

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



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Friezes Restored

Some time ago the Society was approached by the owner of a house in Culmstock Road, about two painted friezes above picture rail level in the entrance hall. They had suffered water damage following a recent fire and she was seeking a restorer and also wondered whether the Society would be interested in inspecting them. Fortunately, we were able to provide the name of a restorer – Oliver Kay (blueskydecorating.co.uk) who is the son of Ann Kay, a longstanding Clapham Society member. Oliver has now completed the work and done a good job!

The friezes are of scenes of sailing boats on a Swiss lake, probably Geneva, with mountains in the background and are in the style of the Swiss artist François Boccion. The house is one of a row of 22 built in 1900-01 by W H George, a builder/developer who was very active in the area. They are on the site of Beechwood, a Georgian house which was demolished in 1898. Boccion died in 1890 so the friezes could not have been painted by him. Who then was the artist of these unusual features? The most likely contender is the original occupier of the house, Thomas Ansell, described in the census of 1911 as an art master employed by London County Council. He and his wife Emily, a London County Council class teacher, lived in the house from 1901 until 1953 so he would certainly have had plenty of time to work on them! He was 44 in 1911 and does not appear anywhere in earlier censuses so it is possible that he may have been travelling on the Continent and had studied under or been inspired by the work of François Boccion. We shall probably never know but I think you will agree that the result is an unusual and attractive feature now fully restored. See more pictures of the friezes at claphamsociety.com/Article/article12.

Derrick Johnson



photo: Dana Kubick

This year our meetings will be held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The bar at Omnibus will be open from 7 pm, and meetings will commence at 8 pm. Our guest will normally speak for about 45 minutes, followed by around 15 minutes for questions and discussion, and the bar will remain open after meetings. Meetings are free and open to non-members, so please bring your friends along.

Monday 16 March

The NHS in Lambeth. Dr Adrian McLachlan, Chairman of the Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group and a local GP, will discuss the organisation of healthcare services in Lambeth, the demands on GPs and local A & E departments, and progress with moving more services into the community (integrated care). There will be plenty of time for questions.

Monday 20 April

A Brave New World. Edmund Bird, Heritage Advisor to the Mayor of London and former Lambeth Head of Conservation, will introduce his recently published book about the architecture of Lambeth in the 20 years following the Second World War (including Clapham which was then in Wandsworth). The book analyses the different architectural styles and evolving building types, changing public housing policies, public and civic building, transport structures, leisure and entertainment venues and public sculpture. A final chapter is on buildings of this period which have already been demolished. His talk will look at the whole of the present borough, with particular reference to Clapham.

If you want to check on future meetings the full year's events are on our website at claphamsociety.com/clapsocevents.html.

Wandsworth Museum

It has recently been announced that Wandsworth Museum is to merge with Battersea Arts Centre. From March Wandsworth Museum staff will be based at Battersea Arts Centre in the Grade II listed former Battersea Town Hall in Lavender Hill, which is now nearing the completion of a £13.3 million restoration and redevelopment project, supported by the Arts Council, Lottery Funds, private donors and a 20-year rent free period granted by Wandsworth Council. The Hintze Charitable Foundation has extended its generous support of the museum.

The plan is that the first year will be a year of transition and testing new ideas, before the two organisations operate as one from March 2016. This seems a good fit and welcome news for the museum which has been homeless since the closure of the West Hill site last autumn. We look forward to future developments.

The Bonds of Clapham

Last summer Joan Bond Barrett from Canada came to visit Sinclair and Madeline Johnston at their house in Narbonne Avenue, which is the remaining wing of Eagle House – the house built by her ancestor in the late 18th century. She had discovered this when researching her family history, and partly as a result of finding the information about the Green Plaque we had erected on the property (see claphamsociety.com/articles/plaque2.html). She contacted Sinclair and Madeline, who invited her to a convivial lunch along with some other Clapham Society members.

At that time she asked if we might consider putting an article about her family on our website which would be, in effect, an extract from the family history she is writing. We agreed to this, and many months later the article is now on our website (claphamsociety.com/articles/article11.html). The fascinating thing about it is the intricate web of friendship and marriage between local families which is revealed. We already knew many of the leading characters in the story, but not necessarily their relationship to each other.

A New Bakery

Gail's Artisan Bakery is opening a branch at 71 Abbeville Road, SW4 9JW this month. It will be open from breakfast to supper, offering breads, pastries, cakes and sweets. Specialities include French Dark and San Francisco sourdoughs, croissants, cinnamon buns, freshly made sandwiches and salads, delivered every morning.

The French in London

We had a large and enthusiastic audience of around 100 members and their friends at Omnibus for our first event of 2015, when Isabelle Janvrin and Catherine Rawlinson spoke about their recently published book, *Les Français à Londres*. They divided their talk into two parts with Isabelle speaking first about the various waves of French who have come to this country from William the Conqueror onwards, and Catherine then drew attention to some important individuals and the contribution they have made to life in England.

One thing which immediately became evident was how so many names from France have become integrated into our culture that we no longer recognise their provenance. From the City streets marking the area lived in by Grey Friars and White Friars, to those further west adopted from the Norman barons, like Beauchamp, Beaumont and Grosvenor. Isabelle took us through the Middle Ages to the marriage of Henry V to Catherine of Valois, wife, mother and grandmother of kings of England. From the early 18th century Huguenots arrived fleeing religious persecution in France. In addition to their well documented silk weaving enterprises in Spitalfields, they made an important contribution to business and the city. There was a significant Huguenot community in Wandsworth.

The French Revolution brought another wave of immigrants and the 1848 revolution yet more, including King Louis Philippe himself who fled to Claremont, Surrey where he died in 1850. During the Second World War General de Gaulle established the Headquarters of the Free French government in London, at 4 Carlton Gardens where a blue plaque marks the fact. The Lycée Charles de Gaulle also celebrates this.

Catherine reminded us of the many artists, inventors and scientists who came to London: Lucien Pissarro settled in Norwood, Tissot and Derain were long-term residents and Monet was a regular visitor. Then there were the Pugin family of architects, which included AWN Pugin of Houses of Parliament fame, the Brunel family of engineers known for railways and bridges, and Bazalgette who was responsible for the construction of London sewers. She also pointed out some south London connections from Tooting Bec, named after Abbey of Bec in Normandy to Violette Szabo, Second World War SOE heroine, whose home was in Stockwell.

It was a fascinating evening and clearly the book is well worth reading, if your French is up to it, though it is hoped there will be an English translation soon. *Les Français à Londres* is available from the French bookshop in South Kensington (frenchbookshop.com).

Tree Removal

Residents were shocked by the sudden removal of a mature Tree of Heaven in Rookery Road on a Friday afternoon at the end of January. A flurry of emails followed and eventually it emerged that the decision was taken at very short notice on safety grounds, without informing the Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee or any local groups.

The subsequent report from the Parks Operations Manager concluded that on inspection the tree officers found evidence that the tree presented a number of severe risks which could only be managed by removing the tree. They therefore instructed the contractors to attend immediately and deal with it as an emergency.

Spring is here

Don't miss the snowdrops, crocus and other spring bulbs in Holy Trinity churchyard during March, and also the pretty strip of crocus in an unlikely position alongside the netball courts in Rookery Road.

Burnt Out Theatre

Some members will remember seeing Burnt Out Theatre's production of *Muscovado* at Holy Trinity Church last October. The play is now coming back to Clapham before beginning a six-month tour, which will include Brighton and Edinburgh Fringe Festivals. It will be at Bread and Roses Theatre, 68 Clapham Manor Street, SW4 6DZ from **Tuesday 10 March to Saturday 14 March** at 7.30 pm.

Muscovado is set in Barbados, between the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act and the abolition of slavery, and tells the interconnected stories of a planter family and its slaves, shedding light on the British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. A heady mix of sexual intrigue, piercing choral music and extreme racial tension, *Muscovado* is accompanied by an original musical score and atmospheric soundscape performed live. For more information and to book tickets (£10, £8 concessions) go to burntouttheatre.co.uk.

Street View

The relentless extension of houses, in particular basement extensions, is causing many ugly large structures to be built in our streets. The firms doing the work seem able to build these at will, with no apparent limitation on height or length, even on to the pavement, and these 'temporary' constructions remain for months at a time. So far enquiries to Lambeth's Planning Department about the rules – if any – governing such structures remain unanswered.



photos: Bill Emmett



Jonas de Clapham: a whale of a story

'Jonas de Clapham', many websites tell us, was son of the Duke of Lorraine, and was given lands at Clapham by King Edgar in AD 965. The lands passed to his descendant Arthur, who opposed William the Conqueror and fled to the north. Various old accounts of Yorkshire add that this Duke of Lorraine was son of Pharamond King of France, and that Arthur built a stronghold on Ingleborough, the mountain above Clapham in Yorkshire.

So even a millennium ago, our Clapham had distinguished proprietors, royally connected? Well, no. King Pharamond was a myth, and no authoritative history of this area has anything to say about Jonas or Arthur. Immediately before the Norman Conquest, Clapham was owned by Thorbiorn, not by Arthur. That is according to Domesday Book, on the

whole a more reliable source than Wikipedia.

Jonas, Arthur and their kin owe their origin to an ancient document owned by a Yorkshire family called Clapham, which recorded them as the family's most distant ancestors, and was said to be 'confirmed by the Heralds'. A number of 19th century Yorkshire antiquarians refer to it. Some were politely sceptical, but one wrote bluntly that the pedigree 'bristles with absurdities and inconsistencies' – much to the anger of a member of the Clapham family, defending his supposed royal pedigree. Another historian summed it up well: 'With very little further exertion of the imagination, the genealogist could have carried the pedigree further back than the reign of the mythical Pharamond, and found an ancestor in that other Jonas, the hero of the whale story.'

Peter Jefferson Smith

Remembering Stan

Clapham Common recently lost one of its most regular and well-known walkers. Stanley Hook was to be seen almost daily, usually with at least one carrier bag full of food (often Jacob's cream crackers) for the birds and the wildfowl on the ponds. Dogs often benefitted from this largesse, too.

A single man, Stan had lived in Clapham all his life, apart from his years of National Service. His last job was as a porter at the British Library where he must have made many friends. He used to entertain dogwalkers with his stories of a different Clapham, earlier in his lifetime. On his way to the Common, and again on the way back, he would stop off at the Ace of Clubs charity shop in Clapham Park Road where he would buy a DVD to watch that evening, and usually sat and chatted to the staff – it was they who noticed he hadn't been seen for a few days, and began the enquiries that led to finding that he'd died.

The dogwalkers have set up a fund for a memorial to Stan on the Common. You can give online at indiegogo.com/projects/a-park-bench-in-clapham-common-in-memory-of-stan, or in cash to Jennifer Cave, Manager at ACE, 8A Clapham Park Road, SW4 7AR.

Alison Macnair

Henry Thornton School

Henry Thornton School, which was originally in Battersea moved to a site on Clapham Common South Side and Elms Road in 1929. In the 1960s the 19th century building on South Side was demolished, the school was extended with a new frontage and became a comprehensive school. This closed in 1986 and in 1993 Lambeth College opened in the South Side buildings, while the 1929 building in Elms Road was used for adult education.

Finally this building was replaced by Lambeth Academy in 2004. Some years ago former pupils and staff of Henry Thornton School formed The Old Thorntonians Association. They have now commissioned a plaque, to be located in Elms Road, marking the school's occupation of the site and to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the death of Henry Thornton. It is hoped the Mayor of Lambeth, Councillor Adedamola Aminu, will be available to unveil it on **Saturday 21 March** at midday. All are welcome to attend the event.

Your chance to comment

A wide-ranging consultation on the future of cultural services in Lambeth has been launched recently. The council is facing unprecedented cuts to its core funding and has to save £90 million by 2018. It means a saving of just over half of the cultural services budget for 2013-14. With an anticipated population increase of more than 30,000 in the next ten years, the council wants to use its assets to raise income that can be invested for the future. So they are proposing significant changes in how cultural services are provided in Lambeth. The proposals include the following:

Libraries. The sale of Waterloo and Minet libraries and the use of the money to help create a £10 million endowment fund for the culture and library services.

Parks and events. The generation of more income in parks and open spaces, an events strategy to bring a cultural festival to Lambeth, to hold more events across the whole borough and bring noise levels for events into line with the majority of London.

Sports. The renegotiation of the current leisure contract in 2017 to provide better value for money. A Sport Innovation Fund to provide access to facilities at reduced rates for Lambeth based community-led sport clubs and self-help groups.

You can find the overview booklet, all documentation and a questionnaire online at lambeth.gov.uk/culture2020consultation and in all Lambeth libraries. The consultation will close at midnight on **Friday 24 April**. It is important that you look at what is proposed and have your say **now**.

It is easier to read and understand the details of these important proposals in the booklet and you are strongly urged to collect a copy from the library if you can. One topic of considerable concern to anyone interested in local history is the scant consideration given to the future of Lambeth's excellent archive service at present housed at the Minet Library, which is due to be sold in 2016.

You can also speak to your ward councillor about these proposals, email culture2020@lambeth.gov.uk, follow and comment using social media – Twitter @lambeth_council #culture2020, sign up to the Love Lambeth enewsletter to make sure you hear about events and visit love.lambeth.gov.uk/culture2020-consultation/ to find out more about what is happening. There will also be some public events throughout the borough at which the proposals will be discussed. The date for the Clapham one is **Wednesday 25 March**, but the venue not yet fixed. So keep the date and check the venue on the links shown above.

Some March Highlights at Omnibus

Sunday 1 March at 7 pm. Gary Crosby's *Groundation*, double bass, alto sax, guitar and drums. Progressive jazz with Afrobeat accents interspersed with ballads. Tickets £10.

Saturday 7 March at 7.30 pm. *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Musical comedy about Charles Darwin. Tickets £12, £10 concessions.

Sunday 8 March at 7 pm. London Conchord Ensemble. Programme of French and German music. Tickets £12, £10 concessions.

Sunday 15 March at 7 pm. Tom Green Quartet. Modern and traditional influences from Flamenco to Dixieland. Tickets £10.

Thursday 26 March at 7.30 pm. *So, This is What Happened*. Six people deliver their 10-minute true stories. Tickets £5.

For the full programme for the month go to the website omnibus-clapham.org and sign up for the newsletter so that you never miss an event. Volunteers are always required at Omnibus. Why not enquire about opportunities for involvement with front of house or the box office? Details are on the website, or call in to speak to the volunteer organiser when you are passing Omnibus.

Clapham Chamber Concerts

The season continues on **Friday 20 March** with a clarinet and piano recital, featuring one of the UK's foremost young clarinetists, CCC's very own Jonathan Parkin, and his duo partner, the award-winning pianist Sebastian Stanley.

This spring the pair celebrate a partnership of over ten years with the release of their first collaborative CD, *Portraits of England*. Appropriately, the second half of this concert will be dedicated to the duo's love of the English repertoire for clarinet and piano, and will include the much loved *Five Bagatelles* by Gerald Finzi and Joseph Horowitz's jazzy *Sonatina*. In contrast, the first half of the concert features three favourites of the French repertoire for clarinet, Debussy's atmospheric *Première Rhapsodie*, and sonatas by Poulenc and Saint-Saëns. It promises to be a colourful evening.

The repair work at St. Paul's church means that this concert will be given at an alternative venue. The venue will be announced on the Clapham Chamber Concerts website, and on the Clapham Society 'Latest News' page as soon as it is known. For more information see the website claphamchamberconcerts.org.uk. Tickets at the door: £12, £9 concessions and students, £5 children.

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 our website at claphamsociety.com

Festival Chorus

On **Saturday 21 March** at 7.30 pm Festival Chorus will perform Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road, SW12 8RQ. Handel wrote this monumental work in 1739 in conjunction with Charles Jennens, the famous librettist of his next work – *Messiah*. *Israel in Egypt* tells the story of the Israelites suffering in Egypt before their dramatic escape across the Red Sea. Tickets £16, £14 concessions, from the box office 07951 791619.