

Representing the views of all who live in the historic Thameside village of Strawberry Hill

No. 144 December 2010

## Christmas begins with carols and mince pies

**C**hristmas gets under way in Strawberry Hill at 6 p.m. on Friday 17th December with carols, hot mince pies and mulled wine.

The village Christmas tree in Wellesley Parade, decorated by local children, will be unveiled by the Mayor, Cllr David Marlow, at 6.30 p.m. Cllr Marlow will also start the carol singing led by the Strawberry Hill Singers.

Now in its eighth year, the tree and carols-singing ceremony is made possible by residents' subscriptions, which fund the purchase and decoration of the tree. Richmond Council will also provide some monies, but requires matching funding from SHRA.

Mulled wine, pies and soft drinks for the children are paid for from subscriptions, but this year we shall be seeking contributions to cover some costs and to make a donation to local children's charity The Roy Kinnear Foundation.

Bruce Duff, Joint Chairman of SHRA, says: "This Christmas event has become very popular. It is a focal point for local people to come together and to express the spirit of our community."

SHRA thanks Phil Rochford, at Sopa, the Thai restaurant, for allowing us to use their premises for serving wine and mince pies.

## In this issue

**I**n the last Bulletin we reported on two imminent events of national interest: the visit of Pope Benedict XVI and the re-opening of Strawberry Hill House. Both events were well reported in the national press, but we've given them a local perspective in two stories on page 3.

Our area is well served for schools, but demand at all levels remains high, so it comes as no surprise that two new ones are opening next year. Radnor House School, for boys and girls from 7 to 18, replaces St James School in Pope's Villa and will open next September. You can find an interview with the Assistant Head Master on the back page. For younger children, Strawberry Hill Pre-School will open in St James Parish Hall in January. This is an initiative by two local mums and you can read about their approach to early years education in this issue on page 4.

Unknown to most of us, there's a hive of activity at the top of Orford Gardens, where Strawberry Hill's beekeeper, Irek Gajowniczek, keeps some of his bees. Across the road Gill Cooke, the jam lady, sells her home-made jams and pickles. Down on Swan Island, Nicola Heathcote teaches sewing skills and yoga. Our roving reporter has been to visit them and you can read about these local entrepreneurs on page 2. We'd like to continue this theme of "hidden Strawberry Hill" in future Bulletins, so if you know about any similar but unpublished activities in our area, please let us know.

And finally, in a year in which Roman Catholics have had much to celebrate, we have commissioned an article which looks at the events which have contributed to the strength of the Catholic community in Strawberry Hill.

## Strawberry confection open to all

**M**aster Inigo Bellingham, youngest member of the Friends of Strawberry Hill, helps the Mayor and Mayoress (Cllr David and Jane Marlow) to cut the cake at the opening ceremony of the £9 million refurbishment of Horace Walpole's little Gothic castle, with a cake-hungry glance from Business Secretary Vince Cable.

The Friends are seeking helpers in all departments from reception to room attendants. Contact: 020 8744 3124, or see

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

You can read more about the opening on page 3.



Inigo Bellingham cuts the cake (picture by Richard Spires)

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# A duo of sweet delights

*There must be something in the air of Orford Gardens which promotes sweetness, as we discovered this autumn*

## G's bees create a baker's buzz

**I**t was the boys at Tiffin School where Irek Gajowniczek teaches art, who said he should label his jars, Honey from G's bees. Naturally, Irek designed the label himself. Irek produces about 200 lbs of honey from the three hives in his garden and three hives at his allotment.



*Irek with his hives in Orford Gardens*

He started making honey when he joined the Twickenham and Thames Valley Beekeepers Association four years ago. Now he supplies almost all his produce to Belmont, the Twickenham baker.

Strawberry Hill honey is light, rich and slightly minty in flavour, because of the local lime trees and exotic flowers in local garden.

As well as honey, Irek also makes candles from the bees' wax. He is now experimenting with raising smaller bees which he believes

might be more naturally resistant to bee diseases.

The native English variety, Buckfast Abbey bees, thrive better than imported varieties and he now gets his breeding queens from Denmark where Buckfast Abbey bees are raised in isolated island communities unadulterated by other bee varieties.

"Honey is reputed to be good for your health. I eat it every day and I rarely suffer from colds." says Irek.



*Irek's honey makes an ideal Christmas gift. You can now buy it at Peggy's Pantry in Tower Road*

look after, added to fruit and vegetables from their garden.

"Everything goes every year," says Gill, now aged 76. She also donates produce to local charities such as Probus. Production begins in June and has been as high as 620 lbs in one season.



*Gill Cooke in front of her house - "more jamjars, please!"*

## Gill the jam lady

**G**illian Cooke, the jam lady of Orford Gardens, is a Strawberry Hill institution. For nearly 20 years, from June to September, the distinctive sign in front of her house has proclaimed jam, pickle and chutney for sale. It's an honour system: just put your money in the box and take your pick. Hundreds do; and not only do they return each year, but become friends of Gill and Tony, her husband, as well.

Gill makes about 350 lbs of jam a year with fruit from the two allotments she and Tony

Gill is reticent about her recipes. 'It's not a secret, I make them up,' she says. Some of her jams are made from unusual fruits such as huckleberries and tayberries sourced from the allotment and from gifts from local growers.

Getting enough jars is always a concern and donations are eagerly sought.

She gets through about 500 1 lb and 12 oz jars each season. Husband Tony is a crucial partner in the enterprise. "He is my taster. He tastes every batch, especially the chutneys and pickles."

Gill adds, "When people ask me what I want, I say, 'more jamjars, please'."

## Nicola has the know-how at Sew-How

**S**wan Island's Nicola Heathcote has got the point, you might say, with her sewing classes for local ladies - and one or two lads as well. Her company Sew-How over-looking the river teaches sewing skills.

Nicola, who escaped from a hectic corporate lifestyle, set up Sew-How two years ago. "Lots of women have never learned to sew, but I also teach those with lots of experience," she says. "I even have a couple of young men keen to learn."

Her classes, in small groups of five people, last three hours and cover a wide range of sewing skills from dress-making to hemming. "Sewing is very calming, but practical, and people love it once they get started."

If that were not enough, Nicola also teaches Kundalin Yoga four times a week. Nor is that all. Nicola is expecting her first child next year and plans to franchise the Sew-How idea when the baby is born, "to keep me busy".



*Nicola Heathcote - "I even have a couple of young men keen to learn to sew"*

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## In brief...

### Station cladding is cracked

Work has begun on replacing the cladding on the footbridge at Strawberry Hill station following the discovery of cracks in the new woodwork.

The cracks are due to expansion of the wood which began during construction. The cost will be funded by the contractors.

### College travel survey and CPZ

SHRA has been in discussion with St Mary's University College on the results of the College's latest travel survey and its proposed plans, which aim to reduce the number of students who travel daily by car to the College and to promote the use of public and other sustainable means of transport.

Under the terms of the planning approval for the new sports hall, the college is committed to fund a new CPZ consultation for the area around the College. The appropriate timing for this will be agreed in due course.

### Planning

An application by MKG 3000 to erect a 3m high illuminated advertising sign in the garden by the path to Platform 1 at the station has been rejected by the Council's Planning Department.

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## Papal Visit

### St Mary's Big Day

The biggest day in the history of St Mary's University College started early for the residents of Strawberry Hill, when a low-flying police helicopter swept the area at 6.00 a.m.

By then Waldegrave Road was already awash with police, security guards manning all the entrances to the College grounds, TV crews assembling their equipment in Strawberry Hill Road and the first coaches full of schoolchildren arriving at the College.

Before long a street-cleaning vehicle was crawling down Waldegrave Road to ensure gutters passed muster; sniffer dogs were at work, and the police were hoisting a lone car onto their removal truck. By 8.00 a.m. a patient crowd of well-wishers out-numbered protesters, drowning them out when Pope Benedict XVI's motorcade swept into the College at 10.20 a.m., just 20 minutes behind schedule.



Pope Benedict XVI addresses religious leaders at St Mary's University College

Of the three elements of the visit to the College, the high point was clearly the Big Assembly, when Pope Benedict spoke at the open air event to around 3500 children drawn from Catholic schools across the country. His message, delivered in simple language, was in essence that the key to

happiness and fulfillment lies in communion with God.

The honour of hosting the occasion fell to Strawberry Hill because of the Pope's wish to have an educational theme on his visit to England. Pope Benedict is a former school teacher, and St Mary's College was the first Catholic teacher training college in England. Having an easily-secured campus, a large chapel and being close to Wimbledon where the Pope was staying during his visit to London, meant that the University College provided an ideal location.

## Strawberry Hill House opens with a party and welcomes residents

We asked Jenny Eynon, Assistant Property Manager, to tell us how the celebrations went

As I write, Strawberry Hill's doors have been open to the general public for exactly three weeks, and what a three weeks it has been! Since our grand opening party on 24th September (timed to coincide with Horace Walpole's 293<sup>rd</sup> birthday) and our public opening on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, we have been inundated with visitors from near and far wanting to be some of the first to see the restoration work.

Those of you who have already been around the house will hopefully have been lucky enough to see specialised craftsmen still at work. Carpenters, gilders, painters and conservators are all now putting the final touches to the end of phase one, which marks the end of the restoration of the state apartment and nearly all the ground floor rooms, as well as the installation of our shop, café and education unit. However, there is still plenty to do, and phase two will start in earnest during our closed season between 22nd December 2010 and 2nd April 2011 with restoration of further rooms, including Walpole's private bedchamber and the garden, which will also be restored to Walpole's design.

We have had some fantastic coverage in the press, both local and national, as well as some items on television, and the support from the local community has been fantastic. Thank you to all of you who came to our SHRA preview day on 25th September – nearly a whopping 300 of you! We sincerely hope you enjoyed getting your sneak preview, and that you will

continue to come back, not only to see the restoration progressing, but also to use our already popular café and shop, as well as to enjoy the gardens as they too get their 18<sup>th</sup> century facelift.

Our newly-launched website is now up and running, and timed ticket slots are filling up fast via the online booking system. So if you haven't already been to visit our little Gothic castle, please do visit the site and book a ticket:

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

Thanks again for the support of the SHRA Committee and its members throughout the restoration and we look forward to welcoming you to Strawberry Hill again soon.

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## Lisa and Rowena's Pre-school venture

**Childminders Lisa Neagle and Rowena Brimacombe are poised to set up Strawberry Hill's first pre-school in St James Church Hall in Radnor Road.**

Aimed at children aged between 2 1/2 and five years, the ethos will be learning through play, says Lisa. The school will be certified by OFSTED and there will be up to 32 children per class with one teacher for every eight children.

Pre-school activities will centre on six areas of child learning, from creative play to problem solving and language skills. The pre-school will open five mornings a week for three-hour sessions running from



Lisa and Rowena and some of their charges

9.15 to 12.15. The cost is £22 per session. "Children over three are funded by the Government," explains Lisa.

The two have been running playgroups in the hall since September and are now studying for foundation degrees in pre-school training.

Parents' open days will be held at 7.30 p.m. on 24th and 26th November and at 9.30 a.m. on 27th November. "There is a big demand for pre-schools in the area," says Rowena, "and we welcome parents' questions."

You can contact them on 07586370875 or: [Strawberryhillpreschool@gmail.com](mailto:Strawberryhillpreschool@gmail.com)

## Breakfast with the builders

**Alice Lennon has a date with the builders in Radnor Gardens most mornings. Alice is the daughter of Alan Dillon, who has taken over the café.**

"The builders from Strawberry Hill House and St James's School arrive from about 9.30 for a fry-up," says Alice. "Then the mums arrive at about 1 p.m. and again in the afternoon from 4.30 p.m. for tea and ice cream with the children."

Open seven days a week, the menu runs from salads, ciabattas to the daily specials and soups and even a student breakfast to tempt scholars from St Mary's.



Alice serves breakfast at Radnor Gardens Cafe

Alan Dillon might be better known to some by his singing alias, Harry Dolan. In his crooner guise, Alan/Harry performs locally in the style of smooth vocalists such as Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole and Buddy Holly. "We hope to put on a concert in the gardens, soon," adds Alice.

## Sun shines on Strawberry Hill Music and Fun Day

**At the RFU Music and Fun Day on the 18th July, we opened our strawberry-themed stall in sight of the gleaming white newly-renovated Strawberry Hill House. After a cool morning, a warm afternoon attracted a large crowd to hear the Acoustic Strawbs, the Mustangs and other bands.**

A team of volunteers manned the stall, slicing 40 lbs of strawberries and inserting them into sponge cakes, layering them on shortbread, tartlets, Pavlovas, millefeuille, cheesecake, and strawberry kebabs. Pints of cream were whipped, bowls of chocolate sauce were stirred and liberally applied to the homemade produce.

By 4 o'clock everything had been sold and the Association was richer by £317. This is longer than previous years and we believe it was due to the changed layout of the site as a consequence of the renovations: the North entrance on Waldegrave Road had been closed, meaning that visitors did not pass the food area on their way to and from the music area.

Secretary Clare Phelps organised the helpers and the strawberry treats were all made by residents, whom we thank for their generous donations.

### Distributors needed for Strawberry Hill Close and Bonser Road

**We are looking for people to distribute the Bulletin in Strawberry Hill Close and Bonser Road. It takes about half an hour, three times a year. Please contact: Clare Phelps or email:**

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Joint-secretary Clare Phelps serves a hungry customer, assisted by Robert Youngs and Pam Crisp

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# A history of Roman Catholicism in Strawberry Hill

*At the end of the year in which Catholics celebrated the visit by Pope Benedict XVI and the 125th anniversary of St James' Church, Robert Youngs looks at the way that Catholicism in our area has been influenced by the building of the church and the establishment of Catholic teaching institutions.*

**W**hen Alexander Pope came to live in Cross Deep in 1719 with his mother, he was perhaps the first Catholic in this area since the Reformation. This was a time when Catholicism in England was at a low ebb. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Catholics had been banned from teaching, holding public office, voting, living within 10 miles of London or owning land. Pope therefore leased a plot of land from Thomas Vernon, on which he built his villa and, later, the Grotto. Pope remains the most famous Catholic to have lived in what we now know as Strawberry Hill.

Most of the restrictions of civil liberties against Catholics continued until the Catholic Relief Act was enacted in 1829. At this time, the area was largely unpopulated, the exceptions being Pope's Villa, a few other large houses along Cross Deep and Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill.

Residential development had started by 1850 and St James' Catholic Church, in Popes Grove, was opened by Cardinal Manning in 1885. It was largely financed by a gift from James de Lacy Towle to Cardinal Manning for the purpose of building churches in the diocese of Westminster. It was consecrated in 1887, with Cardinal Manning preaching the sermon. Until then, Catholics in Twickenham had been worshipping at a house in Grosvenor Road.

In 1908, at the age of 19, the younger son of King Carlos of Portugal succeeded to the throne as Manoel II. After the Portuguese revolution of 1910, Manoel and his mother fled to England, eventually settling at Fulwell Park in 1913. They were regular worshippers at the church and were generous supporters. He presented a window depicting St Anthony to the church in 1932, the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the saint's death. The window, in the south wall (Pope's Grove end), contains the crest of the Braganza family and an



Alexander Pope



The St Anthony window in St James Church

inscription in Portuguese. Manoel died shortly after this, but the organ from the family chapel at Fulwell Park was donated to the church by his widow. It can be found in the organ loft over the sacristy, at the northwest corner.

The history of Catholic education in the area begins in 1914, when the Sisters of Mercy opened a convent school in response to a request from the Parish Priest of St James. The house, until recently called St Catherine's, still stands at the corner of Vicarage Road and Hampton Road. They moved in 1916 to Orford Lodge in Popes Grove, which stood opposite the end of Upper Grotto Road (the house was demolished in about 1930, to make way for new housing). The school moved to Popes Villa in 1919, the original of which had been demolished and rebuilt by Baroness Howe

in 1807/8. The extension on the opposite side of Cross Deep was built in 1928 and Pope's original tunnel through the grotto was used by the girls and staff. The Sisters vacated Popes Villa in 1995, when it was sold and became St James Independent School for Boys and now, in 2010, Radnor House School. There remains a small community of the Sisters of Mercy in Popes Grove.

After Walpole's death, Strawberry Hill was considerably extended by Lady Frances Waldegrave and eventually passed to Lord Michelham (after whom Michelham Gardens is named). In 1923 it was sold by Lord Michelham's widow to the Catholic Education Council. St Mary's College Catholic teacher training college in Brook Green, Hammersmith, unable to accommodate the increased demand for Catholic teachers, moved to Strawberry Hill in 1925.

The Vincentian Fathers (also known as the Congregation of the Mission), who had been put in charge of the college in 1899, moved into Walpole's house and additional buildings were added, including the chapel. Fortunately, the Vincentians made few changes to Walpole's house, thus preserving the fabric for the recent restoration. There was also a need for accommodation for student teachers sent to the College by Catholic religious communities. The Xaverian Brother, the Christian Brothers



Archbishop Nichols and children outside the church

## Horace Walpole and the Catholic influence

**A**lthough Walpole was certainly not a Catholic, his taste seems to have been influenced by Catholic art and culture: he welcomed visitors to his "little Gothic Castle" wearing a cardinal's hat, which he claimed had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey. In the introduction to his Gothic novel, the *Castle of Otranto*, he states that it was found in the library of "an ancient Catholic family in the north of England". And in a letter to Sir Horace Mann in 1759, he describes the Tribune in the house "to have all the air of a Catholic chapel – bar consecration!"

He would have been amused to learn that, 200 years later, the Tribune had been, in fact, consecrated and was in use as a chapel by the Vincentian Brothers while they occupied his house.



The Tribune - "all the air of a Catholic chapel - bar consecration!"

and the Presentation Brothers acquired houses to be used as hostels in Bonser Road, Strawberry Hill Road and Waldegrave Gardens. These houses remain in use to this day.

In 1992, the Vincentians relinquished their charge of the College and Dr Arthur Naylor was appointed the first lay Principal.

St James Church celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 18th July 2010 with a mass said by Archbishop Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster. Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Catholic education in the presence of 3500 young people at St Mary's University College (see a full report elsewhere in this Bulletin).

### References:

"The Parish of St James, Twickenham, UK, 1885-2008" by Tom Devitt. Available from St James Church, call 020 8892 4578 or see:

[www.st-james-twickenham.org.uk](http://www.st-james-twickenham.org.uk)

"Strawberry Hill. A History of the Neighbourhood" by Anthony Beckles Willson, third edition, 2010. Available from SHRA. For ordering details, see:

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

The Twickenham Museum's web site:

[www.twickenham-museum.org.uk](http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk)

# The renaissance of Radnor House



**D**avid Paton pauses among the cables and builders' equipment at the former St James's School in Cross Deep and says, "We seek added-value for our pupils, turning C pupils into A\* pupils. We will not be selective in only taking children who are already A\*."

David is the assistant headmaster of the new Radnor House School, which opens in September next year. A former investment banker, and a teacher for 10 years, David speaks the language of business as befits a school funded by venture capital investors.

The school is breaking new ground in many ways. A £1 million-plus conversion is under way which will see £300,000 spent on IT equipment and £150,000 on school furniture. A new all-day parents' café overlooking the river is planned. "It will be light and pleasant and encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school," he says.

Aiming for high academic standards, Radnor House is non-denominational. While the school will follow the standard subjects of



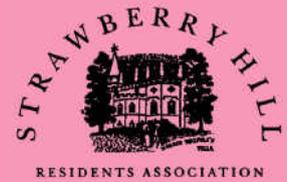
*David Paton, Assistant Head Master on the terrace*

the national curriculum, pupils will have the opportunity to learn about personal finance, along with an emphasis on the arts and sport.

Unlike many independent schools, Radnor House is not a charity and must make a profit in order to repay its investors. The co-educational school for children aged 7 to 18 years will take 320 pupils in the first year, with a teaching staff of about 50. Fees start at £4,000 a term for the younger children, rising to £4,600 a term at ages 13 to 15.

David invites all residents of Strawberry Hill to visit the school. "Robert Cook, the headmaster, and I want the school to play a full part in the life of the community. We look forward to welcoming visitors to Pope's Grotto regularly in the course of the year, for example, and a number of open days are planned."

He adds: "We start with a beautiful building in a lovely spot on the river and a superb environment for learning."



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