

# The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 393 December 2016/January 2017

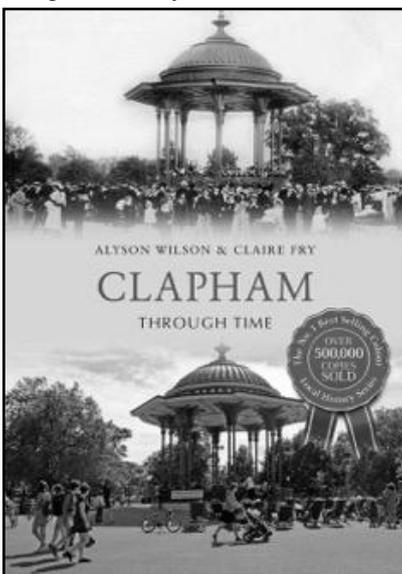
## Christmas Lights

On **Saturday 3 December** from 3 pm to 7 pm Christmas will be celebrated in Old Town with a Christmas lights extravaganza. The programme includes a lantern parade by the local schools, live bands, food and drink stalls, Christmas market and Santa's Grotto, fire breathing and stilt walkers.

The next newsletter is the February 2017 issue, distributed at the end of January. Happy Christmas and best wishes for 2017 to our readers.

## Clapham presents

What about giving Clapham Society membership this year? Or a Clapham book? *Discovering Clapham* gives a concise history of the area and *Clapham through Time* records the amazing changes over the last few years. Contact details on back page of this newsletter or at [claphamsociety.com](http://claphamsociety.com).



Our meetings are held at Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The bar at Omnibus is open from 7 pm, and meetings 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 the talk. Meetings are free and open to non-members. We recommend that you arrive in good time to ensure entry, since there is a limit on the number the theatre can accommodate.

There is no meeting in December. The programme for 2017 is as follows:

### Monday 23 January

**Au revoir to the Union? A European view of post-Brexit London, England and Scotland.** French-born journalists **Eric Albert** and **Etienne Duval** have both reported extensively on Britain. Eric, who lives in Clapham, is City correspondent for *Le Monde*. Etienne, who is half-Scottish, is a former London correspondent for French, Belgian and Swiss TV. In 2014, they were each asked by a French publisher to write a contemporary profile of Britain from their own perspective. Eric wrote *Les Anglais*, Etienne *Les Écossais*. Together they will give us their take on the impact of Brexit on relations between different sets of neighbours: Europeans, Londoners, the English and the Scots. *Both books will be on sale at the meeting.*

### Monday 27 February

**Bandstand Beds: Community Food Growing in Clapham.** When parks manager Victor Chin-Kit built a few raised beds next to La Baita café in 2012, he never dreamt the idea of growing food on the Common would blossom into what it has become today. The following year Fiona Law and **Diana Linskey**, set up Bandstand Beds with the aim of promoting food growing to further social, economic and environmental wellbeing. In 2014 **David Dandridge**, took over as Bandstand Beds Chair. David and Diana will talk about the journey, sometimes bumpy, to build Bandstand Beds into a community group that has flourished and put food growing in the heart of Clapham.

### Monday 27 March

**Up In Smoke: The Failed Dreams Of Battersea Power Station.** **Peter Watts**, author of a recent book about Battersea Power Station, will relate the fascinating history of this illustrious building, explaining how it went from unwanted baby-bleaching monster to much-loved riverside ruin. In the process, he will explain why it has taken so long for the building to be saved and asks what the new £8bn development tells us about the future of London.

### Monday 24 April

**Sir Hans Sloane, Chelsea Porcelain and the Chelsea Physic Garden.** **Sally Kevill-Davies**, ceramic specialist who worked at Sotheby's and was a member of the BBC TV Antiques Roadshow team of experts for nine years will trace the fascinating history of the plants, which were grown at the Chelsea Physic Garden, and painted on Chelsea porcelain plates during the 1750s. Sally, who lives in Clapham and is a member of the Society has written and lectured widely on ceramics, and last year published *Sir Hans Sloane's Plants on Chelsea Porcelain*.

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### Monday 22 May

**Ghostsigns.** Fading on walls across the world are the ghosts of advertising past, still whispering the slogans of old. Once brightly coloured and promoting everything from Black Cat Cigarettes to Hovis Bread, these painted signs are now 'ghosts' of their former selves. Since 2006 **Sam Roberts** has been photographing, researching and archiving evidence of this outmoded form of advertising. In a richly illustrated talk he will offer a brief history and share the stories that these signs tell, if you care to listen.

### Monday 26 June

**Black Cultural Archives: Past, Present and future.** **Victoria Northridge**, Collections Manager will be talking about the 30-odd year history of Black Cultural Archives. Starting from its origins in the 1980s she will focus on the individuals who made the dream of a Black Heritage Centre a reality, as well as the wider history of the African and Caribbean communities in Britain. The talk will appraise the achievements of the organisation since opening the new building in Brixton in July 2014.

**Guided walks replace meetings in July and August. Details will be announced later.**

### Monday 25 September

**Architectural Icons.** **Julia Barfield** of Clapham-based Marks Barfield Architects will talk about the history and design development of the practice's iconic London Eye, Brighton's i360 Tower as well as some local schemes.

### Monday 23 October

**Annual General Meeting.** Followed by guest speaker, **James Le Fanu**. For all the many impressive achievements of modern medicine, there is growing concern at the progressive 'medicalization' of people's lives to no good purpose. *Daily Telegraph* medical columnist and Vauxhall GP James Le Fanu will explore the ramifications and the reasons behind the massive threefold increase in drug prescribing over the past 15 years and its many potential harmful consequences.

### Monday 27 November

**Antibiotics and antibiotic resistance.** For decades, antibiotics have been used to treat infections and have allowed advances in surgery and cancer treatment. Hand in hand with the increasing use of antibiotics is the rise in antibiotic resistance. There is rising alarm over the spread of 'superbugs' and the impact they could have on the future of medicine. The threat is deemed serious enough to be placed onto the national risk register. In this febrile and worried climate **Dr John Clark**, consultant microbiologist at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust will go through the history of antibiotics and the rise of resistance and attempt to bust myths and predict the future.

## London Russian Ballet School: Planning Appeal

As reported last February (see Issue 384), the London Russian Ballet School's planning application for extensive alterations plus a large new extension to the General Clapham Dispensary by J T Knowles Snr at 42 Clapham Manor Street was refused consent by Lambeth. The School has appealed to the Secretary of State against that decision and a public inquiry will be held at King George's House, 40 Stockwell Road, SW9 9ES starting at 10 am on 10 January 2017 and will run for three or more days. The inquiry is open to the public and members are welcome to attend.

The Clapham Society will be giving evidence in support of the refusal. We opposed the proposal because we disagreed that the public benefits arising from the expanded ballet school outweighed the harm to the listed building (Grade II), nor did the new extension make a positive contribution to (or better reveal) the significance of the listed building. We also considered such a large new building in what was the back garden damages the character of the surrounding conservation area, as well as the amenity of neighbouring residents.

## Radical Clapham

South London historian, Sean Creighton has done extensive research on Radical and Mutual Clapham, which he posts regularly on [historyandsocialaction.blogspot.co.uk](http://historyandsocialaction.blogspot.co.uk).

## CCMAC

Clapham Common Management Committee's Annual Open Meeting will take place on **Thursday 2 February** at 7 pm at Omnibus. All are welcome.

## Take Away Art Fair

From **Monday 12 December** to **Sunday 18 December** a Christmas Take Away Art Fair will be held at Omnibus. Buy a unique work of art, discover new artists and find that perfect Christmas gift – for friends, family or yourself! Prints, paintings, illustrations, photographs, ceramics, cards, bags and badges will be on sale.

For the latest information about artists featured see [omnibus-clapham.org](http://omnibus-clapham.org), and to enquire about exhibiting artwork email [visualarts@omnibus-clapham.org](mailto:visualarts@omnibus-clapham.org).

## Light up a Life

Royal Trinity Hospice's annual carol service will take place on **Thursday 8 December**. The lighting of the Christmas tree at the hospice at 6.45 pm, will precede a candlelit procession to Holy Trinity Church for a special service with guest readers, followed by wine and mince pies.

## Christmas Markets

Venn Street Market will be open on **Saturdays 3, 10 and 17 December**, closed on **Saturdays 24 and 31 December 2016** and open again on **Saturday 7 January 2017**.

In addition to the usual foods there will be mulled wines and warm cider by the glass and wines to take away by the bottle from L'Atypique, as well as local craft beers from London Brewers' Market.

**Christmas Trees** and festive decorations are available now at Sash Flowers, Clapham Park Road (behind Bodean's).

## Christmas Number One

Royal Trinity Hospice is part of a choir of 300 patients, families, staff and volunteers from 18 London hospices who are aiming for this year's Christmas Number One – to raise awareness of the hospice movement – with a cover of *The Living Years*. The new take on the classic track was recorded at the Abbey Road Studios alongside Paul Carrack, the lead vocalist on the original 1991 hit, and the video was shot with patients at Royal Trinity Hospice, under the direction of Hollywood film director, Annabel Jankel.

Profits from the sale of the single will be divided between the 18 hospices involved. *The Living Years* by The London Hospices Choir and Paul Carrack will be released on **Friday 16 December**. It is available to pre-order on iTunes and Amazon.



## Four years at 45 Clapham Common North Side

It was January 1955, and London was still suffering the after-effects of the War. My husband Len and I had met and married as art students at Goldsmiths College, and were looking for somewhere more suitable than our tiny top-floor flat in Whitechapel.

Through a friend we heard about a flat in Clapham, and so I set off by bus and tube with our two-year-old daughter to meet the current occupant, a young lady moving to get married. I have never forgotten my astonishment when the door opened and I saw the magnificent ballroom for the first time. It seemed enormous, and rather gloomy on a grey January day, but exciting: marble columns, painted ceiling, gold stencilled walls. Best of all, tall doors opening on to a balcony with an expansive view of Clapham Common. On the downside, there was no electricity, gas light only; no kitchen, simply a Belfast sink in the far corner with a cold water tap; no bathroom; and the loo was on the half-landing above and shared with two other tenants.

The ballroom floor flat included the ladies' powder room, also facing the Common and with doors to the balcony. When we moved in the following week, this became our bedroom. We quite quickly built a kitchen, open plan to the ballroom (trendy in the 1950s – open shelves, string screen), where a galvanised bath was kept under a counter, and a gas cooker installed. Radiant gas fires soon replaced coal in the two magnificent fireplaces. It never seemed cold – the sun streamed in through the front windows and the solid walls provided protection. Washing clothes meant lifting a boiler onto the cooker; flat irons were also heated on the cooker. There were countless gilt-framed mirrors – on all the shutters, candle sconces, fireplaces – and marble side tables; all for £1 a week, cheap even then. The main thing was to make sure never to run out of shillings for the gas meter, and to keep a supply of candles.

So four happy years were spent in this grand apartment, which everyone who came to visit really loved. It was primitive in some respects, not least the shared throne-room loo on the landing, even with its stained glass windows and seat pull-handle – hard work with two small children. The word among residents was that Queen Victoria sat on it when visiting the Pears Soap millionaire who was said to have owned the house and commissioned the ceiling painting and marble columns.

Eight other households lived at 45 North Side. One upstairs friend and neighbour was Robert Troop, then a would-be opera singer, who went on to become a master baker at Justin de Blank's emporium in the King's Road, Chelsea, and his business partner. On the third floor was a retired governess – a very astute, funny, well-educated lady in her 80s, besotted with birds, especially pigeons, encouraging them to feed and nest in her rooms.

We left in 1959 to buy our first house, a farewell tinged with sadness. The entire house was bought that same year, reportedly for £2,500, by a family living nearby.

Latterly we discovered that from 1911 to 1915 the house was occupied by the League of Prayer's Bible Training College, of which Rev. Oswald Chambers was principal. But that is another story....

*Joan Cockett*

## Voucher Local

Voucher Local is a community based platform on which local independent businesses can promote themselves and weekly offers.

Wandsworth resident Archie Fitzherbert had the idea of a voucher scheme providing weekly offers, after becoming dismayed at the number of independent shops that were disappearing from the high street.

He feels that with a bit of encouragement people can change their shopping habits. During his research, he visited some wonderful local restaurants serving amazing food at great prices, but they were half empty, while less appetising and more expensive chain restaurants next door were full. He says: 'Buying a cheap bottle of wine and having a chat with a knowledgeable wine merchant is much more satisfying than just grabbing a bottle at the supermarket.' Find out more and see the great offers available at [voucherlocal.org](http://voucherlocal.org).

## New members

We have recently welcomed the following new members: Pam Alexander and Roger Booker, Tess, Michael and Ben Fletcher, Dominique and Leo Giron and Menon Supriya, and Michael and Susan Wauchope.

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](http://claphamsociety.com)



## Old Thorntonians' Celebration

The Old Thorntonians' Association, which represents pupils and staff of the former Henry Thornton School in South Side/Elms Road, held its annual reunion at The Windmill on 8 November; 26 members attended, including President Michael Caplan, QC (1964-71). This event was combined with a formal lunch to mark the tenth anniversary of the relaunch of the Association in 2006 (as initially reported in the October issue, no 391). The guest of honour was Mrs Bryony Hill, widow of Jimmy Hill, who served as the first President from that year until his death in 2015.