

## **The Friends of The Twickenham Museum**

**At 11am on Saturday December 15<sup>th</sup> 2001 the door of 25 The Embankment will open and the life of an institution will begin.**

Visitors on this and the following Saturday will see a collection of illustrations of local life and history prepared and hung by John Sheaf. It is a quiet unveiling of the old house left to us by the late Jack Ellis, restored in a way we believe he would have approved.

Fanfares will come later, next Spring when we join in celebration of the centenary of the 1902 Act for the protection of the view from Richmond Hill: Arcadia 2002. For the moment we want to introduce the house to those who have watched, waited and supported us, and to present an outline of the rich and varied history of the old borough in its full extent.

### **The House**

Some of you will recall the sight which greeted us on taking possession nearly three years ago, of rooms packed to bursting with goods of every description which you later helped to sell. Many have looked in at subsequent stages in the house's recovery, curiosity overcoming the hazards of entry. At our last Open Day before building work began, Tony Beckles Willson's history of St Mary's Church was launched and a small exhibition mounted.

By the end of March this year the administrators of Jack Ellis's estate had finished their work, and the house belonged, for the first time in law, to The Twickenham Museum. The start of building work was delayed by exceptionally wet weather, several tides reaching the lower step, but was eventually accomplished in stages from May to September. Peter Taylor (P Heywood Taylor & Son, Hampton) undertook this work and brought it to a successful conclusion: no mean feat. It has been the tricky restoration of a building in a sad state of dilapidation and many problems had to be solved as the work proceeded.

The new canopy and steps have wonderfully improved the entrance, and it is hoped that the height of the surrounding pavement will be altered by the Council to improve accessibility.

We have to acknowledge the imminent introduction of strict legal requirements concerning accessibility. Bridge House Estates have paid for specialist assessment of our facilities, and will also pay for such modifications as we find sensible and appropriate, given the Grade II listed status of the house.

Interior decoration started in August. Our desire to preserve surviving fabric as far as possible was to some extent frustrated by the sheer fragility of old and neglected ceilings, but an energetic young plasterer was found who managed to keep ahead of the painters.

Then Terry Salisbury swept our chimneys, becoming one of the elect by giving his services for the love of history. By coincidence Terry enjoys another connection with the house: his wife is the grand daughter of an earlier occupant.

The essential work is now done, thanks to remarkable individual acts of generosity and the help of corporate sponsors whom it is now appropriate to acknowledge:

D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust  
Hampton Fuel Allotment Trust  
Bridge House Estates Trust  
The Mercers Company  
The Skinners Company  
Richmond Parish Lands Charity

Hampton Court Association  
The Gosling Foundation  
Richmond Council Mayor's Fund  
Twining & Co  
RFU Twickenham  
The Garden History Society Jubilee Fund  
Thames Community Foundation  
Kagan Moss & Co

We await confirmation of a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

### **Trustees**

Derek Plummer has been obliged to resign owing to pressure of work. He was the first, informal, chairman of the original 'ginger group' which started the museum project in 1989, and more recently co-administrator, with Tony Beckles Willson, of the estate of Jack Ellis. We welcome as new trustees Jean Cranswick and John Sheaf.

### **Helpers & Support**

We could not have reached the present stage without others who have given of their time most generously. A large proportion of the corporate donors listed above responded to Michael Lee's fundraising efforts. Kathy White helped to develop the Restoration/Business Plan required by practically every outside body before they would help us. She did the same for our leaflet, and is now engaged with fund-raising bodies, museum agencies and potential lenders in preparing for our major opening exhibition early next summer.

Sarah Mallen, a pioneer of electronic communication in education and the arts, is giving us expert assistance. Maurice Parry-Wingfield continues to act as our honorary auditor and helps with difficult financial decisions. Dick Cashmore is active in all which pertains to the museum as such. Simon Lace of the Museum of Richmond and Rachel Tranter of Orleans House Gallery are always ready to give us the benefit of their experience.

When Dr Simon Thurley visited Twickenham earlier this year to speak to the Local History Society he saw the house and suggested we ask for an exhibition of loan material relating to Twickenham, from the Museum of London. This is in the course of negotiation at present.

### **Accessions**

We recently received from the curator of The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Gallery in Exeter a small bronze ornament of probably Roman date. It was found somewhere in Teddington before 1935 and has been claimed to be part of a Roman child's rattle. It had belonged to a collector of classical antiquities, a Colonel Montague. This will join the collection of coins, some ancient, dredged from the Thames at Teddington Lock many years ago and sent to us in 1996. Please keep a lookout for such articles of local provenance.

As building work started, attention focused on the state of the ground floor construction. Floor boards were raised, revealing not a void but a solid mass of debris and waste material that had accumulated over nearly three hundred years. An informal regime of amateur archaeology ensued and objects were retrieved. Many of these were no more than evidence of diet in past times: bones from the stew-pot and the shells of whelks, winkles and even oysters. In addition, there were the obligatory clay pipe stems and bowls, glassware, clay marbles, buttons and other

small domestic objects. Ancient and modern coins emerged, most notably a cartwheel penny dated 1797 and a George IV penny of 1826.

The most intriguing object retrieved actually fell out of the ground floor ceiling: a trade token bearing the initials CK and probably dating from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. CK has yet to be unarguably identified but first indications are that he was a local trader of that time named Charles King.

Not all of the contents we inherited have been disposed of. There is a small residue and after two successful days at the Twickenham Green May Fair we are exploring the possibility of sharing a stall with the Local History Society at next year's fair. In the meantime we do have a large carpet in the house which is not needed: a reasonable offer would enable a generous visitor to bear it away to a good home.

### **The Future**

The museum will be open from 11am - 3pm on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Future opening hours have yet to be arranged with volunteers who have agreed to help. The exhibition will remain displayed in the foreseeable future and will be succeeded in due course by an exhibition timed to coincide with the Arcadia 2002 celebrations.



The generosity of our supporters and sponsors has covered expenditure of nearly £45,000 on restoring the house and putting it into the state you will see now. We have also been able to start the all-important Endowment Fund which already stands at £28,500.

Fundraising must continue: we have to buy showcases, to mention only one major need. Without these we cannot show artefacts and valuable documents.

As a voluntary organisation we are entirely self-supporting, so please help us in any way you can. We invite those who have not had the opportunity to subscribe since our last newsletter in November 2000 to send in the slip below.

## **We look forward to welcoming you at the museum**

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To: Mr Trevor Sutton, Hon Treasurer, 36 Gothic Road, Twickenham, TW2 5EH tel: 020 8241 9011

I wish to remain on the mailing list and enclose a cheque for £3 or £.....

Name.....Title.....(Mr/Mrs/other)

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

I am a taxpayer and would like The Twickenham Museum to reclaim tax on this donation and on any donations I may make in the future. (Please sign if appropriate)

Signature.....date.....