

Strawberry Hill Heritage Trail No.1



(Map created for SHRA by Liz Waters of The Teddington Society)

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We thought it high time that an historic area such as Strawberry Hill had its own heritage trail for both residents and visitors. This first trail starts and finishes at Strawberry Hill Station and is 4 kilometres (65-80 minutes) of easy walking with lots of history and heritage to admire. Points of interest are marked on the map by numbers which can be found in the text below. You can also stop at one of our three cafes for refreshment: at the Strawberry Hill Café at the end (or the start), or at Strawberry Hill House Café or at Antipodea in Radnor Gardens. There is a public toilet at the back of the Antipodea café in the middle of the walk and at the Strawberry Hill House car park (check when the House is open).

Begin the trail by the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association noticeboard outside Strawberry Hill Station, platform 2 side. The London & South Western Railway line ran through here for the first time in 1863, but Strawberry Hill Station was only opened in 1873. Walk across the level crossing and into Tower Road. Cross over the road to the top of Strawberry Hill Road where you can see the Post Office. (1) **Strawberry Hill Post Office** was built in 1905 and it was the first shop in the 'village'.

Walk along (2) **Strawberry Hill Road** which has many of the area's finest Victorian houses. The rambling redbrick mansions were mainly built in the 1880s. There have been a number of notable residents in the history of the street. **Harry Becker** (1892-1980) MP for Richmond lived at no.12. **Horace Wallick**, an artist working on miniatures for Faberge, fled Moscow during the 1917 revolution and lived at no.21. No.28 was the home of the leading British actors, **Keeley Hawes** and **Matthew MacFadyen**, for several years. No.32 was the home of the Accountant General of the Navy, **Sir Conrad Naef** (1872-1954). No.42, which was demolished to make way for Strawberry Hill Close, was the home of **Albert Alexander**, Labour MP for Sheffield who was three times First Lord of the Admiralty.

At the end of Strawberry Hill Road, cross Waldegrave Road at the pedestrian lights to the white gates that form one of the entrances to **St Mary's University**. From here look across the playing fields which were farmland until the 1920s when St Mary's College acquired the estate. Cows grazed here and the white building further along the road on your left is what remains of the old dairy. Across the field to your right is the prominent sport complex completed in 2011.

Now turn left and walk along Waldegrave Road until you come to the main entrance of (3) **St Mary's University**. Its history goes back to 1850 when it began as a Catholic college in Brook Green, Hammersmith. The College bought Strawberry Hill House and its estate and moved here in 1925. From 2007 the College could award its own degrees and received university status. In recent years the university has expanded its numbers and gained a reputation particularly in the teaching of sport. Among its recent distinguished alumni is **Sir Mo Farah**, after whom a modern running track (you can see it when emerging from the Woodland Walk) is named, and where he trained for the 2012 Olympic Games.

From the university entrance you can cross the car park to visit the imposing (4) **Chapel**. It was designed by the eminent architect **Sir Albert Richardson** and completed in 1963. Notable features inside the chapel include some beautiful stained glass and the grand reredos behind the altar of the 'Fall and Ascent of Man'. It was painted by the distinguished artist **Constance Stubbs** in 1964. Back in the car park, nestling behind the Chaplaincy building, is Walpole's little 'Chapel in the Woods' dating from 1772.

Return to Waldegrave Road and continue around the bend where you will be rewarded with sight of the frontage to (5) **Strawberry Hill House**. You can visit the interior of the house – his ‘little Gothic castle’ - where the eccentric vision of **Horace Walpole** can be appreciated in full (for opening hours check www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk). Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford, was the son of **Robert Walpole**, England’s first Prime Minister. He was a man of letters and antiquarian with a particular interest in the medieval. In the 18th century Twickenham was a fashionable location for its Arcadian aspect along the banks of the Thames. Between 1747 and 1792 he expanded and added features, filling the property with his miscellaneous and quirky collection of items. The house is regarded as the finest example of early Gothic revival architecture and interiors, a style known as ‘Strawberry Hill Gothic’.

Enter through the visitors’ gate and turn left. Here you will find the delightful garden restored as faithfully as possible to what Walpole envisioned. However, what we have now is a charming mix of borders, shrubs and trees, including a family trail in the spirit of Walpole’s ‘serpentine walks’. Head for the two benches in front of the woodland and follow the path through what was Walpole’s Terrace with views over the Thames and which now backs the gardens of Michelham Gardens.

Walk back along the outside of the wooded area and cut through the newly restored lime grove towards the corner of Strawberry Hill House and (6) **Lady Waldegrave’s extension**. In the middle of the 19th century the house entered a colourful phase under the ownership of Lady Frances Waldegrave. She added a new wing and embellished parts of the ‘Gothic Castle’ sympathetic to Walpole’s aesthetic ideas. The section adjoining the house which is not painted white is where Lady Waldegrave had a grand drawing room, a dining room and a billiard room constructed. Here, and in the house itself, she threw lavish parties for the eminent members of the British establishment. This wing is no longer part of Strawberry Hill House but still used for special functions under the auspices of St Mary’s University.

Leave by the main gate from Strawberry Hill House and follow the path to Waldegrave Road. Across the other side of the road is (7) **Harptree Cottage**, a fine private house standing on the foundations of the house that Walpole called ‘my little cottage in the woods’. When Walpole found visitors to his Gothic Castle were becoming irksome and he needed some solitude, he would retreat here until the coast was clear.

Turn right and continue to the end of Waldegrave Road using the zebra crossings to get across Cross Deep and turn right, entering (8) **Newman’s Shipyard and Business Park**, often known as **Swan Island**. Walk past the Jawbone Brewery across the bridge onto the island where you will find the premises of **William Curley’s** Patisserie and Chocolatier and the shipyard. In 1940, Swan Island was the last refuelling point for the small boats taking part in the Dunkirk rescue on their journey to the south coast. Some returned to Swan Island with men they had rescued before they were transferred to local hospitals. England Rugby legend, **Lawrence Dallaglio** had a houseboat moored here for several years, one of the forty families living here. Leaving Swan Island briefly turn left to view the art-deco style of **Mercury Motors**. (9) **Mercury Motors** was set up in 1941 by the **Rees family** who have been running it ever since. They stopped selling petrol in the 1980s, but the garage still handles about 5,000 cars every year.

Return to Radnor Gardens and turn left walking past the Bath House and the Summerhouse heading for the War Memorial. (10) **Radnor Gardens’ 1914-1918 War Memorial** was designed by the sculptor **Mortimer Brown** and it was unveiled on 2 November 1921 by **Field Marshall Sir William Robertson**. It is unusual as it depicts a triumphant soldier returning home and one plaque celebrates women’s contribution to the war effort.

Follow the Thames path under the fine row of willow trees and enjoy the view upstream of Eel Pie Island and St Mary's Church, Twickenham. As you look left towards Cross Deep you can see the rose garden that formed part of the garden at Radnor House. (11) **Radnor House** was a large 18th century mansion that was extensively remodelled in the 1850s. It was taken over by the local Council in 1903 and was destroyed by the Luftwaffe 16 September 1940 when a delayed-action, high-explosive bomb exploded in the cellar.

Leave the gardens via the entrance opposite Pope's Grove. Across the road you can see the modern version of the (12) **Alexander Pope Hotel**, previously the Grotto Hotel. The Pope's Grotto Hotel was destroyed by a Nazi flying bomb on 19 June 1944. Since that time it has been rebuilt twice and renamed The Alexander Pope by Young's Brewery.

Turn right and walk along the side of Radnor House School. On the wall inside the gate is a plaque announcing that this was the site of the original (13) **Pope's Villa**, the house belonging to **Alexander Pope** the 18th Century famous poet and man of letters. A second plaque refers to the grotto that runs under Cross Deep built by Pope in 1720 to link his house with his garden. (Today, the Grotto is managed by the Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust, who have raised money for a renovation – <https://popesgrotto.org.uk>). The original Villa had been demolished by **Baroness Howe** in 1806 and the current building was built for tea merchant **Thomas Young** who used an eccentric Chinese-influenced style. The Blue Plaque commemorates the 19th century politician and theatrical impresario, **Henry Labouchere**, whose main claim to fame was introducing an amendment to a Bill which criminalised all sexual activity between men in England (leading to the later jailing of Oscar Wilde).

Across the road from the Radnor House School is (14) **St Catherine's School**. St Catherine's, a fee-paying girls' school, moved into 'Pope's Villa' in 1919 and vacated the premises for the current site in 1994. During the 1930s the famous English actor, **Dirk Bogarde**, attended the school (boys were then permitted entry). Cross the road by the traffic lights and walk along Grotto Road (formerly Fox Lane) which runs alongside St Catherine's School playing fields. This was previously Alexander Pope's famous garden in which he experimented with garden design, moving away from the formal style.

At the end of the road, turn left and look through a gate in the brick wall where there is a plaque about (15) **Stanhope's Cave**, a **grotto** which runs diagonally across the road junction (Radnor Road and Grotto Road) and emerges in the garden of (16) **Radnor Lodge**. **Sir William Stanhope** (1702-1772) MP for Buckinghamshire bought Pope's Villa and garden in 1745 and he also acquired the house known as Radnor Lodge in 1765. The novelist **Henry Fielding**, author of the early picaresque novel, *Tom Jones*, had briefly lived in the house in 1747/48 and it remains one of the oldest properties in the area. Opposite Radnor Lodge is (17) **St James's Church Hall** which was opened by the exiled **King Manuel II of Portugal** who made Twickenham his home.

Walk down Radnor Road towards Pope's Grove walking along the side of the (18) **Church of St James**. This building of Townscape Merit is built in the Gothic revival style and it opened in 1885. King Manuel was a patron of the Church funding two stained glass windows and leaving valuable items in his will. Walk to the end of Pope's Grove under the railway bridge and turn left into Pope's Avenue which was originally an extension of Strawberry Hill Road. Since 1934, the triangle of land between Spencer Road and Pope's Avenue had been the site of West London Hard Court (tennis) Club before the current housing development opened in 1984. Near the top of Pope's Avenue you will walk past (19) **Batcombe Lodge**, a fine house built by **Abraham Slade** in 1862. He was a local builder who was born near a Somerset village called Batcombe. The house was the home of **Griffith Brewer** (1868-1948) who was a pioneer in hot-air ballooning competing in several international

ances. He has the distinction of being the first Briton to fly in a plane, as he was a close friend of the Wright Brothers, managing their affairs in England.

At the end of Pope's Avenue turn right and walk along Wellesley Avenue until you can see (20) **Milton Court** on the other side of the road. The low white-painted walls around the blocks of flats in this area once surrounded four large houses. Milton Court is built on the site of Milton House which before the Second World War was the Alexander Nursing Home. In the early 1900s, Milton House was the home of **Henrietta Fergus**, the eldest daughter of **Henry Robert Fergus**, the co-founder of Strawberry Hill Golf Club. In her twenties she became a militant suffragette who was sent to Holloway Prison in 1912 for breaking shop windows in Regent Street. As a wealthy widow, she had the misfortune to meet the infamous acid bath murderer, John George Haigh, becoming his sixth victim in 1943. Turn around and walk back down Wellesley Road towards the station past the Golf Club car park and entrance.

We hope you have enjoyed following the Strawberry Hill Heritage Trail and discovered some of the interesting features of our delightful neighbourhood. If you would like to learn more about the history of the area, please go to our website where you will find numerous articles in the history section and in the archive of bulletins – www.shra.org.uk