



The Clapham Society

Newsletter

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Another Green Plaque

A Clapham Society Green Plaque marking a notable building which has changed use since it was built, will be unveiled on **Tuesday 7 March** on the former Headquarters of the Union of Post Office Workers (later the Union of Communication Workers), now converted to apartments by Galliard Homes. The plaque on Metropolitan Crescent, Crescent Lane will be unveiled at 12.30 pm by Rt Hon. Alan Johnson MP, who worked in this building for many years, as readers of his latest autobiographical volume, *The Long and Winding Road*, will know.

Galliard Homes have generously invited Clapham Society members to the unveiling ceremony, followed by a short performance by St Mary's School choir, the burial of a time capsule by the school children in the playground area, a chance to view the penthouse apartments and a champagne and canapés reception. If you would like to attend please email crescenthouse@galliardhomes.com or telephone 020 3874 0811.

Some Thoughts on Brexit

The guest speakers at our January meeting were French journalist Eric Albert, correspondent for *Le Monde*, who has been based in London for 14 years and Etienne Duval, freelance Franco-Scottish journalist and former TV reporter whose education and career have been divided between France and Scotland. They explained that they wanted the evening to be a discussion, rather than a lecture and invited the audience to intervene and ask questions whenever they wished. This led to a lively evening with the audience participating enthusiastically in the wide-ranging discussion.

It was interesting and frankly rather disquieting to learn about the effect of Brexit on two long-term UK-resident French citizens, who know and love both countries. They said that they were immediately treated as foreigners, and felt unwelcome. One fact that many of us did not know is that UK-resident citizens of European countries (apart from Ireland, Malta and Cyprus) were not allowed to vote in the referendum. The speakers commented on the post-Brexit outpouring of patriotism, even xenophobia, particularly in the right-wing press; the sense of superiority; the attitude that the EU needs Britain more than Britain needs the EU, and the threat to leave the EU if our conditions were not accepted. To some extent these attitudes had existed before, but they were reinforced by the 'Leave' vote.

It became clear from the discussion that a big problem was that the UK has always had a different reason for being in the EU – the ability to extend markets, whereas France, Germany and other continental European countries have seen it as a union to maintain peace. The fact that the EU is in crisis was conceded, as well as the rise of right wing parties and the possibility, even if remote, that Marine Le Pen could come to power in France.

Another point which arose was that people in the UK are generally ill-informed about government and especially about the EU and how it works, whereas in most

continued overleaf

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.

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 ask 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*.

European countries politics, and in particular how the EU works, is taught in schools and the public are better informed. French MEPs tend to be well-known people who have retired from national government: in the UK it is the reverse, MEPs are often at the start of their careers and not known.

The British also have a different view of history: as an island they feel protected and they have not suffered invasion and occupation in the same way as continental European countries.

Etienne highlighted the fact that Scotland was a close ally of France for 500 years, and has a distinct attitude towards the EU, feeling as a small country it is advantageous to be aligned to the larger EU community than to England. He drew parallels between the referendum for Scottish independence and the EU referendum, though a chart he displayed showed that more Scottish voters opposed independence now than at the time of the referendum.

The question of oil revenues and trade deficits was raised, and it was noted that Ireland had made a recovery, and other small countries did well without oil revenues, which are erratic. The discussion could have continued for a very long time, as more and more issues were raised. Etienne suggested that an important outcome might be the effect on the British Constitution. The conclusion of the evening was that the Brexit story is far from over. This fascinating, disturbing and challenging debate raised our awareness of the many issues involved. Our thanks to Eric and Etienne for an evening which has given us plenty to think about.

Vanessa Bell (1879-1961)

Recently opened at Dulwich Picture Gallery is the first major retrospective exhibition of works by the central figure of the Bloomsbury Group, Vanessa Bell. In addition to around 100 oil paintings, fabrics, photographs and related archive material is on display. The exhibition continues until 4 June. For full details go to dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk or telephone 020 8693 5254.

Town Hall Talks

The next talk on **Monday 27 March** is entitled *Cash, Capitalism and Corporations: Battersea and Beyond*. Talks start at 6 pm at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN. Tickets are free but advance booking is essential as places are limited. Complimentary drinks are provided. Book tickets at bac.org.uk/townhalltalks.

Performing on Clapham Common Bandstand



Do you know any local musicians, singers or bands who would like to perform on Clapham Common Bandstand this summer? Hip hop, jazz or beatbox, choirs or choruses, gospel or folk, dance, spoken word, pop, rock, fusion, classical – all genres are welcome to apply. Acts can be established or novice. The Clapham Common MAC is looking to schedule a diverse range of performances to appear at seven concerts on the historic bandstand from May to September. This is a great opportunity to showcase a new act or practice playing live in front of an audience. Please send a video clip or YouTube link to Peter at claphamcommonmac@gmail.com.

March highlights at Omnibus

Thursday 2 March to Wednesday 8 March at 7.30 pm. Sunday 5 March at 4 pm. Heart of Darkness. A sell-out when it came to Omnibus for a fleeting visit last year, this time Scandal and Gallows return for a week long run with their gripping one-man adaptation of Conrad's novel, which inspired *Apocalypse Now*. Join Marlow on the deck of his steamboat, as he tells the story of his journey down the Congo River deep into the dark, greedy heart of European colonialism. Tickets £12, £10 concessions.

Sunday 5 March at 7.30 pm. Misha Mullov-Abbado Group. Made up of some of the finest, multi-award winning musicians in London, and under the direction of Omnibus associate artist Misha Mullov-Abbado, the group performs his original compositions and arrangements with eclectic variety of influences. Tickets £10, £5 under 25s.

St Paul's Opera

On **Friday 24 March** St Paul's Opera will hold a Gala Concert with a focus on Future Voices at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove SW4 0DX, at 7.30 pm. Tickets on the door at £15 include a glass of wine and interval nibbles.

This year's summer production will be *Orpheus In The Underworld* by Jacques Offenbach. The dates for picnic performances are 29 and 30 June and 1 July. Tickets will be available from May onwards. Local singers are welcome to join the chorus for the production. Enquiries to info@stpaulsopera.org.

Friday 10 March at 7.30 pm. Elephant & Castle. Do you tell the truth when you talk in your sleep? Does your sleep talk even make sense? And could it just be that you analyse your relationships in a way that's more honest than when you're awake? Tickets £12, £10 concessions.

Monday 27 March and Tuesday 28 March at 7.30 pm. Offside. It is 1881. It is 1921. It is 2017. Four women from across the centuries live and breathe and play football. Whilst each of them face very different obstacles in pursuing their dream profession, the possibility that the beautiful game will change their futures – and the world – is tantalisingly close. *Offside* is told through lyrical dialogue, poetry and prose, placing the audience on the touchline of the game of a lifetime. Tickets £12, £10 concessions.

Molly, a new Friend of Omnibus



Clapham in the Past

We often receive emails both from members and others who just happen to find our website, sending us pictures and memories of Clapham in the past.

We recently received this splendid picture from David Lonsdale of the sports and leather goods shop run by his grandparents, Harold and Mabel Richards, at 55 Old Town. This is almost on the corner of Grafton Square, and is now one of three original shops which have been incorporated into the Sainsbury's Local. However, the decorated pilasters which divided the shops have been retained and are just as shown in this picture.

We have also received several letters from 81-year old Charles Murray, who lived off Landor Road and worked for Pinches Medallists, who occupied the former chapel of Clapham Grammar School in the High Street and the Surrey Conservatoire of Music at 1 St Luke's Avenue, now the home of Cactus TV. His two sisters also worked there. He remembered the Allard Motor Showrooms and Lyons teashop in the High Street, the Majestic Cinema now Inferno's, and Ross Optical works on North Side, now the offices of Experian. He also recalled the sweet factory (Batgers) on Clapham Common South Side and said that boys used to climb over the fence at the back to find the empty trays which had been put out at the end of the day, in which pieces of toffee were often left. This is the site (44 Clapham Common South Side) next to Lambeth College which is just about to be redeveloped.

One of Charles Morris's sisters contracted polio and attended the Open Air School on South Side. From our research on historic Clapham we know some of this information but it is particularly valuable to hear these first-hand memories.

Write Yourself Home

A workshop on **Saturday 1 April** from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm run by life coach and writer, Sas Petherick. A day of self-reflection, conversation and connection at The Glebe House, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ. More details and booking at theglebehouselondon.com/events.

Dulwich Pavilion

A temporary pavilion is to be built in the grounds of Dulwich Picture Gallery to host a programme of events to celebrate the gallery's bicentenary. The winning design by young Camberwell-based architecture practice IF_DO will open on **Thursday 1 June** as part of the London Festival of Architecture.

The Arts Society Clapham Common

The committee of The Arts Society Clapham Common is looking forward to welcoming all new members at their inaugural meeting on **Wednesday 15 March**, at the opening lecture from Antony Penrose, entitled *The Boy who Bit Picasso*.

Entry is restricted to members and numbers are limited. For further information and to join The Arts Society Clapham Common email claphamcommondfas@nadfas.net.



Planning News

Details of representations made on planning applications since last October are set out below.

13 and 19 Lillieshall Road. Both applications involve the installation of metal railings outside these listed buildings. We have consistently lobbied against railings (never an original characteristic of these modest cottages) and for the reinstatement of the original timber post and rail fences characteristic to Lillieshall Road, but planning permission was granted.

93-99 North Street and North Street Mews. Qualified support for a second application which provides for commercial space only in the mews, unlike the previous application for predominantly residential development. While the principle of commercial use is welcomed it will mean the loss of the existing workshops and hence many of the present activities in the mews. Some unwelcome extensions to the Victorian properties fronting North Street have been dropped, but on the other hand there are now no plans to refurbish them. The application has been withdrawn.

Mayfield Close and rear of 83-87 Park Hill. Objection to an application to build new houses in the Park Hill back gardens. The scheme damages the character of this part of the Park Hill/Northbourne Road conservation area. Access and parking will be in Mayfield Close, a sheltered housing scheme for elderly residents, and their amenity will also be affected. The application has been withdrawn.

Eurohotels, Clapham Common South Side. Objections to three applications involving advertising in front of the hotel and new entrance arrangements to Southside Court and Southview Court, adjacent blocks now in the hotel's ownership. All damage the character of their host buildings as well as that of the conservation area. All three applications were refused.

2 Mackay Road. This application involves a large roof extension and other alterations to the existing building which fail to respect the scale, consistency and character of Mackay Road, leading to over-development and damage to neighbours' amenity. The application has been withdrawn.

1 Newby Street. Objection to an application involving a large and prominent roof extension which involves the loss of the house's traditional 'London' roof and damages the character of this little enclave of the Wandsworth Road conservation area. No decision has been issued yet.

11 Lillieshall Road. Of the 23 listed artisans' cottages in the street, no. 11 is one of the few yet to be modernised. We have liaised with the new owners on what promises to be a relatively modest scheme of refurbishment, retaining a reasonable amount of what is historically significant whilst bringing the property up to contemporary standards for living. No decision has been issued yet.

In Search of My Father

In 1960, my father, John Cushnan, left our Belfast home, his wife and seven young children and vanished. The next we heard about him was when we were told he had died in Clapham in 1982. I am investigating the 22 'missing' years.

From a collection of bits and pieces handed to me at his funeral, I know from 1974 to 1982 he lived in a bedsit at 6 Orlando Road, that he frequented the Rose & Crown pub on The Polygon, that he was an associate member of the Royal British Legion, Victoria Rise and that he may have attended services at St Mary's. He may have lived in Clapham for longer but I have no proof of that.

For official records like employment, he was John Cushnan. Amongst his friends, he chose to refer to himself as John Kelly from Derry. He was employed in the area by The Express Lift Company.

Are you interested in gardens?

Volunteers are needed for Open Garden Squares Weekend (OGSW), the annual event when around 200 gardens are open to visitors. In exchange for a half-day's duty you receive a free ticket giving access to as many gardens as you wish, many of which are not normally open to the public. Duties entail greeting visitors, checking and selling tickets. This year the event is on **Saturday 17 June** and **Sunday 18 June**. If you would like to volunteer email jock.blakey@londongardenstrust.org or phone 07707 066 765. More details at opensquares.org.

Website

We have now put on our website on the 'What We Do' page the recent submissions made to the London Russian Ballet School Planning Appeal (Planning) and the House of Commons Inquiry into the Future of Public Parks 2016 (The Common). Read these to keep up with what the Society's sub-committees are doing.



South London Press

The Local History Sub-committee has recently been asked to write articles about Clapham history for the *South London Press*. Since the beginning of the year four articles by different members have been published, and more will follow in the next few months. Watch out for these in the Friday edition of the *South London Press*. Future subjects include Samuel Pepys, Fu Manchu, Pinches Medallists, Benjamin Franklin, Phillis Wheatley, John Walter and Ross Optical.

Membership

Subscriptions for 2017-18 are due on 1 April and should be sent to the Membership Secretary. Members who pay by standing order are asked to check that the correct amount is being paid by their bank. Rates are as follows: Individual £6.00; Household £9.00; Business £15.

Please add £10.00 if you receive the newsletter by post to cover the cost of postage. Alternatively you can choose to receive the newsletter by email at no extra cost. If you wish to opt for this method inform the Membership Secretary.

From Mass cards and flower bouquet cards, I have first names of some of his friends – George, Alf, Dennis, Jim, Doug, Helen, Denize, Liz & Gerry (who moved to Co. Wicklow and now live in Spain). The only people with surnames are Judy and Vin McManus, and the landlord of the pub at the time was Jim Nicholson. The secretary at the British Legion was Hugh Hamilton.

These two photographs were among his possessions. If you recognise these people or if any of these names mean anything to you please contact me at joecushnan@aol.com.

Joe Cushnan

Director of Music/Organist Required

St Paul's Church, Clapham, a friendly church in the modern catholic tradition, is looking for an organist to play for services, direct music provision and become a valued member of the congregation and lively musical community.

We would like you to work with us to develop our choir, which currently sings for festivals and Advent and Christmas carol services. You will find here a variety of talents, the chance to work creatively with them, and a warm welcome.

We have weekly sung Eucharist at 9.45 am, Festivals, occasional Evensong, weddings and funerals. Our organ is a 1881 Forster & Andrews, two-manual mechanical action organ and we have a Bluthner grand piano. Competitive rate of pay offered.

For further information contact vicar@stpaulsclapham.org. For an application form contact admin@stpaulsclapham.org. Tel: 020 7622 2128. Closing date for applications **Friday 24 March 2017**.

*Revd Deborah Matthews
Vicar, St Pauls Clapham*

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