

THE STORY OF TEDDINGTON and THE TEDDINGTON SOCIETY

Our story begins in 1973 when a man was walking along Twickenham Road and noticed that one of the old houses in that road was being demolished. Not having read any prior information about this, he was absolutely incensed and went to take up the matter with the local amenity group. All very well and good until he discovered that there was no amenity group. The house was “*Stoney Deep*”, then an old riverside mansion being used as a nurses hostel, now a highly desirable block of flats, and the man was Adam Joseph, an independent journalist who had only recently moved to Teddington.

Adam decided to forge ahead with a neighbourhood society and a number of small meetings was held to gauge support for such a group, culminating with a Public Meeting at Craig Hall in that July. The meeting was attended by about 250 people and from that the steering group of The Teddington Society emerged, Adam being the first Chairman. Ten separate working parties were set up to cover different aspects of Teddington life, the Nasty Smells Group being one of the less obvious and the evolution of these groups means that broadly speaking, they are still functioning today. The groups in question were, not in any particular order – Riverside, Trees, Roads & Transport, Old & Handicapped People’s, History, Social & Cultural, Legal & Advisory, Young People’s, Nasty Smells and lastly Environment & Planning.

The aims of the Society were to promote and encourage on a non party and non sectarian basis the following objectives:

- (a) To encourage high standards of architecture, town planning and civic design in Teddington.**
- (b) To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area.**
- (c) To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity, civic or historic interest.**
- (d) To pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, conferences, lectures and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.**

From that day on The Teddington Society has played its part in the social development of the town with, as would be expected, varying degrees of success in the causes and projects undertaken. The Nasty Smells group changed its name to the Nice & Tidy group and in 1976 a Community Care group was formed. Some of the other groups merged with Borough

organisations such as Richmond Arts Council, Old People's Welfare Committee and Community Care.

The Society has been very active in the last 40 odd years; the Planning Group is constantly at work on planning issues, conservation areas and the like going back to the debate in saving St Albans Church (now the Landmark), saving Oak Cottage, to modern day issues such as the Film Studios site and Udney Park Playing Fields. Roads and Transport also never tire of protecting our roads and spaces and lobbying our transport chiefs for better services. In addition they constantly monitor such items as controlled parking zones and flood control and the Ham Hydro scheme and the questionable Quietway cycle route.

The Environment Group is always busy, much of the time with issues arising out of Heathrow Airport such as aircraft noise. A little nearer to home they are kept on their toes in trying to manage and monitor the three recycling centres in the town which, unfortunately are looked upon as rubbish tips by some of our less salubrious citizens and organised litter picks help to clean up these centres as well as the riverside and the War Memorial on Remembrance Day. The Riverside and Open Spaces Group also has a full load to deal with in keeping our river banks clear. They recently celebrated a great success in the removal of several hulks which had been an eyesore on the river for a few years.

The Trees and Gardens Group has been one of our most successful since the Society started. Teddington In Flower was introduced in 1975 and is still going strong. So much so that our neighbours have borrowed the idea and given us Richmond in Bloom which is extremely popular. Past enterprises include the old St George's Day Procession and Gardeners' Fair

Lastly there is the History Group. This was one of the founder groups and has been constantly in the forefront of Teddington life. Their first task was a survey of every house in Teddington and this has been updated a couple of times. A survey of St Mary's Churchyard followed, noting everyone who was buried there and then came a survey of the church monuments. A variety of History talks have been given and these are always well received. Starting with "*A Walk in Teddington*" we have produced several other historical publications including the evergreen "*Teddington As It Was.*" With a constantly changing population, this title is always in demand. Visitors to the town will have seen our Information Boards at The Grove and Elmfield

House, and more recently at the site of The Bronze Age Barrow in Sandy Lane. In conjunction with the Planning Group, we have reviewed the Buildings of Townscape Merit, making adjustments to the list held by the Council. Currently we are seeking the names of the “Lost Fallen” to add to the Hospital War Memorial.

The Teddington Society is an obvious choice to partner St Mary’s Church in the Teddington 800 project and we are delighted to be able to assist in many different ways.

Now to take a look at the early history of Teddington, the question I have been most asked is “When did Teddington first begin?” and the simple answer is that I do not know.

A high class Bronze Age Burial took place in Sandy Lane which has been put to something like 1500 BC but it is unlikely that this was placed in the middle of whatever settlement existed at that time. A huge number of weapons and other artefacts have been recovered from the River Thames at Teddington Lock and thereabouts and these cover a vast age range but there is no sign of any early settlement in the Bronze Age or earlier. Julius Caesar is said to have crossed the Thames along our stretch of river and given battle with the local Britons but Brentford, Kingston and Sunbury, to name but three, all claim this distinction. However Romano-British dwellings have been discovered at Lower Teddington Road and Udney Park Playing Fields.

What we do know is that there was a small Saxon settlement here at the time of the Norman Conquest. The earliest written reference of it is in the will of Aelfheah, an ealdorman, with land in “TUDINGATUN” in 968 AD. It is said to have been granted to the Abbot of St Peter’s on Thorney Island (Westminster Abbey) in a Charter of 969 AD by King Eadgar as part of the Manor of Staines. This Charter seems to have become lost and it was necessary for the Abbey to forge a duplicate, to maintain their claim over various lands.

Life under the Normans was not very different In Teddington and things drifted along without any major upset. Alas on the national stage there was a virtual revolution with the barons rebelling against the austere rule of King John. He was forced to sign the Great Charter at Runnymede in 1216 but almost immediately broke it and then the barons invited the son of the King of France, Prince Louis, to come to England and take over the Throne. John

died and was succeeded by his son Henry III aged 9. 1217 saw most of England under French law until William Marshall gathered together the British forces at Lincoln Castle and inflicted a crushing defeat on the French.

In the meantime, the Abbot of Westminster was asked to provide a suitable chaplain for TUDINTON and that's where our parish begins.

You can follow the rest of the story of Teddington in our Timeline Banners.

Ken Howe

May 2017