

The Friends of **The Twickenham Museum**

25 The Embankment
Twickenham TW1 3DU

registered charity no 1028984

Newsletter, December 2005

On Saturday 10 December at 12.00 noon
a new exhibition will be opened by the Mayor,
Councillor Robin Jowit:

*Villages into Towns,
the growth of
Twickenham,
Whitton, Teddington
and The Hamptons*



do come!

It has been another year of enterprise and achievement and we bless our good fortune. Long may it last. We have inestimable advantages, above all our perfect position by river and church and our delightful old house. Visitors return again and again just to enjoy the spirit of the place.

Our second invaluable asset is the warm welcome given by our dedicated volunteers who man the museum during opening hours and take pleasure in being there, especially during the quieter periods, when it is possible to give extra time to individual visitors. Other volunteers administer and guide the whole enterprise.

We are financially secure, at least for now and we are beholden to no-one but our visitors, real and virtual. Simple ingredients, never to be taken for granted. If we pay attention to each we shall not fail.

We enjoy a public profile, too: local signposts now direct visitors to the museum, a facility which we owe to the enthusiastic support of last year's mayor, Councillor Pat Parsons.

The Visitors

Visitor numbers are constant at about 4800 a year. Hundreds appear during the Twickenham Festival and the London Open House Weekend (whose organisers made a point of thanking us and inviting our participation next year). On these occasions many come along to the museum after a tour of Pope's Grotto, an enduring and beguiling attraction.

Some visitors offer items from their homes. Others regale us with memories of their youth in the area, which we note as best we can in the museum diary. Many are from overseas.

Our volunteer co-ordinator Geoffrey Morgan takes a particular pleasure in welcoming groups on special visits. Last year he amazed a lively gaggle of young Chinese schoolteachers by greeting them in their own language.

In February a large group of children visited, en route to work on a riverside project in Orleans House Gallery. Inspired by Professor Cockles (see below), their splendid creation now adorns the Embankment playground. Thirty five children from Bishop Perrin's Church of England Primary School, Whitton were followed by an older group from the South Croydon University of the Third Age. Soon we shall welcome the 13th Twickenham St Mary's Cubs.

Professor Cockles

June 18th, a glorious day in Twickenham Festival Week, saw the resurrection (and re-immersion) of a skilled and eccentric engineer and diver who was active on the Twickenham riverside for nearly forty years until the 1970s and is remembered by many to this day. The museum had from its inception owned Cockles' helmets and paraphernalia, but the idea of introducing him to another generation we owe to our Trustee Ed Harris. That it came to fruition is due entirely to his persistence and organisational skills. He invoked the technical co-operation of GH Diving and Engineering Services and excited the interest of the Historical Diving Society, who were both present.

Just before 2pm Ed introduced our local inventor Trevor Bayliss (a former stunt diver himself), who was standing on the Eel Pie Island bridge for his public commentary. A van drew up and 'Professor Cockles' (a professional diver) got out. Entering the river near the bridge on its north-east side he stayed under for about ten minutes and emerged triumphantly clutching a 'lost' set of keys in one hand and a suspiciously rubbery looking eel in the other. The whole event was a wild success, every move taken in by the large fascinated crowd. A repeat performance next year is in prospect.

A technical point of interest is that the small aqualung secreted in the diver's trouser leg proved unnecessary. Cockles' own arrangement, whereby respiration relies upon air supplied to the helmet, worked well enough. In this instance the diver breathed oxygen from a small fire extinguisher bolted to the helmet, so the pipe was present but not used. Not to be deterred, some children manned the pump anyway.



Exhibitions

This year's major exhibition, "People at Play in Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and the Hamptons" was opened by the Mayor, Councillor Pat Parsons, following a party for volunteers just before last Christmas. It succeeded "People at Work". A display describing the history of the Twickenham Yacht Club has replaced the small exhibition

celebrating David Garrick's arrival in Hampton in 1754.

As to the future, we wait to hear whether the Royal Parks application for Lottery funding of the proposed Bushy Park Water Gardens restoration is to be successful. If so, the grant will also fund a travelling exhibition of the proposals which the museum will host later next year.

John Sheaf's exhibitions continue to be enormously popular, showing as they do events, places and sometimes faces known to local people. They result from months of dedicated work.

The Annual Lecture

In 2004 Catherine Parry-Wingfield inaugurated the series with an enjoyable lecture entitled 'Villas on the Thames'. This year's lecture was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Twickenham on Thames, celebrating the centenary year of the founding of Rotary International. On April 25th we had the pleasure of hearing Dr T H R Cashmore speak on "Privilege, Prosperity and Poverty in Twickenham in the 18th and 19th Centuries". Dick is a popular local historian known not only for his fine work for the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society publications, but also for his amiable habit of helping enquirers by looking into any obscure corner of our history and posting his findings through one's letter box within hours. He has been a constant and generous supporter of the museum.

The history of Twickenham provides an exceptional canvas on which to depict the evolution of social classes and the distribution of wealth. Dick has written on the subject before, and spoke with knowledge and feeling of the nobility in their great houses, the growth of the middle classes with the coming of the railways, and the ever-present poor huddled in the alleys around the church. His address was entertaining, instructive and moving and he was warmly applauded.

The Library

This remains in the capable hands of Jean Cranswick, who last year engaged the outstanding Somerset craftsman Nick Abrams to restore the Pope collection. This has been completed with the help of a grant from the Pilgrim Trust, to whom we are grateful.

A further group of books from the late Professor Butt's Pope collection has been donated by his daughter, Olivia Bell. These include George Sherburn's five volume set: 'The Correspondence of

Alexander Pope (1956), five volumes of Pope's edition of Shakespeare, so completing the set of six, and a volume of his letters published in 1737, in need of restoration.

We are grateful to Heather Morgan for taking on the demanding job of cataloguing the museum's collection.

Museum Publications

A paper recounting the history of **Thames Eyot, the site of Poulett Lodge** written by Michael Lee was published last year. This has been followed by his study of the history of the house known as **Cross Deep**. Both these papers are available at the museum, price £2.00 each.



Tony Beckles Willson's new book **'Mastiffs and Minerals'**, a two-part study of the lives of Pope's dogs, and his late interest in geology, is just out and available at the museum (£8.00). Pope may not spring to mind as a geologist scholar but his extensive

makeover of the grotto after 1739 effectively created Twickenham's first museum. We are but the fifth.

The Website

Statistical records that we obtain show that online visitors have risen from an average of 300 a day to over 400. Last year's total of 110,000 has risen to 156,000. Email correspondence can be fruitful and informative, occasionally humdrum, often from other parts of the world.

In April this enquiry came through: *I live in Denver, Colorado, USA, and am unable to visit your museum in person at this time. My daughter is writing a report about England, and was directed to select a specific town and time period on which to report. She selected Twickenham around 1700. We have found a wealth of information on your website, and this time period in Twickenham is quite fabulous. Are there any other resources that would help in our research? One item that would be particularly valuable would be a map of the town around 1700 - one that shows streets, buildings, houses, manors, etc. Does such a map exist? Thank you very much for your assistance. Chuck Bushman*

In May, Boris Quezada Azocar wrote from Chile asking for more information about the sculptor of the York House Statues: *Searching internet accidentally read an article of your archives called "The Statues in York House Gardens". I work in a Casino in Viña del mar, Chile and inside we have a statue signed "T malpieri O ANDREONI" studio and nobody knows where it come from. I'm just wonder if you have some information that i could use. The statue is pretty old and shows a men carrying a women almost natural size. I'm very interested in know somethig about they. Thanks in advance...*

Joe Goodin wrote from New Zealand in June asking if we could put him in touch with a supplier of a London Transport bus driver's uniform for 1948: *Hello, We are looking for a drivers uniform (London Transport) to go with our 1948 roofbox RTL68 Leyland Titan here in New Zealand. Would you know where we can find one from 1940 to 1960's? Thanks for your time.*

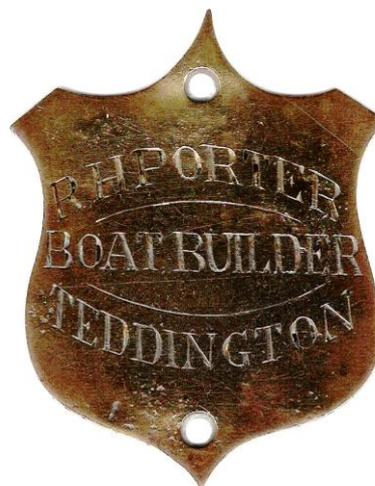
Another correspondent, Trish Hayward, whose family have long been connected with Twickenham, was instrumental in obtaining for us some photographs of a pewter flagon (Ale Measure, gallon size) which began life in The Fox, in Church Street, Twickenham. Supplied to William Clarke the licensee in the 1780s, it is inscribed *Clarke/ Fox/ Twickenham*.



It now forms part of the pewter collection at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, USA. John Davis, the Curator has kindly given permission for this picture to be included here.

Finding the website piece on Hannah More, David Garrick's friend, a lady from Bristol offered, and then sent us, 20 autograph letters written between 1807 and 1830 from Barleywood, the house to which

Hannah More retired. One of these referred to a letter she had received from William Wilberforce who was proposing a Mission to "evangelise India".



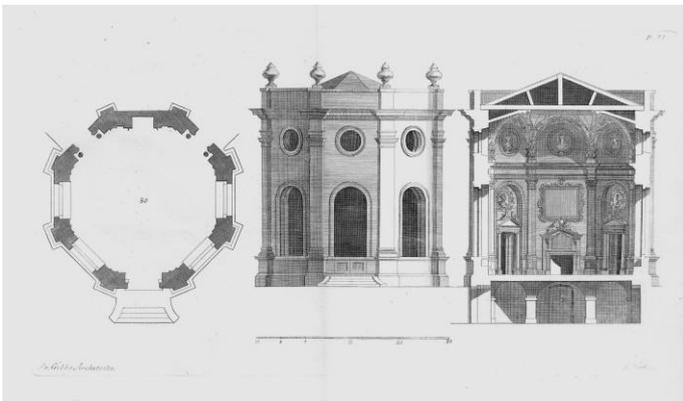
A correspondent from Woy Woy (yes, really) north of Sydney, Australia,

sent us a small brass label that he had dug up in his garden. It appears to have been a survival from a long decayed boat built in Teddington. This was probably not a steamship, but it is an interesting and well travelled relic from the boatyard of Robert Porter which opened in 1891. In 1895 he took over Messenger's Yard but it had apparently closed by 1910.

Accessioning & Acquisitions

During the year acquisition of CATALYST software enabled all the material owned by the museum to be catalogued on the computer, where it can be viewed. This work occupied several months and was undertaken by the team of Christine Diwell, Suzannah Herbert, John Sheaf and Ralph Cox, led by Robert Youngs.

Pictorial acquisitions this year include an uncommon engraved view of St Mary's Church, Twickenham (Pickett, 1811) donated by Alun Glyn-Jones; a tinted copy of Samuel Lewis's map of Twickenham in 1784 together with an engraving of the Octagon at Orleans House, from James Gibbs' Book of Architecture, both given by Peter Hill:



Finances

Our finances are in reasonably good shape. Expenses are met by the interest on our growing Endowment Fund, supplemented by the sale of books at the Museum, the donation box and fees from Pope's Grotto tours.

Nevertheless, we have to anticipate the effects of inflation: heating and lighting expenses rise far beyond published rates. Also, the heavy use of a building nearly 300 years old takes a toll on the internal fabric. Next year we shall have to redecorate the exterior, an expensive operation: five years will have passed since the last time this was carried out.

Derek Beattie & Ken Breen

The death of Derek Beattie from cancer in February was a sad event. He had been a loyal volunteer throughout his very busy year as Deputy Mayor, demonstrating the value of a friend at Court on more than one occasion. He looked fine in his robes and had a dignified bearing and manner. In his very last days our Chairman found him at home in his dressing gown, courteous, resigned and defiantly smoking a large cheroot. He let it be known how much he had enjoyed his time with us, as did Ken Breen, another stalwart volunteer who also died earlier this year. Formerly the Head of History at St Mary's College, he was an expert on Strawberry Hill and contributed to our website.

The Volunteers

We still enjoy the help of pioneers with whom we started nearly five years ago, but some falling away is inevitable and from time to time we are a little stretched. All voluntary organisations, especially those of a cultural nature, bewail the absence of the young and vigorous but this also is inevitable: the young are busy being vigorous at home and at work. So we enjoyed all the more having two young lady volunteers from France and Italy respectively, Celine Farault and Elisa Magistrali. Alas, family problems called them home, we hope only temporarily.

Our most fruitful recruiting ground is likely to be among the recently retired, and we do ask all of you to keep this constantly in mind. Bring a friend and let them try it: they will be sure of a warm welcome.

Acknowledgements

We should like to express our thanks for all they do to keep the Museum running and in good health to Suzannah Herbert, House Manager, Mair Graham, secretary, Ralph Cox, Facilities Manager, Colin White, hon treasurer and Maurice Parry-Wingfield, hon auditor. Last, but by no means least, we thank our ex-Savoy Hotel sommelier Antonio Carmona for officiating so charmingly whenever wine is served.

Advance notice

The Borough of Twickenham Local History Society has generously offered to sponsor next year's Annual Lecture. This will be given, probably in April, 2006, by Tony Beckles Willson. The subject:

**Alexander Pope's Twickenham,
1719-1744**