



NEWSLETTER

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claphamsociety.com

'Our built environment for the benefit of all'

September is Lambeth Heritage Festival

For the fourteenth consecutive year, September brings the Lambeth Heritage Festival, organised jointly by Lambeth Archives and the Local History Forum, which includes the Clapham Society's Local History Group. This year's programme has more than 80 events and activities, offering all sorts of ways to explore the people, places and stories that have shaped the borough.

There are walks exploring London's Irish community in Kennington (17 & 19 September) and the life and haunts of Lily Savage/Paul O'Grady around Vauxhall (12 September). Those interested in how London works can visit the Clockworks museum (11 & 25 September), tour Brixton's working windmill (13 September) or hear about Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the sewer system that transformed Victorian London (19 September). For something altogether spookier, West Norwood Cemetery offers night tours among its famous occupants, owls and bats (13 & 27 September).

A particular highlight is A Tonic to the Nation on 9 September, an all-day event marking the 75th anniversary of the Festival of Britain and exploring the people and ideas that helped shape post-war British culture.

There are events for children too, including a mystery-history challenge at Lambeth Archives for 7–12-year-olds (12 September) and for younger children, storytelling at Brixton Windmill (13 September).

Heritage Festival Exhibitions

Two local artists feature in the festival's exhibitions. Paddy Gunnery and Steven Whitaker present *Dancing with the Imagination* at the Old Parish Room, Holy Trinity Sloane Square, on 5–6 September, 12–6pm. Closer to home, Jim Grover's *Drawn into your presence* opens at St James' Church, Park Hill, on 16 September, exploring local church life and history through photography and Victorian engravings. Open Wednesday–Sunday.

Clapham highlights

Saturday 5 September – Lambeth Local History Fair, 10am–4.30pm - Brixton Tate Library, Brixton Oval, SW2 1QJ. Meet representatives of local history groups from Clapham and across Lambeth.

Sunday 6 September – Walk: The History of Clapham Common, 2.30pm - Meet at the Bandstand. Booking: tomjansz@hotmail.co.uk

Give Lambeth Your Feedback about Clapham Common

Lambeth Council is again asking residents for feedback on how well it manages its local parks. The Clapham Common survey takes about three minutes and is an opportunity to say how you use and value the Common, what is working well and what could be improved. The survey closes on 30 October - to access the survey [Click Here](#)



Saturday 12 September – Walk: Clapham Park – the Cubitt Connection, 3pm - Meet at the junction of Thornton Road and Emmanuel Road. Booking: nigelbassindale@gmail.com

Saturday 12 September – Bell-ringing at Holy Trinity Church - Quarter peals during the morning to celebrate completion of the church extension.

From Wednesday 16 September – Drawn into your presence - A new exhibition by award-winning local photographer Jim Grover at St James' Church, Park Hill, SW4 9PB. Open Wednesday–Sunday, 11am–6pm, with later opening on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Monday 21 September – Clapham in 1815: Saints, Sinners – and the First Dad's Army, 7.30pm - A talk by the Society's Local History Group at Omnibus Theatre.

Saturday 26 September – Walk: Clapham Old Town, 11am - Meet outside St Paul's Church. Booking: gapingill@yahoo.co.uk

These are only a small selection from more than 80 events across Lambeth during September, from walks and talks to exhibitions, tours and family activities. For full details of events [Click Here](#)

Alison Macnair

Holy Trinity Church: The Bells Ring Out Again



After extensive works, Holy Trinity is mostly back in use, the builders are tidying up ready for a celebration on 12th/13th September.

The exterior has been transformed in a dignified manner with carefully matched brickwork by rebuilding the north and south transepts on a larger floor plan, extending out 4 metres. These additional areas of accommodation are connected by a discreet north/south passageway against the east wall, behind the altar. All the original stone features including, the tripartite and round windows from

the 1902 build on the north and south façades have been reset in their historic locations. Once the masonry has weathered in, it will look much as it always did, at least to most observers. The “man on the Clapham Omnibus” may not notice.

On the interior, which has been redecorated, the most striking feature will be the absence of the traditional pews, now replaced with stacking chairs.

The scaffolding has been removed, the site is being cleared, walk around and have a look for yourself at this, the most significant work to a historic building in our area, in recent years. Since the church was built in 1776 this is also a celebration of 250 years of worship, extensions, alterations, repair of WWII bomb damage and community service.

The completion celebration will be announced by a quarter peal on the bells on the Saturday morning, though these were not part of the works, having been augmented from 4 to 6 bells back in 1991.

Holy Trinity is widely known as the spiritual home of the group of dedicated people, nicknamed “The Clapham Sect”, who successfully campaigned for the abolition of slavery.

Sinclair Johnston

See also newsletters 473 and 479

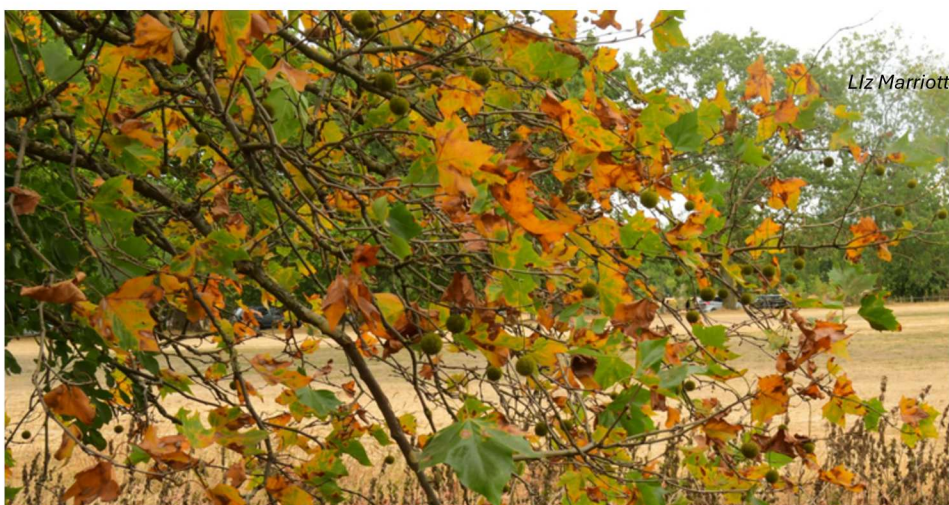
Climate Change on Clapham Common

Five consecutive heatwaves, the driest July on record, southern Europe in flames and hosepipe bans across half the country all confirm that global heating and climate breakdown are no longer a distant threat but a lived, present reality - reshaping how we garden, farm, and plan for water in Britain today.

The landscape across Clapham Common is also set to change. During the summer of 2022, with record-breaking temperatures exceeding 40°C, Kew Gardens lost 400 trees (compared to their average annual loss of 30 trees).

As a consequence, in 2024, they published a report; *Planting for the Future: Kew's Landscape Succession Plan*, which warns that over 50% of their 11,000 trees on-site could become vulnerable by 2090 due to rising temperatures and drier conditions.

The report singles out four particular native species at greatest risk - beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), oak (*Quercus robur*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).



Liz Marriott

The report predicts these trees will become stretched beyond their climate tolerance and will start to disappear from southeast England. Both oak and birch offer some of the greatest ecological benefits to our indigenous wildlife so we can expect to witness population declines here as well.

The report does offer two possible solutions: either start planting non-natives from hotter, drier climate zones, which would dramatically alter the look of the landscape, or source

seeds from our native trees in southern Europe and start to regrow drought and heat-resistant varieties that have already shown genetic adaptation to such conditions.

Although the latter seems preferable, a mix of the two is perhaps most likely, but whichever path we choose, Clapham Common's tree canopy will likely look different within a generation - a landscape reshaped not by choice but by the urgent need to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

Gareth James

Gareth James is Chair of Wild Clapham. Working alongside The Clapham Society and the Friends of Clapham Common, he leads local conservation initiatives, tree planting projects, and habitat restorations. This is the first of a regular series by Gareth for the Newsletter.

Local History: Clapham Bombings WW2

In the 20 interwar years between 1919 and 1939 Clapham High Street and The Pavement were thriving, busy thoroughfares endowed with shops, pubs, cafes and numerous cinemas: accessed by two Northern Line stations, the overground railway and a web of tram lines flowing out from the bustling depot, located where the main Sainsbury's and its car park stand today.

In 1939 however, fear gripped Londoners, who were terrified any declaration of war would bring about immediate German poison gas bombing from the air. Germany had the technology for such attacks but they never actually materialised, it is said on account of Nazi fear of similar reprisals on German cities.

Clapham, however, was to suffer major bombing attacks in each of the main phases of the aerial war. The Blitz, or bomber campaign, began on September 7, 1940, and ran continuously across London to May 16, 1941. Clapham suffered heavy bombing including the destruction of the tram depot on 14 October 1940, in which 35 people died.

Bombing of Gauden Road and Clapham High Street



Bomb Damage (1945) - Layers of London - Clapham, The Pavement

The missile campaign, employing Hitler's V weapons, began in June 1944 and lasted until 28 March 1945. The first V-1 flying bomb, or doodlebug, to hit Clapham landed on The Common at 1:45 in the morning of June 23, 1944, causing minimal damage and no casualties. Seven hours later a second impact, also on the Common, caused one fatality and damaged nearby houses. Thanks to the deep level shelters, begun in

response to The Blitz but only finally being opened in July 1944, casualty numbers were fewer than might have been expected, but the massive bombs caused immense damage to property. On 2 July 1944, at 1:45 in the morning a V1 flying bomb narrowly missed The Polygon, demolishing 20 houses and causing severe damage to 30 others, but no fatalities. Gauden Road, on the north side of what is now called Clapham High Street Station, was hit by two flying bombs: the first at 00:20 on 27 June 1944, causing 11 fatalities and then again at 13:50 the following lunch time causing another fatality. The station itself had also been hit by a conventional bombing raid in January 1944 which destroyed the main building.

Only two V2 ballistic missiles fell on Clapham. Neither caused any casualties. The first, however, which landed close to Cock Pond (the present-day water play area) on the Common at 18:27 on 8 January 1945, did very considerable damage to houses, shops on The Pavement, and nearby Trinity Church. The second hit Rodenhurst Road at 10:45 on 26 January 1945, destroying four houses and 44 flats, and caused serious damage to over 100 more homes.

Immediately post-war Clapham Common, which through the conflict had been the site of a major anti-aircraft gun emplacement and hundreds of allotments, became home to hundreds of temporary prefab dwellers: bombed from their homes in Clapham and other parts of London. The prefab houses on the Common were relatively temporary in existence, but others continued to be occupied in Clapham until the mid-nineteen sixties.

Simon James

Coming and Going

Clapham continues to see plenty of change. Spread on the Common, a new café in the restored former sports changing rooms on the western side of the Common, has opened, while Reyes café in Old Town is back after a refresh. On the High Street, fitness and wellness studio Zakurah has arrived, and 500 Degrees has brought its Neapolitan pizzas from Brixton to Clapham Common South Side. Some things have been disappearing too. Around a dozen street bins were removed from Clapham High Street and Wandsworth Road before their replacements were ready, prompting complaints and a petition; Lambeth has apologised and says new recycling and general-waste bins are on their way. Meanwhile, the bus shelter outside Waitrose has also vanished. After a local campaign, TfL says it will be replaced - although, several months on, its successor is apparently still at the design stage.

What's on in Clapham - September 2026

Royal Trinity Hospice

On Thursday 10 September, 6.30–8pm, artists Abbas Zahedi, Ain Bailey and Tom Harris bring **Sonic Support: ECO** to the hospice garden – a free, improvisational sound performance exploring grief, care and reflection. Booking is essential through the Royal Trinity Hospice website. Trinity's two-acre **gardens are open** on Sunday 13 September, 11am–4pm, and on Monday 28 September, 1–3pm it hosts a free **Death Café**, an informal participant-led conversation about death and dying over tea and cake. For the events [Click Here](#)

On and Around the Common

The inaugural **Impetus Relay** takes place on Saturday 12 September, with individuals and teams seeing how many 2.5km laps of the Common they can complete in four hours while raising money to support disadvantaged young people. Also on the 12th, a new **Common Market** launches at Macaulay School, 10am–2pm, with stalls and children's activities.

On 19–20 September, Long Pond hosts the **Water Lantern Festival**. Visitors decorate lanterns with messages, memories or wishes before releasing them onto the water around sunset, accompanied by live music and food. For tickets [Click Here](#)



Also on Saturday 19 September, **Bandstand Beds** community garden holds its free annual Feast, while **RunThrough** returns on Sunday 27 September with 5K, 10K and half-marathon races.

Performance & Culture

Aria Aficionados returns to **St Paul's Church**, on Friday 18 September at 7.30pm, combining an opera quiz with live arias, duets and ensembles. Tickets are available from stpaulsopera.org

The **Lambeth Fringe**, formerly the Clapham Fringe, runs from 24 September to 25 October. Founded at the Bread & Roses Theatre in 2015, it has since expanded across Lambeth, but Bread & Roses remains its home. The festival brings theatre, comedy, cabaret, music and other live performance to venues around the borough. For details [Click Here](#)

The **Open House Festival** runs from 12–20 September, with 23 participating buildings and sites across Lambeth.

For details [Click Here](#)

Regular Events

Clapham Common **Parkrun** takes place every Saturday at 9am, and the Clapham **Model Yacht Club** sails on Long Pond on Sundays, 11am–3pm, with yachts available to borrow free. **Omnibus** has free live music every Sunday, plus its new monthly Clapham Common **Jazz Club**, next meeting on 27 September.

Dates for Your Diary

September

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|-------|--|
| 5 | Lambeth Local History Fair |
| 6 | Walk: The History of Clapham Common |
| 10 | Sonic Support: ECO - Trinity Hospice |
| 12 | Impetus Relay |
| 12 | Gasworks Artists Studios Open Day |
| 12 | Walk: Clapham Park - the Cubitt Connection |
| 12 | Bell ringing - Holy Trinity Church |
| 12-20 | Open House Festival |
| 13 | Trinity Hospice - Open Garden |
| 16 | Drawn into your presence - St James' Church |
| 18 | St Paul's Opera - Aria Aficionados |
| 19 | Bandstand Beds Feast |
| 19-20 | Water Lantern Festival |
| 21 | Society Talk: Mike Tuffrey - Clapham in 1815: Saints, Sinners and the first Dad's Army |
| 24 | Lambeth Fringe (until 25 October) |
| 26 | Walk: Clapham Old Town |
| 27 | RunThrough (5k, 10k & Half Marathon) |
| 27 | Jazz Club - Omnibus |
| 28 | Death Café - Trinity Hospice |

Looking Ahead

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 10 Oct | Clapham Literary Walk |
| 17 Oct | Clapham Book Festival |
| 19 Oct | AGM & Talk by Jeremy Keates - This is Clapham BID |
| 16 Nov | Society Talk: Bill Linskey - Local Music Hall |

Organised by or linked to the Clapham Society

Book for October

Tea for Trinity invites people to host an afternoon tea during October to raise funds for Royal Trinity Hospice. Hosts receive a pack with recipes, bunting and ideas; to sign up [Click Here](#) or call 020 7787 1000. **Oktoberfest** on the Common runs from 9–24 October, with live music, German food and beer. Advance tickets are required. The **Clapham Literary Walk** takes place on 10 October, followed by the 10th anniversary **Clapham Book Festival** at Omnibus on 17 October. Both have links with the Clapham Society, and details and booking are available through the Book Festival.

The **Clapham Society AGM** is on 19 October, plus Society Talk, by Jeremy Keates. A further Society Talk by Bill Linskey is on 16 November.

Details of Clapham Society events can be found at www.claphamsociety.com

To comment on anything in the Newsletter or to suggest a contribution, email: newsletter@claphamsociety.com

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