

# Friends of The Twickenham Museum

Newsletter

December 2013

## AT THE HEART OF LOCAL HERITAGE

**A**fter the success of the popular temporary beach at Champion's Wharf over the past two summers, Richmond-upon-Thames Council has installed a permanent play space. More than just the original play beach, it is now an historical and educational space depicting both the human and natural history of the area. Hidden artefacts discovered in the local area and supplied by the Museum have been reproduced and are now moulded into the base under the sand for budding young archaeologists to discover. The museum has also supplied the historical and artefact content for the adult and children's information boards.

Our first-floor homage to the music history of Eel Pie Island has encouraged those who may never otherwise have considered entering the building to do so. That extra footfall has increased this past summer as a result of our involvement in the **Eel Pie Island Project** celebrating the Birth of Rhythm and Blues in Twickenham. As well as curating, object handling and local history workshops held at Orleans House Gallery and at the Museum, there has been a video; a website; a book and a walking tour conducted by the Eel Pie Club stopping off at the Museum to enjoy the unique view from our first floor window.

"It's super important for us to get a sense of what The Twickenham Museum is interested in, re: the future."

Sue Palmer, Eel Pie Island Project Manager.



By way of a thank you for our support of the Champion's Wharf project, Richmond Parks & Open Spaces are funding a heritage-friendly blue plaque based on our new 'corporate logo'. It will soon adorn the front of the building.

## NEW EXHIBITION

**R**oad, Rail and River is the subject of our new exhibition, which will be opened by the Mayor, Cllr. Meena Bond, on Saturday 7th December, replacing our popular Public Houses exhibition.

A wealth of visual imagery and relevant artefacts await the visitor keen to explore the history of how and where we got about in the old days before the wide variety of transportation we today take for granted. A lavishly illustrated companion guide will be available for visitors to purchase.





## Museum trials new technology at Open House London 2013

**T**he question sometimes arises as to why The Twickenham Museum should take part in the annual London Open House London event when the building is open to the public throughout the year. The answer to that is simple: because our taking part reflects the core concept of Open House in so far as the creation of the Museum is a positive achievement in our part of the borough that makes it a better place to live, work and play.

This year we looked beyond the question of access to the architectural stamp of our building in the form of a guided tour. How to achieve this without timed tours and extra effort on the days came courtesy of Quick Response (QR) codes. These are now common in newspapers, magazines, on signs, buses and business cards where 'smart phone' users point their devices and grab the information onto the screen.

A double-sided code was set into a downstairs window. The side facing the river offered a guide to the building's exterior and that facing the inside provided a guide to the Ground Floor. The second code was affixed to the staff room door to guide visitors around the first floor. Unfortunately too few visitors were suitably equipped, and those that were felt the effort too wordy.

However, the double-sided, laminated A4 hard copies on hand for non-smart phone users appeared to do the job - despite carrying exactly the same narrative. Smart-phone users reading this might care to see how they fare (we recommend using the i-nigma app, available for iPhones and Android devices).



## THE ANNUAL LECTURE: THE QUEEN'S KNIGHT

**S**ir Howard Elphinstone was one of the first holders of the Victoria Cross, a man personally appointed by Prince Albert as governor to Prince Arthur and close confidante to Queen Victoria on the death of her husband. This fascinating story, well told by Martyn Dowler, was liberally illustrated with photographs seldom seen from the family's private collection.

We encourage all volunteers to show their support for the Museum by attending our annual lectures. At the time of publication, the speaker for next year's lecture had not been decided, but it will be, as usual, an opportunity to learn about a subject of local-historical interest in a talk delivered by an expert in their particular field and all at a very reasonable price. Our lectures have also become something of a social event, with volunteers and guests meeting over a glass of wine.



*Sir Howard Elphinstone (Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)*

# New Year Party

A date couldn't be settled upon for the 2012 Christmas Party and so this jolly annual event was carried over to January 2013. And it was worth waiting for. St Mary's Parish Hall was made to resemble a top class restaurant with the theme a Pie Supper, splendidly produced by Sandy Dempsey and Jill Sutherland.

Included on the menu was a choice of pies full to bursting with Sausage and Chestnut; Beef and Mushroom; Fish; Pork and Cider Pie, and Turkey and Ham. For the vegetarian palate there was a Red Onion Tart or Roasted Vegetable Pasty.

The wine selection matched the quality of the food, which together complemented the fine company. So popular was the post-Christmas date that it is to be continued. The date for your diaries is Friday 17th January 2014.

New Volunteers are always welcome. If you know someone with two hours a month to spare then Alex Skinner would love to hear from you on 020 8941 0669.



## New volunteers arrive at the Museum

**T**here was much excitement on the Embankment in September when former RFU Museum of Rugby turnstile-keeper (affectionately known to staff there as George), together with commentator Nigel Starmer-Smith and fellow mannequin, signed on at the Twickenham Museum as volunteers. Generously donated by the RFU, 'Nigel' has subsequently taken over the role of Professor Cockles and 'George' will become a newspaper vendor over the coming First War commemorative years. His pal will swap his white coat for that of a Thames Waterman as part of the new *Road, Rail and River* exhibition.

Volunteer Wendy Verrall had help this year from university student Peter Martingell in the running of the **Children's Summer Workshops**. Taking place every Tuesday in August, the two sessions at 11.30 am and 1.30 pm each lasted an hour with the children completing a worksheet looking for objects and answers to questions. After a refreshment break they then made a key ring fob displaying the Museum logo and a small picture they had drawn. In keeping with the theme of the 2013 exhibition, there were some pub games to try such as dominoes and cards. The children enjoyed the activity and parents made positive comments.

Opening times: Tuesdays and Saturdays 11am to 3pm. Sundays 2pm to 4pm.

# The Twickenham Volunteers

**T**he Twickenham Volunteers was a Corps of a hundred men chosen by ballot with the threat of invasion following Napoleon's declaration of war in May 1803. Knowledge of this stoic local militia came by way of a metal detectorist in Maidenhead who happened upon a small military button (right) bearing the legend 'Twickenham Vols' on the front and the maker's name, John Williams, to the rear, which may refer to the military button maker of that name working in St Martin's Lane, London, at about this time. The button is now in our collection and will be put on public display at some time in the future.

In February 1804 The Twickenham Volunteers were united in a battalion with the Brentford, Ealing, and Isleworth Corps. The principal part comprised local retailers, adding a little credence to Napoleon's observation that England was a nation of shopkeepers.

This West London Volunteer Corps were to be reviewed in April 1804 on Wimbledon Common, but the commanding officer failed to appear and so the brigades were dismissed, except for the Kensington Volunteers who, "*after being regaled with bread, cheese and porter, repaired to the Common; but, owing to the unfavourable state of the weather, returned, after firing four rounds each*".

Newspaper reports in October 1805 suggest that the Twickenham Volunteers had merged with the Isleworth Volunteers. Meanwhile, our website contains a full report.

On the subject of our **Website** ([www.twickenham-museum.org.uk](http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk)), it is worth noting that for every physical football crossing the Museum threshold, thousands more visit a realm constantly added to with fascinating accounts of lives lived in the old parish and later borough of Twickenham. Take the Honourable Sir William Stanhope who acquired Pope's Villa and Garden in 1745, a prospect that greatly alarmed his neighbours. Horace Walpole, for example:

*"... would you believe it, he has cut down the sacred groves themselves! In short, it was a little bit of ground of five acres, inclosed with three lanes, and seeing nothing. Pope had twisted and twirled, and rhymed and harmonized this, till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with thick impenetrable woods. Sir William, by advice of his son-in-law, Mr. Ellis, has hacked and hewed these groves, wriggled a winding-gravel walk through them with an edging of shrubs, in what they call the modern taste, and in short, has designed the three lanes to walk in again--and now is forced to shut them out again by a wall, for there was not a Muse could walk there but she was spied by every country"*.



It was in the last Newsletter that the sad death of Enid Bugby was announced. Our chairman, Peter Payan, wrote that a prize for the best volunteer couple showing exemplary reliability, punctuality, housekeeping skills and warmth of welcome to visitors would certainly have been won by either Derek and Enid Bugby, or Barry and Alex Skinner.

Since the publication of that Newsletter, both Derek and Barry have sadly passed away and are greatly missed.