



# Pope's Grotto

## PRESERVATION TRUST

Patrons: Monty Don and Kim Wilkie

### Newsletter number 3, April 2017

#### In this Newsletter

**We** are delighted to announce that we've been awarded a 'Resilient Heritage' grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to start our pilot project which will investigate methods and techniques to conserve the south chamber of the Grotto. The research will enable us to more precisely plan and cost the remainder of the conservation and is the first significant step towards our goal for more than 270 years. You can read more about this and other activities in our Project Report on this page.

If you haven't heard storyteller Giles Abbott performing his piece about the life of Pope, there are more opportunities in the next 2 months. Giles' performances have been exceptionally well received and we encourage you to book now as these may be the last performances of this unique work. There's more about this and other events on page 3.

On page 6, we have a report on our recent symposium, an interesting article on the possibility (or otherwise) of a second grotto at Henrietta Howard's Marble Hill (page 4) and a fascinating, scholarly, article on 18th century literary life in Twickenham by trustee Judith Hawley in which, *inter alia*, you can discover what 'labefaction' means (page 5).

We'd love to hear what you think about our newsletters and how we could improve them. Please send your comments using the Contact page on our website.

#### Project Report

*There's been a period of intense activity since our last newsletter. Our heritage consultant Angela Kidner reports.*

**T**he more we delve into Alexander Pope and his grotto, the more riches emerge! The story since September has been one of collaboration and significant progress.

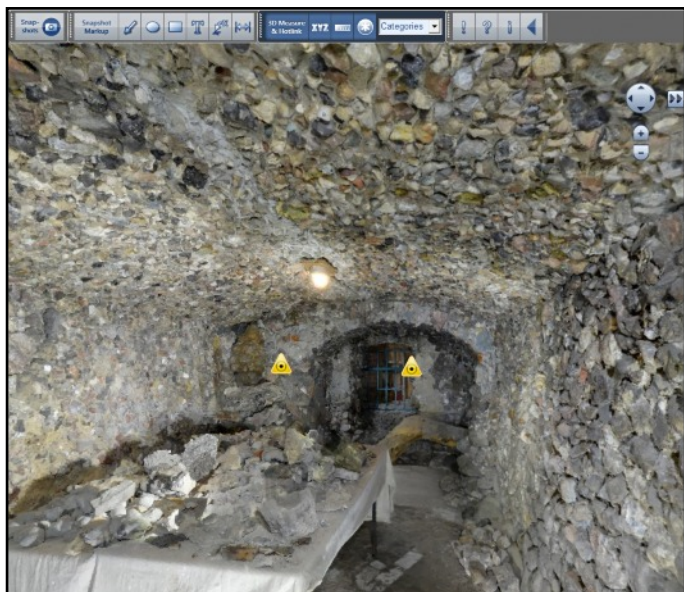
The decision to carry out a pilot project on the South Chamber of the grotto revealed how much we needed to know about the minerals and their fixings there and the grotto as a whole. Thanks to our friends John Henry and Chris Duffin from The Geological Society of London History of Geology Group, we were given the beginnings of a survey, revealing some interesting and colourful finds. It quickly became evident that the task of identifying and locating the minerals (and finding them again!) necessitated a digital survey of the whole grotto. At John Henry's suggestion we invited Plowman Craven (currently engaged on surveying the Palace of Westminster and Crossrail) to perform a digital survey of the grotto which may later be used to record the minerals' positions.

We were delighted when director Malcolm Donald offered a one-day survey by their staff working on a voluntary basis. On a cold Saturday in January a team of five performed a 3D laser scan of the whole grotto, took high-quality photographs of all the surfaces and surveyed the surrounding area to precisely locate the grotto on the Ordnance Survey Grid. The result is an accurate, three-dimensional, high-resolution model of the grotto, which reveals the details of the minerals and other artefacts as they've never been seen before. The model can be inspected on any PC using Leica Geosystem's TruView<sup>1</sup> product. Malcolm later returned to the school to show the result of the survey to trustees and members of Radnor House School's Grotto Society ('Grot Soc').

The survey brings with it the additional benefit of providing geographic accuracy for the researchers working on the digital reconstruction of Twickenham and Pope's Villa and gardens in c. 1740. At our recent symposium, Professor Paul Richens showed the audience a glimpse of the developing reconstruction, with Twickenham's 18th century buildings emerging beside a tranquil Thames and amidst countryside and with Pope's well-documented villa and his intricate and innovative gardens the other side of the grotto.

In February, the Trust applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Resilient Heritage grant for the pilot project funds for a lighting options appraisal, exploratory conservation work and outside advice on our own fundraising and audience development. We heard in early March that the bid had been successful. The exploratory work has been carried out over the

<sup>1</sup> © Leica Geosystems AG



A screen capture of the south chamber from the TruView model. The yellow triangles show other scanning points

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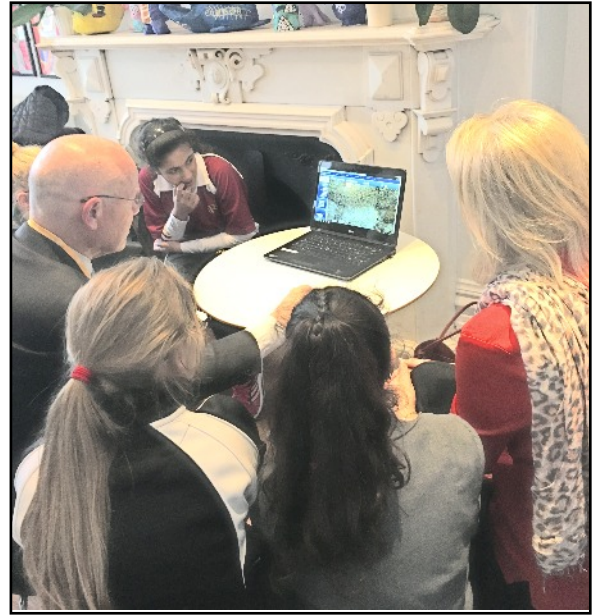


'Project Report' continued from page 1.

Easter holidays by Odgers Conservation, who are preparing the specification and seeking tenders for the work of conservation. Donald Insall Associates are working with DHA Designers preparing the lighting appraisal, and the research project on the south chamber will be carried out over the summer holidays.

The information this project provides will enable us to make bids to HLF and other funders for conservation of the rest of the grotto in the autumn, with a view to carrying out the work in summer 2018. We have always said we were in it for the long haul!

We are enormously grateful for the help of John Henry and Chris Duffin, Roy Starkey, Secretary of the Russell Society, and of Malcolm Donald and his team at Plowman Craven. We also thank the volunteers working with Paul Richens on the digital reconstruction, especially Robert Shepherd, Hazelle Jackson and Val Bott. Through our use of social media we are gathering colleagues and supporters and learning about brother/sister projects throughout the country. Our database of contacts has expanded to more than 600. Please send news of this project to your friends and come to our events this summer!



Malcolm Donald shows the model to Rosie Gill, Head of Radnor House School, and Grot Soc members



The team from Plowman Craven outside the grotto

We were surprised and delighted when Roy Starkey identified this mineral as Brewsterite, probably from the remote Strontian Mines in Argyll. Samples are believed to have been widely distributed to collectors in the 18th century, but it remains a mystery as to how Pope acquired it.



## Simon Thurley's Houses of Power

*The Twickenham Museum Annual Lecture*

**U**ntil Pope's Grotto Trust was formed, the Twickenham Museum ran open days and sold books to raise funds for the grotto's eventual conservation. In 1999 the trustees decided to 'spin-off' a independent trust to provide an impetus and focus for this important project. We still maintain very close links with the Museum (three of our trustees are also trustees or volunteers for the Museum) so we're delighted to publicise their 2017 Annual Jack Ellis Memorial Lecture.

Dr Simon Thurley, leading architectural historian and broadcaster, will talk about his latest book, "Houses of Power: The Places that shaped the Tudor World". Houses of Power is the result of thirty years of research, architectural digs and archival adventuring on the part of Dr Thurley to reconstruct what the great Tudor houses looked like, why they were built in the way they were and what went on within their walls. The result is much more than an architectural history. It is a study of private life intertwined with political intrigue, diplomacy and court, offering an entirely new and remarkable insight into the Tudor world.

Dr Simon Thurley was until 2015 the Chief Executive of English Heritage, the government's principal advisor on the historic environment in England. Previously, he was Curator of the Historic Royal Palaces and Director of the Museum of London, and he is the author of many influential books on architectural history, including *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England*; *Whitehall Palace* and *Hampton Court*. In 2013 he published a major history of English architecture, *The Building of England*.

The lecture is on Monday 22th May at 8pm, venue at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Street, Twickenham, TW1 3DY. Tickets cost £6, either direct from The Twickenham Museum (25 The Embankment, Twickenham TW1 3DU; open Tuesdays & Saturdays 1100 – 1500, Sundays 1400 -1600) or from Ken Howe 020 8943 1513, [howe64@btinternet.com](mailto:howe64@btinternet.com). Or you can book online through:

[www.ticketsource.co.uk/twickenhammuseum](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/twickenhammuseum)



## Alexander Pope: A Search for Perfection

*Celebrated poet, savage satirist, Twickenham resident, brought to life by Giles Abbott*

**L**ast year, the Trust commissioned Giles Abbott, an award-winning storyteller, to write and perform a piece about Alexander Pope. His storytelling vividly describes the life of Pope, with his difficulties of illness, deformity and religious exclusion, as well as his genius.

The first performance was at our symposium in May and has subsequently been performed at several venues in the Borough. It has been critically acclaimed by people of all backgrounds and ages. Here are a few appreciative comments:

*"One of the best nights I've ever spent at a live performance"*

*"Moved me to tears"*

*"Giles Abbott is absolutely fantastic. He brings it all to life in a magical way"*

*"It was the best story ever. I loved it"*

*"A brilliant and educational and entertaining performance"*

There are more opportunities to see performances of this unique work in the coming months:

- Strawberry Hill House: 17th May 2017 at 7.00 pm
- The National Portrait Gallery: 25th May 2017 at 7.00 pm
- 'Pope and a Pint' at the Alexander Pope Hotel, Twickenham: 26th May 2017 at 7.00 pm
- In Pope's Grotto during the Twickenham Festival: 10th and 24th June 2017 (rolling performances)

You can find more details and booking information on our website:

[www.popesgrotto.org.uk/news](http://www.popesgrotto.org.uk/news)

"Alexander Pope: A Search for Perfection" is supported by Arts Council England.



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ENGLAND**

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**"It was the best story ever. I loved it"**

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Photo © Cathy Cooper

## Some other events

*We're not the only ones organising events for grottophiles. Here are a few that we know about in the coming months:*

### Georgian Grottoes at Painshill Park

Our friends at Painshill Park in Cobham have organised a Georgian Grottoes lecture on Thursday 18th May as part of their Study Week. They'll be talking about some magnificent 18th century grottoes including Goldner, Stourhead, Painshill and, of course, Pope's Grotto. If you've never seen the extraordinary grotto at Painshill, there's a tour included.

Book at [www.painshill.co.uk/whats-on/](http://www.painshill.co.uk/whats-on/) or call 01932 868113.



*Inside the grotto at Painshill*

### Pope's Grotto Open Days

We'll be open as usual on three Saturday mornings during the Twickenham Festival in June. On two mornings, you can see Giles Abbott storytelling in the grotto itself (see above). Booking information will be in the Festival brochure distributed locally in May or you can book now at:

[www.popesgrotto.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.popesgrotto.eventbrite.co.uk)

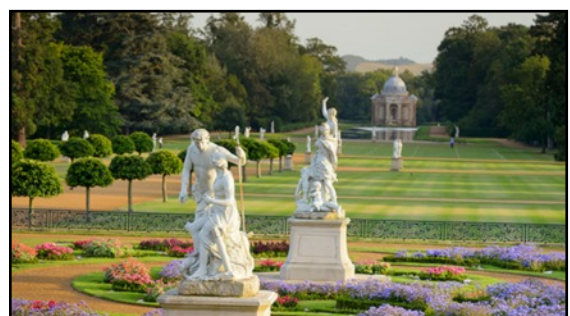
### 'Rustic Retreats. Grottos and Hermitages in the 18th Century Garden' at Wrest Park

Wrest Park is an important English Heritage property in Bedfordshire with a 92 acre 18th century garden. This day conference, to be held on Wednesday 13th July, will explore the fascinating world of grottos, hermitages and root houses.

Speakers will include Brian Dix (garden archaeologist), Prof. Gordon Campbell (author of *The Hermit in the Garden*), Katherine Myers, Judy Preston, Hazelle Jackson, Diana Reynell and Daniëlle Westerhof. Naturally, there'll be a presentation on Pope and his grotto.

Tickets cost £20 to include lunch and refreshments. To book please call the dedicated sales team on 0370 333 1183.

For more information and a full programme contact [emily.parker@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:emily.parker@english-heritage.org.uk).



*Statues and parterres in the gardens at Wrest Park*



## Marble Hill Revived (and another grotto)

Trustee Robert Youngs investigates the second grotto at Henrietta Howard's Palladian Villa

**I**f you were an aristocrat in the early 18th century, what could be better than to have a grotto in your garden? To have two, of course! It has been suggested that Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, friend of Alexander Pope and chatelaine of Marble Hill may have indeed had two.

Henrietta Howard was the mistress of the Prince of Wales, the future King George II. In 1723, the Prince made a financial settlement with her which enabled her to build her villa on the banks of the Thames at Twickenham, about a mile downstream from Pope's Villa. Both Pope and Charles Bridgeman are thought to have influenced the design of the landscape gardens surrounding the house - a 1724 plan, which was never implemented, is attributed to Pope. Her friendship with Pope may have encouraged her to build her grotto in Marble Hill's spacious grounds.

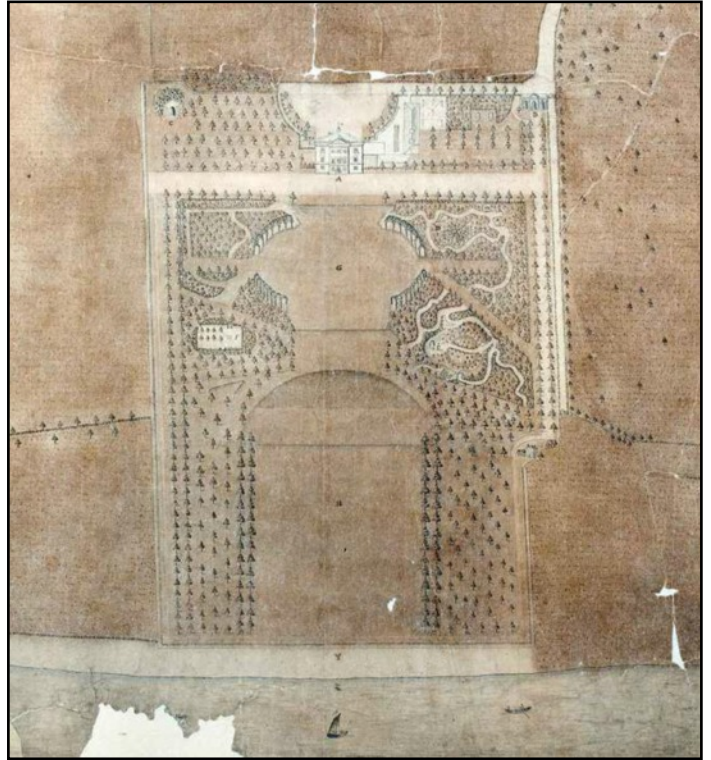


Henrietta Howard by Charles Jervas  
(© English Heritage Photo Library)

A 1752 plan of the grounds clearly shows the only the surviving grotto. However, in 1760, Joel-Henrietta Pye published "A Short Account of the Principal Seats and Gardens in and about Twickenham", an early guide book for visitors to the large properties in this area. At Marble Hill, she describes "... a very fine Grotto; there is also a smaller Grotto, from whence there is a fine View of Richmond Hill." This seems to be the sole evidence for a second grotto.

Could a second grotto have been built between 1752 and 1760, and subsequently disappeared? How reliable is Mrs Pye's description? Horace Walpole, in a letter to the Rev Mr Cole in 1775, describes her book thus: "*it is a most inaccurate superficial blundering account of Twickenham and other places*". Certainly, no physical evidence for a second grotto has yet been found and Mrs Pye may have mistaken the ice house, which still exists, or some other structure for a grotto. It therefore seems likely that her "blundering account" may be responsible for the suggestion, now widely replicated, of the existence of a second grotto.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the grotto of the 1752 plan was rediscovered in 1941 after a period of obscurity, when a falling tree broke through its roof. It was filled in until a systematic excavation was performed in 1985. In the following years, it was restored by English Heritage to the state in which you can see it today.



The 1752 plan of Marble Hill. The grotto can be seen at the centre right and the ice house at the top left

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This year, English Heritage, with Heritage Lottery Funding, commenced a project ('Marble Hill Revived') to restore elements of Henrietta Howard's lost gardens. This is part of a larger project to conserve the house itself and to improve the public amenities in the grounds. Excavations during March revealed a lozenge shaped area, possibly a nine-pin bowling alley, the edges of the original grotto, evidence of gravel extraction nearby and traces of planting beds. The landscape project will recreate the bowling alley, flower gardens, terraces and serpentine paths, following the 1752 plan.

You can hear more about the (single) grotto at Marble Hill at "Rustic Retreats" at Wrest Park in July - see page 3.



Excavating in front of the grotto  
(© Historic England)

## 'The Residence of the Muses': Twickenham as a Literary Hub

Professor Judith Hawley writes about Twickenham as a literary hub

**I**n a guidebook entitled *A Peep into the Principal Seats and Gardens in and about Twickenham* (1775, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1760), Joel-Henrietta Pye dubbed Twickenham 'the residence of the muses' because it was home to so many writers and artists. Twickenham's two most celebrated writers are, of course, Alexander Pope and Horace Walpole. But they were by no means the first writers to settle here, or the only ones in their day, or indeed, the last. Their predecessors include the Catholic recusant writer and translator, Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland and the poet, Sir John Suckling. Some of their successors are perhaps better known, they include: Charles Dickens, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Sarah Disraeli, Flora Thompson, Francis Palgrave of Palgrave's Treasury fame and Walter de la Mare. What is so striking about Twickenham in the eighteenth century is that it was not just home to random isolated writers but that they formed over-lapping networks and communities and that painters and theatre people were drawn into the net as well.

Pope and Walpole were the centre of the two main literary circles. A third writer, less well-known, formed a bridge between them. Richard Owen Cambridge, born in same year as Horace Walpole and surviving him by five years, he became friends with Walpole when they were both at Eton. An essayist and minor poet, he was better-known as a sociable fellow and friend to the famous. Pope positively drew writers to the area: he encouraged the poet and lady of letters Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to take a house in the village; she rented Saville House from the painter Godfrey Kneller. He also invited his friends and fellow members of the Scriblerus Club, John Gay, Jonathan Swift and Dr John Arbuthnot to spend weeks visiting him. In 1726-27 they worked on their masterpieces *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Dunciad* together in Pope's villa at Twickenham. Voltaire, the French philosopher, was also a visitor – he made a pilgrimage to visit Pope in 1728.

Henry Fielding settled here briefly in 1747-48 – perhaps drawn by Pope's fame, but certainly to avoid publicity while his second wife gave birth only three months after they had married. It was Pope's reputation that drew Walpole to this area. He had briefly met the poet as a child and despite their political differences – Pope was a key member of the opposition to the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole – Horace wanted to build Strawberry Hill, his own imaginative retreat in sight of Pope's villa. Walpole's conviviality is well known. It is manifest, for example, in the way he assembled a committee to advise him on the construction of his magnificent and theatrical Gothic dream home. His literary network included the poet Thomas Gray, the poet, playwright and religious campaigner, Hannah More and Mary Berry – not of soggy bottom fame, but a playwright, novelist, and the eventual editor of Walpole's writings.

These networks were entangled and intertwined: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was a close friend of Horace Walpole's step-mother (his father's mistress and second wife Molly Skerrett) and an ardent Whig – one of the reasons she and Pope later fell out. Lady Mary also met Walpole frequently when she moved to the continent and he was on

his travels. She was also a relative of novelist and magistrate Henry Fielding. On his death, she voiced this sanguine assessment of his strengths and weaknesses:

*'I am sorry for H. Fielding's death, not only as I shall read no more of his writings, but I believe he lost more than others, as no man enjoyed life more than he did, though few had less reason to do so, the highest of his preferment being raking in the lowest sinks of vice and misery. ... His natural spirits gave him rapture with his cook-maid and cheerfulness when he was fluxing in a garret. There was a great similitude between his character and that of Sir Richard Steele [another Twickenham resident, with Joseph Addison, he wrote the influential journals, the Tatler and Spectator]. He had the advantage both in learning and, in my opinion, genius: they both agreed in wanting money in spite of all their friends, and would have wanted it, if their hereditary lands had been as extensive as their imagination.'*

Fielding's first published work was a poem written in imitation of Pope and dedicated to Lady Mary. He then wrote under the pen name Scriblerus Secundus, indicating his relation to the Scriblerus Club.

Richard Owen Cambridge situated himself in the same line of descent. His long poem, *The Scribleriad: an Heroic Poem in Six Books* (1751) is based on the satires of Pope and his circle. In her account of 'a little KINGDOM on the Banks of the Thames', Henrietta Pye also described Owen Cambridge as Pope's successor, not by hereditary descent, but 'proclaim'd by a Muse, and acknowledged by the People ... He treads in the steps of his Predecessor, unrival'd in Wit and Learning, by all but the wise and accomplish'd Abbot of Teddington Abby [sic]', that is, Walpole. While he is not well-known now, he was highly valued in his day as a congenial host as least as much for his writing. An extended anecdote in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* describes an impressive gathering he hosted on Tuesday, April 15 1775 at his house by Richmond Bridge. The guests included the painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds; James Harris the Salisbury politician and grammarian (also a close friend of Fielding); the historian Edward Gibbon; the Great Cham of Literature, Samuel Johnson and, of course, his biographer, James Boswell. Among other things, the subject turned to Gay's *Beggar's Opera* – a work completed just up river. They discussed whether or not Gay's *Opera* 'was pernicious in its effects'. Johnson's response, suitable for a lexicographer but perhaps not for a post-prandial chat, reduced them to suppressed hysterics: 'I myself am of opinion,' declared Johnson, 'that more influence has been ascribed to *The Beggar's Opera*, than it in reality ever had; for I do not believe that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time I do not deny that it may have some influence, by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing.' Then collecting himself as it were, to give a heavy stroke: 'There is in it such a LABEFACTATION of all principles, as may be injurious to morality' While he pronounced this response, we sat in a comical sort of restraint, smothering a laugh, which we were afraid might burst out.

Continued on page 6



## 'The Legacy and Ghost of Pope'

Our third symposium was held on Friday March 17<sup>th</sup> at Strawberry Hill House, writes Julia Fienh

**I**ntroduced by our patron, Kim Wilkie, our third symposium was a joint effort, organised in partnership with Strawberry Hill Trust. It attracted an audience of over 70, and raised in the region of £1500 to be shared by the partners.

The event examined the landscape and the literary scene in Twickenham in the 18th Century, taking account of the influence of Alexander Pope on Horace Walpole and other notables of the time. Walpole, who came to Twickenham in 1747, three years after Pope's death, has made reference to Pope's work in his writing, as this example illustrates.

*"The Printing Press at Strawberry Hill, to the Earl of Chesterfield:*

*Few paces hence, beneath yon grotto'd road,  
From dying Pope the last sad accents flow'd;  
O Twickenham, would the friend of Pope but bless  
With some immortal page thy favour'd press,  
The happier emblem would with truth dispose,  
That where one Phenix died another rose."*

(Horace Walpole, quoted in 'Specimens of the Later English Poets', by Robert Southey, 1807)

Speakers in the morning set the scene – Professor Judith Hawley described the literary circles operating in the Twickenham area in the 18th Century (an edited version of this presentation is on page 5), while Chris Sumner and Mike Cherry examined the gardens, riverscape and major houses of the time.

After an excellent lunch, provided by Strawberry Hill Trust caterers, updates on the restoration were provided by Michael Snodin and Dr. Silvia Davoli for Strawberry Hill Trust, and Angela Kidner and Professor Paul Richens for Pope's Grotto. Angela announced that Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust has been awarded a grant of £17,200 from



Visitors in the Long Gallery  
(Photo © Cathy Cooper)

the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the first stage of the conservation of the grotto (see page 1). Paul displayed further work on the digital reconstruction of the river approach and garden in Pope's time (first previewed at the second symposium in May last year). A question and answer panel attracted many interesting questions from the audience. This was followed by a summing up from our host, Nick Dolan, Director of the Strawberry Hill Trust, who also finished the event as auctioneer to help raise additional funds.

At the end of the day, 30 of the audience opted for a candle-lit tour of the grotto. The tours were led by Mike Cherry. The grotto will be open again during the Twickenham Festival Open Days. (See the Pope's Grotto website for booking information).

We continue to look forward to showing our supporters the restored grotto, and to raise funds for the important work that needs to be done. Look out for future events to interest and educate our supporters about the work and interests of Alexander Pope and those he influenced.

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'The Residence of the Muses' continued from page 5

Not a word I had come across before, labefaction means deterioration: the process of coming apart, especially falling into ruin or decay. The image Boswell depicts of a congregation of cultural grandees meeting in this elegant home both discussing serious matters and sharing a laugh seems to me to be characteristic of Twickenham in the eighteenth century.

Why did the muses take up residence here during this period? One of the chief factors was the location: the proximity to London made it attractive as a convenient retreat. Once some literary figures had settled there, it became attractive to the wealthy who wanted a cultured environment and to writers and artists in search of both patrons to support them and a space to work. Land previously devoted to commerce and agriculture was quickly bought up and gentrified. Developing their property became a pastime in itself. We find their correspondence full of requests and recommendations for builders and gardeners, like a eighteenth-century Gumtree.

So, what we have is a social network. The presence of so many writers and artists in the area was not just random and they rarely existed in isolation. They often came because of existing connections, or forged new ones while here. They interacted, formed bonds, collaborated, networked and were connected in various ways. Moreover, they were not just attracted by practical conveniences but because of the ethos cultivated by Alexander Pope. Pope created an aura around his Thames-side villa. Drawing on Classical ideals, he depicted it as a virtuous retreat from the commercial and political pressures of the city. Moreover, he represented his cluster of friends as the embodiment of virtue. Horace Walpole was from a different social class and political group, but was nonetheless able to tap into this idea of Twickenham as a place where you could construct your own space, a refuge in which you could withdraw from world without being totally cut off. Strawberry Hill was a place dedicated to culture, conviviality, and eccentricity. Twickenham was a literary hub and the stamping ground of dilettante, refuseniks and pioneers.