

The Friends of The Twickenham Museum

registered charity no 1028984

25 The Embankment
Twickenham

Newsletter, December 2006

**On Saturday 9 December at 12.00 noon
a new exhibition will be opened by the Deputy
Mayor, Councillor Celia Hodges**

*Shopping Streets of
Twickenham,
Whitton, Teddington
and The Hamptons*



Thames Street, Hampton c1860

An Anniversary

This Christmas we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Museum: the first exhibition to be shown in this house was mounted on December 15th 2001. We have not looked back since.

Visitors

There has been a wide variety, as usual, and some unexpected. One Saturday afternoon there was a downpour and an assembly of elegantly attired wedding guests on their way to St Mary's Church took refuge from the rain. Gratitude for shelter swelled the donation box.

The 13th Twickenham St Mary's Cubs & Brownies visited in force, and had clearly done their homework. They were fully briefed, had studied the contents of the website and asked penetrating questions about history. One asked what were the last words of Captain Cockles as he disappeared beneath the Thames a year or so ago. "*Don't forget the diver, sir*" was the only possible reply.

Some visitors overstay their welcome, to become temporary residents. The stream of bees making a beeline for the Museum and nesting in the rafters. will only be permitted to remain, consuming their own honey until next February. Our treasurer, Colin White (bee-master) will supervise their departure.



Tannia Xing Xia joined us from Shanghai, to undertake a study of the rôle of a local museum in the cultural life of the community. Her appearance, at the foot of the stairs of the house, in traditional costume provided an exotic finale to her successful stay.

Exhibitions

We continue to show John Sheaf's enjoyable work against a background of the display panels made for our exhibition in 2002. These are to be seen mainly upstairs, and present a great deal of valuable information also available in the attractive booklet "*Villages on the River*". This is on sale downstairs for £1, the best value in local history literature.

John's exhibition this year, opened by the Mayor last December has been "*Villages into Towns.*" He has also created smaller displays concerned with Twickenham's Charter Day in 1926 and the firm of nurserymen in Hampton, K E Page.

In last year's Newsletter we referred to the proposal by the Royal Parks to restore the **Bushy Park Water Gardens.**, involving their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was successful but there are still

administrative snags and a shortage of matching funding. We expect to host the travelling exhibition of the proposals next spring if all proceeds smoothly.

The Library & Archives

Our Librarian Jean Cranswick reports that Heather Morgan has done sterling work in the bibliographical field and has reorganised the book collection. New shelving on the stairs, made for us by Nick Dyson who made the bookcase, is at present dedicated to the Eileen Stammers-Smith collection of books related to gardening and landscape history.

We have, now, a considerable photographic archive of views, portraits of people who lived here and miscellaneous documents. The photographs in large measure consist of collections donated by Ken Lea and Martin Fenton. All this information, digitized, is electronically stored on the computer and, subject to copyright where applicable, prints can be supplied to interested collectors.

The Annual Lecture

Sponsored by the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, the third in this series, "**Alexander Pope's Twickenham, 1719-1744**" was given in May by Tony Beckles Willson. Known to all for the indispensable part he played in creating the Museum, Tony's words on a subject to which he has devoted many years were eagerly awaited and received with enthusiasm. It is probably true to say that no-one else living could have given this lecture, involving as it did intimate knowledge not only of Twickenham and its history but of the many larger-than-life contemporaries who gathered around Pope. The immediate response of many in the audience was to ask that the lecture be turned into a publication. This is in train.

Next year the lecture will be given by Kathy White, author, with the late Peter Foster, of *BUSHY PARK, Royals, Rangers and Rogues*. The subject: **The Water Gardens in Bushy Park**. Watch for the announcement of the date which will be arranged to mark the opening of the exhibition noted above.

Accessions & Donations

In the course of the year visitors bring small items to the Museum, sometimes making an outright gift, sometimes just to show us something interesting, perhaps for an opinion. The rule is that gifts are kept safely until they can be assessed by the accessions committee and either accepted with thanks or politely returned as unsuitable.

A donor will occasionally return hoping to see their item on display. They may rest assured that it will

appear. We are proposing to obtain a suitable display cabinet for "Recent Acquisitions".

There have been a number of donations this year:

- An early bronze age **flint arrow head** dating from 2500 to c1600 BC, brought in by our youngest donor yet, 14 year-old Jamie Hepworth.



- A small **silver chalice and paten** fashioned from the trowel used to lay the first stone of Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham Green, in 1841, presented to Archdeacon Cambridge, on extended loan.



- A fine **modern press edition** of a letter from Alexander Pope to Lord Bathurst, with an introduction by Howard Erskine-Hill given by Alan Bell, son-in-law of Professor John Butt.

- A 3" diameter stone **cannon ball** found in her garden in Lebanon Park by Patricia Woram.

- Trevor Baylis has kindly donated one of his **clockwork radios**, possibly at the instigation of Stephen Frankling (ex-pupil of Fortescue House School)

- An unknown donor deposited a view of Lord Kilmorey's mansion, **St Margaret's House** by the river at St Margarets. Kilmorey also owned Gordon House next door, in the grounds of which is the much-travelled mausoleum which he erected to the memory of his mistress, Patricia Hoste.



- Jean Dudley Hardy, the last of the Higgs family of undertakers, has given us a small collection of family memorabilia. Look out for a piece about the Flying Undertaker on the website. Among the collection are photographs of a flood at The Dip, just along from the family business (now Higgs & Saunders), shown here. Note the advertising.



We are looking after a tanged **arrowhead**, found in East Twickenham. This small iron artifact is the subject of an enquiry to the Museum of London

The Imperial War Museum rang to offer us a collection of **books and manuscripts** connected with Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff (at York House 1876-96). These had been delivered anonymously, in a black plastic bag, after closing time. They were sent out to Twickenham, appraised and, following consideration, passed on to two delighted family descendants, one of whom has a business in Teddington.

New Publications



Among a number of publications out in the last year and available at the museum is: *Sion Row, Twickenham*, the museum's Occasional Paper no.3. It is a history of the Row, built in 1721, its occupiers and, together with Montpelier Row, the earliest terrace of houses in Twickenham.

Two books written by Ed Harris are also in print: *Mr Giltron's Enumeration, a Walk through Whitton History*, about Whitton village at the 1901 Census, and: *Twickenham: the History of the Cathedral of Rugby*, a survey of its 80 year life here.

Michael Lee's book, *The Making of Modern Twickenham* describes the growth of the town in the 20th century.

Two publications by the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society are also available: *Hampton 1915-1937*, by John Sheaf and *Hampton Wick, the Story of a Thameside Village*, by Paul Barnfield.

A Brief Account of Sandycombe Lodge, The Twickenham House of J M W Turner, R A, funded by the Friends of Turner's House and written by Catherine Parry-Wingfield is also available.

The Website: virtual reality

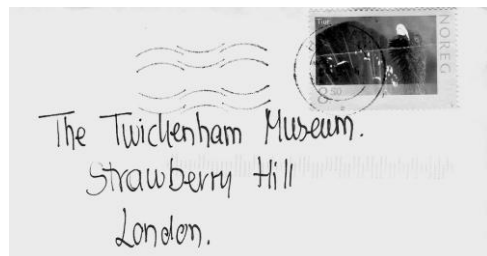
Last year we reported that visitor numbers had climbed to a running annual total of 156,000. Since then the figure has increased to nearly 234,000. This is approaching 650 visitors worldwide in any 24 hour period. Numbers are still increasing, though at a slower rate. We also hear from our visitors from time to time, usually seeking assistance with their own research,

though we cannot offer help with family history: a growth industry.

One or two visitors assume that the contents of the website derive from a larger archive held at the museum, and ask to visit to carry out their own research. The website is both exhibition and archive in its own right based on material not necessarily available in the museum though supported by bibliographical references. We do not have space for study facilities, which is the principal reason for the creation of the website. One visitor, interested in Alexander Herzen, a transient resident of Teddington in 1863/4, was surprised that we did not have a substantial archive about the man. This has provoked thought about how to describe the facilities available. We propose to recast the information on the homepage shortly to clarify this.

Correspondence – a selection

A letter came from Håkon Edverdsen in Norway, enquiring about Horace Walpole's goldfish bowl in which his cat, Selima, drowned. The bowl was brought to Strawberry Hill and displayed, with a memorial note. The letter, with its telegraphic address, shown here is a credit to the Royal Mail.



Another correspondent, Tony Wheeler was interested in the picture of an aeroplane with Russian pilot allegedly crash-landing on a house in Lebanon Park Twickenham in 1917 (see "TWICKENHAM AS IT WAS", photo 23). Was it true and what was the model? No, actually this picture was not of our crash: it was in Palmer's Green, but we found the model, French, like the pilot (a Blériot, illustrated here).



A correspondent reported seeing an engraving of Pope's Villa at the Carolina Augusteum Museum in Salzburg. This led, during the 250th anniversary of the birth of Mozart, to an exchange with the Director, Dr Schaffer. The engraving, published by Carrington Bowles, probably in 1764 is quite well known. Dr

Schaffer suggested it could have come from the collection of Mozart's father Leopold, acquired during the family visit to London in 1764/5. So, did they visit Twickenham? It is a tantalising thought which awaits further research.



Natasha Pardoe wrote: *I found a very old looking glass bottle a while ago & it has the name "GORDON - JONES Ltd TWICKENHAM" embossed on the side.....* We replied: *The only Gordon we know of, a Mr W Gordon, had an orchid nursery on Amyand Park Road towards the end of the 19th century. How big is the bottle? Beer? Lemonade? ...The bottle is 8½ inches tall & in the shape of a beer bottle, but it's made of very thick clear glass... found under an asphalt floor in a shop cellar, so it could have been weed killer..... Therefore, the orchid nursery may be where it came from. Thanks again for your help....*

The Deputy Editor of *Astronomy Now* magazine asked for a picture of Alfred, Lord Tennyson (living in Montpelier Row 1850/53) to accompany a piece about his "astronomical" interests.

Leslie Brown, from Bristol, sent a menu for Lady Clifton Robinson's Molesey Regatta Garden Party for 21 July 1906. The Robinsons were living at Garrick's Villa at this time where, as owners of the new tram company, they had a private terminus for their own convenience. The Regatta continues to this day. The menu is tied with a black & white ribbon, the colours of both Molesey Amateur Regatta and Boat Club.

Rosemary Cross wrote to ask about her great-grandfather, George Cross, a London City Missionary in Twickenham and Whitton, working from 1854 to 1871. She has sent a copy of George's Mission Report

And so to bed – the Indian rope trick?

We have at last said goodbye to a divan bed made for Jack Ellis and long taking up valuable storage space. Our interesting staircase made it necessary to deliver the bed through the second floor window. It was a surprise to at least one trustee to find that a virtually new bed, specially made for its owner, could not be given away to someone who had nothing to sleep on, in case it burst into flames.

for 1859, which details his work amongst the poor of Twickenham since he joined in 1854. He lived in Chestnut Grove Twickenham.

Melinda Rockwell wrote from Nassau: *I am desperately trying to find the graves and any information on my ancestors who owed york house, anne damer and alexander johnston- my 5th great grandfather was the brother of louisa johnston and first cousin of anne damer..... is there a historian you might put me in touch with? -anything is welcome!!!!* ...and received a reply: *No call for desperation! Anne Seymour Damer (1749-1828) died in London and was buried next to her mother at Sundridge, in Kent. Sir Alexander Johnston (1775-1849) died and was taken for burial at Carnsalloch in Dumfriesshire.*

The House

Recent visitors can hardly have failed to notice the external redecoration performed by Trevor Hartley. The white paint is brilliant, beautifully applied after meticulous preparation.

We are fortunate in sharing our small courtyard with a pleasant neighbour whose lovely floral arrangements may be spied through the little window on the stairs.

The Volunteers & Others

This stalwart band numbers about 50 and their continuing interest and loyalty to the enterprise underwrites its undoubted success. There have been temporary set-backs during the year: both Colin White and Geoffrey Morgan suffered ill-health, from which they have emerged, not unscarred, but with enthusiasm restored. We are grateful to Paul Kershaw who, ever willing, gave unstinted help while Geoffrey was away.

Invidious though it may appear to only name a few, we also pay tribute to our long-serving chairman Peter Payan whose devotion to the museum sets an example to us all. Also, Suzannah Herbert (House Manager), Ralph Cox (Facilities Manager) and Maurice Parry-Wingfield (Honorary Auditor), whose efforts behind the scenes help to provide the basis on which our success has been built

