



# The Twickenham Society

[www.twicksoc.org.uk](http://www.twicksoc.org.uk)

## Eel Pie Update

Issue 4 - May 2003

### Christmas Party



We were grateful to Fraser Cullen and the RFU for treating us to a magnificent party in the England Rugby Internationals Club at our December meeting. Many people found their way on a chilly evening to a great reception where the model for the South Stand was on show and where old friends could meet. We were pleased Doug Orchard could attend as Twickenham Society Committee member and current Mayor.

### Last AGM

The AGM on 7th November 2002 was a great change from previous years as we did not have a formal slot for a speaker. John Inglis and Jill Sanders found some brilliant technology in order to demonstrate Twickenham- on- line to everyone on a large screen. After the formalities members were free to circulate and talk to all the local groups who had come with books literature, flyers, programmes and Christmas cards. There were representatives from the York House Society, the Borough of Twickenham History Society, the Friends of Radnor Gardens, The Teddington Society, The Friends of Twickenham Green, The Friends of Strawberry Hill and the Strawberry Hill Residents Association. The event was voted a success particularly as it underlined the recent months of co-operation between the local amenity groups around the future of the Twickenham Riverside.

This issue of  
Eel Pie Update  
has been sponsored  
by the RFU



### Riverside

Since election in May, the new Council has been engaged in a major rethink on development of the site. It has sought the opinions of many local groups, including the **Twickenham Society**. The result is three detailed reports to the Cabinet. The main recommendations are summarised below:

- **The site will not be sold off immediately** for independent development. The Council will decide on a scheme it feels appropriate.
- **The long term future of the site is for a high-quality, low density development fully compliant with the planning guidelines and spirit of the 1991 Planning Inspector's report.** There will be a significant public asset, a limited amount of enabling commercial development (residential; A3, i.e., restaurant/café uses) and A1 retail). There will be a Piazza and/or square to differentiate the public open space from the commercial elements of the scheme, and other "public benefits", e.g., a viewing tower, a fountain or other distinctive feature for public enjoyment.
- **The public asset will be chosen through a competition called "The Twickenham Challenge".** It is intended that the selected scheme will attract significant sponsorship, which will ensure its quality and future. The competition is now under way and five proposals have been received.
- **In the short term, part of the site, closest to the river, will be cleared to create a public open space and a children's' playground.** The remainder, about 2/3 of the total will remain secured.
- **No design competition.** Council to fully consider procurement options.
- **Public consultation will be via the planning process and by inviting comments on specific proposals.**

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, **Tom McKeivitt**, the Council Officer responsible for the pool site, gave a presentation of the Council's plans at a public meeting organised by the Society, in conjunction with other amenity societies.

There was overall support for the long-term scheme, which addresses many of the concerns raised in the past by members of the Society, e.g. need for public open space, a good public asset. However, many felt that a stronger commitment by the Council to a river-related development was needed and that the short-term scheme could be improved. Inevitably, the fresh approach is provoking new questions about the details and the debate will continue as the proposals for the Twickenham Challenge are unveiled.

In the mean time the Council is pressing on and a planning application for the short-term scheme was made just before Easter.

## Eel Pie Island

For many Eel Pie Island conjures up images of a raffish, bohemian place where the spirit of the Rolling Stones, the Who and the best of British trad jazz lives on, where the inhabitants are seriously eccentric and hearty rowers provide an example of what one could do to keep fit, if only one had the energy.

Middle aged pilgrims to the Island visibly weaken at the knees, go gooey-eyed as they recall their memories of enjoyment that must have been intense. Sadly, the hotel that was a pleasure haunt for 33,000 members and their friends now accommodates just 18 families. Clearly a social loss to the Borough, if not the Nation. It is the threat of further gentrification that alarms Islanders today.

The Island provides great visual enjoyment to promenaders on the Embankment, and it is the home of one of the last working river fronts on the whole of the Thames. Large river boats are regularly seen moored off Eel Pie Slipways, because that is now the only boatyard upstream of Gravesend, where such craft can be repaired and certified for safety. The Rowing Club, has been active for over 100 years.

Less obviously, there is plethora of small businesses that based on the Island that provide employment for architects, carpenters, sculptors, artists, designers, musical instrument makers, a blacksmith and many others. It is a small industrial village in the heart of Twickenham.

Like all villages, it is under threat. The boatyards are under threat, because they are worth far more as a site for riverside residential developments. The Rowing Club, which has been active for over 100 years, is under threat because of the difficulties of parking. Even the Richmond Yacht Club has been around for 30 years on the island.

It is not fanciful to imagine that by a process of creeping development, the whole of the Island could be residential within the next 10-20 years and that there would be no boating activity to be seen. What a boring outcome that would be. No wonder that all of those who support the Thames Landscape Strategy are keeping a wary eye on steps that need to be taken to preserve this urban gem.

## Important dates

- 1635**-The first place of public entertainment in Twickenham-"A Boulding Alley"
- 1724-9** George II built Marble Hill House for his mistress, local tradesmen built chalets on the Island for theirs.
- 1737**- An INN - "*The Ship*" later "*The White Cross*"- a dingy wooden cottage
- 1830** -The Hotel Charles Dickens (*Nicholas Nickleby*, *Little Dorrit*) Boating parties
- 1860** Rowing Club founded
- 1880** Club house built (John Goldie of Cambridge a prominent member)
- 1920s** "A risqué place to go"- a ferry & tea dances
- 1950's** Trad jazz
- 1957** Eel Pie Island pedestrian bridge "Snapper Bridge". Designed by Giffords, ranks with Severn bridge as innovation in engineering, according to English Heritage.
- 1960's** Rolling Stones & The Who  
- Mods & Rockers-"*to escape from the fight I dived through the window and into the river fully dressed*", recalls a respectable gentleman 30 years later
- Hippie era - Alan Ginsberg visits
- 1971** Hotel, now derelict, burns down
- 1972** Aquarius estate built on old hotel site
- 1973/1974** Phil Collins launches his career from new Richmond Yacht Club
- 1985-present** Eel Pie Marine develops business units for dental laboratory, carpenter, artists and craftsmen
- 1987** the bridge was seriously damaged as a gas main was bolted on; one of the two cables holding it together was severed in 8 places
- 1993** damage was discovered, and it was recognised the bridge could collapse under its own weight. There followed an epic battle to get British Gas to repair the damage their sub-contractors had caused
- Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 1996** Eel Pie Marine burns down with destruction of many studios and small businesses. Eel Pie Slipways and some of the businesses saved.
- Aug 1997** Bridge closed for safety. Ted Leppard provides a ferry service
- Aug 8<sup>th</sup> 1998** Footbridge reopened
- 2002** Work starts on the first of Henry Harrison Phoenix Dock redevelopment of the "ash tray" site. Aim is to provide a boat shed and workshops.
- 2003** Henry Harrison instructed by the Council to remove modifications of design that would prevent use of the "boat shed" as a boat shed.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS



Costs of running the Society and its events have crept up over the last few years with no similar increase in subscriptions. The Committee put a proposal to the last AGM which was agreed.

All subs for individuals rise to £7.50 per person for the calendar year 2003 and future years. Please pay by Standing Order or cheque or cash and send in the slip below.

All life Members will be asked during this year if they would wish to make any further donation to the Society's funds.

*Judith Lovelace*

## UDP Proposed amendments meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> March

The Leader of the Council invited Judith Lovelace to Chair a public meeting on amendments to the Unitary Development Plan which is only reviewed every 10 years. There were many issues where objections had been raised and some 200 people who attended and many articulate speakers from the floor. As expected many issues were broadly around changing the designation of Metropolitan open land. Others were details which could change the feel of an small but important local area. The Society has not yet made any formal comments but plans to do so. Please let us know if you wish us to consider points for inclusion in an overview document.

## RFU Planning Application

The RFU has been in the news as the Rolling Stones' Concerts in August have been advertised and the tickets have sold like hot cakes.

The RFU have consulted local people as individuals and in groups and as their representative Societies and Associations about the development of the South Stand. The Planning Application has been submitted and the RFU is awaiting a Planning Committee date.

## Angela Kidner's Talk

Angela came as current Chair of the Environment Trust for Richmond to give us an up-to-date overview of the Trust's successes over the years with slides and some interesting marketing material. She was surprised at the instant success of the book **The Thames Hampton to Richmond Bridge** by **David McDowall** in the series "**The Walker's Guide**". We were delighted to discover that the sketch maps and line drawing were by Angela herself.

## Fair on the Green 26<sup>th</sup> May

Last year we were unable to support the H.A.N.D.S. Fair on Twickenham Green because of the extended Jubilee weekend and so many conflicting pressures on peoples time. This year we shall be back with a Twickenham Society stall and we hope other Societies will join us. We shall be an information point not selling goods. If you have ornaments china glass or books please consider supporting the Twickenham Rotary Club stall (contact **David Howden** on **01932 243406**) or the Friends of Twickenham Green stall (contact **John Bell** **8898 9618**)

## Forthcoming Events

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Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2003  
7.30 pm on the Richmond Venturer  
at her moorings by Kingston Bridge

Annual Social Event  
and Thank You party for Derek Plummer

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Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May

10:00pm - 4:00pm

The Fair on Twickenham Green

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Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June  
Visit to Peter and Rosemary Hill's home in  
Chard, Somerset for lunch.

Make your own way there.  
Ticket required.

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Sunday June 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Music Day 2003  
in Radnor Gardens

Sponsored by the RFU



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Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July  
12:00 noon - 2:00pm  
Garden Party  
30 Strawberry Hill Close  
Ticket required

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Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September  
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Ray from Sandy's  
"Fishy Tales of Twickenham"

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Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October  
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Stephanie Kirkpatrick  
Curator of the Richmond Museum

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Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November  
19:30-21:30 St Mary's Church Hall

Annual General Meeting  
and speaker

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