

The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 332

November 2010

Our history map

As mentioned in our September newsletter, this month we enclose a copy of our recently published history map of Clapham and the Common with each newsletter. We produced this map, designed by Claire Fry and Peter Jefferson Smith, in the summer as a free hand-out to publicise the Clapham Society and its activities in the local community.

If you would like more copies or if you have any suggestions for appropriate locations for display and distribution of the map please contact Alyson Wilson. We would like to distribute the maps generously, but not wastefully.



Tea at the Odeon Cinema at Clapham South (now Majestic Wine) was one of Maurice Stewart's childhood memories of Clapham.

Fireworks!

Lambeth Council has cut back on its fireworks displays this year, so that the only free display in the borough will be on Clapham Common on **Friday 5 November** commencing at 7.30 pm. This is always a very popular event, so get there early and be prepared for a big crowd.

Wednesday 16 March.

These were our Sons. **Naomi Klein** will describe her research on the 574 names on the Stockwell War Memorial of men who died in the First World War. Starting with just their names, she has traced most of them and unearthed many of their personal stories. She will tell us how she used a variety of public records and information from families, and share with us some of the lives she has recaptured. She will also tell us about the three Burleigh brothers commemorated on the memorial at Holy Trinity Clapham.

The full programme for 2011 will be published in the December newsletter.

Removal of Pedestrian Crossings

At the beginning of July a paper was published by the Mayor of London's office proposing the potential removal of 145 road traffic signals to smooth the flow of traffic. On the list were all three pedestrian controlled crossings on The Avenue which divides Clapham Common and is part of the busy South Circular Road.

When discussed by the Society's Main Committee and the Common and Open Spaces Sub-committee these proposals were met with disbelief and uniform disapproval. It was agreed that a strong objection be lodged with Kulveer Ranger, the Mayor's Transport Advisor, and with the relevant officers of Transport for London.

This was done and a somewhat belated response was received from Kulveer Ranger with the stock response that there would be full consultation with the relevant boroughs and 'where both TfL and the boroughs agree that the justification for a particular traffic signal site is weak, the next step would be to identify suitable alternative control measures such as road markings (i.e. give way signs), zebra crossings or mini-roundabouts.' None of these alternatives would be appropriate for Clapham Common. In particular the introduction of an island or mini roundabout would require an incursion into the Common because of the width of the existing road. This has occurred with TfL changes in the past.

As members will know, all Clapham Common is owned and managed by Lambeth, but the relevant crossings are in that part of it which is in Wandsworth. We would encourage all our members to consider the implications of these proposals for themselves, schoolchildren, buggy pushers, those in wheelchairs or electric buggies and dog walkers, and raise voices, or emails in whichever direction they feel to be appropriate. The Society has already raised the issue in the *South London Press* and will continue to press for the removal of these crossings from the list.

Anna Jefferson Smith

Wanted

Do you have a copy of the 1849 Bland Map of Clapham you no longer want? The map was reproduced by the Clapham Society in 1973, but has long been sold out. A member is looking for a copy to buy. If you can help please call Fred Uhde on 020 622 5745.

Mr Thornton's Stables



The "Rookery" Clapham Common. 1896.

Most Clapham residents will know Rookery Road, probably as the location of Schmidt's café (now sadly closed). Not so many may know that it was once the site of stables which until the early 20th century housed a vet and farrier's business, and that the grandson of a man who worked there still lives in Clapham.

Some time in the mid-18th century John Thornton obtained permission from the Clapham Parish Vestry to build substantial brick stables around a stable yard on the Common, opposite his house on South Side, which stood roughly on the site of one of the blocks of the present Notre Dame Estate. In 1790 his son, Robert, was allowed to build an extension alongside the stables, which included timber-clad cottages with access from Rookery Road. By the early 1880s the stables, which by then were part of the group of buildings commonly known as 'The Rookery', and included a forge, were occupied by Mr Garside MRCVS 'vet and farrier'. The former profession had evolved from the latter and even in the 1891 census no distinction was made between the two.

In about 1883 a young farrier called William Woodeson came from Berkshire to London to work for Mr Garside and soon became his foreman. In 1890, following a disagreement, William Woodeson left Garside and set up on his own as a farrier in Meredith's Yard, off Clapham Park Road. In due course William was joined by his son, Albert. On William's death in 1924 his wife ran the business for a while until Albert took it over and his mother retired to the Isle of Wight. In 1952 Albert bought the house in Rodenhurst Road, in which his son Donald still lives with his wife, Doris.

Meanwhile, the stables and adjoining buildings on the Common were demolished in 1904, and the land returned to the Common as had been agreed some 150 years earlier. By this time an ale-house and a washerwoman as well as the farrier and vet were listed in The Rookery. The cottages had become run-down and neglected over the years, though local artists liked to show them as a picturesque corner of the Common. For some years was a small area of cobblestones on the north side of Rookery Road survived – the remains of the railed enclosure which was the starting place for pony and donkey rides on the Common. William T Woodeson & Son, Registered Farrier, finally closed in 1951, following an injury sustained by Albert – always a risk with horses.

Alyson Wilson (with the help of Donald Woodeson, who kindly supplied the photograph of 'The Rookery' in 1896)

The Papered Parlour This month's courses include one new one – *An Introduction to Couture Millinery* – on **Sunday 7 November** and a repeat of the popular *Contemporary Photography* course on **Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 November**. For details contact The Papered Parlour, 7 Prescott Place, SW4 6BS.
www.thepaperedparlour.co.uk Telephone 020 7627 8703

The Survey of London and its work in Battersea

At the Society's September meeting, the Eric Smith lecture was given by Professor Andrew Saint, General Editor of *The Survey of London*. Professor Saint described the history of the Survey before turning to its current work on the parish of Battersea.

The Survey was started over 100 years ago by CR Ashbee, architect and art worker. Working at Toynbee Hall, he was depressed by the loss of ancient buildings to industrial progress, seeing the historic buildings of London as a testimony to a better way of life. Working with volunteers, he set out to record the historic buildings of London, parish by parish, stating his aim as 'to make nobler and more humanely enjoyable the life of the great city.' The first volume was a survey of Bromley-by-Bow. Ashbee expected to take 10 years; after 100 years only a third of London has been done.

Ashbee teamed up with the London County Council, whose officials and architects took on more and more of the work, finally taking over completely from the volunteers after the Second World War. (After the LCC, the Survey passed via the GLC and then the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England to its present sponsors, English Heritage.) Over the years, the focus changed. The early selections had been very narrow, but the Survey by then took in any building of merit, up to the Victorian era. However, listing of historic buildings by the Government had now started, which raised the question of what the Survey was for.

In 1954 Francis Sheppard became editor, and he introduced a change of approach. In the second of two volumes on Lambeth (which at that time did not include Clapham), he included Victorian buildings, described estate development and painted the social history of the area. The elegant drawings which had always characterised the Survey remained, but the architecture was now set in its context. His successor, Hermione Hobhouse (a former Chairman of this Society) thought that there had been too much concentration on 'posh' London, so took the Survey down to Poplar. The 47th volume, on Clerkenwell, was published in 2008.

When Andrew Saint took over the editorship, he felt that South London had not had its due share; so the Survey is now working on Woolwich and Battersea. Woolwich is facing great change and much is under threat, with the Army moving out; this is the right time for the Survey to record it.

Battersea is a large parish, astonishingly rich and varied. The area is dominated by railways, with two major junctions, the 'Battersea tangle' around Queenstown Road, where the lines to Waterloo and Victoria cross and intersect, and Clapham Junction. Some of the complexity can be blamed on the people of Clapham, protecting their Common from being crossed by railways.

The railways condemned northern Battersea to industry. The large yards at Nine Elms have mostly gone, and some of the replacement buildings around the New Covent Garden Market will in their turn be replaced by new developments, including the US Embassy; but there are still large railway structures at the Longhedge site. Battersea Power Station is one of many industries which used the interchange between rail and water. Further west, until the mid-19th century the fertile Battersea Fields were famed for their asparagus – and for raffish entertainment around the Red House, a pub suppressed by the Victorians in the 1840s. Unsuccessful attempts by the Spencer family to enclose the fields led indirectly to the creation of Battersea Park, also a place of entertainment, with cycling, the lake, post-War public sculpture exhibitions and the Festival of Britain Pleasure Gardens.

Chelsea Bridge was important to Clapham from the time of Cubitt onwards, since it could give access to the West End. The Clapham gentry tried for years to get a connection from North Street through the railway tangle, but never got anywhere. Then from 1860, Knowles developed Cedars Road, and in alliance with the financier Philip Flower developed the Park Town Estate around Queenstown Road, successfully pushing the road through the tangle. However, Park Town was a financial disaster, as the middle classes did not take the houses down in the plain. The types of houses had to change, and Flower's heirs brought in Thomas Jeckyll, who built a few artisans' houses and fine villas in Queenstown Road.

Because the Survey follows parish boundaries, it is covering the western half of Clapham Common, and many historic sites off the west and north sides. The first West Side house was that of Christopher Baldwin, who initiated improvements to the Common, and by the 1830s there were villas all along this side. The most famous of the lost villas was Battersea Rise, home of Henry Thornton but originally built for John Akerman, a glass merchant. No ground plan is known, but there are many accounts of the Library, said to have been designed by the younger Pitt. The anti-slavery Thornton lived side by side with

people whose wealth came from slavery, including his immediate neighbour William Vassall. Thornton built in his own grounds two houses clearly designed at the same time, Glenelg for his friend Charles Grant, and Broomfield or Broomwood, for Edward Eliot MP, and after his early death, William Wilberforce. Opposite Battersea Rise, on North Side, were the two Sisters houses, built in the 1760s by Akerman to protect his view.

After these great houses of the famous, Professor Saint ended his talk with pictures of the prolifically flowering front gardens of two modest houses off Battersea Park Road. For him and for the Survey, these too are part of the fabric of London.

The Battersea volumes will be published in 2013. The task so far has been immeasurably helped by the researches of the many local historians who have opened their work to the Survey. Professor Saint and his team would welcome any further information about houses round the Common, particularly from people who have old title deeds. The Survey can be contacted at Surveyoflondon@english-heritage.org.uk or at English Heritage, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST. Telephone 020 7973 3638.

Peter Jefferson Smith

If you missed this very interesting lecture Andrew Saint will be speaking again about '*The Survey of London in South London'* on Monday 15 November at 6.45 pm at the Durning Library, 167 Kennington Lane, SE11 4HF. Telephone 020 7926 8682.

Kandinsky Winds On Friday 19

November at 7.30 pm Kandinsky Winds will be giving a concert at St. Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX. The chamber group comprising Romola Smith (clarinet), Fraser Kelman (oboe) and Joanna Stark (bassoon) was established in 2008 at the Royal Academy of Music and is already in great demand. They perform an extensive range of music, incorporating their own arrangements and a fondness for French twentieth-century repertoire. Tickets £9 on the door include interval refreshments.

Congratulations!

Clapham featured strongly in the recent Stirling Prize for Architecture. The new building at what is effectively our home base, Clapham Manor Primary School, was one of the six buildings on the short list. Another was Christ's College School at Guildford which was designed by DSDHA, the DS of which is Clapham Society member Deborah Saunt.

William Curtis

The distinguished botanist William Curtis (1746-1799) records that in the London area in 1782 there was a virtual plague of brown-tailed moths whose caterpillars can devastate small trees and bushes, covering the affected plants with sheets of silken webs. Contact with the hairs of the caterpillars can also cause skin rashes. Concern was so great that prayers for deliverance were said in some local churches and a reward of one shilling (5p) per bushel was offered for collecting the webs which were then burnt. 80 bushels (about 3000 litres) of webs were collected in one day by 'the poor citizens of Clapham'.

Curtis wrote extensively on local flora and is buried, and has a fine memorial window, at St Mary's Church, Battersea. The botanical magazine that he founded, and which bears his name, is still published.

Derrick Johnson

Le Petit Boulanger

A welcome new addition to Abbeville Road at the south end of the shopping parade is Le Petit Boulanger, an artisan bakery and pâtisserie that is also a café. It has been opened by Kevin Hastings and his team of two pâtissiers, a baker (these three all from Brittany) and two serving staff.

Kevin, who is half Hungarian, trained as a pâtissier, and also spent his childhood in his family's bakery. Bon appétit!



The Seasons

On Saturday 20 November at 7.30 pm the Festival Chorus will perform Haydn's *The Seasons* at St Luke's Church, Thurliegh Road, SW12 8RQ as part of the St Luke's Music Society season. Tickets £10 (£6 concessions) can be bought on the door or from St Luke's Music Society box office 07951 791619 or www.slms.org.uk.

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** website at www.claphamsociety.com.

international events listed to keep things in context. This is illustrated by a range of exhibits from a woolly rhino skull to 20th century documents. It makes a great introduction.

The second room is for temporary exhibitions – three or four a year which should ensure it is worth making repeat visits. The current exhibition is *Wandsworth through a hundred objects* which gives an idea of the range of items – public and personal – held by the museum. My own preference would have been a more focused display on one aspect of the area's development, but maybe that will be another exhibition.

We were also told there are two rooms for schools use, where children will be able to see exhibits at close range. A number of schools have already signed up for the educational programme, and anyone can book to study the archives.

The De Morgan collection is still on site but closed to the public. We understand talks are taking place which may persuade them to stay in the area. A major national collection on site would be a great advantage.

The Wandsworth Museum should be a great asset to the area. and all of us who fought to retain the old museum are delighted we again have a local museum. Congratulations and thanks to those who made it possible and best wishes to the staff in achieving their goals. Clapham Society members should pay a visit soon. Strong local support is essential.

Janet Johnson

In April 2011 our monthly meeting will be held at Wandsworth Museum. The Director will speak about the collection and the development of the museum and show us round the exhibits.

New members We were pleased to welcome the following new members this month: Janet Elias, Thomas and Christine Galbraith, R Malcolm Graham, Norman Grigg and John O'Malley.