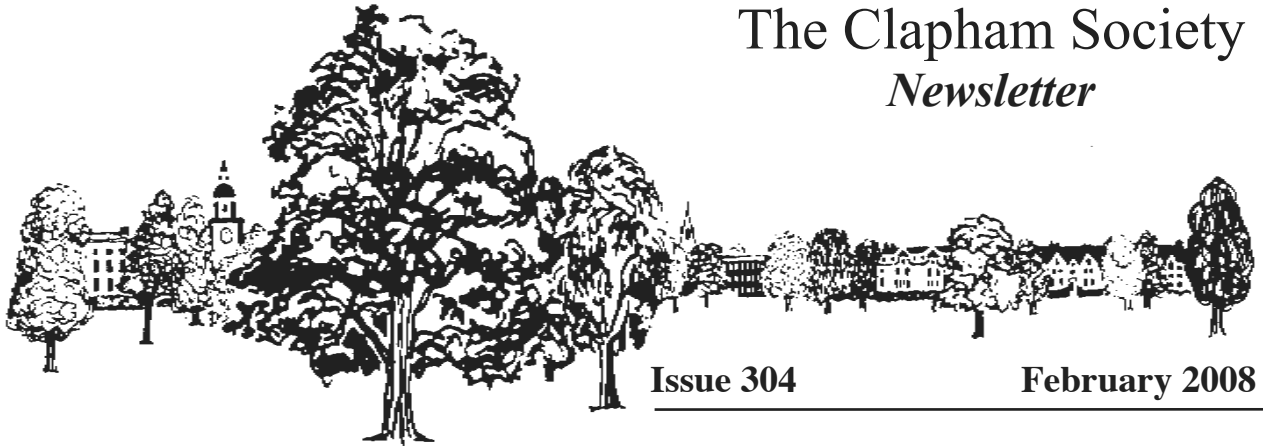


The Clapham Society Newsletter



Issue 304

February 2008

Future Clapham

At time of going to press, we still await decisions from Lambeth on their *Future Clapham* redevelopment plans. As stated in our last newsletter, recommendations for a choice of developer were put to Lambeth's Cabinet on 20 December. They agreed to the award of the contract to one of the three short-listed developers. But that decision has now been 'called in' – a council procedure by which any councillor can call for a key decision to be referred to a Scrutiny Committee before it becomes final.

In brief, Cabinet had agreed proposals for a total redevelopment of mixed use which combines commercial housing, affordable housing and community functions as follows:

- On the High Street (the Mary Seacole House site): housing, a new library, a customer service centre and accommodation for the Lambeth Primary Care Trust and the Clapham Family Practice.
- On Clapham Manor Street (the Clapham Leisure Centre and Depot sites): a new Leisure Centre with enhanced sports facilities and a new swimming pool.

The ground floor of the existing Library building on North Side would remain in community use, as yet unspecified.

Part of the Cabinet session of 20 December was closed to the public for reasons of commercial confidentiality and the identity of the chosen developer remains confidential pending the outcome of the Scrutiny and the completion of tendering formalities in compliance with European law.

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. Please try to arrive before the talk starts, as latecomers are disturbing for both audience and speaker.

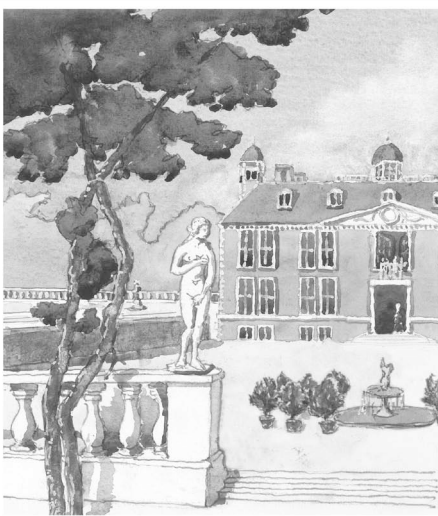
All meetings are open to non-members and are free of charge. Please bring your friends along.

Wednesday 13 February

Historic Clapham. Michael Green will talk about his new book, to be published by Tempus Publishing Ltd in March. The cover of the book and the publisher's description are shown alongside.

Continued overleaf

HISTORIC CLAPHAM



MICHAEL GREEN

The area of Clapham has a particularly rich history. Architectural historian, archaeologist and local resident Michael Green traces the development of the area from its earliest habitation in prehistoric times through to the eighteenth century, when it was finally engulfed by London.

This is the first account of Clapham to draw on both archaeology and original documents to fully explore the fascinating history of a village that is now best known for being a trendy suburb of London. Drawing on a decade of work, the author explores Clapham in its various incarnations, from its prehistoric beginnings, through the thriving rural Roman, Saxon, Norman and medieval settlements, to its sudden growth in the seventeenth century with the arrival of wealthy families, and, finally, the great change in the character of the place when the great mansion of Clapham Place was erected, quickly followed in the eighteenth century by many others in the locality. This book is an absorbing read for both residents and anyone interested in the changing history of the British landscape.

Until his retirement Michael Green was Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings for English Heritage. He is a Chartered Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.⁷

**Wednesday 19 March
Eric Smith Memorial
Lecture.** This year's lecture in memory of local historian Eric Smith, will be given by Nicola Moorby, Curator at Tate Britain. Her subject will be the artist JMW Turner and his links with South London. Turner is remembered as the great painter of colour and light in landscape and he loved to depict the changing conditions along the River Thames, particularly from Chelsea and Battersea where he lived at the end of his life. One of his early oil paintings shows Clapham Common, whilst at least one of his patrons lived in Clapham.

Just prior to the Cabinet meeting, representatives of the Society's planning group were invited to see and comment on the proposals, for inclusion in the confidential Part 2 of the report to Cabinet. To do this they were required to sign confidentiality agreements which remain binding until the decision is made public. This restriction and our inability to inform our membership is regrettable, but otherwise the Society would not have seen anything or been heard at all.

The Scrutiny Committee is likely to meet while this newsletter is being printed. They have power to confirm the decision, or refer it back to Cabinet, or refer it to the full Council. If it is confirmed there will be a public announcement and display of the selected proposals, at which point we can publish details of the proposals and the response of the Society's representatives. Members are asked to be alert to the public notices and announcements and not to miss any display of the proposals.

A betting shop in Abbeville Road?

Several members have contacted us about the proposed betting shop in Abbeville Road. The situation is that the Society objected to the planning application for change of use of the premises from a shop (Class A1) to Financial and Professional Services (Class A2) on the grounds that the loss of a shop damaged the character of the conservation area. However, Lambeth Council granted planning permission on 9 November 2007. Class A2 covers banks, building societies and betting shops.

We have not commented on the licensing application because the Society took a decision some time ago to adopt a neutral position on licensing applications, which hitherto have mainly referred to bars and restaurants which some members favour and others do not. Should applications for betting shops in the area proliferate we may reconsider our position. The Society has a statutory right to be consulted about planning applications, but has no formal rôle in relation to licensing applications.

St Luke's Music Society

On **Saturday 16 February** Andrew Bronwell, winner of the Benjamin Britten prize at the 2006 Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, and in second place overall, will give a concert of music by Handel, Schubert and Chopin. The concert begins at 7.30 pm at St Luke's Church, Thurleigh Road. SW12. Tickets (£16 and £12) are available from the Box Office 020 8673 9285 or book online at www.slms.org.uk.

Local history

Streatham-based historian Brian Bloice, runs a local history course at Morley College on Wednesdays from 2 pm to 4 pm, covering a wide range of South London topics. For more details telephone the college on 020 7928 8501.

Late night opening

Dulwich Picture Gallery now has themed late night openings on the third Thursday of each month. All late nights will include films in the Linbury Room, or in the garden in the summer; music and drinks.

This month's opening on **Thursday 21 February** is entitled **Inside Italy**. This is an evening inspired by the spirit of Italy – from the Venice Carnival to opera – with talks about Guido Reni's six Saint Sebastian paintings which are on display in the Gallery from 5 February to 11 May.

Instant Sunshine

The name of the group providing the entertainment for our final meeting of 2007 was an appropriate, and welcome, introduction to their cheerful songs on a cold, wet November evening. Despite the dreadful weather nearly 100 people came to enjoy this stylish entertainment.

Peter Christie, Alan Maryon Davies and David Barlow founded Instant Sunshine 40 years ago when they were all medical students at St Thomas' Hospital. They were joined on this evening by David's son, the double bass player Tim Barlow. They gave us songs about a range of weird and wonderful topics – counselling us to steer clear of our doctors if we want to stay healthy, or waxing lyrical on the 'joys' of living near Heathrow. The flavour of this wonderfully enjoyable evening really cannot be captured in writing – but if you want to hear more, their CDs are available (as they say) from all good record shops or via their website (www.instantsunshine.co.uk).

Green Up!

Last year local writer Will Anderson, talked to the Society about building his eco-friendly house in Clapham, described in his book *Diary of an Eco-Builder*. He has now produced a handy little reference book described as 'An A-Z of environmentally friendly home improvements'. This concise guide is packed with practical information and advice. Whilst the owners of Victorian terraced houses in Clapham might skip the sections on 'green' roofs covered with plants, water turbines to produce electricity from the local stream and probably also wind turbines (on which he urges caution in a built-up area), there is plenty of scope for improving one's green credentials with the small and medium-sized projects.

We can all save power by keeping the lid on the saucepan when cooking and turning off the light when we leave a room, and it is worth considering simple upgrades of insulation and draught proofing. Choosing energy efficient washing machines and refrigerators makes sense, as does thinking about paying more for a machine likely to last longer. We should take into account the sourcing of materials and the costs of production and transport. Re-using old materials, from timber floors to insulation material made from recycled newspapers, and wooden pellets from sawdust, as well as buying second-hand or antique furniture are all 'green' options. Natural materials – wood, slate, stone for floors, or wool for carpets can be used instead of vinyl and synthetics. It is indisputable that some 'green' options are expensive, but may represent a saving in the long term. While we will all have heard some of the information before, much is new and it is put across in a sensible but non-prescriptive way.

Will Anderson also explodes a few myths. Leaving the television and computer on 'standby' is not so sinful after all – if you want to save power you must turn the power off at the wall, but that is not always sensible or possible. And don't put a brick in your lavatory cistern, nor recycle your bathwater to flush the lavatory, the results may be unacceptable. Fortunately, too the dishwasher is not taboo – it probably uses less water than washing up by hand. After each topic and at the end of the book full details are given of where to get more information: websites, telephone numbers and books. On any major project he recommends getting specialist advice, warning against 'cowboys'.

All in all, this is a thoroughly practical and useful reference book, which will appeal both to the eco-fanatic and to those who are just beginning to get a conscience about their carbon footprint. *Green Up!* by Will Anderson is published by Green Books, price £7.95. Available from Clapham Books, 120 Clapham High Street. SW4.

Meet Alison Macnair

It came as a surprise for me, my family and friends, and no doubt for many members of the Clapham Society, when I was nominated and elected Chair of the Clapham Society after serving only a year on the Society's Main Committee. (I attribute this rapid ascent to John Adams' eagerness to have more time for planning issues.) So far, as well as being honoured to take on the role, I have found it great fun.

I should take this opportunity to explain how I see my job. Because I am a lawyer, I go back to the Society's Constitution. It says the Society exists to: 'promote high standards of planning and architecture; stimulate public interest in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area; encourage the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in Clapham. ...'. So how do we go on doing all this, to best effect?

Clearly, not by representing the individual vested interests of our members, or of people who lobby us for support – unless what they want happens to be 'high standards of planning and architecture', or one of our other objects. Neither should we just promote the interests of our members and supporters, as if we were a trade union or political party.

We cannot put ourselves forward to represent all of Clapham. We aren't, and I don't think will ever be, a cross-section of the community. But no one should get the idea that we are just a narrow constituency. Our members include many people with specialist knowledge, and an in-depth understanding of the area. And it is the Society's role to put forward arguments that are not based just on what is good for us, as a collection of individuals.

To be effective, we need to keep abreast of planned changes. That means we have to follow the many consultation documents that local and central government put out; talk to our friends and neighbours to find out what they have heard; and search obscure corners of Lambeth's and other websites. Importantly, we have to nurture the Society's relationships with those we seek to influence. That doesn't mean we won't confront them if necessary, but to achieve the Society's purposes, we have to be close to decision-makers, not held at bay by them.

So where does the Society currently need to direct its energies? Lambeth is driving through the *Future Clapham* initiative. We are supporting the Council's efforts to provide better, well-designed facilities – see more in this newsletter. Otherwise, we're pressing for a local list of buildings as a weapon in the fight to protect Clapham's architectural heritage. And, working with Lambeth's Bandstand Event's Coordinator David Holley, we will try to make sure there are plenty of well-publicised events where members and the wider community can enjoy the Bandstand, which the Society fought so long to save.

Alison Macnair

On the Common

In the Society's Annual Report we expressed concern over Lambeth Council's Regeneration Delivery Plan which promised to 'devise a commercial strategy for Clapham Common to balance financial return from events with sensitivity to the character of the Common and disruption for local people.' There is an ongoing Parks Review, the contents of which are beginning to emerge.

It is becoming clear that Clapham Common is being seen as a source of future income, not only for the Parks section across the board, but probably for other areas including Culture and Libraries. Councillor Lib Peck assured the Parks and Open Spaces Forum that she would like to see the money ring fenced for Parks but could not promise what might be undeliverable.

The implications for the Common are huge. To quote one paragraph of the Draft Parks Business Planning Review: 'Another potential source of additional income is the corporate entertaining market. Clapham Common and the Rookery (Streatham Common) in particular lend themselves to such events. We envisage that this market would be interested for both high summer and in the case of Clapham Common and its ice rink, the winter as well. We will explore the market potential of this.'

Clapham Common is a much valued amenity for many forms of recreation. It must not be allowed to be exploited solely for financial gain. The Society will be researching the legal framework in which it can be afforded maximum protection.

Clapham Choirs

On **Saturday 2 February** the Clapham Choirs Festival will be held at St Peter's Church, Prescott Place, SW4 from 2 pm to 4 pm. The Mayor of Lambeth and local MP, Kate Hoey, will be attending. The school choirs taking part include Thomas's Day School, Macaulay, Parkgate, Heathbrook, Kings Avenue and St Peter's Church Choir. St Peter's organist Michael Neville will also play some organ pieces.

The end of an era

At the end of last year Margaret Battley retired. She was the last of the family to remain with our printers Cantate, formerly Battley Brothers. The Clapham Society's warm relationship with the local family company reaches back at least 30 years. We are pleased that the enlarged group flourishes in these competitive times and our happy relationship continues, and we wish Margaret well in her retirement.

Share your memories

An oral history of sheltering in the London underground during the Second World War is in preparation. The plan is to record memories of those who sheltered in the underground, so if you were one of those, or if you travelled or worked on the underground during the war and would like to help, you can find out more about the project from David Welsh, email davidwelsh83@btinternet.com, phone 020 7838 0845, or write to 15 Wellington Road, Norwich NR2 3HT.

Lost property

A jacket and scarf were left behind after the event at the Allotts in December. If these belong to you please ring Annabel on 020 7228 5551.

Changing Times

Older members of the Society may remember a restaurant at 22 North Street called *Changing Times*. It flourished in the 1970s and 1980s and was a haunt for Councillor 'Red Ted' Knight and others from the group sometimes referred to as Lambeth's Loony Left.

Since then it has seen a number of changes and spells of closure. It reopened in October 2007 as *Gem & I*, an offshoot from a restaurant in Islington. *Gem & I* specializes in Turkish/Kurdish food and so increases Clapham's already wide range of eateries. The food is freshly cooked over charcoal in view of the customers and is reasonably priced.

New members We welcomed the following new members recently: Mark and Annie Bayley, Tony and Tory Craddock, François and Claire Gamaury.

Clapham memories

A little boy sits in his favourite seat, close enough to watch, fascinated, as the tram driver swivels a brake next to the deadman's handle, harder and harder, to keep the tram still on the steep incline of Cedars Road. At the junction with North Side, which is the terminus, the driver changes ends (there are controls at both) to start the descent back again towards Lavender Hill.

It is the early 1930s and Reginald Jevons (a composer and musician who studied with Vaughan Williams), his wife and their son John, have moved into a ground floor flat in Salcombe Gardens, North Side, on the opposite side of Clapham Common from their great friends, the McShees. I met John Jevons at Hoxton Hall last London Open House Weekend and he shared some memories about the Jevons and McShee families.

By the 1960s Reginald's entry in *Who's Who in Music* was impressive, but in the 1930s there was no money for babysitters, so John went everywhere with his parents. He remembers being trundled across the Common in his pram, to and from Narbonne Avenue, where Reginald enjoyed playing piano duets with Frederick McShee, often into the small hours.

Reginald, with John, walked to his work as an organist and choirmaster at St Mary Magdalene on Wandsworth Common. (The vicar was a keen cyclist, known to loathe and ignore red lights, on principle). One day, out of the blue, there was a magnificent opportunity to earn £100 per week for playing the organ at a new, palatial cinema at Clapham Junction. Reginald auditioned successfully, but turned the job down because he didn't like the sound of the instrument. 'So we stayed rather poor and carried on eating sardines on toast' John observed.

At John's first junior school – a religious establishment – he was made to

crawl on wet, muddy grass and, objecting vociferously, was swiftly moved to another school. When the Jevons family moved to Albert Mansions in Battersea, the McShees remained in Clapham. Mrs McShee was principal of a local evening college while Frederick worked for *The Times* for 38 years, establishing direct links with foreign correspondents, and was often abroad. On 3 September 1939 when war was declared he was trapped with other newspapermen in Berlin. They eventually escaped back to England via Sweden. On his return, with so many of the staff away in uniform, he became a respected sub-editor of *The Times*. For many years, on nights when he worked late, he would take the all-night tram home from Printing House Square, arriving at Clapham at 4 am.

The McShees were immensely proud of their daughter, Sheila, a highly successful solo singer who performed mainly in oratorios. In 1953 she was on the same bill as the well-known counter-tenor Alfred Deller. Tragically, decades later, through an unhappy love affair, one night Sheila McShee walked into a pond on Clapham Common.

John Jevons would become a theatre manager, outside London and in the West End, but his parents took some persuading to let him study drama at the Royal College of Music (as one then could). It was Sheila McShee and her parents who advised and helped John on to the course.

I am grateful to John Jevons for sharing his memories with me.

Carolyn Rockman

Mistletoe Dr Iain Boulton, Project Officer for Communities and Education at Lambeth Council has asked if we can locate any mistletoe plants in Clapham or further afield in Lambeth. If you know of any please contact Iain at iboulton@lambeth.gov.uk. He also recommends a site with information about mistletoe, www.mistletoe.org.uk.

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

The Foundation Trust is required to have members, to ensure that it meets the needs of patients and local communities. There is also a Members' Council made up of local people, patients, staff and stakeholders (e.g. representatives from local Primary Care Trusts and King's College). This Council advises the Board of Directors, which consists of five non-executive directors chaired by Patricia Moberly. Their financial management has been successful recently as there is currently a surplus of £29.9 million, which can be used to improve facilities following consultation with patients and visitors. Recently signage has been improved to help patients find their way around the two sites. The names of the buildings on the Guy's site have been changed to avoid the confusion caused by St Thomas' Hospital, St Thomas Street (near Guy's, not St Thomas') and Thomas Guy House (at Guy's). Letters and leaflets for patients are being updated.

I was elected as a public member of the Members' Council in 2007 and would be pleased to hear from Clapham Society members who have suggestions or complaints for GSTFT. Write to me at 23 Fitzwilliam Road, SW4 0DW or email jennycobley@aol.com. Members are invited to the AGM and to a series of seminars on health topics. For more information you can visit

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk, call 0870 703 0159 or email members@gstt.nhs.uk.

Jenny Cobley

The Age of Enchantment

This delightful exhibition of illustrations by Beardsley, Dulac and their contemporaries continues at Dulwich Picture Gallery until 17 February. For more details telephone the gallery on 020 8693 5254 or go to www.dulwichpicturegallery.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** web site at www.claphamsociety.com
