



The Twickenham Society

www.twicksoc.org.uk

Eel Pie Update

Issue 3 - Nov 2002

SOCIAL EVENT



This year's Summer Social Event took place in the Long Gallery and the Waldegrave Drawing Room of Horace Walpole's House, Strawberry Hill. We were grateful for the wine and finger buffet provided by Strawberry Hill Enterprises.

For most people it was the first opportunity to see the portrait of Brian Parker painted by son Jonathan and it was a pleasure to welcome the new Mayor Doug Orchard, a member of the Committee, our MP Vincent Cable and the Chairman of the Friends of Strawberry Hill and about 40 members. Most people approved of the new venue in spite of higher costs and the refreshments were excellent.

Jason Debney of the Thames Landscape Strategy talked to us about river landscapes in general but could not contain his enthusiasm for Arcadia in the City the celebrations for the view from Richmond Hill protected by an Act of Parliament passed in 1902. (Many of us have enjoyed other events run to celebrate Arcadia including the exhibition at Orleans House)

RIVERSIDE

The newly elected Conservative Council reviewed the financial aspects of the scheme proposed by Dawney Day. At a Special Cabinet meeting on 31 July the Council decided to terminate negotiations with Dawney Day on its Riverside development scheme.

The Society has been working closely with other local Societies etc in raising objections to the scheme and in supplying information to the Government Office for London and The Planning Inspectorate for a possible Public Inquiry.

We will continue to work with the Terrace Group, the York House Society, the Marble Hill Association, the Eel Pie Island Association, The Friends of Twickenham Green, the Strawberry Hill Residents Association, The Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, Thames Eyot residents and other interested individuals.

We have prepared a document which was circulated at our meeting on 26 September. Jack made a short presentation to the meeting and all present were happy to endorse the approach. We have concentrated on the principles eg that the site should focus on the river rather than the Town Centre. This also means that we are not at this stage endorsing the Terrace Scheme as such but it and other schemes fit well with the principles. More copies available from Jack as hard copy or email attachment.

Although the Council have decided not to continue discussions with Dawney Day the Public Enquiry may still go ahead in January. We and the other groups involved in the Steering Group submitted our evidence in time for the 6 August deadline. We understand that Dawney Day have not yet submitted their evidence.

The Mayor's Parlour

The Mayor invited representatives from local groups to a small reception and the opportunity to see his chosen pictures for his year. We were able to take a few people to join others from the Twickenham Local History Society, the York House Society and the Twickenham Museum. Jonathan Parker, the artist and son of Brian was able to admire the portrait. We were grateful to Doug for suggesting it should hang in the Parlour. If anyone would like to see the Portrait please contact me – it can be arranged. If anyone else would like to contribute to the portrait please forward donations clearly marked to The Treasurer Richard Spires 70 Popes Ave.



Geoffrey Morgan, Heather Morgan, Fraser Cullen,
Jack Betteridge and Miriam King

POPE – THE VANDAL?

Recently I was going round Wookey Hole near Wells in Somerset. To my surprise the guide said: "This is Chamber Two, the great hall. It is 70' high. The stalactites have been vandalised by visitors.... the wealthy poet Alexander Pope hired soldiers with muskets and they put straw on the floor and they fell. He built a grotto, and it is still there today apparently, and there is a pub near there called Pope's Grotto". Since this version repeated what another guide said to another tour I was on in April, it is clearly the standard repertory of the staff guides. In the museum attached to the caves the charge is repeated. There is even an illustration of the foul deed being done.



A wallboard headed "Cave Vandals Ancient and Modern" includes the text *"the poet Alexander Pope about 1745 built an artificial grotto at Twickenham and was presented with calcite "petrifications" from Wookey Hole. It is said that men with muskets shot down stalactites from places where they could not be reached with ladders"*

Note that there is no proof provided ("it is said...") and that Pope died in 1744. The earliest known sketch of the caves dates from 1757. I looked in Maynard Mack's authoritative biography of Pope – and there is no mention of this event. I looked in Tony Beckles Willson's book about the building of the Grotto published in 1998 – and in a footnote he calls it "fiction". He describes the "second stage" in the building of the grotto – established between 1720 and 1739 – when Pope became interested in adorn-

ing the walls and ceiling with minerals and coloured rocks. This mainly arose from his friendship with Ralph Allen of Prior Park near Bath, and from Pope's visits to his friend, who supplied him with ores, spars crystal and stone. This was the time from 1740 described as "a new surge of grottofying". I looked through the letters exchanged between Pope and Allen – there is an edition in St Mary's College library – and they often refer to "cargoes of stone", and "shipping of rockworks"(March 1740) to cargoes of minerals and spars from Cornwall (May 1740) and to Mr Allen's zeal (July 1740). But nowhere is there mention of an expedition to Wookey Hole, or of Wookey as a source of stalactites.

In December '98 the Managing Director of the Caves, Peter Haylings, visited St James School (on the site of the former villa) and issued the headmaster with a "pardon" for this "act of vandalism", printed on their own handmade paper. It was a publicity stunt, which implied that the deed took place; it was not an apology for getting it wrong. The deputy headmaster said at the time "It is quite novel to be cleared of something you did not know you had done". Haylings even called for the return of the stalactites – rather like the Elgin marbles. But much of the grotto was buried two centuries ago when the villa was knocked down by Lady Howe.

Tony Beckles Willson wrote to the Times in December 1998 to point out that evidence unearthed by the British Cave Research Association cleared Pope, and suggests that Pope acquired a stalagmite (sawn off from the ground) from a Mr Bruce, who may possibly have been Charles Bruce, later the fourth Earl of Elgin. This new research, while suggesting that material from "Okey-Hole" did make its way to the grotto, nonetheless makes clear Pope had no part in its removal.

So if this new research has been published, and a "pardon" was issued four years ago, why do guides at the caves still persist in repeating the charge of vandalism? I challenged my guide in the cave in front of the tourist group: he said he had never heard of the pardon, did not know what its purpose was, and was completely unaware of any of the press coverage or subsequent correspondence.

It is time for Mr Haylings to admit they are peddling a myth, and instruct his guides to stop doing so – and take down his wall boards. Or else produce some evidence for what they tell thousands of visitors a year.

Peter Hill

26 SEPTEMBER – THE OPEN MEETING

The meeting was attended by about 35 members and we had a very lively discussion. There were some wistful thoughts about the extent of the demographic and social change in the Twickenham area and strong feelings that the Twickenham Society should continue to influence decision makers e.g. the Council, the RFU, local developers, businesses etc. The meeting also endorsed the approach of being apolitical, balanced and full of commonsense! As a Society we should concentrate on the Big Issues but we accepted that sometimes small issues can have a Big Impact on our lives (e.g. Traffic and Parking). The Riverside Steering Group had been an excellent example of local societies working together which people would like to see happen in other circumstances e.g. socially or for talks. The Twickenham Society acting as the umbrella organisation for the smaller societies was appreciated.

Judith also explained her idea of inviting other Societies to attend our AGM and bring samples of their newsletters, programmes and books with John Inglis to tell us about running a Community Newspaper online.

The Twickenham Talks are still enjoyed and should continue. In summary we should not just focus on the Twickenham area but should extend our interest to the wider context of Richmond and Teddington and any other areas with a historic link. Some of the subjects suggested were:

- Mogden and London sewers in general
- Brookwood and Twickenham Cemeteries
 - Francis Francis
 - St Augustines Whitton
- The Loss Adjusters Story by David Harper
 - Warwick Castle
- Garrick Temple and the Garrick Club

I also received some letters and messages from people who were unable to come to the meeting.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Thames River Boat Project

On 9th August an intrepid band of 10 set off to join the Richmond Venturer in Kingston for a full



day trip downstream. We felt very brave as the rain was pouring and the weather forecast not encouraging. Anthony Holly was our leader for the day and he delivered the safety instructions and plan for the day as the rain beat down on the

deck and we covered down below. We were extremely pleased when Anthony popped his head down five minutes later to say "The rain has stopped". We didn't look back after that and the day was brilliant. We reached Hammersmith around 1.00pm having travelled further than we had dared to expect and had a pleasant voyage back to Kingston.

Painshill Park

A footnote just to record that this trip had to be cancelled as only 3 people wanted to go!!!

Communications by eMail

Printing and sending communications to members is our biggest expense. If you would like to receive future communications, including Eel Pie

Update by eMail then please send a mail with your name and address to:
membership@twicksoc.org.uk.

Forthcoming Events

Friday 8th November
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Annual General Meeting

Friday 6th December

CHRISTMAS PARTY
7.30pm at the RFU

Courtesy of the RFU
No charge but you must have a ticket!
Contact David King on 8892 3979

Transport: 281 bus stops outside

Thursday 13th February 2003
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Angela Kidner
of the Environment Trust

Thursday 27th March 2003
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Speaker being approached

Wednesday 30th April 2003
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Tony Arbour
Leader of the Council

Thursday 23rd May 2003
TBA

Annual Social Event

This Issue has been sponsored by the RFU



RFU plan to complete development of Twickenham Stadium

The Rugby Football Union recently unveiled plans to build a new South Stand, including a hotel and other facilities at Twickenham Stadium. The RFU will be consulting widely on these plans and a series of public exhibitions will be announced at the end of October. Please see local press for details.

Twickenham Society Executive Committee Members

Judith Lovelace, Chair
30 Strawberry Hill Close, Twickenham TW1 4PX
Telephone: 8404 4370

Judith.Lovelace@twicksoc.org.uk

John Bell, Vice Chair
34 Albion Road Twickenham TW2 6QJ
Telephone: 8898 9618

John.Bell@twicksoc.org.uk

Roger Hackett, Honorary Secretary
12 Haggard Road, Twickenham TW1 3AF
Telephone: 8891 2565

Roger.Hackett@twicksoc.org.uk

Richard Spires, Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

70 Popes Avenue Twickenham TW2 5TT
Telephone: 8898 6355

Richard.Spires@twicksoc.org.uk

David King, Social Events Secretary
9 Talma Gardens, Twickenham TW2 7RB
Telephone: 8892 3979

Philip Morgan, Assistant Secretary
85 Heathfield South Twickenham TW2 7SR
Telephone: 8892 6044

Jack Betteridge - Telephone: 8891 4159
14 Aquarius, Eel Pie Island, Twickenham TW1 2EA
Jack.Betteridge@twicksoc.org.uk

Fraser Cullen - Telephone: 8241 9119
12 Gothic Road, Twickenham TW2 5EH
Fraser.Cullen@twicksoc.org.uk

Doug Orchard - Telephone: 8977 3516
66 Sixth Cross Road, Twickenham TW2 5PD
Douglas.Orchard@twicksoc.org.uk

Bill Thompson - Telephone: 8892 6560
22 Egerton Road Twickenham TW2 7SP

New RFU store for Twickenham town centre

A new RFU store will open in York Street, Twickenham at 2pm on Friday 1st November. The Twickenham Stadium South Stand model and project team will be at the store after 2pm and all day on Saturday 2nd November.