

Travel and Transport in Strawberry Hill

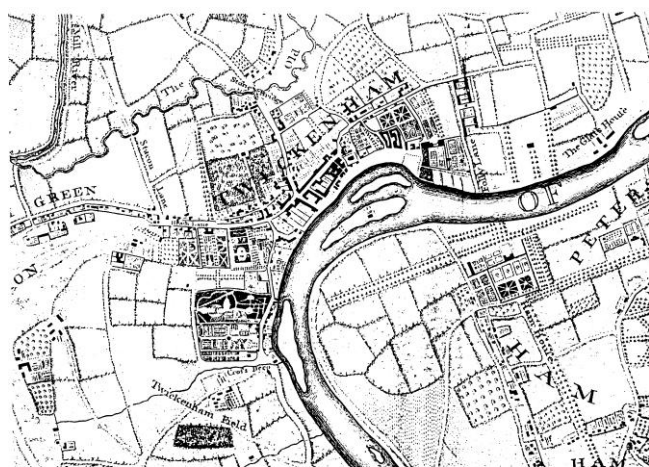
In the third of our occasional articles on the social history of Strawberry Hill, we examine the history of the roads and the public transport in our area. The road names used are mostly the present names, though most were not adopted until the late 1800s.

The Development of the roads

Although it has been suggested that the Domesday book contains evidence of tracks along the lines of Pope's Avenue and Cross Deep, the first record of the road system is a map of the area was drawn by Ralph Treswell in 1607. This shows "Kinson Waie" (now Cross Deep) and the "Waie to Hampton" (now Hampton Road). Between the two lies the "South Feilde", an arable area now known as Strawberry Hill. These tracks would have been busy with traffic to Kingston and Hampton, muddy and probably all but impassable in wet weather.



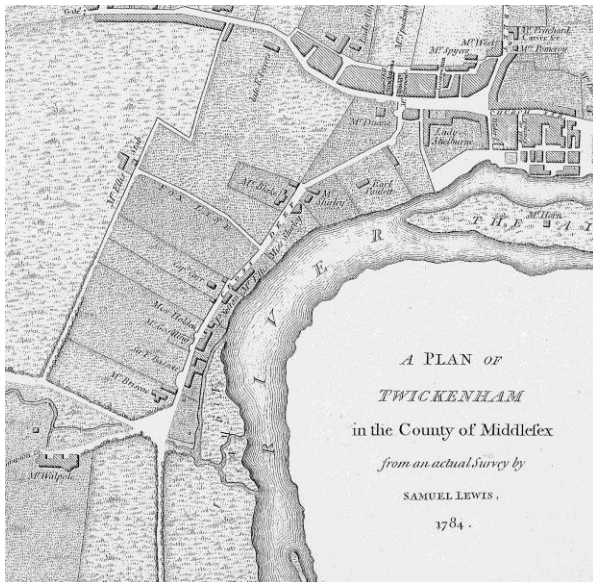
Treswell's map of 1607, clearly showing the lines of Hampton Road and Cross Deep



Rocque's map, showing Radnor Road to the left of the garden in the centre and Tower Road below

John Rocque's map, published in the 1740s, shows Radnor Road and Waldegrave Road (though neither was named as such at that time) roughly along their present lines. Pope's Avenue can be seen as a track running down to what is now the junction of Shacklegate Lane with Waldegrave Road. The footpath which now runs along the railway south of Tower Road lies along this original track.

The roads at this time were maintained locally, but the growth of wheeled traffic made this more difficult. The Isleworth, Twickenham and Teddington Turnpike Trust was founded by Act of Parliament in 1767. As a result, Cross Deep and Strawberry Vale became a major highway and tolls were collected to maintain the highway. Tollbooths were constructed at various points, though none seem to have been in our area. The Trust operated until 1872 .



A section of Lewis's map of 1784. Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill can be seen with Waldegrave Road running up to the front entrance

By the time of Samuel Lewis's map of 1784, Grotto Road and Tower Road had been laid down and Radnor Road is shown with a pronounced dog-leg at the northern end, roughly where Radnor Gardens now leads off it. This was straightened when the northern end of the road was straightened in the 1930s. Radnor Road was called variously Back Lane and Narrow Lane until the 1890s.

The road system hardly changed until the railway was built in the 1860s. By 1846, Pope's Grove had been constructed, but there was no development to the west of the

railway, apart from Pope's Avenue and Vicarage Road. After the station was built, in 1873, and before the publication of the 1894 Ordnance Survey, Strawberry Hill Road and the southern end of Waldegrave Gardens were constructed. Radnor Gardens, still with its dog-leg, and Heath Gardens are shown. The major change at this time was the development to the west of the railway with Wellesley Road, Walpole Road and Spencer Road appearing. It must have been the intention to extend these last two roads further towards Stanley Road over what is now the Golf Club – there are dotted extensions to them on the map.



The 1894 Ordnance Survey map, showing the roads much as they are today

The structure of most of the roads as we know them was finally established. Most of the remaining roads were created as part of the massive housing developments of the 1930s to the east of the railway.

Railways, Trams, Trolleybuses and Buses

The opening of the station in 1873 spurred the residential development of the area. The railway was and remains the only public transport within the Strawberry Hill area and residents had to rely on it until tram tracks were built along Hampton Road in 1902, part of the Hampton Loop. Passengers could travel to Hampton, Hampton Court, Hampton Wick, Teddington and then along Stanley Road, with connections to Isleworth and

Richmond from Twickenham. This loop partly followed the lines of today's R68 and 281 bus routes and no service ever ran along Cross Deep and Strawberry Vale.

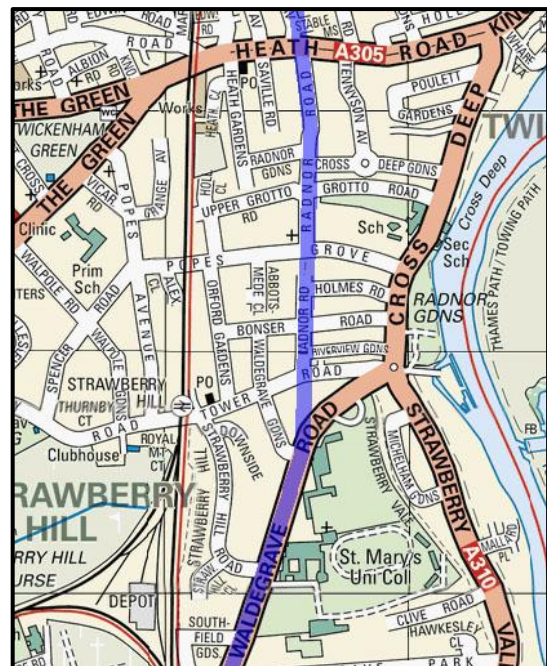


Laying tram tracks on Hampton Road on 18th March 1902. The tower of Holy Trinity church can just be made out on the right

Motor omnibuses were introduced in 1910, with the number 37A service running along Cross Deep. On the 16th May 1931, the first trolleybus service in London, number 4, started on the service between Twickenham and Teddington via Hampton Road (a video of this historic event can be seen on the Twickenham Museum's website in the article on Fulwell Depot). The last tram ran in 1935, but the trolleybus service continued on this line until 1962.

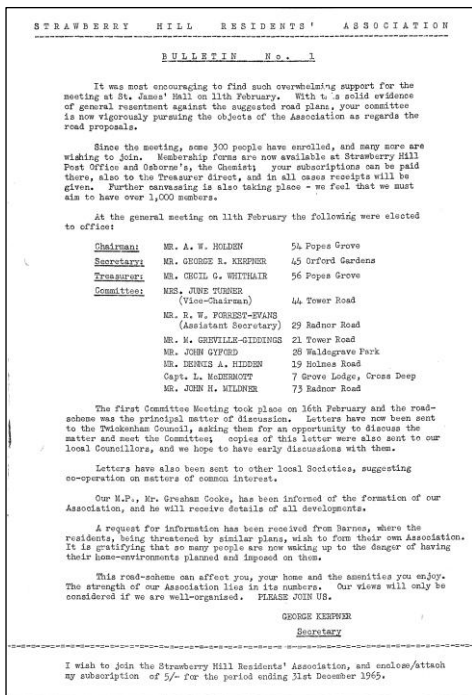
A major road development triggers the formation of SHRA

On 9th January 1965, the Richmond and Twickenham Times published an article about a town centre development plan for Richmond in which new arterial and “primary distribution” roads were proposed to relieve the traffic in the town. One of these roads would have run from a junction on the A316 near Egerton Road, down Grove Avenue and into Strawberry Hill at Radnor Road, which was to be extended to join Waldegrave Road near its junction with Waldegrave Gardens and on to Broad Street in Teddington. Radnor Road would have had to be widened, presumably demolishing many houses, and a new extension would have cut through the housing between Tower Road and Waldegrave Road, effectively dividing the community into two parts. Headlines in the following issues of the paper included “Houses may come down to make way clear”, “Houses on road route are now unsaleable” and “Save our village battle”.



The route of the proposed primary distribution road

The Local Government Act of 1963 had resulted in Twickenham, Richmond and Barnes Councils being merged. Until 1 April 1965, the new merged Council existed only as a “shadow authority”. Twickenham Council rapidly issued a statement to the effect that the published plans were “seriously misleading” and that they had not been consulted.



Bulletin No 1. The annual subscription was 5 shillings (25p)

However, Strawberry Hill residents, taking no chances, had already formed a group to oppose the plans and the first General Meeting of the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association was held on the 11th February 1965. 450 people attended the meeting and a summary was published in Bulletin No 1 – a single page typed and “photocopied”. The first officers were A W Holden (Chairman), George R Kerpner (Secretary), Cecil G Whithair (Treasurer) and June Turner (Vice-chair) and the annual subscription was five shillings (25p). In Bulletin No 2, published shortly afterwards, it was reported that the Mayor had explained that the road plan had “nothing to do with Twickenham” and that “the Council had not even discussed this plan”. Thus the original reason for forming the Association was defeated, but 46 years

and 145 Bulletins later, the Association still strives to ensure that Strawberry Hill continues to be a pleasant riverside village. One can only speculate what the outcome might have been had these events had happened two months later, after the new Richmond-upon-Thames Council had assumed full authority.

A bus route through the village?

On the 25th of July 1995, a London Transport bus was seen to pass along Tower Road and Wellesley Road. The SHRA Committee had had discussions in the previous February with LT about the possible re-routing of the 290 service through the centre of Strawberry Hill and this “route test” was the result. However, several residents, most notably Dr R Davies, expressed opposition to the plan. The Committee was forced to write to LT withdrawing their support for the rerouting until the following AGM. LT responded saying they were surprised at this sudden U-turn. At the AGM in March 1996, the proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by residents, and so the centre of Strawberry Hill remains a bus-free area to this day.

More recently, a campaign has been started by residents, living mainly in Strawberry Vale and Michelham Gardens, to persuade Transport for London to instigate a direct Twickenham to Kingston bus service (T2K). Currently, the 281 provides this service, passing through Teddington and taking about 30 minutes to travel less than 4 miles. The benefits are obvious for anyone who has travelled between the two towns by bus, not just those living on the proposed route. However, TfL does not believe there is sufficient demand and that the costs would outweigh the benefits.



The T2K campaign's logo

You can support the campaign for T2K by signing the on-line petition at:

www.t2kbus.com

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References and acknowledgements:

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This article was first published in a shorter form in December 2011 in Bulletin no 147, the newsletter of the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association (www.shra.org.uk).