94 apartments to rent or purchase. As well as the private cinema the village offers a pool, restaurant and health club, which are also open to non-residents.

Gala Quiz Night: Aria Aficionados

The **St Paul's Opera** autumn gala has the extra entertainment value of a good old-fashioned quiz thrown in. This year's will feature opera favourites sung by familiar faces from our *L'elisir d'amore* production in July. You don't have to be an opera buff to nail the quiz as many of the questions will cover popular culture, history, maybe even geography too. Come on your own and meet friends to team up with, or form your team in advance (up to six people per team). If you're not one of nature's quizzers come to enjoy the singing. The musical director is **Adrian Salinero** with quiz masters **Tanya and Louis Hurst**.



Friday 10 October, 7.30pm. St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. Tickets £22 at stpaulsopera.org/radiant-voices-1 or £24 on the door. Doors and bar open at 7pm. **Tricia Ninian**

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The new season begins with **Beethoven and Berwald septets** featuring Ensemble SW4, directed by **Amanda Lake** (violin) and **Jonathan Parkin** (clarinet). Beethoven's Septet in E-Flat Major is at the heart of the programme. Scored for strings, clarinet, bassoon and horn, it was one of the most popular works in his lifetime. Audiences will also be treated to Franz Berwald's *Grand Septet*, a work of great humour displaying this lesser-known composer's unique voice.

Friday 17 October, 7pm. St Paul's Church (as above). Tickets at the door or via claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk, £18 (including OAPs), £12 concessions and Friends of CCC, £5 children under 12.

The Arts Society Clapham Common

Why are drawings and paintings still considered superior to a digital image? **Beauty in truth – the past, present, and future of botanical illustration** looks at not just the history of botanical illustrations but also the artists who created them and plants immortalised in them. The speaker, **Timothy Walker**, worked at Oxford Botanic Garden, the Savill Garden and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. In 1985 he was awarded a Master of Horticulture by the Royal Horticultural Society of London. From 1988 to 2014 he was Director of the Oxford Botanic Garden, during which time (between 1992 and 2000) it won four Gold Medals at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Wednesday 15 October, 11 am (doors open at 10.30am). **Clapham Picturehouse, 76 Venn Street, SW4 0AT.** Non-member tickets £10, or email claphamcommon@theartsociety.org to join.

November save the dates

• **Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-Sort** is a five-star solo by **Jan Carey** which has been performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and festivals around the country. It explores the friendship between the World War I poet and composer Ivor Gurney and violinist Marion Scott, trail blazer for equality for women musicians. The piece is told through Gurney's poetry and music (on wonderful recordings by lyric tenor Ian Partridge), and through their letters and memories. **White Bear Theatre, Kennington Park Road, SE11 4DJ. Sunday 2 November, 6pm; and Monday 3 November, 7.30pm.** Tickets at whitebeartheatre.co.uk.



• **Saturday 8 November.** Calling all choristers for a Remembrance Day **Come & Sing** at Church of the Holy Spirit, Narbonne Avenue. Highlights from works by Mozart, Rossini, Fauré and Rutter. More next time or email the fabulous music director: keith.pun@holyspirit-clapham.org.uk.

• Finally, keep **Thursday 13 November** free for the St Luke's discussion. This year it's on **AI in the medical world**. Key details next month.

Omnibus Theatre auction and listings

Last month we announced that Omnibus was launching an auction on 26 September that will remain open online until early November. If you haven't already, you can place your bids at omnibus-clapham.org/support-us/online-auction. The auction features more than 100 lots, from a Swiss chalet where Wham!'s *Last Christmas* video was filmed to tickets to Florence and the Machine, Prime Minister's Question Time, an Arsenal football match and hospitality package and the 2026 PGA Golf Championship. Omnibus's celebrity supporters have also rallied to support; their lots include a personal birthday message from **Dame Judi Dench**.

For what's on at Omnibus this month, visit omnibus-clapham.org. **Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.**

Explore Royal Trinity Hospice

Royal Trinity Hospice is hosting two free open house 'Talk & Tours' this autumn. These afternoon events are open to anyone who is interested in finding out more about their local hospice in a relaxed and informal environment. The two-hour events will take you on a tour



around the hospice and its award-winning grounds, where you will be able to meet different members of staff who will explain more about the care that the hospice provides throughout the

community. Why not arrive early and enjoy lunch in the brand new hospice café, Common Cause, before the event gets started?

Sign up for free at www.royaltrinityhospice.london. The first tour is on **Tuesday, 7 October, 2-4pm**, followed by another two months later on **Tuesday, 2 December, 2-4pm** (BSL interpreted). **Royal Trinity Hospice, 30 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0RN.**

Studio Voltaire

• **Hilary Lloyd, *Very High Frequency*** and **Hilary Lloyd and Dennis Potter: *Seeing the Blossom***. Selected dates until Sunday 11 January 2026.

• **Maz Murray Performance: *Plot Hole***. Wednesday 1 October, 7-8 pm. Tickets £5, concessions available

• **Dennis Potter Screening Programme**. Key and rarely seen works by the broadcaster, producer, director and playwright, with October screenings of *Pennies from Heaven*, *The Singing Detective*, *Schmoedipus* and more. Details and tickets (£3, concessions available) at studiovoltaire.org/whats-on. **Studio Voltaire, 1A Nelsons Row, SW4 7JR.** Free admission Wednesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm.

Three cheers to Tom of Tom's Café

Tom Cameron has worked at the café at Battersea Arts Centre since 2001 and is well known to the customers queuing up to buy



coffee and a bite to eat. He is such a valuable addition that the café was renamed after him. He radiates joy and energy and is passionate about the work he does. He told me that he serves customers with snacks, ensures equipment is kept clean, manages the behind-the-scenes operations and chats with everyone who comes in. Tom is at his eponymous café Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. He says the best bit about his job is

that it is such fun, and he so enjoys being with his work friends. But there's more. Tom is also a part-time actor, as well as an artist, and he has had roles in BAC performances, including *Phantom of the Opera*. How lovely to spend a bit of time with Tom in his café and with the wonderful staff of the Arts Centre. I recommend a visit.

Interview and photograph by Alison Inglis-Jones

Lambeth Local History Fair

This fair, held annually on the first Saturday of September as the opening event of the Lambeth Heritage Festival, is organised by the Lambeth Local History Forum and Lambeth Archives. It was Clapham's turn to host the 2025 fair, which took place at Clapham Library on Clapham High Street. Local history societies and Lambeth Archives had stands handing out information and selling publications; there were talks by local historians, walks in the surrounding area, and refreshments in the café where delicious cakes provided by the Clapham WI were served with tea and coffee.



The Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Adrian Garden (centre right) and Bill Linskey, Chair of the Lambeth Local History Forum (back, just seen) with (from left) Christine Armstrong; Sinclair Johnston; Alyson Wilson, Clapham Society Local History lead and Publications Officer for the Lambeth Local History Forum; and Mark Leffler.

Judith Strong (1941-2024)

The Society was both grateful and touched to have received a generous bequest from Judith Strong, whose husband, Michael, was a past Treasurer of the Society. Her dear friend Sue Roberts remembers her.

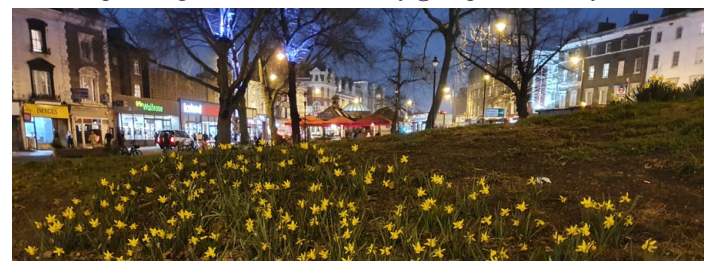
Last month marked a year since we bid farewell to Judith Strong. Judith was a beloved member of the Clapham community. As a music teacher and opera buff, she shared her love for song and music with generations of piano and choral students in Clapham and beyond. She believed music was not just an academic subject but a way to express deepest emotions and to connect with one another on a profound level. Fourteen years ago, Judith, with Tricia Ninian, conceived of St Paul's Opera; she remained a faithful supporter of all its productions.

A passionate gardener as well, Judith opened her own dazzling garden in Sibella Road as a fundraiser in memory of her husband, Michael. These events were an opportunity for the whole community to gather and be inspired by nature, whilst convivially drinking fine wine and eating Judith's famous cheesy canapés. Judith was an engaging, entertaining and funny friend with a zest for travel and living life to the full – and a heart filled with compassion and devotion to all around her.



Daffodil bulb planting now in its second year

After last year's successful planting of more than 1,500 daffodils in the grassy area near Clapham Common Station we plan to plant more. But we need help with donations and putting the bulbs in the ground. You can donate via the donate button on our website (after selecting your amount, follow the prompts about 'specific project') and if you can spend a few hours over the last two weekends of October planting, email michaelbarry@claphamsociety.com. **MB**



Clapham street names: Park Hill

View of St James' Church c.1860, courtesy of St James'



There are several curiosities about Park Hill. One is that almost the first construction in the road was the church, St James', built in 1829. In the 1820s Clapham's population was expanding rapidly and Holy Trinity on the Common, completed in 1776, was already unable to accommodate all who wished to attend. A group of evangelicals decided to build a proprietary chapel on pastureland conveyed to the Bishop of Winchester and incumbent vicar, the Rev Charles Bradley, by the owner, Richard Prescott. The fine Gothic church (*above*) was erected and later extended as the congregation grew. But why this location? Almost certainly because the land was available and because of imminent development nearby.

The name Park Hill, adopted about that time, is also curious. Although not part of Thomas Cubitt's 229 acres purchased in 1825 for his Clapham New Park estate, the road acted as a gateway. The villas built from the 1840s on either side of the church were in recognisably Cubitt style. Some have been demolished, but others towards the upper end have survived and been well restored, notably Suffolk Lodge. It was not until c.1910 that the neat little terraces at both ends of Park Hill were built. There was more infilling from the 1960s onwards, including Allard Gardens on a site once occupied by the Allard Motor Company.

The most prominent home, Park Hill House, was built near the corner with Clapham Park Road in 1827 by a gold dealer, Charles Webb. Aston Webb, his grandson, was architect of the Victoria and Albert Museum. A subsequent resident was General Pitt Rivers, whose anthropological collection formed the basis of the eponymous museum in Oxford.

The most dramatic change to Park Hill came when St James' Church was destroyed by a bomb in September 1940. More than 300 people sheltering in the crypt when it hit escaped without injury. The present-day St James', by architect Nugent Cachemaille-Day, was consecrated and opened in 1958, its bold vaulted concrete roof in marked contrast to the original Gothic design. *Alyson Wilson*

Next month: the former Wirtemberg Street

If you would like to find out more about your street, please email history@claphamsociety.com.

Membership news

We extend a warm welcome this month to: Natasha Giroux and Tom Barley; Sasha and Nick Goff; Nicola Kingston and Jeff Silverstein; and Susan Pettit. New members are always welcome. More details at claphamsociety.com/join. *Jennifer Everett*

The Orangery

The Orangery, or rather the portico of an orangery, off Worsopp Drive in the Notre Dame Estate may not be our best-known historic structure but it has long been a cause for concern to the Society and others. It is listed Grade II and was built in 1793 in the grounds of Thornton House, which was cleared for the council housing scheme after World War II. The site is in the ownership of Lambeth Council's Housing Department.

In early August, the date not yet verified, more than half the roof collapsed. There has been no official announcement or report from Lambeth but, as far as can be assessed, the cause was decay



of the heavy timbers in the surrounding walls and pediment. Fencing has been added outside the original railings; apart from that, nothing seems to have been done.

We may reasonably assume that the rest of the roof is just as decayed and without the protection of the roof the exposed masonry is at risk. Recently, the London Buildings Preservation Trust, a registered charity (londonhistoricbuildings.org.uk), was in discussion with Lambeth about using its experience, skills and resource to save the Orangery. Whether this dialogue can continue remains to be seen. Lambeth have been asked for comment. We will update you when we know more.

Photograph and report by Sinclair Johnston

Planning

Along with a large number of local residents, the Society lodged a formal objection relating to a proposed residential development in **Stonhouse Street**. Lambeth Planners obviously agreed and have since refused the application on the grounds that 'its height, bulk, massing, forward siting and detailed design would cause...substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Clapham Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II listed buildings at 122 and 124 Stonhouse Street'. *John Haworth*

Andrew Saint (1946-2025)

We were very sad to hear of Andrew's recent death. Andrew was a loyal friend of the Society from the days when several members, notably Peter Jefferson Smith, provided information about the Clapham area for the Battersea volumes of the *Survey of London*, published under his general editorship in 2013. When Peter died in 2018, leaving a book on which he had been working for almost 30 years, text finished but needing preparation for publication, Andrew joined the small team to complete and publish the book in Peter's memory, working tirelessly, checking the extensive notes and compiling the index. At the end of 2019 *The I'Ansons: A Dynasty of London Architects & Surveyors* was published.

Andrew's academic standing and contacts led to reviews and recommendations. He was a self-effacing man who wore his scholarship lightly. I shall greatly miss his wise counsel. *AW*

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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Vice Chair, Alison Macnair
Secretary, Gillian White
Treasurer, Simon Eagles
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Previous Newsletters and details of our meetings, activities and publications can be all found at claphamsociety.com.

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