

No.172 Spring 2020

## Comings and Goings

**We have said farewell to Nick Dolan recently who has, for four and a half years, been the hard-working Director of Strawberry Hill House; he has moved on to pastures new and we wish him well.**

**We welcome Paul Finucane who is currently serving as Interim Director and who will speak at the SHRA AGM on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.**

(See Paul's article on page 2).



**Francis Campbell, Vice Chancellor of St Mary's University** has also moved on. He has taken up the post of Vice Chancellor of The University of Notre Dame, Australia, based in Fremantle. Whilst we have not seen eye to eye with Francis on his plans for the development of the campus, we have worked harmoniously with him on other matters and we wish him well in his new role.

His successor, **Anthony McClaran**, is returning from Australia where he was responsible for Quality Assurance in the tertiary sector. Until 2015, he was Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency in this country. SHRA will look forward to meeting him in due course.

### Notice of SHRA Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Strawberry Hill Golf Club on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April at 7.30pm. Everyone who lives in Strawberry Hill is automatically a member, so do come along and tell us what you think. It's a good chance to meet the neighbours. You are invited to have a glass or wine after the meeting, so please stay and chat.

We would very much like to recruit more committee members, especially some with good IT skills. If you would like to become a committee member, please email for details from: [infomation@shra.org.uk](mailto:infomation@shra.org.uk), by 17<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

**Given the current situation, please check on Facebook and the SHA noticeboard in case of a change of date or cancellation.**

Follow us on Twitter: [@SHResidents](https://twitter.com/SHResidents) and join our Facebook group: **Strawberry Hill Residents Association**

## Wilde Brunch Café at Radnor Gardens

SHRA has long been a supporter of the community café at Radnor Gardens, as both a local meeting point and a source of toilet facilities for all. We supported the £20,000 grant for the extension that held the promise of all-weather opening. Like many local residents, we were disappointed that the café was often closed, when the expectation was that it would be open. Then, following bad publicity and several acts of vandalism the decision was made to close for the winter.

We are pleased to see that the Wilde Brunch Café reopened during the February half-term school holidays. The new opening hours are Friday to Monday from 9.00am to 16.00pm, however, this is still 'weather dependent'. These times and days will be extended during the summer months. If you value the café, then please start to patronise it by sampling the food and drink on offer – only then will it become profitable and sustainable.

## CAROL SINGING IN WELLESLEY PARADE

The carol singing and tree decoration took place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019, in Wellesley Parade and the date did not bring any bad luck. The weather stayed fine and about 50 residents with children attended and joined in the singing.

We were grateful to our three councillors (Katie Mansfield, Michael Butlin and Richard Bennett) who all attended, and also to Tony from the café who heated up the wine for us. We were especially pleased to welcome an ensemble from Richmond Brass band which once again supported the singing.

Adults were offered the usual mulled wine and mince pies, while children enjoyed juice and sweet treats. The tree was duly decorated by the children and a very 'Christmassy' atmosphere was achieved.



Carol singing in Wellesley Parade, Christmas 2019



# Fabergé, the Bolsheviks and Strawberry Hill Road

**As part of the SHRA StreetWise series, we have been researching the history of one of the area's finest Victorian streets, Strawberry Hill Road. In 1939, Horace Wallick (1869-1956), and his wife Lillie (1870-1954), lived in an apartment at 21 Strawberry Hill Road. His grandfather, a botanist, was born in Copenhagen and his father, a surgeon, was born in India. In the 1939 Register his occupation is given as 'painter' but this does not reveal the whole story.**

In 1910, he went to Russia and worked for Fabergé. His specialism was painting miniatures for portraits, the top of jewellery boxes or for the insides of locket.

He lived through the final years of the Tsar, and through the revolutionary upheavals of 1917, only a few streets away from Fabergé's shop. He escaped during the Civil War which followed the Bolshevik victory and, along with

many other White Russia supporters, he ended up in Yalta on the Black Sea. From there he was lucky to catch a British ship, the Princess Ena, back to Malta and then to Britain.

The author, Vanora Bennett, has included her great-great-uncle Horace as one of three main characters in a novel about Russia before the 1917 Revolution, *Midnight in St Petersburg*. He forms one point of a love

triangle in the romantic, historical novel. The book, which was published in 2013 by Random House, is a work of fiction, although it brings in real characters such as Horace and Rasputin. Vanora tried, in vain, to gain more detail about Horace's actual life in Russia from visiting many libraries and archives, but she does know that his life drifted when he got back to England.

He spent his time doing art jobs for friends and relatives, and just about making ends meet. He always smoked gold-tipped Balkan Sobranie cigarettes, a habit picked up during his years in Russia.

He eventually moved to a retirement home in Richmond where he died in 1956.

## Vandalism in Strawberry Hill



Sadly, there have been several incidents of vandalism in the Strawberry Hill area recently. We have reported before regarding bouts of vandalism in Radnor Gardens. But in addition, we have recently witnessed graffiti on the Residents' Association notice board, which has thankfully been removed.

Together with continued fly-tipping around the bins at Wellesley Parade, these incidents cause great concern among residents, and influence the quality of our lives. Police and local councillors are always informed of these events and they are currently pursuing solutions.

## Police Liaison Group (PLG)

**The last meeting took place on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at 7.30. (Location to be confirmed). Not many neighbourhood watch co-ordinators attend so, if you are one, it would be greatly appreciated if you were able to come to the meeting.**

**The meetings are open to all residents.**

Dates, venues and times of meetings can be obtained from the secretary to the group, Pam Mcmillen: [pam-plg-mcmillen@hotmail.com](mailto:pam-plg-mcmillen@hotmail.com)

The crime figures (as reported to the police) for October – November 2019 compared to the same period in 2018 were presented as follows:

OFFENCE	OCT-NOV 18	OCT-NOV 19	Difference
Burglary	12	5	- 7
Criminal damage	11	7	- 4
Robbery	3	2	- 1
Theft from motor vehicles	10	5	- 5
Theft of M/V	7	3	- 4
Theft of pedal cycles	14	4	- 10
Violence with injury	9	13	+ 4

**Please note that Twickenham Police Station is closed for six to nine months, from the end of January, for refurbishment.**

This closure will be temporary and most services will be moved to Teddington Police Station with the front desk now open. Twickenham will eventually be re-opened as the 24/7 front counter for communication in the local area.

# StreetWise

## Spencer Road

**At first glance, Spencer Road seems like an ordinary Southwest London residential street, which it is.**

**It is interesting to local historians because all its houses were built in the three major periods of Strawberry Hill's expansion:**

**Late Victorian/Edwardian** the first 16 houses are typical of large semi-detached middle-class villas, built following the improved access to the area after the construction of Strawberry Hill Station in 1873 and the later widening of the roads by London United Tramways. **Between the wars** the availability of cheaper motor cars stimulated the construction of detached and semi-detached houses with garages. **Late 20th century** terraced townhouses built in the 1970s and 1980s.

The full Streetwise (Spencer Road) document (see SHRA website, History, Streetwise) describes the development of each of these phases, the occupants of some of the houses and the long-drawn-out battle against the development of the West Twickenham Hard Court Club. It includes an account of the road at the time of the Second World War by Ray Manning who lived there as a boy.

The earliest known topographical record for the area is Ralph Treswell's 1607 map 'A Plott of the Whole Mannor of Sion within the County of Middx'. The land now occupied by Spencer Road runs down in the centre of 'Twicknam South Feilde', just south of Hounslow Heath.

By 1888 Spencer Road had been laid out and is clearly shown in the 1894 Ordnance Survey (there was a planned extension, never built, running southwest from Wellesley Road to

Stanley Road). However, the first houses, numbers 1 to 17, were not built until at least 1905. Number 1, a detached house on a very large plot at the junction with Pope's Avenue was demolished in 1965 to make way for Cortayne Court.



An early 20th century postcard showing the first 16 houses at some time before 1912. The message on the reverse from the anonymous sender says: "This is the house where we live, the one hidden by a tree. Is it not a pretty road? On the right side, opposite our house is a lovely field".

Census records tell us that the first occupants who were employed were professional, managerial or retired – a profile which remains to this day.

Numbers 38 to 68 were built between 1927 and 1932. At least one of them was designed by the distinguished architect Sir Banister Fletcher who was responsible for, amongst many other buildings, the Gillette factory on the Great West Road.

In 1969, a planning application was submitted for an indoor sports centre with squash and

badminton courts on the site of the West Twickenham Hard Court Club, which had occupied the triangle of land between the northeast side of Spencer Road and Pope's Avenue since 1934. This was refused and after three further applications were refused, the final application was submitted in 1981 for 28 houses on Spencer Road and Pope's Avenue. Residents objected, supported by SHRA. The application was initially refused by the Council

on the basis that the land was protected from development by a restricted covenant but the developers appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. In May 1982 Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, decided that the restrictive covenant should be overturned.

Construction of the new houses started in 1983 and in July 1984, the Richmond and

Twickenham Times reported that "there are three houses available from £89,950 to £92,950 and two and three more are due to be released". The first houses were occupied by October that year. The last house, number 29 was completed in 1994 – some 12 years after permission was granted.

In 2012 and 2013, numbers 2 to 17 were listed as Buildings of Townscape Merit and in February 2019, all houses in the northern part of the road were incorporated into the Pope's Avenue Conservation Area.

**Editor's note:** Reading the whole article on the SHRA website is strongly recommended. We are extremely grateful to Robert Youngs (ex- committee member of SHRA and long-time resident of Spencer Road) for writing this article and carrying out extensive research on the street.

**SHRA needs funds from subscriptions in order to provide information and social events. We ask for an annual subscription, but do not make this essential for receipt of the advantages of membership. If you have not already done so, please pay for 2020. Thank you to all those who regularly subscribe.**

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