



Representing the views of all who live in the historic Thames-side village of Strawberry Hill

## No. 162 Winter 2016

### 'A marvellous centrepiece for the whole community...'

**... that is how the Post Office, run by Jayesh and Aparna Patel, was described by a long-term resident at their surprise retirement party held at Strawberry Hill Golf Club.**

Jay came to England from Uganda in 1972. He lived with his uncle, who owned a shop in Teddington, so Jay learned about running shops from an early age. He went to local schools and to university, where he studied computer science, and worked part-time in his brother's shop in Strawberry Hill.

Jay married Aparna in 1983 and together they took on the shop, when Jay's brother retired. Aparna gave up her job as an industrial chemist, and Jay as a systems analyst in the City.

As a general store, newsagent, stationers, dry cleaners and post office, the shop soon became the focal point of the village. After 33 years, the Patels have decided to retire. Members of the SHRA committee popped in to say goodbye on Jay and Aparna's last day at the post office, with some gifts as a thank you for their enduring work.

The real surprise was a party in their honour, held at the Golf Club, which was planned and run by a team of local residents led by Sue Read and Maggie Tague, from Orford Gardens. The party was a huge success, crowded with residents. 200 people accepted the invitation, delivered through letter boxes, and many queued to add their good wishes in a comment book.

Provided with a delicious array of food, the guests appreciated the chance to mingle with each other and, particularly, to express their best wishes to Jay and Aparna. These thoughts were echoed in the speeches by Stephen Tague, Dipesh Patel, and Jay himself.

The business was a real family affair. Dipesh and Dipali Patel, Jay and Aparna's children, grew up in Strawberry Hill and went to local schools. Both now young professionals, they remember their childhood, growing up and helping out in the village shop, with great fondness. However Dipesh and Jay both reserved particular praise for Aparna, who according to Jay 'was the back bone of the shop, who did all the ordering and displays.' He later said, 'if it wasn't for her time and commitment, I would have given up the shop ten years ago'.

Although Dipali was abroad and unable to attend the party, she was closely involved in the planning by phone both to the organisers and to her brother.

The leaving party was so very successful that many people commented on how good it would be to have more of such events in Strawberry Hill. As part of Jay's farewell speech, he said:

*"People say, what's so special about Strawberry Hill? But if you live in the village, you realise what is so special about it. Everytime someone comes to look at a house, the first thing I tell them is 'Until you move in, you will never get the feeling of it.' What I would say to you is please, try to do another gathering like this. I will organise it in the summer time."*

OK Jay, we are holding you to that!

**Jay and Aparna Patel were interviewed by SHRA Chair, David Cornwell**



David Cornwell, Chair of SHRA, with Aparna and Jay Patel.



Aparna and Jay Aparna Patel at the party.



Dipali and Dipesh Patel.

**Come along to the annual carol singing, Friday 9th December, from 6.00pm  
Radnor Gardens Cafe (See Page 5)**



# New postmaster



Anir Vora

Strawberry Hill  
50 Tower Road  
TW1 4PE



Kinjal Vora

We are very happy to report that the post office will continue to serve the village. It will be run by Anir and Kinjal Vora (*with initial help from Aparna*). New services and products will be added to those already established (such as dry cleaning, cash machine, penny sweets, greetings cards), and opening times will be extended. The post office will be open seven days a week,

Monday - Friday: 7.00am -7.00pm Saturday: 7.00am - 6.00pm  
Sunday: 7.00am - 1.00pm

We hope that residents will continue to support it. Anir and Kinjal will be happy to receive any suggestions on how they can improve the service the shop provides to residents. We really need a post office in the village, and our support as customers will be crucial.

## First impressions

Neil Coburn, Orford Gardens

After deciding to move with my family from Battersea to the broad Twickenham/Teddington area, we soon came across Strawberry Hill, a place I had barely heard of apart from a vague awareness from the departure boards at Clapham Junction. Approaching it for the first time, it almost feels like a secret enclave. My daughter's school friends insisted she made it up when she told them the name of our new home village.

We fell in love with our future home, but did not realise how special the place is until we moved in and then immediately the doorbell started ringing. In Battersea it would usually be a youth selling dusters at eye watering prices. Here it was an incredibly warm welcome from a procession of our new neighbours, including June, who we later found out is the legend who founded SHRA in order to prevent the entire village being replaced by a dual carriageway.

Events such as the summer drinks at the Radnor Gardens Café and the leaving do for the Patels have been great opportunities to meet people and instantly feel at home. While there are urban and suburban villages all over London, and my wife and I have lived in a fair few between us, the welcome here seems extra special. It is striking just how long people have lived here, as if the place has a magnetic attraction. Thanks to everyone who has made us feel so welcome!

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## Anthony Beckles Willson 1928 – 2016

With the death, in September, of Tony Beckles Willson, we have lost a stalwart of the area and a pre-eminent local historian. He served on the committee of the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association, as chair from 1986 to 1991, and worked tirelessly to improve the local environment for residents.

He was author of the definitive history of Strawberry Hill, *'Strawberry Hill: A history of the area'* (first published in 1991 and revised in 2010), was the founder of the Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust and was a prime mover in the opening of Twickenham Museum. In addition to fighting for the development of the museum, he used his professional experience as an architect to design and implement the changes necessary to turn a bequeathed 18<sup>th</sup> century cottage near the embankment into the attractive and much-loved museum that we know today.

Tony was particularly fascinated by our distinguished 18<sup>th</sup> century resident, Alexander Pope. In 2009, the owners of The Pope's Grotto Hotel, Youngs Brewery, decided they wished to project a more exciting, dynamic and modern image for their pub and so they decided to change the name to 'The Alexander'. When the new and expensive signage was erected at the front of the building, local

residents were outraged. The Strawberry Hill Residents' Association asked Tony to intervene and he wrote a reasoned letter to John Young, the Chairman of the Brewery, explaining the significance of Alexander Pope to the area. A compromise was reached, the signage was replaced at great expense and the pub became 'The Alexander Pope' – a relatively minor change but one which keeps Pope's name visible on Cross Deep opposite the site of his Villa.

Tony published four books on Pope: *'Alexander Pope's Grotto in Twickenham'*, *'Mr Pope and Others at Cross Deep'*, *'Mastiffs and Minerals in the life of Alexander Pope'* and *'Alexander Pope's Twickenham, 1719 – 44'*.

These books describe aspects of Pope's life and achievements from a local perspective. They are based on meticulous research and are widely appreciated by scholars and the general public worldwide.

All of this work naturally encompassed records of the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Pope's burial place. In 1997, Tony was appointed archivist; he organised parish records and published a history of the church.

His last research was into the people commemorated on the church monuments,



Anthony Beckles Willson opening the Twickenham Museum

published in *'The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Twickenham'* (2015).

This particular work supplied missing evidence for Pope's enormous influence on garden design in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is a fitting monument to its author.

**With grateful acknowledgement to Robert and Sue Youngs.** All books mentioned are available to buy from Twickenham Museum.

## An update from Strawberry Hill House

**Nick Dolan, Director of Strawberry Hill House Trust.**

What is it about a place that makes it special? At Strawberry Hill House and garden, we are trying to find out. We all have our own reactions to places: because they are familiar, or because they inspire a particular memory or emotion, or because we have a special interest, perhaps in architecture or history. So what really matters about Strawberry Hill House and Garden?

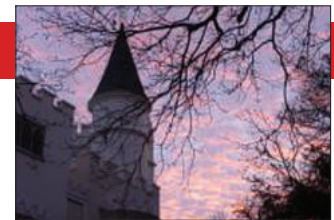
A recent gathering of staff, volunteers, Trustees, Guides, local people, and colleagues from different heritage venues shared ideas to try to get to the heart of what made Strawberry Hill House special.

Strawberry Hill House is certainly significant for the meticulous restoration of the building and interiors, recreating the era of its creator, Horace Walpole. Since opening in 2010 there has been a wealth of activity using the building as a visitor attraction, hire venue, and centre for learning and outreach.

But there is more to it than that. It was, and remains, an eccentric quirky 'plaything' house. Its bright white outside, in a tranquil and communal green setting, conjures thoughts of fantasy and fairy tales. No view is the same, inside or out. It is an outrageous mix of gothic detail, made deliberately old, to a total design. The luxurious colours and textures change in different light. Shadows and detail matter, with atmospheric 'gloomth' (a word invented by Walpole) as important as sunlit glory.

Detail and atmosphere are united by the singular, deliberately quirky, 18<sup>th</sup> century taste of the House's creator Horace Walpole – writer, man of letters, and friend.

Once crammed with a brilliant collection of all sorts, the interiors are now empty only of objects. They are actually packed with surface details, scrupulously accurate, beautifully made, and lovingly admired. Strawberry Hill House is a creative confection, designed as a progression through a series of stage sets, for showing off, using imagination, and sharing with friends. Being theatrical, what happens on stage is



important: the show matters, to properly immerse, surprise and delight the audience. Always liked, never loathed, the House has experienced changes of fortune. It was saved because of its architectural significance, and the affection and emotion which it inspires. Now it has significance because it was saved, and how it was saved, and people feel loyalty and affection for it.

So, discover and celebrate the remarkable survival of the quirkiest of places – very considered, very sensory, very Horace Walpole - right on your doorstep!

Please check our website:

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

for our winter opening and events programme – your support is very gratefully received, and a warm welcome awaits.

**Best wishes of the season!**



## Developments at St Mary's University

**Four months on and we can shed a little more light on St Mary's University's plans for the future which were still very much up in the air when we reported on them in our last Bulletin in the summer.**

A new Corporate Plan was launched in mid-October (available on their website) which sets out the University's vision for its growth and development until 2025. Most importantly, the Plan confirms that the University will remain centred on its campus here at Strawberry Hill. Its vision involves St Mary's building on its heritage as the UK's premier Catholic University, but still open and welcoming to all faiths. It plans to build on its academic strengths, particularly in areas such as sports and sports science, education, theology, public and social policy and the arts, and raise its profile by greater engagement at all levels with the wider community both locally, nationally and internationally and by partnering with overseas universities.

The Plan envisages growth in student numbers of 5% each year with a target of 7,500 students by the end of the Plan in 2025. This represents an increase on current numbers of around 40%, a large increase, but thankfully well below the near doubling in numbers which some of the earlier planning had indicated (see our Summer Bulletin 161). This is planned to be accompanied by a near doubling in teaching staff as the University seeks to increase the ratio of staff to students over the same period.

What does all this mean for us residents of Strawberry Hill? Certainly more traffic and pressure on parking. Even before any expansion, the current pressures from student parking have put the need for more restrictive residents-only parking on the agenda of Council officials. What it means for development of the campus, another major concern of residents, is less clear.

The Plan contains a broad statement about improving campus facilities but no detail is given. At the time of writing we are awaiting a further meeting with the University to discuss the Plan, and the proposals for the campus will be a major focus of our enquiries. As the majority of undeveloped land on the campus is protected Metropolitan Open Land, we are expecting previous commitments by both the Council and the University to respect this protection to be honoured, and for any significant development on the site to be by way of sympathetic enhancement or redevelopment of buildings on the current footprint. We will keep you informed in future Bulletins as the plans and their potential impact on the area and on us, the residents, becomes clearer.



## Clare Phelps



We are very sad to report that Clare Phelps, who was a long serving Hon. Secretary of the Association, has died as a result of an accident while she was abroad on holiday.

Clare's love for Strawberry Hill, where she had lived for many years and brought up her family, and her energetic pursuit of everything she regarded as improvements to the surroundings of the village are legendary.

Last year's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition recounted many of her initiatives and, although she retired as Secretary in 2012, the committee has continued to be conscious of her friendly overview of its current concerns.

We send our deepest condolences to her husband Mike and her family.

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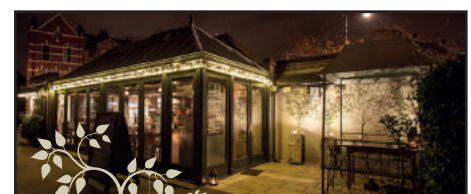
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## A Safer Neighbourhood

An update from Charles Owens, Chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board

**The nights have drawn in and the unscrupulous are on the lookout for houses in darkness. Leaving lights on is one idea but using timer lights is better. Some can be set for different times or light automatically at dusk.**

The nights have drawn in and the unscrupulous are on the lookout for houses in darkness. Leaving lights on is one idea but using timer lights is better. Some can be set for different times or light automatically at dusk. In addition to making a home look occupied, make it sound occupied by using similar technology to switch on a radio or television. (Is there an App you can use?)

Alarms, CCTV and net cams can all have some deterrent value, as does a dog that barks.

Thefts from sheds and of property on display in vehicles head local crime statistics. Even small items on display can lead to the inconvenience of replacing a broken car window.

Lastly, be on the lookout for an afternoon burglar, who has been active in our area.

Several properties have been entered by force normally by breaking rear doors or windows. This person may be carrying tools, so be on the alert for strangers approaching or entering properties and do not assume that a high visibility jacket or tool box gives any legitimacy to their activities. If in doubt phone the police.

## Strawberry Hill get-together in Radnor Gardens Café

Residents of Strawberry Hill attended a late summer get-together at Radnor Gardens café in early September. A free drinks voucher, published in this magazine, invited residents to attend and about 40 people turned up for a very enjoyable Friday evening.



Despite some early evening drizzle, a good time was had by all.

Marcus and Michael fired up the barbeque and people enjoyed mingling and chatting to neighbours.

Lots of people suggested that more of such events should be put on.

## Christmas carols and mulled wine



As a result of people's comments at the September get-together, we have decided, as an experiment, to hold the Annual Carol-singing gathering at:  
**Radnor Gardens Café**  
**on 9th December, from 6.00pm.**

**PLEASE PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY** Bring the family and a loud singing voice.

Mulled wine, mince pies and treats for the children will be available at no cost.

We will, however, be collecting for a local charity – this year Pope's Grotto restoration fund.

## A BIG 'Thank You' to our distributors

**Have you ever wondered how the Bulletin reaches your letter box?**

Well, the answer is through the hard work of 42 distributors, who voluntarily deliver to your street.

There is a well-organised system involving lead distributors, who receive the appropriate number of Bulletins for their sub-area of Strawberry Hill.

They often take on responsibility for a street themselves and pass on the other

bundles to a number of volunteers, who deliver to a street each; and some of those streets are very long!

**We want to say a very big thank you to all those distributors.**

So, distributors, do come along to the Christmas gathering on:

**9 December, 6.00pm onwards, at Radnor Gardens Café . . .**

**. . . and have a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie.**

## Developments at the station?

**Does anyone know what is going on at the station?**

**For the past few months, builders have been working on the buildings on the Kingston platform.**

We have tried, in vain, to get some information from Network Rail about the purpose of these works. The most we have been told is that treatment for dry rot is taking place – but we have no idea what is planned for the building.

Our chairman has been in contact with Network Rail in an attempt to find out, and has three times been promised a telephone call, but so far, nothing useful has been communicated.

We really do believe that local residents have a right to know.  
So we will keep trying!

## SHRA Notice Board

**Remember to look regularly at the notice board outside of the station.**

**It keeps you up-to-date with local events. If you wish to display a poster on the notice board, contact Pam Crisp. (see committee details)**

**Please do not attempt to stick anything on the outside of the notice board, since this causes damage.**



## Hunt for Heroes

**Committee vice-chair Peter Lamb continues his investigation into Strawberry Hill in the First World War**

The images of trenches, mud, and ravaged landscapes have become the epitome of the Great War. The grim potency of our pictorial legacy from the Western Front has tended to overshadow the other arenas in which Britain was engaged. It is after all regarded as a world war, and it should not be forgotten that military forces engaged with each other in far flung corners of the globe, where the European powers sought to defend or expand their colonial territories. The campaigns in Africa might not figure highly in our perceptions of the Great War, but fierce battles were fought here between the British colonial armies and their German counterparts. The carnage of the Western Front and its drawn-out stalemate was not a feature of the African campaigns, but those who participated none the less had to endure hardship with significant casualties.

My 'hunt for heroes' from Strawberry Hill had only turned up military records relating to the war in France until I came across Keith Ravenscroft Tucker whose war service took place in Africa. Keith Tucker was born in Twickenham in 1890, the son of Henry Oliver Tucker, an assistant bank manager, and Annie Elizabeth Tucker. The family lived at 26 Trafalgar Road until sometime between 1891 and 1901 when they moved to The Walnuts, 56 Pope's Grove. They were still here in 1916. Keith attended Sandwich School as a boarder, a private grammar school that no longer exists. In the 1911 census his occupation is given as 'clerk crown agent', so I assume he had entered the civil service. The medal index records state that he had a military career beginning in August 1914, but at what exact point he became involved in the colonial conflict is unclear. In November 1914 he married Marcella

MacDonagh who lived in London Road Twickenham, and shortly after this he was serving as a despatch rider to the Gold Coast Regiment with columns operating in Togoland and Cameroon. He returned to Britain in April 1916 from Accra on the Gold Coast. The passenger list gives his occupation as government official and he was travelling first class. I might conjecture from this that he had made some progress in his colonial career. His return to Britain may have been brief as he was thereafter promoted to captain in the Nyasaland Field Force, part of the South Africa Service Corps.

Keith Tucker continued to work in the British colonial territories in Africa until long after the Great War. I have found his name and that of his wife in several passenger lists when they made return visits to Britain. One from September 1927 states that his permanent residence was Nyasaland (now Malawi) but that his proposed address in Britain was 47 Paulet (sic) Gardens in Twickenham. In 1932 he was awarded an OBE for his work as Treasurer in Nyasaland. He died in 1963 in Folkestone.

The Gold Coast Regiment, in which Keith Tucker served, raised five battalions during the First World War. They were all deployed in the East Africa campaign where a series of engagements and guerrilla actions took place in German East Africa and other neighbouring colonial territories. The German strategy was to divert forces and resources from the Western Front. The main campaign more or less came to an end by the end of 1917, but colonial troops were still engaged to a greater or lesser extent until the armistice.

After the war German East Africa was divided for the most part between Britain and Belgium.

I suspect that Keith Tucker's role at this time was largely administrative, not exactly 'heroic', but nevertheless of interest in our record of local residents who played a part in the Great War.

### THE COMMITTEE

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