

Heatham House



Heatham House stands at the left of the junction of Whitton Road and London Road near Twickenham railway station, a short distance from the centre of Twickenham. The River Crane, Twickenham's small river much confused with the Colne, runs through its three and a half acres of grounds. Little is known of its early history despite its being mentioned in both histories of Twickenham - Edward Ironside's **History and Antiquities of Twickenham**

and R.S.Cobbett's **Memorials of Twickenham**. No explanation is offered for its name and it is not clear exactly when the house was built; certainly it was mid-eighteenth century - 1740-50 - although there may have been additions and alterations since. Glover's map of 1635 indicates that the site of Heatham House and the Cole Brewery was previously occupied not by a pleasure garden, but by part of the garden and nursery of Vincent Pointer. Gerard, in his **Herbal** (1597) wrote 'many sorts [of pears and apples] are growing in the ground of Master Vincent Pointer a most curious grafter and planter of all manner of rare fruits...the greatest varietie of these rare are to be found...'

Heatham House is a listed building of architectural interest. Ironside described the house in his book published in 1797 as 'a neat house, with a pleasant garden round it, through which runs a stream of water over which is a neat bridge and under the bridge a small cascade.'

People who have lived in the house include Stephen Cole whose family were brewers in Twickenham and whose brewery was only yards away from Heatham House on the other side of the River Crane. Possibly the house was built for him. Cole died in 1790; his name is still evident in the roads Cole Park Road and Cole Park.

Roger Wilbraham, the Whig and associate of Charles James Fox, the statesman (1749-1806), lived here until his death in 1829. Because of his friendship with Fox, it has come to be believed that Fox lived at Heatham House. This is not so but it is likely that he would have visited Wilbraham and therefore stayed at the house on these occasions. A similar tradition, but with no foundation, is that Charles I once stayed at a house on the site and planted a tree in the garden.

Other residents of the house included Sir Charles Hawtrey, the actor-manager of the 1880s and 90s who died in 1923; and the Swedish artist and caricaturist Einar Norman who added a double staircase leading from the stone balcony at the back of the house. The last private owner was William Thomas Lane, the original owner of the MacFisheries shops.

In 1944, the house was purchased by Middlesex County Council for £8,000. It had been put on the market in 1943 and several Twickenham people interested in youth work urged the Borough Council to buy the house and use it for the development of the youth service. It has been part of the Youth Service since then and was officially opened on 10th June 1950 as a youth centre. Currently the house is a Youth Activities Centre, not simply a youth club, where young people up to the age of twenty-one can pursue a wide range of practical interests including most sports as well as music and drama. In addition to this, Heatham House complements the work of other youth organisations by providing facilities for club group activities, rooms for meetings, leadership training courses and school leavers' courses. Additions were made to Heatham House in 1969 when a new hall was opened to provide increased facilities and also in 1973 when an extension to the main hall was opened. These additions have not altered the external appearance of Heatham House and it seems likely that it will continue to be part of Twickenham for many years, looking much the same as it did when Stephen Cole lived there in the 18th century.