

The Friends of

THE TWICKENHAM MUSEUM

25 The Embankment
Twickenham TW1 3DU

registered charity no.1028984



NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER 2007

A Royal Appointment

The Museum played host this year to an exhibition of the proposed restoration of the historic Water Gardens of Upper Lodge in Bushy Park. Visitor numbers enjoyed a significant boost since the launch in April, attracting a wider audience from across the borough.

Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra made a private visit in September, spending an hour talking to a small group of Museum trustees, volunteers and representatives from The Friends of Bushy and Home Parks and the Royal Parks. The Water Gardens are to be restored to their former eighteenth century glory, thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



HRH Princess Alexandra signing the visitors' book

The Princess was presented with a watercolour of Bushy Park, by Sir Michael Tims and, in a letter from Buckingham Palace to Peter Payan, the Chairman of the trustees, she sends all her 'warmest good wishes and thanks for an entertaining and interesting visit to the Museum.' The watercolour was 'a lovely memento both of the visit and the launch of the exhibition to celebrate the restoration of the Water Gardens in Bushy Park'.

New Exhibition

The 2007 main exhibition, *Shopping Streets of Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and The Hamptons*, proved a huge success, with many visitors returning to wander down the High Streets of the past or to see how they have changed. Next year's centrepiece looks to the *Lost Houses of Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and the Hamptons*.

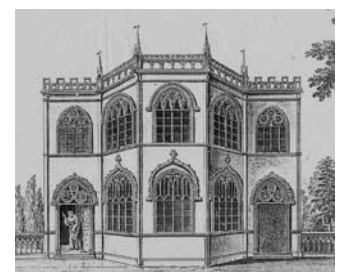
***Lost Houses will be opened by the Mayor,
Councillor Marc Cranfield-Adams on Saturday
8th December at 12.00 noon.***

Exhibitions maestro John Sheaf explains: 'virtually everything on the ground floor will change, except for the Professor Cockles tableau, which remains a firm favourite. The eleven new main display frames will be packed with evocative images of the past.'

The display cases will boast a variety of rare items on the general theme, including two amateur watercolours dated 1858 of Heatham House in Whitton Road and Brook House, in London Road. Other items include a menu for Lady Clifton Robinson's garden party held at Garrick's Villa, Hampton, in 1906 and items relating to The Pheasant House, a lost house in Bushy Park.

On the first floor there will be two supplementary panels: *The Manor House Estate, Hampton and Teddington Hall, Hampton Road, Teddington*. Carlisle Park is all that remains of the Manor House Estate. Teddington Hall still stands, re-modelled internally.

*Thomas Hudson's
Gothic Villa in Cross
Deep, Twickenham,
only lasted 50 years*



Volunteers & Visitors

Despite the inconvenience of a broken ankle and a few volunteers falling by the wayside, Volunteer Co-ordinator Geoffrey Morgan (aided during the darkest days by Paul Kershaw) maintained a steady ship with 55 Volunteers now on the books, all of whom comprise the backbone of the endeavour. The latest recruit is young Sarah McGrady, seen here, who is studying for a qualification in museum management.



The photogenic nature of *Shopping Streets* resulted in a bumper spate of publicity for the new exhibition, with visitor numbers expected to reach a record 5,000 this year. Numbers rose to over 3,000 visitors with the launch of the Water Gardens Exhibition in April, another event that

proved popular with the local press.

In February, *BBC Radio Four* broadcast a programme about Eel Pie Island and its colourful music history. Some sixty visitors arrived at the Museum the following weekend expecting to find a tribute to Twickenham's answer to Liverpool's Cavern. This transgression is being addressed by Trustee Ed Harris in the form of two panels proposed for the first floor, overlooking the site of the old hotel.

The Museum also benefitted from Twickenham Week, which drew an extra 319 visitors through the door. Tours of Pope's Grotto were also well patronised, as usual.

'West Day' is an annual event held throughout the country by the John & Frances West Family Group who meet to celebrate the history of this enormous family. This year it was the turn of Twickenham and the life and times of John West and his family in Twickenham and Hampton in the 17th century. A special paper covering this history was produced by the museum for the occasion. Dick Cashmore took on the challenge of co-ordinating the visit of over 80 delegates, which proved a great success. (see below, page 4)

The annual Open House Weekend in September ensured another busy period for our volunteers, with the event attracting 255 visitors, including Wesley Kerr, chairman of the Lottery Heritage Fund's London

Committee and the Leader of Richmond Council, Serge Lourie.

According to our very own Black Dog (Geoffrey Morgan again), *The Sunday Times* reported that Dr Vincent Cable MP paid a visit 'to a museum in his constituency (that's us), where he found a cudgel on display that was taken from the leader of the Liberal Roughs during the 1880 General Election.' The following day Sir Menzies Campbell, the Lib-Dem leader, quietly resigned. Thanks to the Twickenham Museum Dr Cable is now Acting Leader of the Liberal Roughs.'

The Annual Lecture

On 22nd May, Kathy White, author, with the late Peter Foster, of *Bushy Park, Royals, Rangers and Rogues* gave The Museum's fourth annual lecture on the proposed partial restoration of the Water Gardens of Bushy Park.

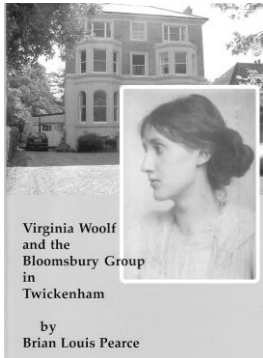


Built by the Earl of Halifax in the early 18th century, the Water Gardens eventually fell into disrepair, were drained and then largely forgotten. In 1997, the Friends of Bushy and Home Park set up the Bushy Park Water Gardens Trust and have played a key role in researching and documenting this unique historic garden. In a lucky discovery in 1999, art historian and writer, Sir Roy Strong, identified a detailed painting of the Water Gardens in the Royal collection. It is the shared aim of the Friends and Royal Parks to restore this unique baroque splendour and open up the pools and cascade to the public.

Note: next year's Annual Lecture will be given by Professor Michael Lee, author of *The Making of Modern Twickenham*. The subject: Local History of the 20th Century.

Publications

From a local perspective the name Virginia Woolf is synonymous with Richmond and the Surrey side of the Thames, but associations with the old Borough of Twickenham are least well known, if at all. In a new

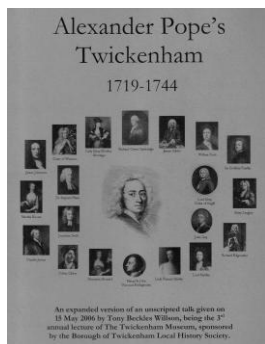
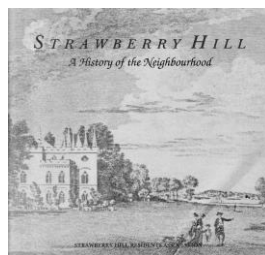


publication *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group in Twickenham* by the late Brian Louis Pearce, we are able for the first time to trace the often sad but always revelatory passages of Virginia Woolf's life as lived out in Twickenham, St Margaret's, Cambridge Park, Teddington, the Hamptons and Whitton.

Teddington, Twickenham & The Hamptons Past and Present records the changing local scene from the 1970s, focusing particularly on buildings that were due for demolition. Garth Groombridge provides an enjoyable trip down memory lane for many local residents and an education for those recently arrived.

Strawberry hill - A History of the Neighbourhood by Anthony Beckles Willson was first published in 1991 and the third printing joins *Alexander Pope's Twickenham* by the same author on the bookstall. This is an expanded version of the museum's third lecture, given in May 2006.

Due to the demands on space, future policy will see the rotation of those publications selling least well.



A major recent accession is due to the great generosity of a Richmond resident, Mrs Madeline Huxstep. Visiting the Mary Wallace Theatre, she noted the position of the museum and there and then decided it was the ideal home for a view of Twickenham's riverside by Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) given to her many years ago by her friend Charles Branchini (alive and well at 99). He is pleased to hear of the donation.

Part of the *Richmond & Twickenham Times* photographic archive has been saved from the skip by Trustee Ed Harris. Thousands of negatives covering local events from 1967 to 1982 are currently undergoing a painstaking sort by Ed Harris and John Sheaf. When completed, those negatives covering districts outside the old Twickenham Borough will be offered to the Richmond Museum and the relevant history societies. Shown here is an earlier view of the Museum from the collection.



The whole process of accessioning donations is undergoing a thorough restructuring by Trustees, with a view to streamlining the process and making it easier for volunteers to administer. Their findings will be made available in the New Year.

Accessions & Donations

The earliest items brought to us are flints discovered close to Syon Park. Six pieces have been identified by the Museum of London as 'humanly struck'. Two could be Palaeolithic and four are likely to be Neolithic or Bronze Age. None are 'tools' in their own right, rather waste pieces generated during the knapping process. The other pieces were declared to be of natural origin, which is also the case for some Whitton finds, thought to have included stone musket balls.

The Library

With the cataloguing of the Museum's book collection now complete, thanks to Librarian Jean Cranswick and cataloguer Heather Morgan, the question arises how best to make this valuable collection available for study under supervision.

Financial Report

The Museum Trust continues to count its blessings in having among its number Colin White as Honorary Treasurer, whose accurate forecasts of Income and Expenditure continually put the Exchequer to shame. Proceeds from book sales and events mostly exceed expectations, with the Bushy Park exhibition generating an extra £672. The trust is fortunate too in benefiting from the services of Maurice Parry-Wingfield as Honorary Auditor.

The House

25 The Embankment continues as the star attraction in the whole enterprise, thanks to those that keep it running and in good order: Suzannah Herbert, House Manager, Ralph Cox, Facilities Manager and Sandy Dempsey who replaces Mair Graham as Secretary.

The Website

The number of virtual visits to the Museum over the past year is climbing towards 350,000. Editor-in-Chief, Tony Beckles Willson handles enquiries from all corners of the world. New Yorker Frank O'Brien wanted to let us know: 'You have a first rate website.' The wackier include Roberto Lopez from Getxo, Spain, who is 'very interested in wooden pencils' and wants to know if we can supply him with a Twickenham Museum example. Similarly, Juan Manuel Duran from Buenos Aires who is in the market for key rings.

The wealth of new web pages added over the past year includes **Tycho Wing**, the astrologer, astronomer, mathematician and land surveyor who owned houses in Twickenham. Also the story of **Gifford Lodge**, today a



closed Retirement Home built in the garden of a 17th century Twickenham mansion. **Anne Seymour Damer**, niece of Horace Walpole was an 18th century sculptor and much engaged in theatricals locally. **Abraham Slade** was a prolific 19th century local builder of houses in the Popes Grove area, and boxer and child star, **Bertie Higgs** was Twickenham's first (and last?) flying undertaker.

William Chunn, Warrener of Twickenham, was indicted for killing a poacher on his land; brought to the Old Bailey on 7 September 1722 and acquitted.

Rifleman **Frank Edwards** kicked the football that started the charge at The Battle of Loos in 1915, which inspired Captain **Billie Nevill** to do the same on the Somme.



From the 17th century, **Sir Simon Harvey**, Clerk of the Green Cloth, and **Edmund Cooke** both owned properties and land in Whitton.

Among the Merchants and entrepreneurs are 16th century goldsmiths **Sir James Pemberton** and **Alexander Prescott**, who both owned or leased land in Twickenham. **John West** and his wife, Frances, are principally known for the series of charitable bequests that they established. One provided places for up to six boys and two girls from Twickenham each year, at Christ's Hospital in London. **George Buckingham**, son of the 'itinerant' Organ Builder, was married in St Mary's Church in a Twickenham much expanded earlier by local builders **Edward** and **William Reeves**.

And finally the battered scrap book chronicling the career of **Broomstick Broomhall**, the multi-talented, world record breaking Twickenham sporting hero who died a vagrant in the 1970s is to be reunited with his family, who live in New Zealand. Says Peter Hope in an email: 'I can now place him in my mother's family tree. Have been onto your Twickenham Museum web site, great site. Next time Barbara and I are in the UK we will pop in for a look.'



Postscript

"Is this all?" cried a lady, entering the museum during Open House Weekend, clearly expecting something far grander. She was invited to look upstairs. Small, perhaps, but not eccentric like some others. There is a lawnmower museum in Southport, upstairs: not the usual habitat for lawnmowers, with a curator allergic to grass. There is a museum of smoking in Bournemouth, its future perhaps in doubt, and museums of pen nibs and pencils.