

# The Clapham Society

## Newsletter



Issue 300 September 2007

**Our regular monthly meetings are held at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. The hall is open from 7.30 pm when coffee and tea are normally available. The talk begins promptly at 8 pm and most meetings finish by 9.30 pm. All meetings are open to non-members and are free of charge. Please bring your friends along.**

### Wednesday 19 September

**Wimbledon Society.** Norman Plastow, President of the Wimbledon Society, will talk about one of the oldest amenity societies in the country. It was founded as the John Evelyn Club in 1903 with the principal aim of 'protecting from unnecessary impairment the picturesque amenities of the neighbourhood'. In 1916 members set up their own local history museum, which is open at weekends. Apart from running the museum the Society's activities are similar to ours, and include a planning group, a regular newsletter, lectures, conducted walks and other events.

### Tuesday 16 October

**Annual General Meeting.** The Guest speaker, after the formal business of the meeting, will be the Rt Hon Keith Hill, Member of Parliament for Streatham. Keith Hill has represented this constituency, which includes part of Clapham, since 1992. He was Minister of State for Housing and Planning 2003-2005 and PPS to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair 2005-2007.

### Wednesday 21 November

Once again our final meeting of the year is a musical entertainment. **Instant Sunshine**, the unique musical comedy group comes fresh from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with an irresistible collection of brilliantly crafted songs full of hilarious observations and rib tickling humour – a sparkling, light-hearted comical gem with David Barlow, Peter Christie, Alan Maryon-Davis and Tom Barlow. 'Instant Sunshine are too warm to be cool and too polite to be cutting edge – what they are is very, very entertaining' *The Scotsman*.

Alan Maryon-Davis is both a Clapham resident and a very long-standing member of the Clapham Society. A ticket application form will be in the next newsletter.

**There is no meeting in December.**

## The Orangery

Notre Dame Tenants' & Residents' Association (TRA) has been awarded £25,000 from the Community Chest of Connaught, one of Lambeth's contractors, to clean, make repairs and generally spruce up the area surrounding the Orangery.

A small group comprising staff from Connaught, Lambeth Housing officers, the Chair of the TRA, John How from the Clapham Society and local Councillor Angie Meader, met in early July to assess how best to use this money. It was agreed that the contractor would draw up a provisional specification of works to the Orangery and steps and it is envisaged that there will be an estate meeting in early September inviting all stakeholders to agree what work will actually take place on the site and to ascertain who will be responsible for future management.

It is recognised that much more money is needed and so, once the plans are agreed, the TRA intend to apply for further funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

*Chris Vaughan*

*Chair, Notre Dame Tenants' & Residents' Association*

## Listen to the Band

On **Sunday 9 September** from 3pm to 5pm the Crystal Palace Band returns to Clapham Common Bandstand for a programme of brass band favourites, old and new. The concert is organised by the Clapham Society and the Friends of Clapham Common, and follows a very successful concert by the same band last year. Traditional music in a traditional setting – do come and listen and bring your friends!

## London Open House

The booklet giving full details of all properties open, free of charge, during the weekend of **15 and 16 September** is now available from local libraries and on the website [www.londonopenhouse.org](http://www.londonopenhouse.org), where you can also book on line for the buildings which must be pre-booked. Don't miss this interesting weekend!

## New members

We were pleased to welcome the following new members over the summer: Marian Alford, Sheila de Bellaigue, Rosemarie Carty and Christopher Jones, Paul Donohue and Mark Henderson, Isabelle Le Chevallier-Rous, Deborah and Neville Matthews, James and Laura Miles, and Gary Taylor.

## Wandsworth Museum

At our June meeting we heard the story, as it was at that time, of the proposed future for Wandsworth Museum. Peter Jefferson Smith chaired a panel which comprised Peter Robinson, Wandsworth Council's Acting Deputy Director of Leisure and Amenity Services, Jane Allen, Head of Libraries, Museums and Arts in Wandsworth, Caroline Reed from the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council London and Tony Tuck, one of the leaders of the Wandsworth Museum Campaign Group.

The first speaker, Peter Robinson, explained that as a result of a review of council services in February 2006, in an effort to balance the council's budget it was proposed that Wandsworth Museum be closed at the end of September 2007. In March this year the Hintze Family Charitable Foundation offered a donation of £2 million to save the museum, on condition that a charity independent of the council was established and a five-year business plan produced. The council proposed the establishment of a new museum, to be located in the present West Hill library building and that the present museum in the former Court House in Garratt Lane be converted to a new town centre library.

Jane Allen spoke of Wandsworth's library system, which has the highest number of book issues of any London borough, but lacks a town centre library. The council propose to close two local libraries and to create the new central library, in which heritage displays would be shown on computer screens. The Local History Library would be incorporated in the present Reference Library in Altenburg Gardens, and would operate an appointment system. She felt that people were not sufficiently aware of the Wandsworth Museum.

Caroline Reed spoke of the role of museums in community life, their stimulus for creativity, nurturing new skills, volunteering and work experience, as well as their contribution to the local economy. She said that MLA recognised the excellence of Wandsworth Museum, which attracts 30,000 visitors a year, and is one of only six London local authority museums to have accredited status. She congratulated the Wandsworth Museum Campaign Group and the council on securing a future for the museum and welcomed the Hintze Foundation's donation, adding that other local museums are now devolving to independent trusts. However, she expressed concern for the future without any continued local authority investment, since museums can never cover their costs. The proposed move of museum and library would be costly and ambitious, much more so than retaining the museum on the present site.

The final speaker was Tony Tuck who expressed grave concern at the loss of cultural facilities in the borough due to the council's withdrawal of support. The original plan had been to close the museum and sell the site, and the present plan was the result of a 22,000-signature petition organised by Wandsworth Museum Campaign Group, and the Hintze Foundation offer of £2 million. However, a large part of the £2 million would be absorbed by the cost of removal of the museum to the new site and the adaptation of the library to a museum. There would have to be a closed period when artefacts would have to be stored, staff made redundant and possibly the prized accreditation lost. In addition there would be problems and considerable cost involved in converting the Grade II listed building, currently the museum, to a library.

Furthermore, he was concerned what would happen at the end of the five-year business plan proposed. He urged a re-think of the plan to move the museum to the new site and he stressed the concern of the many supporters of the museum that this excellent facility would be degraded or lost.

When the Chairman invited discussion after the presentations Cllr Grimston, Wandsworth Council Member for Environment and Leisure rose to explain the council's position. However, he was asked to allow others to contribute to the discussion, since the council's case had already been put. Several points were made by the audience, including the fact that while in Lambeth an old building (the present library on North Side) is considered inappropriate for a modern library, Wandsworth wishes to use a historic building as a library. In general, the audience could not see the logic of exchanging the library and museum sites, which are only about 500 metres apart, and the consequent cost and disruption.

**Further developments.** Since our meeting in June the situation has moved on. At a council meeting in early July it was agreed that the museum should definitely be closed at the end of 2007, and that it be relocated to the West Hill Library site. The library would close in November 2007. The Local History Service would be closed and replaced with a Heritage Service.

A new company has been formed to take on the ownership and operation of the new museum, and several prominent local people have agreed to join Michael and Dorothy Hintze as Trustees.

Further details can be found in the Wandsworth Museum Campaign Group's Bulletin # 7 which is at [www.tootinglife.com](http://www.tootinglife.com).

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## House History

Following the success of last year's talks on how to research the history of your house, Lambeth Archives have organised a similar series this year, in conjunction with London Open House, to take place in different Lambeth libraries. Each evening will have a speaker from a local society and one from Lambeth Archives.

The Clapham talk will be on **Thursday 20 September** at the library on North Side, when Peter Jefferson Smith of the Clapham Society will talk about the development of the local area and Graham Gower from Lambeth Archives will follow with an introduction to sources and advice on research. The evening will start at 7.15 pm. For more details contact the library or Lambeth Archives (020 7926 6076)

As a follow-up there will be workshops on **Wednesday 26 September** from 2.30 to 4.00 pm and from 7.00 to 8.30 pm at Minet Library. Workshop places are limited and must be booked in advance by telephoning Rosanna Osborne on 020 7926 0750.

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## Archives Open Day

Lambeth Archives Open Day is on **Saturday 6 October** from 10 am to 5 pm at the Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY. The subject this year is Sport in Lambeth. There is a programme of talks throughout the day, which includes *Out of the Blue – a celebration of Brockwell Park Lido*, *Herne Hill Harriers – the first sixty years*, *The Streatham Races and Sport as entertainment – strong men, acrobats and balloon races*.

There will be exhibitions and displays put on by various local amenity societies and by the archives department. Our own display will show the extraordinarily wide range of sports, past and present, which have been played on Clapham Common. This event is also an opportunity to purchase local history publications, use the family history help desk and archives enquiry service and to see images of Lambeth past on the Landmark picture imaging system.

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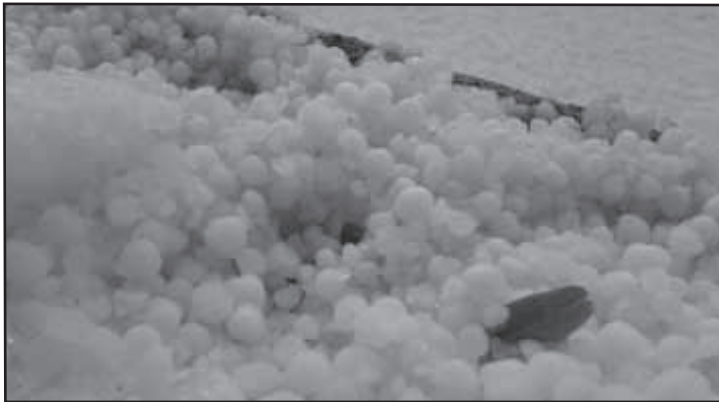
## Summer 2007 in Clapham

**Saturday 30 June** – An absorbing children’s activity at the Abbeville Fete  
(Photo: Bill Emmett)



**Tuesday 3 July** – On this day a freak hail storm hit Clapham. For about ten minutes hail stones the size of ice cubes fell relentlessly, shredding the leaves of plants, bruising fruit, soaking anyone who failed to take instant refuge, and covering the pavements with lethal ice marbles.

A few members recorded this extraordinary event but if any one else has pictures we would like them for our archive and for the newsletter. Photos, by email if possible, to the editor.



Hail stones on a flat roof at 552 Wandsworth Road  
(Photo: Jill Cramphorn)



The doorstep at 33 Iveley Road  
(Photo: Pamela Blackwell)



**Saturday 28 July and Sunday 29 July**  
– Ben and Jerry’s held their popular family weekend on Clapham Common again  
(Photo: Oliver Engleback)

**Saturday 11 August** – Quantum Theatre presented their adaptation of *Treasure Island* with live music on Clapham Common Bandstand. This was a free family show, on a hot sunny day, well attended by an appreciative audience and one of several events on the Bandstand during August. (Photo: Alyson Wilson)



## September Walks

Although our own summer guided walks are now finished, you can still purchase our self-guided walks leaflets for the modest sum of 50p each, to explore Clapham by yourself. The leaflets are available at our meetings, at Lambeth Archives Day or from Alyson Wilson (telephone 020 7622 6360). The following South London guided walks are also available.

**Sunday 2 September.** Robert Holden of the Herne Hill Society will conduct the Herne Hill Heritage Trail. Meet at 2 pm at Herne Hill Station.

**Sunday 9 September.** Alan Piper of the Brixton Society will lead a walk of Clapham Park and Brixton Hill. Meet at 2.30 pm at the corner of Brixton Hill and New Park Road.

**Sunday 16 September.** Richard Lines of the Norwood Society will lead a walk from Streatham Common to Crystal Palace. Meet at 2.30 pm at Rookery Café on Streatham Common.

**Sunday 30 September.** John Rattray of the Balham Society will lead a walk along St James's Drive. Meet at 2.30 pm at Wandsworth Common Station ticket office.

## Jazz in the garden

The final evening opening this summer at Dulwich Picture Gallery is on **Thursday 13 September** from 6 to 9.30 pm. Charles Cary-Elwes and his six-piece jazz group present an evening of relaxed jazz, with guest stars and the steel bands from Kingsdale School. Free admission to the gallery's permanent collection is included in the £5 entrance fee, payable on the gate. There is a wine bar and Cheese Box (mobile British cheese van), the café is open for light meals and snacks, and floodlit croquet is organized by Dulwich Croquet Club. For details telephone 020 8693 5254 or go to [www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)

## Just the Job

Continuing until **23 September** at Wandsworth Museum is an exhibition about how local people have earned a living, from working on the land to working in the office. The exhibition looks at how the development of the area from a group of rural villages to an industrial suburb affected working lives and considers today's post-industrial era, women's work and some aspects of early Trades Unions. For more details and opening times telephone 020 8871 7074 or go to [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/museum](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/museum)

## The Art of Mosaics

The De Morgan Centre has an exhibition, which continues until **23 September**, of work by three contemporary mosaic artists. The three artists interpret this ancient art form in their own distinctive way, and the works are on sale. For opening times telephone 020 8871 1144 or go to [www.demorgan.org.uk](http://www.demorgan.org.uk).

## Clapham Books

Our local bookshop in Clapham High Street has recently started Storytelling for Under-5s. The sessions take place each Wednesday at 11 am. The bookshop now also has a new website: [www.claphambooks.com](http://www.claphambooks.com).

## Heritage Open Days

On **Saturday 8 September and Sunday 9 September** buildings all over the country are open on a similar basis to London Open House. For details telephone 0870 240 5251 or go to [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk). Some are only a short journey from central London and well worth a visit.

## Clapham Junction

There are plans afoot for a new wave of investment at Clapham Junction. Proposals include a mix of new housing, shops and offices in the area around the station, to strengthen the town centre. New development here could include taller buildings which have been championed by the Mayor of London. Wandsworth Council also want to see major access improvements to the station itself.

Councillor Lister, leader of the council, said recently that Wandsworth's popularity makes it a magnet for new investment, especially in key areas like Clapham Junction and central Wandsworth. Local businesses and societies, including the Clapham Society, were recently invited to a meeting with representatives of the council to discuss the redevelopment of the station approach and transport and townscape proposals.

Consultation on the broad principles of the strategy will take place during September and October. The proposals will be considered by a planning inspector during 2008 before being finally adopted in 2009. The approved core strategy will then form the basis for detailed work on development control policies and individual site proposals.

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** web site at [www.claphamsociety.com](http://www.claphamsociety.com)