

The Friends of
25 The Embankment
Twickenham TW1 3DU

The Twickenham Museum

registered charity no 1028984

Newsletter, December 2004

On Saturday 11 December at 12.00 noon
a new exhibition will be opened by the
Mayor, Councillor Pat Parsons:

*People at Play in
Twickenham,
Whitton, Teddington
and The Hamptons*

do come!



The Museum at Three Years

The museum approaches its fourth year with confidence and vigour. Visitor numbers are climbing, volunteers are in good heart, new exhibitions are greeted with enthusiasm and our website is being consulted from all over the world. It may sound too good to be true, but these are genuine achievements owed to the qualities of those who have felt drawn to take part, to the support of the community and to our being solvent and independent.

The Volunteers

As everyone knows, the museum depends on its volunteers, and more would be welcome. We have reached the stage at which the public is calling for more hours of opening, which is gratifying but not easy to arrange. Most volunteers find a two hour stint fits best with their other commitments, so we should try and find others to join the roster. Five have recently done so, which is splendid, but if each volunteer were to bring a friend the problem would vanish. Think about it. Volunteering is a

responsible, but also enjoyable way to spend a few hours a month. If you doubt it, consider the recent newspaper headline: 'Too Much Laughter at Twickenham Museum' (we are all trying to be a little quieter).

The 'Pow-Wow'

It is obviously desirable for volunteers on duty at Reception to be fully briefed about the museum. To this end thirty volunteers and trustees turned out one evening in May for a 'Pow-Wow' devised by Geoffrey Morgan, most appropriately wearing the head-dress of a Red Indian chief.

In order of appearance came first Colin White, our Treasurer, to tell of the School Packs he and his wife Kathy had devised for the guidance of teachers hoping to interest their pupils in local history. Some weeks later these were distributed to twenty enthusiastic teachers at a special gathering in the Museum.

Our librarian Jean Cranswick then spoke of the Pope collection. We had been successful in our application to the Pilgrim Trust for funding, and restoration of these ancient and fragile books by Nick Abrams in Wellington,

Somerset, is almost complete. House Manager Suzannah Herbert introduced her draft 'Notes of Guidance for Volunteers', and received several useful contributions from the floor.

Finally, Tony Beckles Willson and Robert Youngs gave a spectacular demonstration of the present capability and future potential of the computer facilities we owe to the generosity of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. It was an agreeable and useful evening which we hope to repeat one day for the benefit of those unable to be present.

'Villas on the Thames'

On April 19th, at the invitation of the Trustees, a lecture with this title was delivered by Catherine Parry-Wingfield to a packed audience in St Mary's Church Hall. Knowing her as a speaker of erudition and wit our expectations were high and not disappointed. We were led enjoyably from the Roman campagna to the banks of the Thames by way of Palladio and his English followers.

The evening was more than a cultural tour de force: Tony Beckles Willson skilfully accompanied the lecturer using the museum's 'Powerpoint' facility, providing an effortless succession of the scenes we know and love, some chosen from the Museum's archive. Catherine generously donated her normal fee to the Museum.

The Rotary Club of Twickenham upon Thames has generously offered to sponsor a future lecture (which we intend to make an annual event) to celebrate the centenary of the Rotary movement.

The Exhibitions

Some display panels from the exhibition opening in July 2002, 'Villages on the River', are on permanent display because they give basic information about the old Borough. Against this background we hold smaller, more focused exhibitions. Thus, Ed Harris's 'The Lost Garden of Whitton Dean' was succeeded on 13th December last year by John Sheaf's 'People at Work', which is about to give way to

'People at Play'. Ed and John are presently co-operating in a project on Professor Cockles, local diver and eccentric.

We have celebrated the 250th anniversary of the RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and Commerce) because one of its founders was Dr Stephen Hales, Curate of Teddington and an eminent scientist. We have also commemorated this year the 250th anniversary of the arrival of our greatest actor-manager David Garrick, to live in Hampton.

Kathy White has tentative plans for an exhibition in 2006 in connection with restoration of the Water Gardens at Upper Lodge in Bushy Park. She will submit proposals if the Royal Parks succeed in their fund-raising.

New Acquisitions

Mr Frank Ambler of Hanworth has generously let us have on indefinite loan the Doggett's Coat, badge, breeches, and socks won by his father, also Frank, in the 1944 race postponed until 1947. In winning he joined two earlier residents, J Mackinney (1885) and Ernest Barry who won his coat in 1903. We understand from Freda



Hammerton that her father coached Frank senior. How fitting that this ensemble should rest on display (though not yet) in the former house of a waterman.

We have been allowed to remove from the glebe garden of St Mary's three substantial pieces of masonry which have been lying in the undergrowth for years. It is pleasant to speculate that they might have been part of the church which fell down in the early eighteenth century, but there may have been another

building, perhaps a charnel house on the site. They are now in the courtyard we share with our neighbour Arlette Davidson, who has decorated it charmingly as can be seen through the window on the stairs.

‘Accessioning’, as the jargon has it provides another task for our hardworking computer. Everything in the museum’s collection has to be recorded, described and classified, and software for the purpose is being acquired.

Finances

There is no room for complacency and no need for anxiety. Our funds are carefully invested in the Charities Aid Foundation and are regularly reviewed by the Finance Sub-Committee. We live mainly on interest from the Endowment Fund but are grateful for other sources of income. These include the donation box, the sale of books at the Museum and the proceeds of lectures in Twickenham Week, and Pope’s grotto visits curated by Tony Beckles Willson (over £650 this year).

John Sheaf and Dick Cashmore have also raised funds by talking this year, Dick being much in demand as a speaker to local organisations. A recent source of income has been the success of a history of the Cross Deep flats known as Thames Eyot, written by Michael Lee and based on research by Gerry Hewett, a resident. A few copies remain. Finally, when Sunday afternoon riverside guided walks start at the Museum we receive a third of the ticket value.

This year we eschewed overt commercial activity at Twickenham Green May Fair but won an award for the best display, promoting the Museum.

The Museum Website

Work has continued through the year with the development of our “virtual reality” museum. There are now approaching 300 separate short illustrated articles covering People, Places and Events in the area starting in 704 AD. The two timelines are effectively complete; that

for Schools showing the interesting multiplicity of private schools which have come and gone over the years. The picture archive is well developed now.

Statistical records show that visitor numbers are now running at over 300 a day: approaching 110,000 a year. There is considerable Email traffic, often leading to interesting dialogues. Sometimes less interesting, for instance: “*we should like to book a wedding at York House next year....*” The mailbag has recently included enquiries from Vancouver, Basel, Münster, Nova Scotia, Ireland, France, New York and even Wandsworth.

The 150th anniversary of The Charge of the Light Brigade generated Email interest in James Alexander Mustard, a survivor of the Charge and a long-time resident in St Margaret’s. One correspondent wrote from Salford where four survivors are buried and then we heard from Terry Brighton, Curator of the Queen’s Royal Lancers Museum in Grantham where there is a letter written by James Mustard. Jill Sutherland, one of our volunteers had recently visited the Crimea with her husband and they represented us at a ceremony in the National Army Museum in Lambeth on Sunday 17 October, where the bugle which sounded the order to charge was blown again as part of the proceedings.



Acknowledgements

When an organisation runs smoothly it is not by chance. The Museum is privileged to have two unobtrusive but ever-busy guardians, Suzannah Herbert our House Manager and Ralph Cox the Facilities Manager. One of them always seems to be there working away. Two great members of the team. We thank them warmly.

We remain most grateful to Mair Graham, secretary, Colin White, Treasurer and Maurice Parry-Wingfield, auditor.

Last but by no means least, two volunteer husband and wife teams of exceptional merit. Barry Skinner and Derek Bugby have applied their skills in such practical matters as sign painting and furniture restoration, while their wives Alex and Enid always leave the house in sparkling condition. An example to us all.

Postscript



On Saturday 5 June our 10,000th visitor and his wife stepped across the threshold, to receive, unexpectedly, a bottle of champagne donated by a well-wisher. Charles and Jennifer Devereux were re-visiting Twickenham to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. Charles and Jennifer, now living in Norfolk were married in St Mary's Church next door on 5 June 1964. This picture shows Geoffrey Morgan handing over the bottle, prompting them to respond with a generous donation to Museum funds.

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As a voluntary organisation and a private charity we are entirely self-supporting. Help in kind enables the running and management of the museum on a day-to-day basis. The financial generosity of our many supporters and sponsors has enabled the museum to flourish. However, fund-raising has to continue in order to assure our long term security and financial independence. Our endowment fund is now over two-thirds of the way towards meeting our target of £150,000. Achieving this would put the Trust in a strong financial position for the foreseeable future, giving us an assured core income from careful investment.

We invite you to make a donation. Filling out the accompanying form enables you to remain on the mailing list for the future if you so wish.

## Opening times

The Museum is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 11.00am until 3.00pm and Sundays from 2.00pm until 4.00pm. Special visits can be arranged for organised groups on other days and times.