

The Hampton Society

The residents' association of Hampton, est.1956 Summer Newsletter 2021

New Look for General Roy's Marker



▲ The upturned cannon that marks the end of General Roy's base line in Roy Grove, off Hanworth Road, Hampton

Up until now, part of a well-worn cannon and a small black and white iron notice were the only clues to the historic importance of a small grassy site in Hampton's Roy Grove. It marked the arrival of triangulation as the basis of accurate mapping, and what was to become Ordnance Survey.

Until the arrival of GPS, this was the most reliable method of the craft. Our local cannon marked one end where General Roy's base line started. It ran as far as the existing site of Heathrow Airport.

Today you can read all about it on a new information board of detailed explanatory texts and maps created entirely by Claygate photographer and author **Paul Doe**. Coming across the site when his son was at nearby Hampton School, he found the cannon and the dilapidated notice, dated 1926, the 200th anniversary of General Roy's death.



▲ The new information board researched and designed by Paul Doe.

An appeal to Richmond Council for a Civic Pride grant underlining its Heritage Site status took nine months to come to fruition. With funding secured Paul created the board himself. Like most such boards these days it stands about 4 feet high on stout legs, the surface angled forward for easy reading, and topped with clear plastic. As for the maps within, the specialist Charles Close Society and the Royal Society were generous, the latter providing drawings dated 1785. **MW THS**



The grassy corner of Roy Grove ▲

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▼ Lucky fox 'knit bomb' on post box top on Ormond Avenue? See chair's notes on page 2





Notes from the Chair

My son and I were lucky enough to qualify for tickets for the FA Cup Final, part of the government's Events Research Programme.

We both had to have tested negative at an authorised pharmacy in Teddington within 48 hours of the match and proof of both this and our identities was required for entry. The match programme featured Society member **Phil Weller** and his role at Hampton & Richmond Borough Football Club. He was also featured in a video in the stadium before the game. Apologies to local Chelsea fans, but there was something in the air preceding the day with sightings of lucky foxes around Hampton! As a lifelong Leicester City fan, and as it is the first time the club has won the cup after five appearances, you could say it was a day we will never forget. Well done Phil and congratulations to Chelsea for going on to win the Champions League in Porto. No hard feelings, eh?



Thames Fire

The early May bank holiday ended quite unexpectedly. I had wondered why there were so many sirens screaming through the streets around us in the High Street at around 6.00pm. A quick dip into Twitter revealed that there was a huge fire on the river. Quickly donning a raincoat, I dashed down to the Thames to be met by a chimney of thick grey and black smoke rising from the boatyards on Platts Eyt. It was with much sadness I witnessed the roaring fire that was to destroy two boatyards and several historic boats, taking with them the livelihood of those that worked there. Luckily, our friend's studio on the end of the island next to the boatyards avoided disaster as the strong wind was blowing away from their building. At least this one historic building was saved. The island is part of Hampton's heritage and my thoughts are with the businesses that have been so badly affected.

Virtual AGM

Thank you for your flexibility as we held our first virtual AGM in April this year. We cancelled last year's AGM due to lockdown but we decided it was important to resume this important business rather than miss another year. For those who were not present, our treasurer **Brian Brignall** presented two years of accounts and all proposing and seconding was done via the chat facility in Zoom. The meeting was followed by a fascinating talk on researching your house's history, given by Nick Barratt.

Rosemary Hill retires as secretary

Along with arranging our talks, Rosemary is also the secretary for the Society. After many years of service Rosemary has requested that she retires this year from the role to concentrate on organising events with Alice. I would like to thank her sincerely for the diligence and effort she has put in ensuring there is a record of our activities. **Lesley Cesenek** has kindly accepted to take over as secretary and after approval from our members in attendance at the AGM, I welcome her to the position.

Hampton Matters DVD producer dies

I was very sad to hear of the death of member **Ron Smedley** (see obituary, right). As you'll read, Ron was very much an active member of the community and was generous enough to donate the video he expertly produced to the Hampton Society. The few remaining copies of Hampton Matters, that captures 10 'stories of life in Hampton recorded in the first decade of the 21st century', are available to buy. Please drop me a line at enquiries@thehamptonsociety.org.uk if you would like a DVD. They cost £5 each.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.
Kind regards, **William Redfern**, Chair

Obituary

Ron Smedley

With the recent death of Ron Smedley at the age of 92, Hampton has lost a remarkable character. A man who will be greatly missed, both for his personal qualities and for his valuable contributions to our community. He has been particularly involved with two local groups.



▲ At his Grange Hill office, 1985-89

He took over as Chairman of the Hampton & Molesey Riverside Trust in 2001 and held that position for the next 11 years, helping to effect many major improvements to the condition of the riverside, notably the long neglected historic area of Bell Hill.

Garrick's Temple to Shakespeare is an important Grade 1 Listed building, created in the 1750s by the great actor David Garrick, and it was saved from a state of near dilapidation in the 1990s and restored to its original condition. Ron was one of the original trustees of the local charitable trust that was set up in 2004 to manage the Temple and the landscaped gardens in which it stands, a role he retained to the end of his life.

Whilst still in his teens, he became hooked on folk dancing and he joined the staff of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. A chance meeting with BBC producer Charles Chilton led to him getting a job with BBC Radio and when BBC Schools Television was created in 1959, he became an assistant producer. He had a glittering career at the BBC, making popular and successful programmes, including *Grange Hill*, winning three BAFTA awards and many other prizes. During this period he continued his involvement with folk dance, playing a major role with his partner Bob Parker in its world-wide revival, including teaching traditional forms of dance to students of the Royal Ballet School and producing seven of the EFDSS Festivals at the Royal Albert Hall. He even danced with Princess Margaret at one of these events.

Bill Weisblatt THS



▲ The fire on Platts Eyot seen from Hampton Ferry on Bell Hill, Monday 3 May 2021

Dunkirk Little Ship Lost in Fire

A casualty of the completely devastating fire at Platts Eyot in May was 'Little Ship' Lady Gay.

A 34 ft. long craft built in 1936, she was in **Tony Woollard's** Otter Marine boatyard when an ember from a rubbish bonfire spread to his premises on Lower Sunbury Road.

"Ten of us tried to launch the *Lady Gay* but it was impossible" said Tony. "The fire took hold so quickly it was impossible, the fire was so fierce." As well as the *Lady Gay*, two more craft, *Pippin* and *Angie*, were lost.



▲ The lost 'Little Ship', the Lady Gay, seen here in 2015.

The boathouse was built of steel and asbestos with wooden walls. Tony couldn't even sift through the debris as it was just hazardous waste. "What really hurts is losing *Lady Gay*" he says. "This was a Dunkirk Little Ship and it's like having a child taken away".

Footnote: 700 Little Ships took part in the evacuation of Allied troops from the beaches of Dunkirk over nine days from May 26, 1940. Altogether, 338,226 servicemen, including French and Belgians, were landed in England – largely by Royal Navy warships – after the smaller craft endured bombs and strafing runs from the Luftwaffe to rescue them. **MW THS**

Summer Party!



Yes, it's on! Everyone pray for no new Covid restrictions before **Friday 25 June**, the date for our **2021 Summer Party**. The venue will be our favourite, Hampton Sailing Club where you can enjoy music, buffet supper and unrivalled views of the Thames at

sunset for £18 a head. At the request of the Sailing Club, numbers have been restricted to 60 so don't be slow at booking your place.

To register your interest, please contact **Linda Brignall** by phone on **020 8979 9499**.

We are not taking payment at this point as we are still awaiting confirmation from the government that such gatherings are permissible from 21 June.

Please visit the Society's website **www.thehamptonsociety.org.uk** for up-to-date announcements.

Just in case you haven't graced one of our summer parties in recent years the club is approached by chain ferry (all of a two-minute journey) from the bottom of Benn's Alley at the foot of High Street. **MW THS**

About your committee

The committee is the governing body of The Hampton Society. It consists of elected officers and up to six committee members. We meet four times a year to discuss current issues that affect the community to see where we can make a contribution. We also organise talks, visits and events for our members.

Any member of the Society is eligible to join the committee and can stand for election at our Annual General Meeting in April or be co-opted during the year. If you are interested in joining the committee and playing a part in the Society and Hampton's development, please contact the secretary below.

Committee members

Chair

William Redfern 020 8286 7071

Deputy chair

Iacopo Sassi 07761 670911

Secretary

Lesley Cesenek 07540 342813

Treasurer

Brian Brignall 020 8979 9499

Membership

Linda Brignall 020 8979 9499

Newsletter editor

Maura Waters 020 8979 9654

Planning

Sylvia Bridge Le Cluse 020 8941 4450

Event organisers

Alice Fordham 020 8979 3543

Rosemary Hill 020 8973 3604

Contact us at **[enquiries](mailto:enquiries@thehamptonsociety.org.uk)**

[@thehamptonsociety.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thehamptonsociety.org.uk)

Update on Membership

Over 93% of our members now pay by annual Standing Order

We would really appreciate it if you do not currently pay by Standing Order to consider doing so when you come to renew your membership.

A warm welcome to our new members.

Newsletter production:
Edited by Maura Waters.
Designed and produced by William Redfern
www.williamredfern.co.uk 020 8286 7071.

Make a Garden at Hampton Station

If you've missed a train and need to wait 30 minutes for the next one, you'd surely welcome a garden to wait in?



So believes **Tarnia Rayment**, relief ticket office clerk for Hampton railway station and customer ambassador for SW Region between here and Shepperton. She wants to put up our station for adoption, by which she means green-fingered locals taking up the cudgels – or spades or trowels. Horticultural societies and allotment associations are

obvious candidates. South Western Railways and Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) will cover the cost of plants and material.

Tarnia's already gained favourable reactions from commuters. How many of them remember Len, who worked a prizewinning garden on a plot beyond where the bike racks now stand? That was 40 years ago, and when he retired no-one took it up. Now's the opportunity to make amends.

Another use for the station, Tarnia has discovered, is the Metro and Coffee Group. After fetching their daily fixes from the coffee hut, they gather on the station platform's benches to read or chat – carefully social distancing at either end. "The station's a hive of activity, not just for passengers" says Tarnia.

Interested? You can email Tarnia at the following address:

Tarnia.Rayment@swrailway.com. MW **THS**

Venue Change for Band Concert

The Middlesex Yeomanry Concert Band will hold its summer concert at St James Church in Hampton Hill, TW12 1DQ, on Sunday, 27 June.

A combination of Covid 19 and the temporary closure of their original home at the White House means this is only the band's second outing since the pandemic hit us. With a half-full church it is expected the audience can easily observe social distancing.

The concert starts at 3pm with no interval. Tickets cost £10 a head either from **Judy Morrison** on **020 89411227** or from the band's website: **www.mycb.org.uk**

Disappointment for Stables

Having already raised over £1 million to save eviction and buy their property, Park Lane Stables in Teddington has been asked to leave. As a charity, they are not allowed to meet the higher price of £1.3 million, an offer their landlord has received from another party. The current lease ran until the end of May and cannot be extended.

There are 23 horses stabled at Park Lane, where the charity Riding for the Disabled runs very successful classes for children and adults alike. Now RDA chief **Ed Brasher** hopes an alternative suitable venue can be found. In the meantime, Manor Farm Stables in Petersham has offered a temporary home to the horses.

Richmond Council Leader **Gareth Roberts** describes the situation as "sad news". He says "I hope there is some way the Council can step in and prevent the loss of this facility which contributes so much to the community and to disabled children".

PLS (to abbreviate its full name) is following Charity Commission guidelines: 'the trustees



are responsible for protecting a charity's money and assets, that the price paid for property should be fair or even discounted'. After arranging for three valuations, the highest put the value at £840,000. £1.3 million far exceeds that. But the stables could be designated an Asset of Community Value, meaning it can't be sold to anyone other than a community body before the end of July.

Another ray of hope is to designate the building as one of Townscape Merit, meaning a change of use would need planning permission – likely to be refused if housing was proposed.

Clearly, this isn't the end of the tunnel for PLS.

MW **THS**