

The Friends of

THE TWICKENHAM MUSEUM

25 The Embankment
Twickenham TW1 3DU

registered charity no.1028984



NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER 2008

One million visit the virtual Museum

On the evening of Thursday 7th July, Robert Youngs recorded the one millionth visitor to www.twickenham-museum.org.uk. This came in a month when almost 40,000 visits were recorded, by far the highest monthly activity since the launch of the website in 2004.

In the Spring, *Alexander Pope* moved into pole position at the top of the list of the most popular entries, followed now at some distance by *Strawberry Hill*. As well as *Alfred Lord Tennyson*, *the Plague in London and Twickenham*, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, *J M W Turner*, *Marble Hill House*, *Flora Thompson*, *Teddington Studios*, *Charles Dickens*, *York House*, *Busby Park*, and *Lord John Berkeley*. Twickenham's contribution to the swinging 60s attracts thousands of visitors back to the *Eel Pie Hotel*, *The Yardbirds* and the Island's other R&B Legends.

In the last 12 months 24 *People* and *Places* articles have been added: *Thomas Wildman* through to *Dr Hugh Welch Diamond*, passing on the way *Edith Somerville*, *Augustin Noverre*, *Gideon Aunsham*, *Juliana Byron* and the rest.

New Exhibition – *Then and Now*

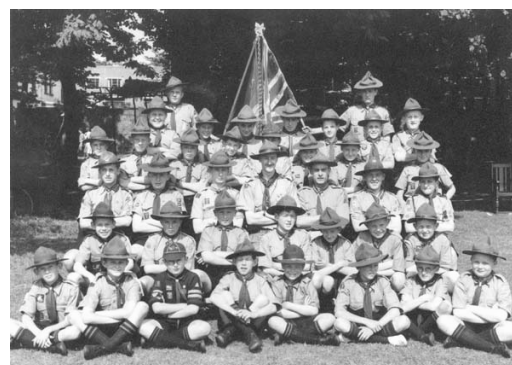
The theme for 2009 is *Then and Now: The Changing Face of Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and the Hamptons*. Using a wealth of images and other material relating to the changing face of the old borough of Twickenham, Exhibitions Director John Sheaf has assembled an



impressive collection of well-known views as they were, and how they appear now. The church of St Philip and St James in Whitton (pictured) is one example. Built in 1862, when the hamlet became a separate parish, this view from the front contrasts with the enormous changes to the landscape about it.

Then and Now will be opened by the Mayor, Councillor Helen Lee-Parsons on Saturday 13th December at 12.00 noon.

The Lost Houses of Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and The Hamptons, the main exhibition for 2008, proved a continual source of fascination for visitors and a boost to publicity with the local papers eager to fill their pages with the wealth of photographs assembled by John.



During the year the supplementary exhibition featuring the 13th Twickenham (St Mary's) Scout Group Centenary (1908 – 2008) proved equally popular, filling two wall panels with photographs recording the group from its initial meeting held in the front room of Arragon House through to the present day.

Volunteers and Visitors

The Museum has again welcomed record numbers. For the first weekend of the Twickenham Festival in June some 500 visitors crossed the threshold and a good half

that number for the second weekend. Mid-week, 50 English language students from the Richmond Adult Community College arrived en masse for a special visit, proving quite a challenge, as each one represented a different corner of the world. Geoffrey treated them to a tour of old Twickenham before handing them over to Sue and Ed Harris for a gesticulatory tour of the Museum.

At Cross Deep, Tony Beckles Willson, valiantly aided by volunteer Nigel Waller, guided more groups of visitors on tours of Pope's historic grotto, welcoming nearly 100 on the first Saturday morning. Entry fees and book sales for the Museum amounted to a healthy £350, which was somewhat insufficient, sadly, to allow the Museum to top the £4.5 million winning bid for the Turner painting of Pope's Villa (pictured) that went for public auction on 9th July.



By far the youngest Museum Volunteers to sign up in 2008 were these two young ladies, keen to learn more about local history and how museums work.

Left of this picture is Anika Brar, currently reading history at university and hoping to make a career in museum management. On the right is Anna Claeys, currently studying for her international baccalauréat

at Richmond-upon-Thames College and looking to go to university next year to read history.

Since our History Girls hit the headlines, more youngsters have expressed an interest in joining the ranks, with the young at heart ably represented in the form of budding thespians Edward Jeoffroy, veteran actor with the neighbouring Richmond Shakespeare Society, and Michael Godley of the Teddington Theatre Club.

The 'Hob Nob' Away Day for volunteers took place on Friday 18th April at St Mary's Hall. Sumptuously catered for by Jill Sutherland and Sandy Dempsey, with fine wines dispensed by the inimitable Tony Carmona, the purpose of the event was to enable volunteers to meet each other, to hear reports from officers and trustees and

to learn of future plans. Geoffrey waxed lyrical about the team, thanking Ed Harris for his efforts in keeping the Museum in the media eye and Ralph Cox for maintaining the fabric of the building. John Sheaf talked about future

exhibitions, Robert Youngs about the website, and Suzannah Herbert about the Museum administration and the importance of us all following set procedure. Founder chairman, Tony Beckles Willson, standing in for Peter Payan, thanked Geoffrey Morgan for mustering and organizing the Volunteer corps and for setting up the party.

In September the Museum again earned its place during another **Open House Weekend**, as one of an incredible 700 buildings and architectural walks and talks giving Londoners the opportunity to experience architectural history at first hand.

The Annual Lecture

Local History Past & Present was the title of the fifth annual lecture presented by the Trustees of the Museum at St Mary's Church Hall on Monday 21st April. The speaker was Professor Michael Lee, who managed in an hour to characterise what is Local History, the genesis of Local History and its present nature.

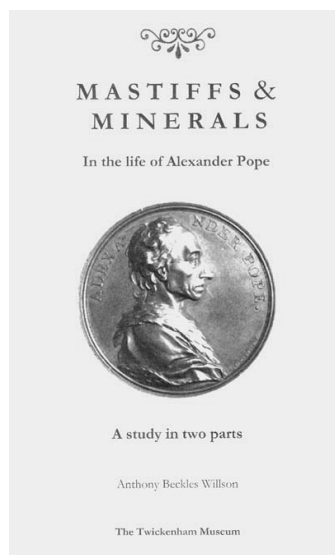
W G Hoskins (right) taught us that local history is about the study of a relatively small geographical area, the events of the past that have impacted on that area and its people, its settlement and its growth over time. Although the study of individual towns and villages is inherently a local pursuit, it should not be divorced from national and even world



events or, as the gurus of local study have it - the wider context. Often, local history is the realm of historical societies or groups that assemble to preserve a local building or indeed, as in the case of the *Borough of Twickenham Local History Society*, the relics of an entire local authority after its incorporation into an expanded municipality. In this, archivists, historical societies and museums can, and do, provide advice and information, but above all encouragement.

In his summing up, Peter Payan, Chairman of the trustees, thanked Professor Lee for a marvellously

comprehensive tour of how local history has come about in the way that it has, and the importance of its understanding and appreciation to anyone linked to the heritage of where they live. 'A little learning is a dangerous thing,' Peter reminded the packed hall, 'drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring'.

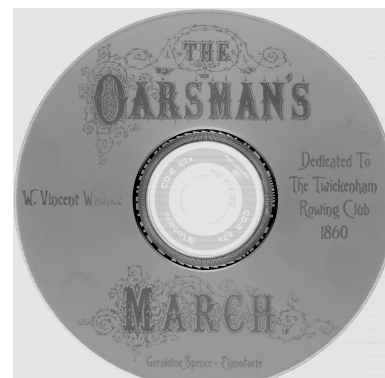


Publications

Mastiffs & Minerals in the life of Alexander Pope by Tony Beckles Willson is a study in two parts covering the lives of Pope's succession of dogs, all called Bounce, and the damascene conversion of his grotto from mythical retreat into a 'Musaeum' of mining and mineralogy following a visit to the Avon Gorge in Bristol. It is available at the museum for £6.00.

sections that could be carried by bearers through the African bush and launched on the various lakes and rivers encountered. Named in honour of his American fiancée, Alice Pike, Stanley used the boat to survey the entire circuit of the shores of Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, launching her on the meandering Congo before reaching the vast basin he named Stanley Pool, and the Livingstone Falls beyond. As part of Stanley's expedition, The Lady Alice helped change the course of African history.

The Oarsman's March, composed by William Vincent Wallace in 1860 to celebrate the formation of Twickenham Rowing Club has been recorded on CD by Geraldine Spence, apparently on a contemporary piano. This rousing music, with a biography of the composer, can be bought from John Sewell (tel: 01403 252950).



Accessions & Donations

Gardening Centre entrepreneur Colin Squire's gift to the Museum in the form of a new display cabinet arrived in the spring. It now plays host to a variety of new acquisitions and donations, including an early wind-up radio, donated by its inventor, Trevor Baylis. The new Accessions team in place, comprising Jean Cranswick, Robert Youngs and Ed Harris, are charged with recording all such treasures and ensuring that they enjoy similar airings over time in our new cabinet of curiosities.

Not all donations are tangible relics or corporeal objects. For example, the story behind this drawing of The Lady Alice, taken from H M Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878):



The Lady Alice was a collapsible boat commissioned from Teddington boat-builder, James Messenger. Made from Spanish chestnut and measuring twelve metres in length, the vessel was designed to dismantle into five

The Library

Heather Morgan has updated the bibliographical record of the Alexander Pope book collection donated to The Museum under the Professor Butt Bequest and restored with a grant from the Pilgrim Trust. These can be made available for serious students, by special arrangement with Jean Cranswick.

Financial Report

Treasurer Colin White is upbeat despite these uncertain times. Gross income for the first nine months of this year, excluding exceptional items (legacies) is just under £8,400. Expenditure for the same period is £5,500. The annual Gift Aid tax claim to HM Revenue & Customs should raise a further £440. For every £1.00 donated by taxpayers in this way, the Museum receives a further 28 pence. "A great way of boosting funds", urges Colin.

Waitrose in Twickenham has introduced a scheme whereby each month a £1,000 donation is shared between three local good causes nominated by its customers. The Twickenham Museum sat alongside two strong and emotive contenders, *The Shooting Star Trust* and the charity *Stepping Out*, but still managed receipt of a very respectable £230.

The House

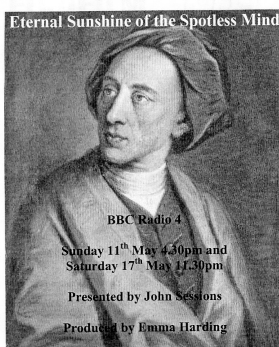
Master decorator, Trevor Hartley, who recently repainted the exterior of the Museum, turned his attention to the internal window frames, which were beginning to look rather tired. The carpet has been cleaned and Facilities Manager, Ralph Cox, is assembling a working party to address other areas of shabby chic. Steve McAllister has been enlisted to clean the windows (inside and out) on alternate months.

The Website

Another significant first is the inclusion of a five minute video clip of the very first trolley-bus journey through the streets of Twickenham and Teddington, returning to Fulwell Depot where the Mayor of the day is seen congratulating the driver at the end of this momentous journey. This event took place on May 16th 1931 and features trolley-bus number 4 passing many streets and features clearly recognizable today. Note the dog crossing King Street, unaccompanied.

Alas other landmarks, such as the Odeon cinema at the junction of Cross Deep and Heath Road are no more. More of the journey can be found under *Fulwell Depot* on the Museum website.

The Museum Has Landed. Thanks to Robert Youngs, 25 The Embankment now has entries for both *Google Maps* and *Google Earth*. For those yet to discover these delights, *Google Maps* is an online mapping service. By keying in the name of a place or road, directions are given on how to get there, with useful information regarding the location. *Google Earth* is a 3-D mapping interface for the entire planet, allowing movement around the world to any particular location. Viewing from space, it is possible to zoom onto the roof of the Museum as part of a virtual world tour. Our global footprint is further established by searching 'Business' and entering 'Museum'.



Museum in the media

Tony Beckles Willson took to the airwaves twice during the year on his cherished subject of Alexander Pope. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* was the title of Radio 4's *Poetry Please*, which saw Tony in the

company of John Sessions in search of his same poetic hero, accompanied by modern poets and satirists including Peter Porter and Ian Hislop. Tony also discussed the influence of our local bard on BBC Radio Cambridge one morning.

As fire ravaged the historic villa once home to Shakespearean actor David Garrick on Saturday 25th October, so a Press Association reporter looked to Twickenham Museum for comment on the tragedy. Mike Cherry, who was on duty at the time, explained that the villa was 'an iconic building whose importance couldn't be overstated because of its association with Garrick, such an important figure in theatre, both actor and manager, and the building provided an historical link with the man'.

Film set designer, James Hendy, visited the Museum looking for images of 1960s Twickenham for a coming-of-age drama called *An Education*, based on the early life of journalist Lynn Barber. Ed Harris was on hand to suggest photographic and video material evocative of 1960s Borough. Written by Nick Hornby the film is due for release in 2009, complete (it is hoped) with a credit for Twickenham Museum.



High Street, Hampton Hill in the 1960s

Future management of the museum

Following our successful first eight years of opening and promoting a wholly voluntary enterprise, the trustees are considering how the museum might be managed in the future. It has been decided to investigate the possible restructuring of responsibilities in order to draw together strands of the management. This might involve the creation of a role for a (non-resident) part-time curator. A small working party has been convened and will be presenting ideas shortly.